

## 1. Urban History and the Materialities of/in Literature

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Urban history has a long record of drawing on literary sources for its engagement with cities of the past. A case in point is Lewis Mumford's *The City in History* (1961), which draws also on a range of fictional texts for elucidating the rich variety of urban conditions in history. Mumford foregrounds the importance of fictional texts for our understanding of the city, claiming that cities in history have reached the climax of their urban condition in fictional representations (140). The link drawn by Mumford between the very emergence of the city and 'glyphs, ideograms, and script' (Mumford 97) suggests that writing was connected both to the origins and to the individual climaxes of urbanism. Foundational works on British urban history by H.J. Dyos, both alone (1961) and in collaboration with others (Dyos and Wolff) similarly emphasized the place of literary authors and graphic images in forming views of the modern city. In Mumford's case, as in a range of more recent publications (see Kervanto Nevanlinna and Blom), the use of literary narratives does not necessarily question the extent to which the fictionality or the formal features of literary narratives make these differ from other sources such as autobiographies, letters, inscriptions, or historical annals. There is an assumption in such historical works of a more or less immediate accessibility to past urban materiality through fictional source texts. On the other hand, text-based (e.g. New Critical) and postmodernist approaches (e.g. structuralism and post-structuralism) in literary studies have long emphasized the distance – sometimes seemingly insurmountable - between material world and culture-specific word.

While studies such as those by Mumford and Dyos have produced cornerstones of sorts for urban history, their work has also been extensively critiqued during the past half-century.

Mumford's intuitive methods for drawing conclusions about the past are far removed from those of contemporary archive-driven urban historians, who have pointed out absences, lacks, and doubtful interpretations in his work, including his disparagement of nineteenth-century industry. Recent decades have seen the appearance of a host of new urban history publications straddling history and literary studies, developing interests in both the specificity of literary narratives and the material conditions of the historical city. Such works include *Cities in Modernity* by Richard Dennis, Christoph Lindner's *Imagining New York*, and *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature* by Dana Brand, to name but a few. But there remains a need to further question the interaction between literary narratives (as potential research sources) and urban materialities. What is gained when literary narratives are used in urban history, and what is lost? What kinds of methodological approaches are most useful when drawing on literary narratives in the context of urban history? And what happens when we approach literary narratives of past cities not only in terms of distanced reflections of a past materiality, but rather as firmly intertwined with the urban material conditions from which they arise and to which they contribute?

This volume showcases a range of case studies of what literary texts, grasped as material objects and as reflections on urban materialities, have to offer for urban history. With concrete examples from a wide variety of geographical and cultural contexts, it engages in dialogue between literary scholars and urban historians in ways that hopefully may enrich future cooperation. The approach to literary narratives and materialities in urban history proposed here is summed up with the conceptualization 'materiality in/of literature', defined here as the way in which literary narratives are at once referring to the material world and also actively partaking in the material construction of the world. Narratives are variously engaged, enveloped in, and constitutive of the material world they reflect upon. The book relates the materiality of literary texts to urban history along lines that are geographically

multipolar and multidisciplinary. Chapters discuss cities in the UK, USA, India, South Africa, Finland, and France, examining a wide range of textual genres from the novel to cartoons, advertising copy, architecture and urban planning, and archaeological writing. In the process, attention is drawn to narrative complexities embedded within literary fiction and to the dialogue between narratives and historical change. The volume explores different categories of literary narrative in various text types and literary genres which together support, shape, and structure but also question stories about the city. It focuses on three specific, although intertwined, areas of focus: literary fiction as form of urban materiality, literary narratives as social investigations of the material city, and the narrating of silenced material lives as witnessed in various narrative sources.

For decades, urban historians have been highlighting literature as a source of evidence about what the city in modernity was experientially like. We provide evidence from texts and cities that could confirm these assumptions but will also question some of them. Literary narratives have the capacity to evoke, convey, and question experiential conditions, enabling readers ‘to simulate the intrinsic or ineffable qualities of an experience’ (Caracciolo 96) – the *qualia*, or ‘what it feels like’. They thus need incorporating in urban historians’ accounts of city experience, an area of recent interest (Kenny). Literature is seen here first as material in and of itself, secondly in the idea that literary genres, language, and narrative conventions provide the material structures for rendering specific kinds of experiences. And literary narratives have their effect on emerging new urban materialities, and are constitutive of reactions (political, social, architectural) to city developments in history. Our approach in this volume aims to draw attention to narrative complexities embedded within literary fiction and to the dialogue between narratives and historical change.

*READING CITY LITERATURE AFTER BOURDIEU AND LEFEBVRE*

The materiality of literary texts can be understood in several complementary ways. First, there is the view of literature itself as material, in the sense of the materiality of physical books, of the physical newspapers that print fictional narratives (Mackintosh; Mackintosh, Dennis, and Holdsworth), or of the material aspects of book culture institutes such as publishing houses, book shops, or libraries (see e.g. Nash). Studying urban history in terms of the materialities of literature, and of literary texts as material elements in the social fabric of the city would demand a move in directions outlined by Pierre Bourdieu (*The Field of Cultural Production; The Rules of Art*) and his collaborators and followers in studying the network of power relations in ‘the field of literature’. Such work could include studies of how literary institutions, physical features of fictional works, and book culture form material relationships that tend to converge on, and inform, urban experiences. Literature, then, has a place in the complex material history of humans’ uses of and relations to technology.

Important theorizations in this area include those of Heidegger (‘The Question Concerning Technology’; ‘The Thing’), in whose terms, developed more recently by Bill Brown (‘Thing Theory’, ‘Objects’) and others, the book and the text can be seen as examples of the category of the ‘thing’. Reading Heidegger’s later essays and the philosophy of place developed from them by Jeff Malpas, ‘any individual thing’ can be understood by a person through ‘walking around it and so seeing its details at the same time as we get a feel for it as a whole’ (Finch 78).

Second, there is also – and this is how literary narratives are more commonly used in urban history – the way in which literary narratives can offer complex insights into the materialities of urban lives, insights that complement and enrich the information we have from other sources. For decades, urban historians as well as cultural geographers have been

highlighting literature as a source of evidence about how the city in modernity was experienced (Harvey). Literary narratives reflect upon, and mediate, in varied ways, the urban material world. And they may in turn have their effect on emerging new urban materialities, becoming constitutive of reactions (political, social, and architectural) to city developments in history. As such, literary narratives as representations of urban materiality are not seen here as passive recipients or imaginary ‘mirrors’ of reality, but rather as partaking in a complex constellation of discourses that draw on, but that also feed into the urban experience and urban decision making, such as discourses on public housing, urban planning, and green spaces in the city. Examples of such interaction are the influence of utopian writing such as that of Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward 2000-1887* (1889) on English urban planning (see Ameel, ‘Cities Utopian’), or the effect of Camille Lemonnier’s novel *Un mâle* (1881) on forest preservation in Brussels (Notteboom).

A crucial reference point for considering the relationship between literary narratives and other dimensions of the urban experience is the famous triad developed by Henri Lefebvre in the seminal *The Production of Space*, where a threefold taxonomy of space is proposed. Lefebvre distinguishes between material spatial practices (the dimension of experience; such as everyday city walks), what he calls representations of space (the dimension of conception; space such as it is imagined), and representational spaces (the dimension of imagination) (Lefebvre 33, 38–39; see also Harvey 26; Ameel, *Moved by the City* 51-54). In Lefebvre’s conceptualization, literary representations are not in a binary relationship with the material reality, and are again not merely immaterial imaginaries that ‘mirror’ material reality, but are part of a complex, three-fold operation. Lefebvre’s view of space, formulated in the 1960s and 1970s, also needs nuancing and questioning. We do not see Lefebvre’s triad as an invitation to examine different emanations of urbanity as separated from each other along neatly arranged categories, but rather as a reminder that all objects of

study could (and should) be thought of in all three ways – material, symbolic, and imagined – proposed by Lefebvre, via the kind of wide-ranging sensory history crossing many types of published and unpublished source which is notably produced by recent research (e.g. Tullett, ‘The Macaroni’s “Ambrosial essences”’; ‘Grease and Sweat’, Koole).

Following Lefebvre, literary narratives can exist in a range of relationships to the other modes of spatial production. Especially in the case of radical transformations in the urban environment, as the result of dramatic industrialization and modernization, de-industrialization or globalization (in the nineteenth century; or, more recently, in the case of radical twenty-first century ‘expulsions’, see Sassen), literary narratives may provide ways to reflect on the moral and social effects of change. They may suggest ways of moving forward from disruptive experiences. Such reflections are not without a dimension of moral meaning-giving, which may explain the didactic aspect of many literary reflections on the city in transformation. Textual genres that became prominent in specific historical periods as reaction to urban transformations, including the ‘urban sketch’ in the early to mid-nineteenth century (see Brand); or the rise of the detective novel in the late nineteenth century (see Lehan 85-87), may give important insights into the specific narrative frames and imaginative resources available for people at a specific time to imagine the changing material realities in the city.

In addition to literary studies and urban history, this volume draws also on developments in cultural history. Cultural historical approaches have been from early on connected to questions of language, narrative, materiality, and experience, which are at the core of urban literature. Simultaneously, the materiality of (urban) experience has been one of the important questions in cultural historical urban studies. Texts, reading, and literary narratives fold in many ways with urban experiences. Peter Fritzsche, for example, has pointed out how, from the nineteenth century on, there have been ‘word cities’: centres of

mass print culture. Reading signs, instructions, timetables, and newspapers was necessary for anyone living in the city (Fritzsche 1-11).

One way to look at urban literature is to see it from the point of view of a certain city as a part of local print and publishing practices alongside a much larger body of texts. Cities have their own specific traditions of producing texts and literature. But cities are also transnational. Many of the conventions and aspirations of urban narratives are not understandable from a local point of view. A good example of this is Heidi Hakkarainen's recent work on nineteenth-century Vienna and its flourishing humorous publications that commented on the transformation and renewal of the city. Hakkarainen shows that humour in this context was used as a way of investigating the limits of knowledge in a new kind of urban environment that caused uncertainty and insecurity (Hakkarainen 147). A study such as Hakkarainen's provides an example of a detailed, geographically fixed case that also has relevance for broader patterns of modern urban transformations.

An alternative to a view which sees literature as having a privileged or specially insightful position compared to other types of source would be one in which literature is understood as both having its own history *and also* being involved in (often, indeed, following from if not actually determined by) other histories. If British novelists of the Victorian period built many of their plots around wills, inheritances, and (often ethically ambivalent) acts of benefaction, this was in part because legacies were such an important instrument of change or the protection of continuity in the lives of middle-class Victorians (Green and Owens). Simultaneously, the inheritance plot became a narrative device well-known to both Victorian novelists and their readers, with 1880s and 1890s novels often playing knowingly with expectations about them established earlier in the century. Aesthetic traditions could be very insistent: ostensibly naturalist writing of 1880s and 1890s London, for example, seems compelled to narrate using literary models already established, whether

relatively recently (e.g. the Gothic) or hundreds of years earlier (chivalric romance). An understanding of simultaneous multiple histories often acting abrasively yet productively on one another stands behind many of the individual studies of texts and cities, as does a determination to recognise how acts of ‘jumping scale’ operate, as argued variously in recent work on space and time by literary scholars (Hsu 133; Tung).

### *NEW MATERIALISMS AND URBAN NARRATIVES*

As the examples above demonstrate, the way in which literary narratives engage with the materialities of the urban condition is always partly dependent on genre and period conventions, and the specific poetics of any given literary text. But literary narratives do not only refer to the material world in a relation of distance – they also recreate and convey some of people’s experiential engagement with the materialities of the world, warranting one to speak of the relationship between world and word in terms of presence and nearness. The Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky famously noted that formal literary techniques and narrative strategies may give the reader a sense of the material world, enabling the reader to ‘recover the sensation of life’ and ‘to make the stone *stony*’ (Shklovsky). Bringing the reader nearer to a sensation of what the material world feels like is a view of literature that we also find, in different modulations, in more recent work. James Wood sees literature as ‘the nearest thing to life’ (Wood, *Nearest*), arguing that descriptive details are ‘nothing less than bits of life sticking out of the frieze of form, imploring us to touch them’, giving the material in literature a sense of tangibility (Wood 30). Similarly, but from different perspectives, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht argues for art as engaged with ‘presence effects’. What Wood and Gumbrecht have in common is also a dialectic between the particular and the universal – that

fictional particularities or the particularities of a fictional world are able to speak both as references to particular material conditions in a referential world, but also to universal meanings to reverberate with a reader distanced in time and space – a vision of literary fiction as old as Aristotle.

While there has been a tendency (in some historical, critical, and geographical studies; see Mumford, Harvey, Mallory and Simpson-Housley) to envision literary texts as privileged sources into experiential knowledge about geographical environments, literary studies have been more reserved about literature's relationship to the material world. Such a reserved position, which problematizes the possibility of literary fiction to offer access to the world, has a well-established history that goes back as far as Aristotle's notion of *mimesis* (see Halliwell). Twentieth-century movements in the humanities and social sciences such as New Criticism, social constructivism, structuralism, and some aspects of post-structuralism, have arguably exacerbated such a position.

However, the past decades have seen a number of endeavours to bridge word and world, cultural representation and corporeal experience. It is possible to see movements as diverse as cultural studies, postcolonial criticism, and cognitive narratology as moving towards such an act of bridging. The past few decades have seen the appearance of new movements that more radically emphasize materiality, prioritizing the agency and performativity of objects, natural entities, and the material of the world (Coole and Frost, Bolt, Morton, Barad). What many of the new materialist approaches share is a move away from dualist views that pit 'nature' against 'culture' or the material world against the mind, towards an ontological monism (Dolphijn and van der Tuin). What appears then, is not so much as a one-sided highlighting of the material world, but rather a renewed interest in the object and materials of the world, and a realization that these are firmly intertwined with the language and discourses in which they appear and act. It is through this notion of radical

interconnectivity that a term such as the ‘material-semiotic’ is to be understood (Haraway), or the idea of the ‘mesh’ (Morton). And this is also the context within which we propose ‘the materiality in/of literature’ as a fruitful way to approach literary narratives as sources for urban history.

There is an affinity between the approaches in this volume and the notion of the material world as being intimately intertwined with the language in which it is couched. Literature speaks from, and to, a material that has its own imperatives, and does this in language, scripts, and literary genres that are also constructive and performative of the world as we experience and remember it. This volume has an interest in how literature uncovers, confronts, and questions urban materialities, but also in how fictional texts enable the materialities of cities in history to come into being. It wants to join others in thinking about material things in ways that allow them to change the way we think and write about them (see Huehls). We do believe that literary narratives can shed light on the material conditions of the urban experience in ways that would be difficult to replicate using other sources. Yet, in order to get the most of such literary material, it should be emphasized that the sense of ‘materiality in/of literature’ is not concomitant with a self-evident proximity or direct relationship between world and word. As always, what is needed is careful contextualization in genre, period, and poetics, as well as an awareness of the referenced materialities as they appear from other sources or in the form of present-day material remains of past urban environments. When drawing on literary narrative sources, the material is always couched in language and embedded in narrative strategies and formal textual features. But this may well be one of the reasons for literary sources’ potential strength as anchoring points for historical materialities, if – as we do in this volume – one shares with Rom Harre the notion that ‘[m]aterial things have magic powers only in the contexts of the narratives in which they are embedded’ (Harre; see also Woodward 152).

*OUTLINE OF THE VOLUME: THREE SECTIONS*

The first section of the book, 'Literary Fiction as Urban Materiality', examines literary writing in genres such as the novel and the lyric poem as a complex and highly aestheticized investigation of urban material structures. It focuses in particular on how literary texts provide insights into embodied experiences of historical cities. At the same time, literary fiction is introduced here as being part and parcel of urban materiality: literary texts and literary production are constitutive of specific kinds of urban experience and their renderings in narrative form. Among other things, literary texts are also part of the city. They are manufactured productions of the city as surely as are railings, clocks, and buses.

In addition to being of the city, literary narratives investigate and comment upon the environment in which they were formed. The book's second section, 'Literary Narratives as Social Investigations of the Material City', approaches literary narratives as providers of tactile knowledge concerning the history of urban poverty, urban social problems, and concerning marginalized groups in the city. Narrative forms and genres such as poetry, children's comics, and literary journalism will be foregrounded in this section as useful sources for urban history – text types that in literary urban studies, with its focus on the prose novel, have remained somewhat underdeveloped. Narratives are seen here as investigating, discursively constructing, and actively shaping responses to urban social problems.

The book's third section is entitled 'Narrating Silenced Material Lives'. This section examines literary narratives as important sources for documenting the qualitative aspects of material lives that without them would have disappeared and as tools for reconstituting earlier silenced spatial and material histories. New insights into forgotten, neglected, or otherwise

inaccessible voices in urban history are in this section brought centre stage through the examination of literary narratives.

### *LITERARY FICTION AS URBAN MATERIALITY*

In the first chapter in this section, 'Between the Street and the Drawing Room: Slumming in Eliot's Early Poetry', Bo Pettersson examines T.S. Eliot's early poetry in view of Eliot's predilection for slumming. Pettersson argues that Eliot's detailed observations of upper-class life must be set against his equally searching scrutiny of prostitution, squalor, and decay in rather explicit language. The article shows that nightly strolls and related reading, especially Charles-Louis Philippe's slum depictions *Bubu de Montparnasse* and *Marie Donadieu*, helped to open the young Eliot's eyes to another side of urban life that informed much of his early poetry and set him on the path to *The Waste Land*.

Markku Salmela, in 'Recycling Fictions in the City: Don DeLillo and the Materiality of Waste' uses the works of Don DeLillo to outline the development of urban 'waste fictions' toward something that might be termed the 'literature of recycling'. As a novelist whose texts have often touched on the themes of urbanity, consumerism, materialism, and waste management, DeLillo brings forward literature's potential in reflecting and engaging not only societal ideas but also the material forms of urban infrastructure and environments in their historical contexts. In a sample of his novels written since the early 1980s, the gradual change in the late twentieth century from consumerist fantasies to practices akin to the circular economy emerges from oblique angles. That process, when represented within the poetics of literary texts, also illustrates some metaphorical connections between waste management and

literary production, ultimately contributing to a view of literature itself as part of urban materiality.

Drawing on the phenomenological theories of such specialists in architecture as Christian Norberg-Schulz, Juhani Pallasmaa, and others, Aleksejs Taube's chapter 'Embodied Experience of London's Material Structures in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*' examines Ackroyd's representation of individuals' embodied experiences of London's material structures. In particular, the chapter highlights the role that Ackroyd's use of imagery plays in conveying the mood of a particular place and suggests that one's phenomenological apprehension of a place depends, to a great extent, on one's sensory impressions rather than conscious or unconscious associations derived from any kind of text. By revealing the phenomenological dimension in Ackroyd's postmodernist narrative, the chapter not only provides an alternative reading of the novel but also underscores the irreducibility of urban materiality and of embodied experience to textuality.

Silja Laine's chapter 'Sensory Environments of Poverty Seen Through the Writings of Runar Schildt, Toivo Tarvas, and Elvi Sinervo' looks at short stories by three different authors who write about Helsinki in the interwar period. Laine concentrates on the sensory history of the working class area Kallio. The short stories give a voice to the kind of people and experiences that are often left in the shadow: widowers, children, sauna assistants. The stories considered in the chapter take place inside homes, saunas, cafés, and in urban interiors, where people, however, do not have privacy. The stories deal with sensory environments in different ways, from the modernist aesthetics of Runar Schildt and the nostalgic melancholy of Toivo Tarvas to the critical awareness of Elvi Sinervo.

Jason Finch's chapter "'Quite an Aristocratic Place, Although in Whitechapel': Hospital Topographies and Margaret Harkness's Writing of London' explores the boundaries and surroundings of the hospital as an imaginative presence in densely populated city

districts. The case study is of Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl: A Realistic Tale*, a London novel published in 1887 in tandem with social research and socialist political activism. *A City Girl* is known for its accounts of East End housing conditions in flats built for the working class, and of the action of the Salvation Army in the same zone, but its depictions of the hospital have been overlooked, as have environmental and topographic qualities of hospitals in the period more generally. The full ambivalence of the hospital emerges in a topographic reading of it and Harkness's text: in a more nuanced way than grasped in earlier studies, it had multiple functions. The late Victorian city hospital was simultaneously an institution which restrained and judged the poor people who used it, a site of the production of noxious or unappealing qualities and yet a site of increasingly effective urban modernisation, through which progressive reform was implemented.

#### *LITERARY NARRATIVES AS SOCIAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE MATERIAL CITY*

In her chapter "The Casey Court House Builders": Nineteen-Thirties Children's Comics and the Material Transformation of East London', Lucie Glasheen analyses issues of the comic 'Casey Court' and how they intervened directly in this debate, targeting a different set of readers. She discusses the ability of the genre of the cartoon to depict motion and urban space in the process of transformation (similarly to film). Comics are understood as part of a circulation of fictional and non-fictional representations of urban space which children would have engaged with, but the chapter suggests that their popularity makes them perhaps particularly significant, while their situated consumption in streets, playgrounds, and houses was bound up with children's urban experience.

In “‘On the Square’: Constructing the Dangers of Depression-era London in Ada Chesterton’s Social Investigations’, Flore Janssen looks at narratives of depression-era London in Ada Chesterton’s social investigations. By the late 1930s, Ada Jones Chesterton, a prolific writer and journalist with several decades’ experience, had established herself as an investigative writer addressing the social problems of post-World War I and Depression-era Britain. Her investigative publications quickly became linked to a charity project she had launched following an investigation into homelessness. This chapter focuses on a text published to advertise the ‘Cecil Houses’: *Women of the London Underworld* (1938). It argues that Chesterton drew heavily on her journalistic and literary experience to convince a broad readership of the need for her accommodation schemes and relied in her writing on the construction of 1930s London as a place of personal danger, particularly for young women. This chapter explores how a narrative that claimed to wish to protect young women from the dangers of the city relied on curtailing their freedom to explore the urban environment.

Richard Dennis, in his chapter entitled “‘Would you Adam-and-Eve-it?’ Geography, Materiality and Authenticity in Novels of Victorian and Edwardian London’, discusses novelists’ uses of maps, mapping, and their naming of places, real and imagined. For authors, what are the constraints and opportunities of setting fiction in real places; and as readers, do we read differently if we read in the context of external geographical knowledge? Does the use of ‘real’ locations authenticate or make us more aware of the improbability of melodramatic plot turns; or does the employment of pseudonymous or invented toponyms lay claim to the generality of experiences and events? Dennis focuses especially on the mostly real locations deployed by George Gissing in a series of novels set in Victorian London, including three of Gissing’s working-class novels alongside Somerset Maugham’s first novel, *Liza of Lambeth*, and Gissing’s comic novella, *The Paying Guest*, alongside H.G. Wells’ *Ann Veronica*, both parodying the conventions of middle-class suburban south London. *The*

*Paying Guest* has an improbable plot set in a real suburb, Sutton; *Ann Veronica* is all too real in depicting the suffocating stuffiness of suburbia, but Wells sets it in ‘Morningside Park’, almost but not quite the suburb of Worcester Park where he had once lived. Whereas most of the material circumstances discussed in this collection are associated with poverty, poor quality housing, and/or inner-city districts, Dennis’s chapter at least hints at middle-class and suburban materialities.

Julie Gimbal, next, examines narratives of the skyscraper in the context of early twentieth-century France via her chapter ‘The Literary Adventure of the Skyscraper in France (1893–1930): Literary Narratives and Urban Architecture Between Fiction and Reality’. Although ignored by historians of architecture studying skyscrapers, the recurrence of the skyscraper as a narrative trope in travel journals and the literary press from the end of the nineteenth century to between-the-wars France reveals the apprehension towards American architecture through the prism of French opinion, the latter of which does not avoid pre-suppositions, simplifying clichés, and distorted images. Illustrated tales, novels of travel, crime stories, satirical writing, and even speeches build up a varied semantic field and metaphors related to the skyscraper. From the introduction of the word for ‘skyscraper’, *gratte-ciel*, in French vocabulary, to the construction of the first Parisian high-rises, this chapter considers the reception of a word which, since its beginnings, has been unable to shake off these multiple connotations. Overall, the chapter provides a detailed case-study of the relationship between discursive traditions and the development of, in the terms classically proposed by Kevin Lynch, the ‘image of the city’.

*NARRATING SILENCED MATERIAL LIVES*

In 'The Unconfessed Architecture of Cape Town', Huda Tayob explores and questions the potential role that literary texts can play in responding to the archival silences of subaltern architectural and urban histories. She does so by reading across the urban and architectural histories of Cape Town, the Herbert Baker archive, and literary texts, with a particular focus on the novel *Unconfessed* (2006) by Yvette Christiansë. Cape Town is well known for its Cape Dutch architecture: gabled homesteads which were seen as emblematic of civilization in Africa. *Unconfessed* critically reconstitutes the spatial and material histories of slaves and 'Blackness' in Cape Town through poetic narrative techniques. Christiansë's work is particularly important as it draws out the spaces of the doubly erased bodies of 'unseen' Black women through an interpretation of court records from the late nineteenth century. This chapter, therefore, argues that literary texts can act as an alternative form of reading archives, particularly in relation to spaces of trauma. Drawing on postcolonial literature and particularly the writing of Gayatri Spivak, this chapter contributes to debates on the potential of literary works for architectural and urban history.

In 'Contestant City Tales: Searching for a "Literary City" through Archaeology', Elke Rogersdotter focuses on the South Indian city of Vijayanagara as it appears in two chronicles written by the Portuguese travellers Domingos Paes and Fernão Nunes, respectively, who visited the city in the sixteenth century when it constituted one of the largest cities of the contemporary world. The city, abandoned in 1565, regained physical shape and world-wide attention when rediscovered by European scholars in the nineteenth century. This chapter draws on archaeological material. In it, the remains of engraved game boards, deriving in particular from military foundations in Vijayanagara, are focused upon and enacted as spaces of contestation, both in regard to their dimension as 'things' (drawing on archaeological ideas on 'material histories') and through their implication of past gameplay (using Benjamin's thoughts on playthings as sites of conflict).

In 'Memorialising Materiality: Narrative as Archive in Neo-Liberal Delhi', finally, Anubhav Pradhan reads a collection of life-stories gathered in contemporary Delhi as a means of gaining access to demolished and unmapped urban communities. In India since the 1970s, the lived experience of the urban poor has had no value put upon it. The demolition of squatter settlements, unauthorised colonies, and slums for urban gentrification has led to the erasure of not just houses but also homes, the removal of not just the paraphernalia of quotidian domesticity but also the memory of settlement. In this situation, wherein the only witnesses of this corrosive violence are governmental enumerations and surveys, literary narratives act as not just markers and memorials of the life-cycles of these settlements but also as testaments against the machinations of consumptive urbanisms which seek to rigorously deny the possibility of alternate forms of urban spatiality and experience. Pradhan examines the anecdotal compilation *Trickster City* – a product of Delhi's Centre for Study of Developing Societies – as an archive of the lived experience and life-cycles of illegal squatter settlements in contemporary Delhi. Since some of these settlements have now been demolished and the land they stood on redeveloped and gentrified, the only living record of their existence and of the lives of those who inhabited them is this collection of self-narratives compiled by the persons residing in these settlements. Being autobiographical, these narratives record but also memorialise these vulnerable material cultures of the urban poor.

## *CONCLUSION*

The contributions to this volume address the materiality of literary narratives in urban history from a range of perspectives and in light of a wealth of textual materials, in effort to see how

literature studies could learn from urban history, and vice versa. Together, they hope to show that urban history can benefit from engagements with literary and cultural studies, including approaches ranging from literary urban studies (e.g. Ameen, 'Cities Utopian'), deep locational criticism (Finch), geocriticism (Westphal) and other approaches in the spatial humanities. Equally, literary scholars could benefit from insights provided by urban historians and others including environmental historians, gender historians, and historians of the built environment into the specific contexts from which the texts they are analysing emerge. Future research generated by the present collection could be envisaged, examining materiality on the ground and working on the materiality in/of literature. Many literary scholars could engage more deeply in archive work that extends beyond the personal papers of famous writers and in examinations of the locally placed qualities of narratives. The local qualities of narratives include the acts of localization carried out by literary authors, for example when they introduce a genre such as naturalism to their own specific urban and linguistic environment. Approaches such as geocriticism and deep locational criticism, moreover, offer something new in their combination of actual archaeology and a form of literary archaeology. As a concept to summarise the possible development of urban literary studies inspired by this volume and the diverse contributions it brings together and gains shared meaning from, consider the notion of fieldwork. One of the editors of this volume refers elsewhere, almost in passing, to 'the geographer's traditional activity of fieldwork' (Dennis, *Cities in Modernity* xiv). A concept long neglected in literary studies of place, which have focused on texts in a way that can divorce them from the world in which they came into being, fieldwork could be one way to materialize the materialist turn within the broader frame of literary urban studies. An approach to spatial literary studies driven by the notion of fieldwork would mean deeper and more consistent engagement with the materiality both in and of literary texts. As

proposed in the present volume, such engagement could be usefully conceptualized under the heading materiality of/in literature.

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