Place Making in Transit

Literary Interventions at the Airport and in the Underground

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Abstract

Spaces of transit and transportation are often thought of as one-dimensional and as defined by their functionality and rationality, but recent literary texts challenge such preconceptions by representing those spaces as multidimensional and meaningful. In this article, we examine literature through the lens of place making, seeking to understand in what ways literary representations are involved in renegotiations of transit space. Addressing two generic spaces of transit—the underground and the airport—we analyze a body of texts generated through initiatives relating to the London Underground and Heathrow Airport respectively. Arguing that literature contributes to a processual understanding of place, we conclude that literary texts should be considered as instances of place making, and thus deserve serious consideration in research.

Keywords

airport, Henri Lefebvre, literature, place making, transit space, underground railway

Ever since the early days of modern transportation, artistic and literary representations of transit vehicles and transport infrastructures have helped us become habituated to new technologies and modes of traveling, while also stimulating reflection on their consequent upheaval of established conceptions of time and space.¹ Already in the 1850s and 1860s, British and American railway companies explored ways for shaping the public image of railway travel through advertising, postcards, art commissions, and documentary photography.² In a similar manner, the London Passenger Transport Board, especially during the Modernist-infused period of the 1930s and 1940s, supported artistic visions and representations that helped in forming the brand of the London Underground.³ The results of art commissions, however, have rarely been critically discussed as place making actions in the sense that they contribute to shaping “the image and imageability”⁴ of spaces of transit and transportation—that is, that they add meaning, memory, and emotion to spaces commonly considered deprived of such features.⁵

In this article, we investigate how transit space commissions resulting in literary texts work as place making initiatives and as interventions encouraging reconsideration of particular spaces of transit. We ask what literary texts may bring to place making and we discuss what distinguishes textual representations from the embodied and material practices predominantly studied in previous research on place making, mobility, and transportation.⁶ By linking our discussion to recent theoretical as well as artistic reconceptualizations of transit spaces, we suggest, with Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, that critical discussion on place making and mobility could benefit from taking a more active interest in “the intrinsically reflective and retrospective nature of textual material,”⁷ providing no less evocative and dynamic images of transit spaces than ethnographic approaches or “mobile methods.”⁸

Reconceptualizing Transit Spaces

Often understood as artificial, rational, efficient spaces, reflecting and reproducing the social order of late modern capitalism and globalization, spaces of transit are seldom put forward for their place-like qualities. This is implied, for instance, in Marc Augé’s influential conception of “non-places,” which he outlines as opposed to “anthropological places,” since non-places, unlike anthropological places, “cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity.”⁹ Exemplifying non-places with supermarkets, hotel chains, and wireless networks, Augé nevertheless suggests that the “traveller’s space may [. . .] be the archetype of *non-place*.”¹⁰ Such conceptions of transit spaces, however, have been challenged theoretically as well as in practice. For example, the place/non-place binary has met substantial critique among cultural geographers and mobilities scholars. Early on, Peter Merriman advocated the employment of historical perspectives to counter simplistic understandings of spaces of mobility, exemplified by the diverse and dynamic “placings” of England’s M1 motorway.¹¹ Similarly, Tim Edensor has argued that repetitive practices among commuters may install a sense of mobile belonging and “dwelling-in-motion.”¹² More recent discussions have concerned the development of “mobile place-making” strategies among travelers during the implementation of new public transport systems,¹³ and the place making functions of artistic exhibitions through which transit spaces become attached to local history and collective identities.¹⁴ Informed by “the new mobilities” paradigm in social sciences,¹⁵ or by Doreen Massey’s problematizations of space/place-binaries and reconfigurations of places referring to their processual, relational, and transgressive features,¹⁶ these researchers suggest that meaning is ascribed to transit spaces through ongoing processes of place making, implying that place and mobility are not antithetical but co-constitutive.

Related changes in the conception of transit spaces are offered in a growing body of artistic explorations emphasizing creative and liberating rather than functional and rational aspects of such spaces. Highlighting movement, mobility, and direction as prominent features of contemporary aesthetics, art critic Nicolas Bourriaud has even suggested that airports, cars, and railroad stations be seen as new metaphors for the house—challenging traditional notions of artistic creation as a spatially secluded activity associated with private, domestic spaces.¹⁷ In contemporary literature, a growing interest can be observed among writers as well as other agents in connecting literature and the act of writing to spaces of transit and transport. On the one hand, writers activate various transit spaces in literary texts to reflect on the conditions for writing in a globalized world, or they explore the narrative potentials of transit space. Rana Dasgupta, for example, in *Tokyo Cancelled*, creates a global-age *Decameron* or *Canterbury Tales* by transforming the airport lounge into a space for storytelling.¹⁸ And in Valeria Luiselli's *Faces in the Crowd*, the New York City subway is cast as a space for literary encounters, also inspiring the fragmented form of the novel.¹⁹ On the other hand, agents such as transport companies and authorities representing these spaces have recently engaged writers in residence, or they have collaborated with publishing houses to employ writers for special occasions, thereby adding to the longstanding interest of transport agencies in the meaning-making abilities of the arts. The results of such collaborations or campaigns have been literary texts that revolve around, represent, and comment on particular transit spaces.

In this article, we focus on the latter tendency, arguing for collaborations between transport agencies and writers, as well as their results, to be seen as instances of place making. Inspired by methodological discussions in literary geography, we look at representations of and reflections on transit spaces in literary texts related to two campaigns from the late 2000s and early 2010s, along with discussions on the socio-spatial contexts of their production and reception,²⁰ to suggest that transit spaces are renegotiated in textual representations as well as in embodied mobility practices in “real,” material space.²¹ In line with recent geocritical research, we consider literary representations of places and transit spaces as active and performative, taking part in “the process that brings places into being *as* places.”²² Implied in this line of argument is the idea that literary representations change experiences of places and make possible new understandings of them. Informed by such perspectives, this article suggests that discussions on place making and meaning making, connected to mobilities and transit, can benefit from taking an interest in literature and textual analysis.

Our aim is to analyze in what ways literature—by being associated with as well as representing and reflecting on transit spaces—participates in processes of place making and in renegotiations of transit spaces. We focus on two generic spaces of transit, the underground²³ and the airport, which are

investigated through the textual results of two separate literary events or campaigns, respectively connected to a particular underground and airport—the Penguin Underground Lines series, initiated and commissioned by Penguin Books in 2013 in association with the 150th anniversary of the London Underground, and the Heathrow Airport Writer-in-Residence campaign (2009 and 2011), which was initiated by the airport’s private owner and designed by a PR-company as part of a new brand strategy for Heathrow. Our empirical material is comprised of the fourteen literary texts that were generated through the two campaigns (twelve books in the Penguin Underground Lines series; two from the Heathrow Airport residency campaign; see note for a list of titles).²⁴ The analysis is focused on how various dimensions of transit spaces are reflected and negotiated in literary representations of the underground and the airport, while also situating the campaigns by referring to reviews and media texts commenting on the published works or the commissions. We employ a contextualizing and comparative approach, sensitive to the specific designs and socio-spatial circumstances of each case, as well as to the histories and connotations of the spaces of the airport and the underground and their potential impact on contemporary literary discourse. Due to the significant difference in volume, texts from the Heathrow campaign are analyzed in more detail, while the Penguin series is approached from an overview perspective, zooming in on individual titles and particular features.

In order to operationalize and illustrate how place is made in our empirical cases, we use Henri Lefebvre’s conceptualization of space as socially produced and transformed by human practices.²⁵ In addition to contributions by Massey and others, we find Lefebvre’s perspective helpful to develop more diverse understandings of place making related to transit spaces than strict dichotomies between space and place may offer. By looking at Lefebvre’s proposed “trialectics of spatiality,”²⁶ we discuss how place, as expressed in literary texts, emerges in constant tension between spatial practices, representations, and imaginings. Presenting and discussing first the Penguin Underground Lines series and then the Heathrow residency campaign and its results, we suggest that literary texts contribute to the processual nature of place by adding ambiguities and multiple meanings, creating place as always in a state of becoming rather than something fixed and finished.²⁷

Reassessing a Cultural Icon: The Penguin Underground Lines Series

The year 2013 saw a number of anniversaries and commemorative events related to mobility and transport infrastructures, the 150th anniversary of the London Underground—the world’s first underground railway system—

being one of the most extensive.²⁸ Along with museum exhibitions, heritage rail events, theatrical productions, commemorative artwork, academic and non-academic publications, and various souvenirs and merchandise,²⁹ the publisher Penguin Books, in loose collaboration with Transport for London, celebrated the anniversary by commissioning twelve short paperbacks as part of a larger Penguin anniversary program.³⁰

Initiated by publishing director Helen Conford, the Penguin Underground Lines series refers to the lines operating in the London Underground transit network. Each writer was assigned a particular underground line to frame or inspire their contribution, but the degree of connection to the particular line or to the London Underground varies greatly among the titles. The ambition seems to have been to give a very broad view with few restraints on content or form, since the chosen writers, differing in national, cultural, and professional backgrounds,³¹ express themselves in various styles and genres (some of the books additionally make use of visual elements such as sketches, photography, or statistics). Read together, the books form a “composite portrait”³² of the Underground and of contemporary London life, including critical commentary on the city as a hub of a neoliberal and globalized economy.

Cultural Imaginaries of the Underground

Looked at more generally, the space of the underground tends to be caught up in conflicting cultural imaginaries: on the one hand, it is seen—in line with Augé’s conception of non-places—as a predominantly rational space, part of a larger narrative of capitalist modernity and technological development. On the other hand, the underground is understood as a modern, material version of the underworld in various religions and myths, associated with death or with irrational and primitive energies.³³ As Samuel Merrill has suggested, this conflicted view is reflected in the collective consciousness of the London Underground, oscillating “between notions of fear and myth, modernity and avant-gardism, community and security, and the everyday and mundane.”³⁴ Notably, Augé himself does not seem to consider the underground a typical non-place; his portrayal of the Paris Métro associates it with personal memories and with the communal history of Paris as well.³⁵ Discussing the London Underground, David Welsh has similarly argued that it functions as a “permanent referent for London,” reflected in endless cultural artifacts from the late 19th century to the present day.³⁶ David Ashford, however, claims that the London Tube-network functions as a precursor to Augé’s non-places, particularly since it was from early on a heavily mediated space, in which connections with the world outside were foremost articulated through signs, maps, and various verbal messages.³⁷ This particular spatial feature of the underground makes it an environment in which individuals are supposed to interact primarily with texts, representing anonymous institutions or companies, whose

messages function as “instructions for use,” be they prescriptive, prohibitive, or informative.³⁸

Another way of looking at the underground as a space of transit is offered through the lens of Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space*. In this work, Lefebvre outlines space as produced in tension between three constitutive elements, reflecting in various ways the mode or organization of production of a particular time and society. First, space is described as conceived, conceptualized, and represented in abstract forms such as maps or urban planning; second, it is discussed as perceived, experienced, and practiced in everyday life; and third, it is understood as lived and remembered, attached to emotion, imagination, meaning, and time.³⁹ In the case of the Penguin Underground Lines series, Lefebvre’s spatial “trialectics” is particularly clarifying when the series is looked upon as a collective contribution to contemporary literary reflection on the London Underground. By addressing the three-dimensionality of transit space, Penguin Underground Lines contributes to place making by exposing the constant tension between these dimensions, thus adding to the processual and ambiguous features of places. Below, examples from various parts in the series will be discussed to address the three dimensions and their interactions and how they encourage reconsideration of the London Underground.

Paratexts and Abstract Book Design: The Underground as Conceived Space

Andrew Thacker has argued that “critical literary geography” should not only take an interest in literary representations of spaces but also pay attention to how social, material spaces may impact on the formal properties of literary texts.⁴⁰ At first glance, what stands out in the Penguin Underground Lines series are some of its paratextual features,⁴¹ such as covers, front and back pages, and the graphic and visual design, obviously inspired by the corporate image of the London Underground and its abstract design features. This can be discussed in terms of conceived space, in Lefebvre’s sense. For instance, the books are color coded and the spines share the Tube map color of the lines they are about, yellow for Circle Line for example,⁴² or red for Central Line.⁴³ Alluding to one of the most well-known mediations of the London Underground—Harry Beck’s iconic Tube map—the design of Penguin Underground Lines echoes the transit system as a Lefebvrian “ideal and abstract space,”⁴⁴ that is, the Underground—as conceived by transport planners and cartographers—represents a category of rationalized space produced in modernity through capitalist relations of production and consumption. The Tube map also seems to have contributed to another feature of the overall book design, since in the back pages of each book, a Tube-like map structure organizes the whole series in various categories or “thematic ‘stops.’”⁴⁵ Alluding to a con-

ventional metaphor of reading as a way of traveling, the reader is encouraged to “Choose Your Journey,” and to select from headings ranging from “Romantic Encounters” and “Tales of Growing up and Moving on” to “A Bit of Politics” and “Tube Knowledge.” The mapping of the series titles can be related to Augé’s and Ashford’s discussions on non-places as text-mediated environments, offering the individual “instructions for use,”⁴⁶ since the map-like categorization suggests to the reader what the separate titles are about and how they are to be read. In other words, paratextual features of the series echo the Underground as a conceived space in the sense that they organize and try to impose a “map” on a diverse set of books.

These paratextual abstractions, inspired by the Underground as a space filled with maps and instructions, may call to mind the fact that artists and writers—in the longer spatial history of the London Underground—have actively participated in transforming the city’s transit network into a conceived and rationalized space. As Ashford observes, the English Modernists were among the first to recognize and formulate the London Underground as an abstract space, expressed in Tube posters and graphic design as well as architecture inspired by the aesthetic principles of the Vorticism movement.⁴⁷ In Penguin Underground Lines, however, the abstract and rational dimensions of underground space—expressed in the uniform design of the books—remain on a superficial level, and hardly reflect individual authorial contributions but rather aspects of marketing and PR. As one reviewer aptly remarks, the “homogeneity of look conceals a striking variety of subject matter, prose styles and political assumptions.”⁴⁸ Layout and material features aside, the Penguin Underground Lines series communicates no uniform picture of the London Underground, but instead offers a set of conflicted views, recalling at times the Underground as a space of urban anomie and alienation, which was a common feature in other strands of Modernist art and writing.⁴⁹ To get a clearer picture of this idiosyncratic discourse, we need to take a look at the Underground as perceived and lived as it is expressed in some examples from the series.

Conflicting Affective Responses: The Underground as Perceived Space

Lefebvre’s idea of perceived space focuses on material space, enabling spatial practices and routines of daily life, and on sensual and bodily experiences of being in a particular space. The repetitive ritual of commuting presents itself immediately as an aspect of the Underground as perceived space, not least since it has been a recurrent interest among mobility scholars. Using Lefebvrian “rhythmanalysis,” Edensor has argued that going the same route every day at a certain pace, passing the same landmarks, encountering the same passengers, fosters a “mobile homeliness” and familiarity and could even be

described as rhythmic place-making.⁵⁰ Similarly, David Bissell has focused on nonrepresentational modes of communication to describe commuting as a shared everyday experience, forming particular affective atmospheres, fleeting intimacies and socialities.⁵¹ Notably, routine travel, such as commuting, is rarely represented in the Penguin series, which implies quite different responses to transit spaces in the literary texts, compared to what is offered in post-humanist mobilities studies. Reviewing the whole set of books, David Sexton in fact complains that few of them “speak to what it is actually like to be on the Tube,”⁵² but observes that artist and graphic novelist Leanne Shapton in *Waterloo–City, City–Waterloo* has tried to capture some daily commuters’ random thoughts and impressions during their journeys from home to workplace and back home again. This is accomplished through Shapton’s use of a varied set of expressive means, from photography of tunnel walls and watercolor sketches to inner monologs, short text messages, and quotes from books or magazines read on the train.⁵³

A more common tendency in the series is the expression of individual affective responses to Tube travel and to the Underground as material space, articulated in bodily reactions as well as sensory perceptions. To some extent, the tendency to associate the Underground with confinement or spatial phobia, repeated in many works of British modernism,⁵⁴ finds its modern equivalents in the Penguin series. A case in point is journalist and writer William Leith’s *A Northern Line Minute*, which is an autobiographical piece reflecting his spatially conflicted relationship to the London Underground and to tunnels more generally, rooted in a previous experience of being on a Tube train that had to be evacuated.⁵⁵ A bout of “tube phobia” accompanies writer and broadcaster Richard Mabey’s *A Good Parcel of English Soil* as well,⁵⁶ but while Leith depicts the claustrophobia of actually being *on* the Tube, Mabey eludes it by avoiding Tube travel and by portraying ‘Metroland,’ the suburban area north-west of London where he grew up.

That the Underground, particularly its deep level lines, is not a preferred means of transport for many of the writers is also made clear in a back cover-questionnaire that accompanies every book in an inventive take on the traditional promotional blurb. Asked for their “favourite mode of transport,” the only one choosing the Tube is management consultant and trend-spotter Peter York, who had not been on it for twenty-five years before getting the assignment, and who formerly preferred to get around London by limousine.⁵⁷ Even so, the affective responses to the Underground as material space in the Penguin series are not always rejective or anguished; in *Earthbound*, music journalist Paul Morley, remembering one of his first encounters with the Tube in the 1960s, links the spatial confusion and disorientation experienced in the Underground to a destabilized self: “I didn’t know where I was, which has a direct influence on your sense of who you are.”⁵⁸ Rather than dwelling on the fear of such a disintegrating experience, however, Morley celebrates

the loss of direction as a possibility to explore alternative identities, since the Tube—due to its spatial separation from the world above—is described as a place “where you think about things differently, where you can be in different places that all look the same, surrounded by others, who’ve also become something else.”⁵⁹ Accordingly, the Penguin series gives the impression that the material space of the London Underground and its accompanying spatial practices arouse very mixed feelings, from aversion or indifference to enthusiasm and curiosity, and that experiences and memories of particular journeys are highlighted rather than repetition and routine—pointing, as Pearce has argued, to the need for supplementing post-humanist studies on the flows of bodies and artifacts with a humanist focus on individual responses to particular journeys, since what is routine for a mobile community may be a moment of revelation for the individual passenger.⁶⁰

Symbolic Site or Catalyst for Personal Memories: The Underground as Lived Space

Lefebvre’s third dimension of space—lived space—is discussed by Stuart Elden as resolving the conflict between “conceived, abstract thought of space” and “perceived, concrete reality of space.”⁶¹ Lived space relates both to mental and physical aspects of space, and is space as socially produced and modified over time through its use. To consider the London Underground as a lived space could be to look at how the material space of the Underground, as an implementation of the Underground as conceived space, is invested with symbolism and meaning and is attached to social and individual memories and to imagination. Commenting on a selection of titles from the Penguin Underground Lines series, Barbara Korte and Georg Zipp observe that several of the texts use the London Underground as a symbolic “site for negotiating the rising social and economic inequality” growing in London in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008.⁶² While the Underground “makes Londoners spatially mobile,” it also reveals “how their social mobility has boundaries.”⁶³ To make the London Underground serve as a symbol of reckless capitalism reshaping the city and its social geography is not a new tendency in literature, however; several writers from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including George Gissing and George Orwell, tightly linked the London Underground to a wider socialist critique of capitalism.⁶⁴

Apart from depictions of the London Underground as a cog in the big wheel of neoliberal capitalism, a few other examples could be put forward of how the Underground as a lived space is negotiated in the Penguin series. In *What We Talk About When We Talk About The Tube*, John Lanchester, journalist and novelist, reflects on the difficulty in finding an adequate form to convey his own experiences and memories of the Underground: “I can’t see a way of making a story out of my relationship with the Underground. That’s because

it isn't a story with a beginning, middle and end, but a series of fragments."⁶⁵ Consistent with this description, his book takes the form of the "loose, personal and associative form of the essay,"⁶⁶ blending individual memories with reflections on commuting, conversations with a train driver and historical research. A quite different way of addressing the historical lines of the Underground is artist Philippe Parreno's *Drift*, entirely made up of images and drawings in black and white. On the back cover, it is said to "produce a psycho-geographical map of a subway line,"⁶⁷ alluding to Guy Debord and the Situationist movement of the 1960s, whose idea of the *dérive*, or unplanned and experimental movement through urban space, was aimed at reclaiming the urban environment from the state and the market by misappropriating it and using it for play.⁶⁸ *Drift* stands out as perhaps the most self-consciously theoretical piece in the series, since it engages with a particular, heavily theorized, historical context of spatial practice, but this spatial reflexivity is rarely recognized by reviewers.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, it adds to the impression that Penguin Underground Lines is quite different from early twentieth-century public transit art commissions serving more straightforwardly as promotion.

As can be seen from the above examples, the Underground of the Penguin Underground Lines series has multiple and often conflicting facets, which, we argue, is integral to how the series contributes to an ongoing process of making the Underground a place in the sense that it is invested with meaning, history, and various emotional responses. That this process is marked by a constant tension between space as conceived, perceived, and lived is illustrated not least in novelist and comedy scriptwriter John O'Farrell's *A History of Capitalism According to the Jubilee Line*, which here serves as a concluding sample from the series.⁷⁰ Korte and Zipp describe it as "a farcical parable inspired by the 2008 financial crisis about the old debate between state interventionism vs. more reckless laissez-faire approaches to the economy," and they relate it to allegorical writing.⁷¹ From a spatial perspective, however, it could be argued that O'Farrell's dream vision, in which the narrator is faced with the problem of choosing between a leftist or a right-wing perspective on economy, explores the literary and political potential of Tube travel and underground space when the infrastructure does not operate according to plan. Put briefly, an emergency evacuation transforms a tube carriage and later a tunnel into spaces for political discussion, including odd encounters with Noam Chomsky and Margaret Thatcher. The story illustrates a breakdown of the Underground as a conceived space, but even if the evacuation is prolonged, the Underground is not perceived as frightening or claustrophobic as in other instances of the series. Instead, it is turned into a space for conversation on local history and for political debate among strangers—into a public space of sorts—which it would probably never be if the Tube worked normally. By focusing to such a large degree on face-to-face conversation, O'Farrell clearly opposes "unspoken interdictions against talking to or even

looking at one's fellow passengers on the Tube,"⁷² and offers alternatives to the "self-induced isolation" which is still a common feature of Tube etiquette.⁷³

Literary Diversity and Critical Distance

Given the long and rich cultural history of the London Underground,⁷⁴ a relevant question would be whether a series such as Penguin Underground Lines brings something new to the extant Underground-related place making already expressed and negotiated in a wide array of cultural products, from art posters to novels and movies. As suggested by Merrill in relation to the 2013 anniversary, the London Underground is a "cultural punctuation mark in the life of the city. It is a key cultural identifier and is part of the collective memory of London."⁷⁵ From comments made by publishing director Conford, it rather seems that the publisher needed the London Underground than the other way around, since she wanted Penguin Books to "shape our imaginative understanding of London, as well as transporting visitors and residents from one place to another," just as the Underground does.⁷⁶ Also, the Penguin initiative was but a small contribution among the many commemorative events and products acknowledging the pervasive influence of the Underground on the cultural identity and social history of London. Unlike the Heathrow campaign, which we turn to shortly, the occasion motivating these contributions was not explicitly commercial but aimed at remembrance and celebration. This is not to say that there are no economic gains by anniversaries—rather, it is likely that cultural imaginaries surrounding transport infrastructure and shaped through memory encourage political and public support for continued investment.⁷⁷ Regarding the 2013 anniversary, Merrill suggests that the increasing regularity of commemorative events reflects a growing heritage industry serving as a vehicle for corporate identity. The period between the 1910s and the 1940s in particular, represented by key agents such as transport administrator Frank Pick and architect Charles Holden, is still invoked as a normative past in contemporary commemorations.⁷⁸ Penguin Underground Lines, however, could not be said to promote the London Underground in the same way as Modernist art or design of the interwar period; indeed, some of the books in the series even ignore the Underground altogether, taking the liberty to dig into childhood memories,⁷⁹ or certain fashion phenomena.⁸⁰ Others, as we have seen, offer a more critical stance toward the Underground as a space of anomie, or they use it as a springboard to comment on the state of neoliberal London more generally.⁸¹ Possibly, this sometimes quite distanced attitude toward the London Underground was due to the fact that it was not Transport for London, but a publishing house, that acted as commissioner. In contrast to the Heathrow case, not many of the books give the impression that the writers dealt with their commission by actually getting on the Tube to observe or interact with people in this space,⁸² and individ-

ual titles take so many different directions that they hardly form a coherent picture.

Clearly already considered a place impacting the life and identity of the contemporary metropolis and its inhabitants, the London Underground could still be said to benefit from the very diversity of the Penguin Underground Lines installments. They exemplify how literary texts contribute to place making by defamiliarizing ordinary spatial practices and by connecting transit infrastructures to wider social concerns regarding community, economy, history, and identity. They expose the numerous and shifting emotions and memories associated with underground space and with the London Underground. As one reviewer put it, “reading them as a disjointed series offers a perplexing and intellectually jarring (in a good way) glimpse into other Londons. Like the overall Tube network, this series is bigger than the sum of its parts.”⁸³ Brief, portable, and appealingly designed, the series could—at least ideally—inspire reflection and insight in reading commuters and make the everyday routines of travel a little more varied and exciting.

Now, imagine one of these ideal Tube-travelers embarking on a west-bound train on the Piccadilly Line, eventually ending up at another transit point essential to the infrastructure and identity of London. Here, at Heathrow Airport, two quite recent books may motivate the traveler to reflect also upon the meanings of this particular space. Similar to the titles in the Penguin Underground Lines series, the two books were the results of a campaign that sought to encourage renewed attention to a space of transit. The airport, the campaign, and its literary outcomes, however, were entangled in circumstances that made this place making initiative somewhat different in character.

Between Routine and Magic: The Heathrow Airport Writer-in-Residence Campaign

Spaces of transit and transportation often tend to be dismissed collectively as artificial and rational spaces, but there are significant differences between various spaces, not least between the two in focus here. While physically connected, the London Underground and Heathrow Airport are embedded in diverse or even conflicting connotations, mythologies and pre-requisites. Where one is fixed on transportation above ground, the other is focused on movement below ground. And where the underground is deeply entrenched in the local and in underworld mythologies, the airport is intrinsically linked to global and cosmopolitan perspectives and has been associated with the celestial through long-lasting dreams of flight. For the same reasons that the underground has grown into a largely naturalized space—due to its longer history, its invisible subterranean extensions, and its integration with the city’s built environment—the airport has not. Other significant differences

concern political and economic pretexts. Whereas the London Underground is a public means of transportation managed by a local government body, Heathrow Airport is privately owned and depends on the persistence of international corporate business and consumerism; and while the underground could relate to modes of “train bragging,” pertaining to railway travel as an environmental-friendly option, the airport and air travel are increasingly confronted with issues of sustainability and sentiments of shame. These subtexts and preconditions, of course, brought distinct incentives to the campaigns and particular modes of engagement for the writers involved.

From being associated with excitement, opportunity, and the wonders of flight in the early twentieth century, the airport has transformed into “an increasingly maligned aspect of modern culture.”⁸⁴ Perceived as a highly rational space, intertwined in a narrative of global capitalist expansion and technological progress, the airport, along with the narrative itself, has become contested and dismissed as dehumanizing. Geographer Edward Relph, for example, considered airports to be archetypal of placelessness in that they are bland, hyper-planned spaces that lack individual identity,⁸⁵ and in Augé’s theory of the non-place, the airport is presented as the paradigmatic example of this category.⁸⁶ Others have instead considered experiences such as non-belonging and detachment as pleasurable qualities related to the airport as a self-contained and diverse city.⁸⁷ Polarizing accounts, however, tend to overlook the complex histories and materialities of sites that are “encountered and occupied by people in diverse ways.”⁸⁸ Considered from the outlook of empirical airport spaces in different cultural and social settings, and recognizing the differentiated experiences of various travelers, migrants, and workers, researchers have shown that airport space cannot unconditionally be dismissed as an “asocial realm or non-place.”⁸⁹

From Non-Place to Destination: An Invitation to Rewrite the Airport

The Heathrow Airport writer-in-residence campaign (2009, 2011) comes across as a deliberate intervention into these tensions between different dimensions and notions of airport space. The campaign sought to expand the image of Heathrow beyond its role to facilitate international mobility and to encourage people to reconsider the way they think about the airport.⁹⁰ Initiated as part of a new brand strategy for BAA, the corporation that, at the time, owned and managed Heathrow Airport, the campaign targeted a vision of the airport being recognized as “a destination in itself.”⁹¹ As such, it can be understood as a place making initiative in tune with recent efforts to emphasize fantasy, affect, and livability in airport space. A paradigm of “pleasurable postfunctionalism” within recent urban design, for example, has sought to invest airports with features that ideally turn them into destinations and spaces in which to dwell and spend time.⁹² As stressed by urban geographers Robert Freestone and Ilan Wiesel, con-

temporary airports fulfill many other roles than that of facilitating air travel.⁹³ Various place making initiatives, such as art exhibitions, have invested airports with qualities that help destabilize the polarity between place and placelessness. The Heathrow campaign, however, turned to literature and acclaimed writers in order to explore and invest place-like features in airport space.

The campaign was launched in August 2009 with the announcement that philosopher and writer Alain de Botton had been engaged to spend a week in the airport's new Terminal 5 building. de Botton's *A Week at the Airport: A Heathrow Diary* was published shortly thereafter. Two years later the campaign was renewed with the appointment of journalist and writer Tony Parsons, who subsequently issued a collection of short stories, *Departures: Seven Stories from Heathrow*. The residency assignment could be described as an invitation to indulge in what Christopher Schaberg has called "airport reading," that is, to approach the airport as a meaningful and ambiguous space that requires interpretation.⁹⁴ Since this reading was bound to be presented in writing, the campaign acknowledged the place making potentials of literary representation: its ability to influence the way a place is experienced and realized, that "stories shape airports, and airports shape stories."⁹⁵

Compared to the Penguin Underground Lines commission, the Heathrow campaign was a more organized and purposeful attempt at place making. It was a top-down initiative intertwined with commercial concerns of publicity, marketing, and brand building—making it more in line with what Lew distinguishes as planned and intentional "placemaking" than with spontaneous and organic "place-making."⁹⁶ Still, the literary results of the campaign should be situated somewhere in between these polarities along the "place making continuum,"⁹⁷ since they were the outcomes of a deliberate attempt to shape perceptions of place, and at the same time the results of the unrestricted and subjective creativity of the writers. The campaign could be described as an instance of corporate philanthropy or arts patronage, where the boundaries between corporate social responsibility, sponsorship, and marketing tend to be increasingly indistinct.⁹⁸ It is unlikely that the campaign sought any tangible commercial profits besides objectives such as goodwill, image building, and positive publicity, and the literary outcomes of the campaign do not come across as promotion or branding devices in any straightforward way. Of the two writers, de Botton in particular faced up-front how the residency assignment straddled the spheres of art and commerce. By incorporating ironic meta-reflections on the commission—for example, naming the chief executive of BAA "my own patron,"⁹⁹ and suggesting that he had been invited because the company had "developed an interest in literature"¹⁰⁰—de Botton's Heathrow narrative sought to maintain a position of integrity and autonomy toward the assignment's corporate setting.

The overall design of the campaign was premised on a general assumption that spending time at the airport with no intent to travel anywhere makes you

look at the place in a different way.¹⁰¹ By positioning a writer at the airport, the campaign sought to install such an open-ended interaction with airport space. The campaign, therefore, was designed in opposition to the airport as conceived space—challenging the rational and functional imperative of the airport by supporting the dwelling and unrestricted access of the writers—underscored by the phrase “in residence,” which implies habitable and place-like features. The compound “writer-in-residence” furthermore highlighted Heathrow Airport as a workplace and as a space for social interaction, since the term generally designates the temporary employment of a writer to work among and interact with the members of an institution. In these ways, by focusing on local spatial practices, the campaign encouraged reconsideration of Heathrow as perceived space. Also, the very idea of writing in the crowded, busy, and public space of the airport served as a counter image to traditional notions of writing as a solitary, private, and domestic activity¹⁰²—explicitly acted upon by de Botton, who wrote at least parts of his book at a desk in the check-in area of Terminal 5.

A Heathrow Diary: Meditations on the Life and Soul of Airports

de Botton's *A Week at the Airport* has a documentary, philosophical, and personal set up and is explicitly situated within the context of the campaign. It conveys a constant tension between different spatial dimensions of the airport, representing it as a highly complex and dynamic space. The book's documentary approach serves to bring forth the material space of the airport and its accompanying routines and rituals, as well as adding to its symbolic and experiential layers. The word “diary” in the subtitle signifies that this is indeed a self-experienced account of sensory and bodily encounters during a “week at the airport,” or Heathrow as perceived by the writer through on-site observations. The first-person authorial voice and the many photos by Richard Baker included in the volume also bring authenticity to the representation. Throughout the book, de Botton reflects upon the airport experience of travelers as well as employees, observing, for example, travelers' mixed feelings and existential concerns at departures, the melancholy of baggage-reclaim, and the emotional climax at arrivals. Airport employees, in turn, are portrayed both as professionals caught up in logistical routines—in, for example, that each successful flight is the result of “the coordinated efforts of hundreds of souls”¹⁰³—and as fellow human beings susceptible to general vulnerabilities, since there are no “directional charts for daily life.”¹⁰⁴

As a comprehensive portrait of Heathrow, the book continuously identifies and contemplates individual, social, emotional, and cultural aspects underneath the functional and anonymous machinery of the airport. This is mirrored in the structure of the book, which—similar to the graphic design of the Penguin Underground Lines series—brings attention to the dimension of con-

ceived space. Spatially organized in accordance with the designated route for travelers approaching Heathrow, the book proceeds from departures, to airside (the tightly controlled zone of an airport, after security), to arrivals. Within the chapters, however, each area is brought forward through individual stories and experiences as well as the writer's reflections on existential and philosophical matters. In fact, the book's promotional blurb can be said to emphasize this tension between lived, perceived, and conceived space, when—with direct reference to Augé's concept—the book is said to explore the *magical* and the *mundane* of “this familiar but mysterious ‘non-place.’” Also, a passage inside the book can be interpreted, metaphorically, as a proposition to acknowledge the dynamics and multiple meanings of airport space. Here, de Botton considers the contrast between “objective” industrial projects, such as the construction of runways, terminals, and aircraft, and “the subjective psychological knots that undermine their use,”¹⁰⁵ suggesting that a trivial interpersonal dispute may instantly wipe out the advantages of technological civilization.

Aspects concerning the airport as lived space are particularly notable in many meditative passages where airport space in general, rather than Heathrow in particular, is imbued with symbolic and poetic loadings. The ritual of flying, for example, is linked to fundamental themes of existence and to religious tales, not of descents and perdition as in the case of the underground, but of “ascensions,” “voices from heaven” and “airborne angels.”¹⁰⁶ Another example is the new terminal building, whose architectural design is said to represent the promises of modernity, and is discussed as a symbol of our faith in technology, of our romanticizing of travel, and of our destruction of nature—suggesting that it, similar to the underground in the Penguin series, is used as a vehicle for wider questions. More generally, the airport is presented as a space that inspires us to scrutinize and reflect upon our lives. The very moral of the story—or “the important lessons of the airport,”¹⁰⁷ as it is phrased in the book's final sentence—seems to be that airport space encourages existential reflection. It provides a perspective through which our homes and our daily lives are counterpoised to other destinations and to alternative realities, and where thoughts of potential disasters—such as a plane bursting into flames—confront us with mortality and death and help us recognize and remember the essential things in life.¹⁰⁸ As noted by Freestone and Wiesel,¹⁰⁹ de Botton captures the richness of a global hub airport, and a reviewer of the book similarly remarked that it “finds a soul where sterility is conventionally expected.”¹¹⁰

Seven Stories from Heathrow: Displaying the Work and Wonders of an Airport City

In contrast to *A Week at the Airport*, Parsons' book is a work of fiction comprised of dramatized stories about travelers and airport staff, in which the writer himself as well as information on the residency assignment are absent.

Departures, however, also moves beyond preconceptions of the airport as an abstract non-place, although it is focused on the mundane rather than the magical in its emphasis on the labor and everyday routines of the airport as a workplace. The book may be seen as a response to de Botton's call for educating travelers "about the labour involved in their journeys."¹¹¹ A more explicit source of inspiration, however, mentioned by Parsons in several interviews, was Arthur Hailey's bestselling novel *Airport*, from 1968. Like Hailey's novel, *Departures* presents an overview of the complex operations of a major airport and its workforces, and by similarly "mixing a melodramatic plot with lengthy descriptions of the site's functions," it could, like *Airport*, be subsumed to a genre Zizek has named "capitalist realism."¹¹²

Providing insights into the daily work of fire fighters, air traffic controllers, staff at airside operations, and the animal reception center, with a few additional glimpses from the perspective of travelers, Parsons' short stories take the reader behind the scenes and into "the secret city of the airport."¹¹³ Heathrow, however, is not represented as a diverse and postfunctional airport city in the sense that it hosts a variety of activities, experiences, and fantasies, beyond those relating to flight and transportation.¹¹⁴ Parsons' airport is almost exclusively a space concerned with travel and flight, and with the efficiency and safety of their operations. Interspersed facts, such as names of aircraft models and quantitative data on the amount of flights and cargo processed at Heathrow—"the world's busiest airport"¹¹⁵—serve as realistic props and at the same time call forth a functionalist perspective on airport space. Also, reminiscent of the structure of de Botton's book and the graphic design of Penguin Underground Lines, Parsons' collection of stories invites a map-like understanding of Heathrow as conceived space by moving from the airport's fire service in the first chapter, to the border agency, air traffic control, and airside operations in others. A reviewer of the book aptly remarked that the stories appear almost like a guided tour through the different departments of the airport.¹¹⁶

The collection, however, also seeks to humanize the airport by bringing the individual and collective efforts of various lines of work to the fore. In this way *Departures* includes an interesting tension between dimensions pertaining to the airport as conceived and perceived space. While its focus on functional aspects tends to call forth notions of the airport as an abstract space primarily determined by mathematical calculation,¹¹⁷ it is the people who support and sustain these functions that are the center of attention. The promotional blurb on the back cover of print editions declares that airports are places for dreams, and that the book is about "the men and women who make the dreams come true." These workers are the heroes of Parsons' Heathrow, and their professionalism and efficiency are celebrated throughout the collection. Those men (mostly) and women do "what it takes to keep the airport safe,"¹¹⁸ and it is through their efforts that the airport becomes "a place where nothing bad could happen."¹¹⁹

This commitment to human labor and routine as means for sustaining and safeguarding the complex operations of the airport can be compared to de Botton's reflections on how human frailty and fallibility rather undermine the significance of sophisticated systems and advanced technologies. Parsons' Heathrow, however, does not seem to have room for the full emotional register of transit spaces. In comparison to the affective ambivalence displayed in the Penguin Lines Underground series and to the emotional diversity of de Botton's Heathrow, the airport of *Departures* is never really stressful, overcrowded, disorganized, frightening, or boring. In fact, full awareness of the airport as a functional and material space is presented as a reassuring remedy for anxieties, since, in the opening short story, a woman is cured from her fear of flying when she is brought up a fireman's ladder to witness the airport from aerial view. From up there, she sees the "calm glory" of the airport—a "safe world" of "unruffled order"¹²⁰—and her mind is at peace.

The reduced emotional register of *Departures* can be linked to an overall tendency to understate the lived dimensions of airport space, that is, the airport as invested with tangible and symbolic meanings. It is mainly in the final chapter that this aspect is evident, which, by way of exception, is written from the perspective of travelers—an Australian family returning home after ten years in London. To them Heathrow represents the demarcation of distinct phases in their life as either Londoners or Australians: "A life had started at this airport. And now it was ending."¹²¹ For the father, a frequent flyer in his work, the life-changing significance of Heathrow is contrasted to a more general experience of airports as "the punctuation marks of a lifetime, the twilight spaces between places and people, the no-man's-land between what had happened and what was yet to be."¹²² This impression of airports as non-places, he realizes, is not universally true. An airport could also be "where a new life began."¹²³ Except for this story, symbolic qualities are suggested in a realistic and materialistic sense, such as the boyish amazement expressed about the airport and the airplanes as products of advanced technology and engineering. When, for example, the two "aircraft addicts" in the penultimate story agree that "[t]his place was not an airport. It was a cathedral built to inspire awe,"¹²⁴ it is the physical size and the architectural majesty that is implied by the metaphor, not any spiritual or existential significance.

From Commercial to Literary Investments

Parson's *Departures* is infused with a rather old-fashioned view of the wonders of flight—or, in the words of a reviewer, a "childlike romanticism about air travel"¹²⁵—while, for example, political and economic difficulties facing today's airports are absent. Although a work of fiction, this imbalance may be interpreted as an indication of the commercial context within which the book was written. As put by a reviewer, *Departures* "reads like a manifest promo

piece to Heathrow.”¹²⁶ Parsons’ collection of short stories undeniably belongs closer to the “placemaking” end of the spectrum than de Botton’s book, in which the promotional context constitutes an important part of the narrative, and where the writer explicitly contemplates the moral predicaments of writing on commission. Both writers, however, appear to have been previously enticed by airports, which may have impacted their appointments in the first place. In a video broadcast on Heathrow’s YouTube channel, Parsons expressed his enthusiasm and love for Heathrow, and even paraphrased Samuel Johnson’s famous words about London, saying: “The man who is tired of airports, is tired of life.”¹²⁷ In his *Art of Travel*, de Botton already mentions the “appeal of the airport” and its “emotional charge and imaginative allure,”¹²⁸ and even suggests a “poesie des aéroports”¹²⁹ as an updated version of Baudelaire’s practice of giving expression to the beauty of modern places of travel. Still, de Botton and Parsons were presumably expected to bring different kinds of connotations and values to the campaign, as can be observed from *The Guardian’s* suggestion that bringing de Botton to the airport was a way for Heathrow to attain “cultural respectability,”¹³⁰ while *The Economist* described Parsons as an “interesting brand ambassador.”¹³¹ Although it is likely that BAA did not seek any tangible benefits from the campaign, the two writers as well as their texts somehow worked as instruments for negotiating between cultural and economic capital, resulting in what James F. English has called *capital intraconversions*, where symbolic capital is “cashed in” or economic fortunes are culturally “laundered.”¹³²

Both *A Week at the Airport* and *Departures* brought attention to the airport as a multidimensional and diverse space, in line with the overall objectives of the campaign. Together with the campaign itself as a socio-spatial and mediated event, their representations of Heathrow gained positive media coverage and also invited consideration of the airport as a workplace and as a complex and ambiguous place that merits reading and interpretation.¹³³ It is likely, however, that Augé would not be convinced by this attempt to invest place-like qualities in an emblematic non-place. In a rather obscure paragraph, he suggests that “today’s artists and writers are doomed to seek beauty in ‘non-places,’ to discover it by resisting the apparent obviousness of current events.”¹³⁴ To imagine an airport as a communal and meaningful place in which people can experience beauty, he seems to mean, is a utopian delusion. Interestingly, de Botton ironically alludes to his assignment precisely as one of singing the beauty of the new terminal building, which he subsequently calls “the imaginative centre of contemporary culture.”¹³⁵ Neither de Botton nor Parsons, however, was doomed or forced to seek beauty in Heathrow. The fact that their assignments were commercially motivated, and that they were paid, however, in various ways influenced the campaign’s literary outcomes and what they eventually brought to airport place making.

Literary Place Making in Transit

In this article we have explored the relationship between literature and spaces of transit through the lens of place making, seeking to understand in what ways literary representations and reflections provide incentives for renegotiating and reimagining transit spaces. Guided by Lefebvre's spatial triad, our analyses show that literary representations add dimensions, sentiments, tensions, and ambiguities that remain obscure when spaces of transit are considered solely in regard to functional properties. Less concerned with actual embodied and material practices, such as developing a "travelling know-how"¹³⁶ in spaces of long-distance travel or everyday commuting, literary texts and literary place making tend to bring spaces of transit into conversation with wider questions of social change, politics, and history, and they expand on symbolic and existential significances of space. This reflective capacity of literary texts along with their often retrospective nature—that texts "trade in representations of our individual and collective *pasts*"¹³⁷ and call attention to other temporalities than the immediate present—show that analysis of literary material can bring otherwise neglected perspectives into research on place making, mobility, and transportation. To be sure, the London Underground and Heathrow Airport, as they emerge through the texts studied here, encompass histories, dimensions, and meanings that are not accessible through common ethnographic or mobile methods.

The analyzed texts, of course, are not quite representative of literature in a general sense, since they were not produced on the initiative of individual writers, but triggered by other actors and directed toward particular spaces of transit. Even though the assignments endorsed creative autonomy, the writers and their texts were incentivized. The commissions tied them not only to particular spaces but to frameworks of more or less promotional or purposeful placemaking that in various ways left marks on the literary outcomes.¹³⁸ These circumstances arguably make commissions particularly interesting cases of literary place making since they necessarily entail tensions and possible conflicts between, on the one hand, artistic freedom and on the other, the interests of funding bodies and collaborative agents. Our case studies and the two separate bodies of texts show significant differences in this regard, depending on the initiators behind the assignments as well as on the transit spaces themselves and the dispositions of the participating writers.

Despite the celebratory context of the London Underground anniversary, the Penguin Underground Lines commission resulted in a great variety of expressions and attitudes toward the space in target—from critical to indifferent to evasive. Among other things, this distanced approach was likely empowered by the commissioning body's independence from the space itself, and its primary orientation toward the literary rather than the spatial. By way of contrast, the Heathrow assignment was an on-site arrangement organized

by its corporate owner, and the two resulting texts were thoroughly focused on investigating and portraying the airport—one in a self-reflective and unrestricted manner and the other in a more submissive and romanticized fashion; responses that, each in their way, could be understood as consequences of the commission's promotional setting. Nothing, however, suggests that either of the two commissions sought to encourage any particular representations of the underground or the airport. If any, their objectives regarding the literary outcomes were to engage writers, readers, and travelers to take notice of these spaces at all, as they had grown increasingly significant yet unnoticed or despised in a world defined by circulation, connectedness, and mobility. The two commissions provided opportunities for open-ended consideration and representation of transit spaces, and the resulting texts suggest that they worked as enablers of literary interventions through which deep-seated notions and preconceptions about the airport and the underground were challenged.

Ultimately, it should be noted that our examples originated in, and refer to, a time when transit spaces and mobility were still inevitable components of the world order. The global pandemic of COVID-19 forced spaces of transit into lockdown, and transport agents no longer promote mobility and movement, but admonish people: "Stay at home. Don't travel. Save lives."¹³⁹ Presently, there is no knowing whether things will ever be the same again, or what spaces such as the airport and the underground will represent in the near future. In the meanwhile, literary representations, commissioned or otherwise, remain avenues for recollecting what these spaces until very recently were and what they signified.

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Notes

1. Research for this article was funded by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). The authors would like to thank the three anonymous reviewers for valuable feedback and support.
2. George Revill, *Railway* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 43–46.
3. See, e.g., Michael T. Saler, *The Avant-Garde in Interwar England: Medieval Modernism and the London Underground* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Welsh, *Underground Writing: The London Tube from George Gissing to Virginia Woolf* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David Ashford, *London Underground: A Cultural Geography* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).
4. Alan A. Lew, "Tourism Planning and Place Making: Place-Making or Placemaking?," *Tourism Geographies* 19, no. 3 (2017): 448–466, here 448, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2017.1282077>.
5. Following Lew, we use "place making" as a term encompassing both "place-making," defined as organic and unplanned actions of individuals, imprinting emotions, perceptions, and memories on geographic spaces, and "placemaking," described as planned and intentional actions carried out by professionals and governing bodies to influence and shape perceptions of a place. Commissioned works of art and literature could be situated somewhere in between these end points, since they are not spontaneous expressions but the results of intentional assignments, but still allow for individual and subjective perspectives and styles (Lew, "Tourism Planning and Place Making," 449–450).
6. For examples, see Ole B. Jensen, "Flows of Meaning, Cultures of Movement: Urban Mobility as Meaningful Everyday Practice," *Mobilities* 4, no. 1 (2009): 139–158, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450100802658002>; Anru Lee, "Place-Making, Mobility, and Identity: The Politics and Poetics of Urban Mass Rapid Systems in Taiwan," in *Transport, Mobility, and the Production of Urban Space*, ed. Julie Cidell and David Prytherch (New York: Routledge, 2015), 153–171; Paola A Jirón, Walter Alejandro Imilan, and Luis Iturra, "Relearning to Travel in Santiago: The Importance of Mobile Place-Making and Travelling Know-How," *Cultural Geographies* 23, no. 4 (2016): 599–614, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474774015622141>; Grover Wehman-Brown, "Home Is Where You Park It: Place-Making Practices of Car Dwelling in the United States," *Space and Culture* 19, no. 3 (2016): 251–259, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331215596489>.
7. Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, "Mobility and the Humanities," *Mobilities* 12, no. 4 (2017): 493–508, here 503, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2017.1330853>.
8. *Ibid.*, 498.
9. Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 2nd ed., trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 2008), 63.
10. *Ibid.*, 70.
11. Peter Merriman, "Driving Places: Marc Augé, Non-Places, and the Geographies of England's M1 Motorway," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, no. 4–5 (2004): 145–167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404046065>.
12. Tim Edensor, "Introduction: Thinking about Rhythm and Space," in *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies*, ed. Tim Edensor (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 1–18.

13. Jirón, Imilan, and Iturra, "Relearning to Travel in Santiago."
14. Lee, "Place-Making, Mobility, and Identity," 17–25.
15. See Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A* 38, no. 2 (2006): 207–226, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a37268>.
16. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), and *World City* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007). Cf. Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 108.
17. Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, trans. James Gussen and Lili Porten (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2010), 57.
18. Rana Dasgupta, *Tokyo Cancelled* (New York: Black Cat, 2005).
19. Valeria Luiselli, *Faces in the Crowd*, trans. Christina MacSweeney (London, England: Granta, 2013).
20. Cf. Sheila Hones, *Literary Geographies: Narrative Space in Let the Great World Spin* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 8; Marc Brousseau, "In, Of, Out, With, and Through: New Perspectives in Literary Geography," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, ed. Robert T. Tally Jr. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 9–27.
21. Cf. Merriman and Pearce, "Mobility and the Humanities."
22. Eric Prieto, *Literature, Geography, and the Postmodern Poetics of Place* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 11. See also Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Tally (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 85.
23. In this article, we use "underground" while discussing the underground as a transit space in a generic sense, whereas "the Underground" refers specifically to the London Underground.
24. The Penguin Underground Lines Series, published by Penguin Books in 2013, consists of the following titles: Camila Batmanghelidjh and Kids Company's *Mind the Child*, Danny Dorling's *The 32 Stops*, Fantastic Man's *Buttoned-Up*, John Lanchester's *What We Talk About When We Talk About The Tube*, William Leith's *A Northern Line Minute*, Richard Mabey's *A Good Parcel of English Soil*, Paul Morley's *Earthbound*, John O'Farrell's *A History of Capitalism According to the Jubilee Line*, Philippe Parreno's *Drift*, Leanne Shapton's *Waterloo-City, City-Waterloo*, Lucy Wadham's *Heads and Straights*, and Peter York's *The Blue Riband*. The literary results of the Heathrow Campaign were Alain de Botton's *A Week at the Airport* (2009), and Tony Parson's *Departures* (2011).
25. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991).
26. Phil Hubbard, "Space/Place," in *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*, ed. David Atkinson, Peter Jackson, David Sibley, and Neil Washbourne (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 41–48, here 42.
27. Cf. Massey, *For Space*, 8.
28. See Peter Merriman, "Mobilities I: Departures," *Progress in Human Geography* 39 no. 1 (2015): 87–95, here 88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132514527030>.
29. For more on the activities arranged by the London Transport Museum, see Sam Mullins, "The London Underground and the London Transport Museum," *The London Journal* 38, no. 3 (2013): 274–279, <https://doi.org/10.1179/0305803413Z00000000035>. See also Samuel Merrill, "Looking Forward to the Past: Lon-

- don Underground's 150th Anniversary," *The Journal of Transport History* 33, no. 2 (2012): 243–252, <https://doi.org/10.7227/TJTH.33.2.6>.
30. Joshua Farrington, "Penguin to Celebrate London Underground's 150th," *The Bookseller*, 21 August 2012, <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/penguin-celebrate-london-undergrounds-150th>.
 31. There is, however, an apparent dominance of male writers; only three titles were by women.
 32. Barbara Korte and Georg Zipp, "Lines of Disconnection: The Penguin London Tube Anniversary Series (2013)," in *London Post-2010 in British Literature and Culture*, ed. Oliver von Knebel Doeberitz and Ralf Schneider (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 195–214, here 197.
 33. See, e.g., David L. Pike, *Subterranean Cities: The World Beneath Paris and London, 1800–1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 1–12; Liesbeth François, "Beyond the Ruins of the Organized City: Urban Experiences Through the Metro in Contemporary Mexican Literature," in *Urban Spaces in Contemporary Latin American Literature*, ed. José Eduardo González and Timothy R. Robbins (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 19–46, here 23–25.
 34. Merrill, "Looking Forward to the Past," 243.
 35. Marc Augé, *In the Metro*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 3.
 36. Welsh, *Underground Writing*, 268.
 37. Ashford, *London Underground*, 2; 25–27.
 38. Augé, *Non-Places*, 77.
 39. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38–39.
 40. Andrew Thacker, "Critical Literary Geography," in *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, ed. Robert T. Tally Jr. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 28–38, here 34.
 41. Cf. Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
 42. See Lucy Wadham, *Heads and Straights* (London: Penguin Book, 2013).
 43. See Danny Dorling, *The 32 Stops* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
 44. Ashford, *London Underground*, 3.
 45. Korte and Zipp, "Lines of Disconnection," 197.
 46. See Augé, *Non-Places*, 77; Ashford, *London Underground*, 25–27.
 47. Ashford, *London Underground*, 26; 63–92.
 48. Marcus Berkmann, "Penguin Underground Lines—Review," *The Spectator*, 6 April 2013, <https://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/04/down-the-tubes>.
 49. Anxious Modernist reactions to new urban spaces and transportation are discussed by Andrew Thacker, *Moving Through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 80–114.
 50. Tim Edensor, "Commuter: Mobility, Rhythm and Commuting," in *Geographies of Mobilities: Practices, Spaces, Subjects*, ed. Tim Cresswell and Peter Merriman (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 189–203, here 192 and 196.
 51. David Bissell, "Passenger Mobilities: Affective Atmospheres and the Sociality of Public Transport," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28 (2010), 270–289, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d3909>.
 52. David Sexton, "If You Live in London Those Tunnels Become Part of Your Life: Twelve Tales of the Tube," *Evening Standard*, 14 February 2013, <https://www>

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53. Leanne Shapton, *Waterloo–City, City–Waterloo* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
54. See Andrew Thacker, *Modernism, Space and the City: Outsiders and Affect in Paris, Vienna, Berlin and London* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 178–184.
55. William Leith, *A Northern Line Minute* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
56. Richard Mabey, *A Good Parcel of English Soil* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 59.
57. Peter York, *The Blue Riband* (London: Penguin Press, 2013), 1.
58. Paul Morley, *Earthbound* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 3.
59. *Ibid.*, 18–19.
60. Lynne Pearce, “Routine and Revelation: Dis-embodied urban mobilities,” *Handbook of Urban Mobilities*, ed. Ole B. Jensen et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 205–213, here 209.
61. Stuart Elden, *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible* (London: Continuum, 2004), 187.
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63. *Ibid.*, 200.
64. See Welsh, *Underground Writing*.
65. John Lanchester, *What We Talk About When We Talk About The Tube* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 29.
66. Korte and Zipp, “Lines of Disconnection,” 203.
67. Philippe Parreno, *Drift* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), back cover.
68. For a discussion on the influence of the Situationists International on new ways of exploring the London transit system among writers and artists from the 1960s onward, see Ashford, *London Underground*, 135–162.
69. See Berkmann, “Penguin Underground Lines;” Matt Brown, “Penguin Publishes Set Of Books Inspired By Each Tube Line,” *The Londonist*, 20 March 2013, <https://londonist.com/2013/03/penguin-publishes-set-of-books-inspired-by-each-tube-line>.
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71. Korte and Zipp, “Lines of Disconnection,” 209.
72. Joe Moran, *Reading the Everyday* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 54.
73. Ashford, *London Underground*, 15.
74. See Welsh, *Underground Writing*; Ashford, *London Underground*.
75. Merrill, “Looking Forward to the Past,” 243.
76. Farrington, “Penguin to Celebrate London Underground’s 150th.”
77. Cf. Mullins, “The London Underground and the London Transport Museum,” 276–277; Lee, “Place-Making, Mobility, and Identity,” 6.
78. Merrill, “Looking Forward to the Past,” 247.
79. Wadham, *Heads and Straights*.
80. Fantastic Man, *Buttoned-Up* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
81. For the latter, see especially Camila Batmanghelidjh and Kids Company, *Mind the Child* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), and Dorling, *The 32 Stops*; cf. discussion in Korte and Zipp, “Lines of Disconnection.”
82. An exception is Lanchester, *What We Talk About When We Talk About The Tube*.

83. Brown, "Penguin Publishes Set Of Books Inspired By Each Tube Line."
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