Chapter Two

The Reconfigured Spatiality of London

It would be better to approach space as a verb rather than as a noun. *To space*—that's all. Spacing is an action, an event, and a way of being. (Doel 125)

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 22)

London grew into something huge and contradictory. It was a good place, and a fine city, but there is a price to be paid for all good places, and a price that all good places have to pay. (Gaiman, *Neverwhere* 10)

I. Introduction

The novel *Neverwhere* follows Richard's journey during which he discovers another world, the Underside of London, making his everyday experience of London unfamiliar. London spatiality is not lucid as it appears, because the city, especially the Underside, is so huge, labyrinthine, and even sometimes magical. The line between the reality of the city and the imagination of the city becomes obscure. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the present and the past highlights the complexity of the city. The past does not disappear, but is embedded underneath the city. If the city is regarded as a piece of writing, then it is not a finished one, but one that can be rewritten over and

over again.

This chapter deals with the complex spatiality of London through Edward Soja's spatial theory. His conception of Thirdspace which attacks dual thinking of space can help to illustrate postmodern geographies inhering in the London cityscapes in Gaiman's work and to point out that the reconfigured spatiality breaks the dichotomy between the real place and the imagined place. The protagonist's experience of the urban reveals that the London cityscape is fragmentary, indeterminate, and changeable. By applying the theory of Thirdspace to the spatiality of London, I argue that the urban spatiality embodied in *Neverwhere* is fluid, plural, and configurable. Accordingly, including the first as the introduction and the last as the conclusion, this chapter consists of four sections among which the second and the third sections are my main focus. The second section proffers the theoretical framework in which I illustrate Soja's spatial theory by retracing Jonathan Raban's proposal of the soft and the hard city as well as Henri Lefebvre's conception of the spatial triad. The third section resorts to spatial theory outlined in the previous section to examine the configurable spatiality of London in Gaiman's *Neverwhere*.

II. Exploring Thirdspace

The issues related to space have been a matter of interest since the 1970s. Before this, theory paid more attention to time than to spatial issues, because space was treated as "dead, fixed and immobile, traversed by the movement of history" whereas time was seen as "the dynamic field of social change" (Barker 347). As Michel Foucault claims, "Space was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" ("Questions on Geography" 70). In contrast with time taken as changing and fluid,

spatial features placed in the marginal position are inanimate and stable. However, as Barker suggests, "Since the 1970s there has been a growing interest within social and cultural theory in questions of space and place" (347). Urban space has been explored by more and more theorists, for spatiality is reconsidered to be active, movable and dynamic, rather than passive, fixed or barren.

Theories related to the postmodern urban geographies discard the spatial dichotomy by breaking the demarcation between the material side and the mental side. Soja's conception of Thirdspace is such a theory which can serve as an exemplar, for his Thirdspace deconstructs the spatial dyad. Soja's Thirdspace is "a purposefully tentative and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constantly shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances, and meanings" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 2). For Soja, Thirdspace is "a space of extraordinary openness, a place of critical exchange" (5). Before eliciting Soja's Thirdspace, I shall discuss two important books, both published in 1974; one book is Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, and the other is Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*. The reason is that the former which maps the postmodern cognition of the city suggests the deconstruction of spatial dualisms, and the latter paves the way for Soja's theory of Thirdspace.

In his prose-style *Soft City*, by reading London cityscapes Raban separates the city into two parts: the soft and the hard. Raban asserts, "The city as we imagine it, the soft city of illusion, myth, aspiration, nightmare, is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate on maps in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture" (4). The hard city is "the material fabric of the built environment" that can be measured by concrete ideas, such as the alleys or architectures, while the soft city refers to "an individualized interpretation of the city" which is created by the mind of each city dweller (Dear and Flusty 65). The hard city

focuses on the material level observed by the senses of urbanites, but the soft one resorts to the mental level which needs to be exercised by the imagination of urbanites. The relationship between the two is complicated and interwoven, and the two parts are not schismatic but interactive.

At the beginning of *Soft City*, Raban (who represents every urbanite) recounts his experience of the city. As he says, "I stand on the pavement waiting to cross at the lights. Suddenly I know that I don't know the direction of the traffic" (Raban 3). At the moment, he is dazed by the city streets, for the city that he abides in becomes immediately unfamiliar. His experience suggests that one who comes to the city first encounters the hard city and sees only the surface appearance of the city. But later, one will feel that

> the city goes soft; it awaits the imprint of an identity. For better or worse, it invites you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can live in. You, too. Decide who you are, and the city will again assume a fixed form round you. Decide what it is, and your own identity will be revealed, like a position on a map fixed by triangulation. Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature. We mould them in our images: they, in their turn, shape us by the resistance they offer when we try to impose our own personal form on them. (Raban 3-4)

The above-mentioned quotation suggests that the city is fluid and living, because the city, though made of inanimate building materials, interacts with city dwellers. The city, like man, calls for its own identity. While urbanites seek to impose their image of the urban on the city, the city can forge the image of urbanites as well. The identity of the city can only be inscribed rather than branded, for the urban spatiality refuses to remain a fixed form. Although Raban neither uses the term like "postmodern" nor

claims that his reading of the city is out of postmodern consciousness, his view of the relationship between the mental and the real anticipates "a postmodern cognitive mapping of the urban" (Dear and Flusty 65).

Raban's proposal of the soft city points out the imagined side of the city, but his separation of the hard/soft city tends to be a dualistic view. Compared with Raban, Henri Lefebvre more radically attacks spatial dichotomies. The most influential and seminal book in the spatial theory field should be Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* which enlightens Edward Soja to develop his theory of Thirdspace. Soja claims that "Lefebvre [is] probably the first to discover, describe, and insightfully explore Thirdspace as a radically different way of looking at, interpreting, and acting to change the embracing spatiality of human life" (*Thirdspace* 29). Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of the thread of Soja's thoughts on Thirdspace, it is necessary to outline Lefebvre's notion of spatiality. My purpose is not to proffer an overview of Lefebvre's spatial theory but to illustrate how Soja extends Lefebvre's spatial theory to his concept of Thirdspace, so I will narrow down the review of Lefebvre's spatial theory here by focusing on his critique of a double illusion and on his proposal of the spatial triad.

Through his examination of the double illusion, Lefebvre intends to liberate spatial thinking from dualism and to prepare for his later discourse of the spatial triad. Although Lefebvre attacks the strict distinction between physical space (objective) and mental space (subjective), he does not completely reject the knowledge derived from this kind of spatial dualism. He not only dismantles "the rigid object-subject binarism that has defined and confined the spatial imagination for centuries," but also "simultaneously maintain[s] the useful knowledges of space derived from both of these binary 'fields'" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 62).

The double illusion refers to "the realistic illusion" and "the illusion of transparency." While the former is related to "(naturalistic and mechanistic) materialism," the latter is closer to "philosophical idealism," (Lefebvre 30). The realistic illusion, also called the illusion of opacity, is "the illusion of natural simplicity" which resorts to "naturalness" and "substantiality" (29). Regarded as a kind of naïve attitude, this illusion focuses on the real, so it has not been adopted by philosophers for a long time. Lefebvre takes the space that sculptors depend on as an example to illustrate this illusion. The sculptors' space tends to put emphasis on "the physical qualities and properties of the earth" (30). Therefore, in this illusion, the things (or the objects) themselves have received more attention than the subjects (or the subjects' mind).

The illusion of transparency, as Lefebvre defines, is a space that "appears as luminous, as intelligible, as giving action free rein" (27). In contrast with the realistic illusion which appeals to the object, the illusion of transparency pays attention to the subject, and thus is more favored by philosophers. The subject can see through things through the mental eye without puzzlement, so the things can be conducted and comprehended in a luminous way. The illusion of transparency is a "transcendental illusion" which can generate "quasi-magical power" (29). Lefebvre suggests that this form of illusion has potential for "a revolutionary social transformation" (29).

The relationship between these two illusions is not antagonistic but complementary. Neither illusion is developed independently. As Lefebvre comments, "[E]ach illusion embodies and nourishes the other. The shifting back and forth between the two, and the flickering or oscillatory effect that it produces, are thus just as important as either of the illusions considered in isolation" (30). Lefebvre's criticism here anticipates his thirding process of spatiality. Through the critique of the

double illusion, Lefebvre works out his later spatial triad—spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space).

Spatial practice, known as perceived space, "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (Lefebvre 33). To put it simply, spatial practice embodies the space which is materialized, socially produced, and perceived empirically. The spatial practice of some society "secretes that society's space," so the spatial practice can not be shown until the society's space is discovered (38). Spatial practice forges the bond between daily reality and urban reality, i.e., between "daily routine" and "the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure" (38). Endowed with cohesive power to link extremely separated places together, spatial practice is concerned with "the everyday social/spatial patterns of people in particular places" (Liggett 249).

Representations of space (conceived space), taken as "the dominant space in any society," is "conceptualized space" propelled by "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (Lefebvre 38-39). Representations of space are "the logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space linked to production relations" (Shields, *Lefebvre* 163). The conceived space is regarded as abstract and "shot through with a knowledge (*savoir*)—i.e. a mixture of understanding (*connaissance*) and ideology—which is always relative and in the process of change" (Lefebvre 41). In other words, representations of space involve knowledge, conceptual theory, and production.

Also translated as spaces of representation, representational spaces (or called

lived space) "[embody] complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life . . ." (Lefebvre 33). Comprising "imaginary and symbolic elements" (41), the lived space is the space belonging to the inhabitants, most of whom use their senses to perceive space by habit, as well as those who tend to "*describe* and aspire to do no more than describe," such as artists, writers and philosophers (39). Lefebvre claims that lived space, "overlay[ing] physical space," is the dominant space "which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (39). As Soja comments, representational spaces "contain all other real and imagined spaces simultaneously" (*Thirdspace* 69). The lived space goes beyond the traditional treatment of the spatial dyad, and thus creates the third possibility.

In Lefebvre's thinking, the perceived, the conceived, and the lived which constitute a triad have to be "interconnected" (Lefebvre 40) and the relationship between the three is "never either simple or stable" (46). These three spheres rely on another to operate together without working in isolation. Lefebvre's trialectics of spatiality triggers Soja's treatment of Thirdspace in which Soja not only puts Lefebvre's spatial theory into practice but also enriches it by broadening the scope of the spatial triad.

Soja's spatial theory can be treated as the afterlife of Lefebvre's. Lefebvre attacks reductionism, including any binary oppositions (such as subject/object, mental/physical, central/marginal, natural/social, local/global, etc.) which compress the meaning into "a closed either/or opposition between two terms, concepts, or elements" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 60). In order to break the rigidness of a dichotomy, Lefebvre launches "a third possibility or 'moment' that partakes of the original pairing but is not just a simple combination or an 'in between' position along some

all-inclusive continuum" (60). Likewise, Soja's proposal of Thirdspace is also to crack binary classification open.

In my opinion, Soja fertilizes Lefebvre's spatial theory in various ways. First, Soja makes Lefebvre's theory more practical. With his discussion of Thirdspace, Soja provides substantial cases to illustrate, like the city Los Angles, which is frequently used as an example of a postmodern city. Second, Soja in his Thirdspace theory imports feminist and postcolonial issues which are overlooked in Lefebvre's discussion of the spatial triad.[9] If Lefebvre is a philosopher who has an elevated eye to view spatiality, then Soja is a practitioner who enlarges the scope of his antecedent's view. Based on these reasons, I draw Soja's spatial theory to study Gaiman's *Neverwhere*, rather than Lefebvre's only.

Through Lefebvre's treatment of the double illusion, Soja "criticize[s] the epistemological dualism of objectivist-materialist and subjectivist-idealist approaches that has dominated the modern discipline of Geography since its origins" (*Thirdspace* 62-63). The realistic illusion corresponds with the objectivist-materialist approach whereas the illusion of transparency coincides with the subjectivist-idealist approach. The former which features physical space is traceable throughout "empiricism, naturalism . . . and other more social and historical forms of material determinism" (64); the latter which characterizes mental space follows "philosophical idealism and post-Enlightenment rationalism" (63).

Soja describes the realistic illusion as "a confusing myopia" which creates "illusions of opaqueness, short-sighted interpretations of spatiality" (*Postmodern*

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[9] Some reviewers criticize that issues related to race, gender, and ethnicity are greatly absent from Soja's *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), so thereafter Soja includes these issues in his later work *Thirdspace* (1996). Soja claims that Thirdspace has to remain "radically open (and yes, openly radical) for its interpretive insights and strategic power to be grasped and practiced" (*Thirdspace* 107). In order to make the conception of Thirdspace radically open, Soja asserts that feminist and postcolonial discourse can not be overlooked, because these two realms which suggest marginality have potential to resist the mainstream (for example, patriarchal or colonial discourse). See Chapter Four of *Thirdspace*.

Geographies 122). Because of this short-sightedness, spatiality can not be seen through its surface appearances and thus turns out to be observed by only "things-in-themselves" (122). This myopic view of spatiality relies on "objectively measurable appearances" and "sensory-based perception" (122). This empirical methodology focuses on "the accumulation of accurate geographical information" and "a presumed science of geography" (123). Therefore, the things themselves are prior to thoughts; that is, the object predominates over the subject, because "objective 'things' have more reality than 'thoughts'" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 64).

By contrast, Soja calls "the illusion of transparency" as "hypermetropia" which means "farsightedness, seeing so far into the distance that what is immediately before you disappears" (*Thirdspace* 62). From this hypermetropic view, spatiality can be seen through and thus appears to be limpid. Because spatiality is "reduced to a mental construct alone," the mental image of the reality overwhelms the material substance and tangible objects (Soja, *Postmodern Geographies* 125). In the illusion of transparency, thoughts are prior to the things, and the subject precedes the object.

Like Lefebvre, Soja attacks binary categories. While the realistic illusion which limits the openness of spatiality suggests that space is fixed, the illusion of transparency which upholds "what is imagined/represented defines the reality of social space" might easily fall into an illusion (Soja, *Thirdspace* 64). Therefore, neither illusion is privileged over the other.

Soja borrows Henri Lefebvre's discussion of perceived space to coin the term "Firstspace" and of conceived space to coin the term "Secondspace." According to Lefebvre, perceived space "can only be evaluated empirically" (38), whereas conceived space "is thought by those who make use of it to be *true*" (361). Likewise, Soja's Firstspace is examined in a scientific way, and his Secondspace is realized in

an ideal image. For Soja, Firstspace emphasizes the material level, while Secondspace refers to the imagined level. Both Firstspace and Secondspace fall into the trap of dualism. Therefore, following Lefebvre's argument which purports to break through "binarized categories" and refuses to dichotomize space, Soja extends Lefebvre's concept of "an-Other term" and "thirding-as-Othering" to develop the theory of Thirdspace (*Thirdspace* 60).

From the perspective of Firstspace, as Soja describes, "[C]ityspace can be studied as a set of materialized 'spatial practices' that work together to produce and reproduce the concrete forms and specific patternings of urbanism as a way of life" (*Postmetropolis* 10). Like the realistic illusion turning to physical substance, Firstspace, which has been a way of thinking for centuries, focuses on concrete, perceived, and material spatiality "that is directly comprehended in empirically measurable *configurations*" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 74). Firstspace can be perceived in the locations, sites, situations, and concrete geographies of people's daily lives. As an empirical text, Firstspace focuses on things that can be observed empirically. As Soja asserts, "Firstspace epistemologies tend to privilege objectivity and materiality, and to aim toward a formal science of space" (75).

Soja further explains that Firstspace can be read in two levels. One level focuses on "the accurate description of surface appearances" (*Thirdspace* 75). That is, the data of the spatiality of Firstspace are accumulated by scientific, quantitative and mathematical description. For example, mathematical topology, multivariate statistical ecologies are utilized to describe city geographies. The other level "searches for spatial explanation in primarily exogenous social, psychological, and biophysical processes" (75). Soja takes Marxist geographers of Firstspace as an example. Marxist geographers analyze human geography, through the discussion of "class analysis, the

labor theory of value," and so on (77).

Resembling the illusion of transparency, Secondspace focuses on mental space. Cityspace from the view of Secondspace "becomes more of a mental or ideational field, conceptualized in imagery, reflexive thought, and symbolic representation, a *conceived* space of the imagination," or what Soja describes as "the urban imaginary" (Soja, *Postmetropolis* 11). If the analysis of Firstspace is guided by the scientists, the spatiality of Secondspace is contrived by artists. Soja claims that "*Secondspace epistemologies* have tended to arise in reaction to the excessive closure and enforced objectivity of mainstream Firstspace analysis, pitting the artist versus the scientist or engineer, the idealist versus the materialist, the subjective versus the objective interpretation" (*Thirdspace* 78). Secondspace is like a blueprint of a utopia; it is an ideal and improved spatiality designed by utopian urbanists. In contrast with the concrete locality of Firstspace, Secondspace is more abstract, and imaginative.

Soja reminds readers of the overlapping parts between Firstspace and Secondspace. As he points out, "Firstspace analysts now frequently adopt Secondspace epistemologies for their purposes, and Secondspace interpretations often extend themselves specifically to address actual material spatial forms" (*Thirdspace* 78). However, Secondspace is quite different from Firstspace, for Secondspace concentrates on conceived space, while Firstspace highlights perceived space.

According to Soja, Lefebvre's representational spaces are the marginalized spaces which can serve as resistant sites to be against the grain. As Soja comments, "[T]hese lived spaces of representation are thus the terrain for the generation of 'counterspaces,' spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning" (*Thirdspace* 68). Lefebvre's an-Other term is "a third possibility or 'moment' that partakes of the original pairing

but is not just a simple combination or an 'in between' position along some all-inclusive continuum" (60). Soja agrees with such a third possibility which can deconstruct binarized opposition. Therefore, Soja extends Lefebvre's argument and coins the term "thirding-as-Othering," defined as "the first and most important step in transforming the categorical and closed logic of either/or to the dialectically open logic of both/and also . . ." (60). Thirding does not equal the combination of binary antecedents, but produces an "other-than" choice, as well as "an open alternative that is both similar and strikingly different" (61). Soja treats Thirdspace as a place "where no vision or persuasion holds sway over any other" (Dear 83).

Besides Lefebvre's spatial triad, Soja also incorporates Foucault's proposal of heterotopia into the field of Thirdspace, because Soja regards Foucault's heterotopia as an example of thirding-as-Othering. Like Soja, Foucault attacks a spatial dichotomy. In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault dismisses the oppositions "between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 23). Foucault defines "the heterotopia as a site that undoes the usual order of space" (Tonkiss 237). He sees spatiality "as a dematerialized mental space" and searches for "other spaces" and "other sites" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 157). Foucault is "interested in certain ones [sites] that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 24). That is, he is concerned with such sites, a kind of heterogeneous space which can relate itself to other sites. Libraries and museums, for example, are the heterogeneous sites which accumulate time and space, and contract different sites together via piles of archives.

Thirdspace breaks the dichotomy between reality and imagination, between concreteness and abstraction, and between materiality and metaphor. Thirdspace offers another way of thinking to explicate human spatiality "that incorporates both Firstspace and Secondspace perspectives while at the same time opening up the scope and complexity of the geographical or spatial imagination" (Soja, *Postmetropolis* 11). Thirdspace, which cracks up duality, vacillates between Firstspace and Secondspace, and can be described as "real-and-imagined," and "actual-and-virtual" in Soja's words (11). Thirdspace echoes "what Lefebvre once called the city, a 'possibilities machine;' or [. . .] a remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost . . . or never sighted at all" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 81).

III. Re-Imaged-in-London: "It Was a Moment of Pure Magic"[10]

The prologue of *Neverwhere* anticipates the complexity of London that the protagonist will encounter. The night before Richard leaves from a Scottish town for London, he meets an old woman who tells his fortune by reading his palm. She says to Richard that he will "[get] a long way to go" and the place he leaves for is "[n]ot just London" (3).[11] The old woman's words foreshadow Richard's experience of another London thereafter. When Richard sees Oxford Circus, one of the names of London Tube stations, which appears on a round white shape carried by the old woman, he ponders "whether there really [is] a circus at Oxford Circus: a real circus with clowns, beautiful women, and dangerous beasts" (4). His meditating on the names of the stations envisages his encounter with the figurative station names.

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[10] The phrase "Re-imaged-in-London" is appropriated from the subtitle ("*Re-imaged-in-LA: A Little Bit of Baudrillard*") of the eighth chapter of Soja's *Thirdspace*. The quotation ("It Was a Moment of Pure Magic") is from *Neverwhere* (Gaiman 195).

[11] Gaiman, Neil. *Neverwhere*. New York: HarperTorch, 1996. Subsequent citations are noted hereafter parenthetically in the text.

Infused with the ideas of postmodern geographies illustrated in the previous section, this section explores the reconfigured cityspace in the novel. According to Richard's different stages of observing London, this section consists of three readings. The first reading is the period before Richard meets Door, the girl who comes from the Underside. The second reading refers to the period before Richard intrudes into London Below. The third reading is the period after Richard goes on his journey to the Underside. Different stages of reading the city can help to explicate capricious cityspace.

A. First Reading: London Spatiality as Hard

Before his journey to the Underside, Richard perceives the city in an innocent and empirical way. Although Richard feels that London is huge, odd and incomprehensible when he first arrives, he thinks that the Tube map, a colorful display of underground railway lines, reveals a sense of order (8). The Tube map suggests that London is orderly, for the cityscape of London can be mapped and comprehended. In Soja's term, Richard perceives the city through the Firstspace perspective, because Richard lacks imagination while observing London, and Richard's view of London focuses on his empirical experiences.

After Richard gets used to London city life, he does not feel that London is huge, so he thinks that "the actual City of London itself [is] no bigger than a square mile, stretching from Aldgate in the east to Fleet Street and the law courts of the Old Bailey in the west, a tiny municipality, now home to London's financial institutions, and that that [is] where it [has] all begun" (9). Because Richard reduces London to a small place which he complacently thinks he knows every part of, he takes London for granted, and even "pride[s] himself on having visited none of the sights of

London" (10). Richard is near-sighted. He depends only on the surface appearance of the cityscape, and thus perceives only the substantial form of the city.

B. Second Reading: London Spatiality as Soft

The longer Richard lives in London, the more he feels that London is not the city he previously assumes. The city is more lively and multicolored than Richard imagines. Before Richard comes to London, he thought of London as "a gray city, even a black city," but after three years in London, Richard finds the city "filled with color" (8). As the novel depicts, "It [London] [is] a city of red brick and white stone, red buses and large black taxis, bright red mailboxes and green grassy parks and cemeteries" (8). Richard regarded the Tube map as an image of order when he first came to London, but gradually he has come to feel that "the Tube map [is] a handy fiction that [makes] life easier but [bears] no resemblance to the reality of the shape of the city above" (8-9). Richard's change of his thought on the map suggests that Richard does not resort to the concrete stuff to experience the city. He gradually realizes that London can not be simply epitomized as a map, a concrete form.

As the narrator describes, London, whose history is more than two thousand years, is "a noisy, dirty, cheerful, troubled city" (8). This contradictory description ("cheerful," though "troubled") implies that ambivalence features in the character of London. Moreover, London is inhabited by "people of every color and manner and kind" (8). The various kinds of people living in the same city highlight the complex image of the city. Living in London for several years, Richard, representing most city dwellers, is in the habit of taking the same route while strolling in the city, so he increasingly overlooks the hugeness and complication of the city. Richard presumes that he is familiar with the city; however, Richard sees only the partial side of London.

For example, one time when Richard is driven by a taxi driver who takes him home "by an unlikely route," he admits that he never knows those streets before (19).

At the beginning of the novel, the plot is divided into two lines which have no connection: one line narrates Richard's routine life in London Above, and the other line depicts how killers pursue Door in London Below. These two lines do not intersect until Richard saves Door, a girl who runs away from London Below and bleeds on a London sidewalk. Door, coming from another world, makes Richard rethink London and encounter diverse cityspace thereafter.

Richard does not feel that his view of the city is limited until he walks the streets following Door's directions. Door asks Richard to look for the marquis de Carabas, the person who can help her, and then on his way to look for the marquis, Richard sees many London streets that he has never noticed before. After Richard passes many busy places, including Oxford Street, which is crowed with people, and the Virgin megastore, full of noise and lights, and a souvenir shop, he turns into Hanway Street which looks "empty" and "forsaken" (43). Although Hanway Street is "only a few steps from the well-lit bustle of Oxford Street," Richard feels that "he might have been in another city," because Hanway Street is "a narrow, dark road, little more than an alley, filled with gloomy record shops and closed restaurants . . ." (43). When he walks along Hanway Street, he doubts whether Door's directions are correct or not, because based on his experience he can not "remember an Orme Passage, although he had been to Hanway Place before . . ." (44). After seeing the sign for Orme Passage, he can not help but admit that he is wrong. He used to miss Orme Passage, for it is "scarcely more than a narrow alleyway between houses, lit by a sputtering gas-jet" (44).

As the novel progresses, Richard's empirical perception of the city turns out to

be more and more unreliable. When Richard follows the marquis de Carabas to climb down the ladder through the manhole, en route he "[realizes] that he [does] not know very much about what [goes] on beneath the streets of London" (47). Richard can not even know where he is. As he thinks, "This [doesn't] seem to be a sewer. Perhaps it [is] a tunnel for telephone cables, or for very small trains. Or for . . . something else" (47). Then, Richard and the marquis look for Old Bailey, who lives on the roof of an old building. When Richard arrives at the roof, he is astonished because he can see London below him. For Richard, the tangible objects appear so treacherous that he can not distinguish his location. Here cityspace becomes soft; it is not only made of materials, but also made of illusion.

C. Third Reading: London Spatiality as Magical

In *Neverwhere*, London makes Richard's comprehension of the city unfamiliar. With Richard's growing understanding of London, cityspace tends to appear not as flat as the mirror of the reality, but as grotesque as the mirror of distortion. After Door leaves, Richard's life is changed, for he becomes unknown to anyone around him, as if he never lived in London. Since then London has been the city that Richard never knew before. People in London Above cannot see Richard, but he can see them. In one sense, Richard is endowed with extra vision. In order to figure out why he becomes a non-person, invisible to people around him, Richard seeks to find Door and enters London Below by accident. Richard can see people in London Below and can be seen by them. Richard is unfamiliar with London Below, for it shows another side of London—dark, sinister, mysterious, and marginal. London Below is a "real-and-imagined" place that challenges Richard's dual epistemologies of London (Soja, *Postmetropolis* 11).

London in *Neverwhere* is a heterogeneous space that juxtaposes the past and the present. As the novel describes, London is "a city in which the very old and the awkwardly new [jostle] each other" (8). The city is not orderly as it appears on the surface, because the past and the marginalized are covered and masked by the surface tight regulation. Laid in the Victorian age is London Below in which the past memory of the city and lurking evil power are embedded.

In the second part of *Thirdspace*, Soja illustrates the postmodern metropolis by taking Los Angeles (LA) as an example. Soja argues that "El Pueblo [the birthplace of LA] has been the primordial PALIMPSEST of the City of Angels, prepared from its origins to be written upon and erased over and over again in the evolution of urban consciousness and civic imagination" (*Thirdspace* 228). Soja begins his argument with an exhibition[12] which displays the spatial history of El Pueblo from 1789 to 1989, as if diverse spaces of LA were juxtaposed synchronically.[13]

From Soja's observation on the exhibition, El Pueblo "has entered still another round of possible deconstruction and reconstruction" (*Thirdspace* 226). Because of its

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[12] "[W]ithin the spaces of Perloff Hall, then the home of the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning at UCLA," the exhibition which Soja helped to organize in the spring of 1989 is "part of a multi-year celebration on campus of the bicentennial of the French Revolution" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 186). Soja narrates, "For our part [UCLA] in this multi-media and cross-disciplinary extravaganza of global simultaneities, we [choose] the theme *1789/1989—Paris/Los Angeles—The City and Historical Change* and [tries] to compress within the exhibition space-time a 200-year visual geohistory of the present urban scene" (186-87).

[13] In 1789, El Pueblo was "a successful agricultural settlement and trading post" (Soja, *Thirdspace* 219). El Pueblo used to be the capital of Mexican California, but was ceded to the United States in 1848. In 1871, the Chinese Massacre occurred in El Pueblo and made LA draw the world's attention. The Chinese Massacre "culminated two decades of extraordinary violence, lawlessness, and interracial conflict," and LA was called "Hell Town" during the period (221). In order to efface the negative images of LA, "new public and private coalitions" were created "to imaginatively 'rebuild LA'" (221). The railway was built between LA and San Francisco; therefore, the transportation has facilitated immigration and triggered urban growth since 1871. After 1871, El Pueblo started to be overlooked, because the coalitions constructed a new center on the southern flank of El Pueblo. As Soja claims, "[T]he American city [turns] its back on the old Plaza and its embarrassing memories" (222). However, during the 1920s, El Pueblo was recreated "as an Americanized monument to the founding of Los Angeles," and many old buildings of El Pueblo were preserved (225). Then, El Pueblo "had become a State Historic Park," embodying "[t]he heterotopological qualities of the site" that represented "the symbolic center of Latino life and culture in Los Angeles, almost entirely unseen as such by the Anglo majority" (226).

complex history, El Pueblo, for some people, is "an anomalous and anachronistic piece of eminently developable land in the heart" of LA; for others, El Pueblo "is the signifying site of the contemporary region's spectacular multiculturalism"; for many, El Pueblo is "the irrevocable heart and soul of Mexican-Chicano/Chicana Los Angeles or, at least, an important Latino commercial and cultural stronghold worth preserving and enhancing" (226). People's sundry views on El Pueblo manifest the area's complex historical spatiality. Thus, Soja comments that El Pueblo is a "new kind of temporal heterotopia" in the Foucauldian sense (228).

Likewise, London spatiality shown in *Neverwhere* is a palimpsest, an ancient document on which the original writing has been removed from and covered with the new one. Consisting of diverse writing, this palimpsest is inscribed by not only the urban present but also the urban past. London Below, tinged with a Victorian style, represents the past which is obliterated and ignored by those in London Above. The vision of the Underside evokes past memory, in terms of buildings and figures.

The buildings or places in London Below which fall into oblivion for those in London Above are reminiscent of the Victorian age. For example, "an indoor Victorian structure" is the swimming pool woven into Door's house by Door's father when he finds that the deserted pool is about to be damaged in London Above (80). The two assassins, Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, make their home in the cellar of a Victorian hospital, "a huge room in which a hundred and twenty years of hospital waste [has] accumulated, been abandoned, and, eventually, forgotten" (71). Built of the lost remnants of London Above, the labyrinth led to the place where the Angel Islington lives presents the image of a Victorian ghetto. As the novel depicts, the labyrinth consists of tiny alleys, roads, and sewers "which had once been part of a Victorian 'rookery'—a slum comprised in equal parts of theft and penny gin, of

twopenny-halfpenny squalor and threepenny sex . . ." (305). Indebted to "the great plan of Victorian sewer-building," the population of the Sewer Folk increases rapidly (265). The sewers that the Sewer Folk inhabit are Victorian remains.

Besides Victorian structures, those figures appearing in London Below smack of Victorian manners. For instance, wearing black suits which seem to be made two hundred two years ago from Richard's view, Mr. Vandemar and Mr. Croup kill people or rats by knives, instead of any modern weapons, such as guns, as if they were living in the past. When Mr. Vandemar and Mr. Croup trace Door through interwoven tunnels, they are described as "Victorian dignitaries visiting the Crystal Palace exhibition" (19). Another character paralleling the role of Mr. Vandemar and Mr. Croup as the killer is Lamia, one member of the Velvets who employs her sexuality to seduce males. Pale-skinned and red-mouthed, she takes advantage of her beauty and charm to absorb Richard's energy, and therefore presents the fin de siècle figure of the vampirish femme fatale. When Richard first carefully looks at Door who "[is] dressed in a variety of clothes thrown over each other," he feels that she steals her strange clothes from "the History of Fashion section of the Victoria and Albert Museum" and wear them all (29).

The demarcation between London Above/Below and the present/past London is not so clear-cut. Instead, these two worlds are interfused with each other. In London Above, Victorian or other historical remains can be observed. For example, on their way to the fluid market through London Above, Anaesthesia (the rat-girl) and Richard pass the Embankment which was built by Victorians. When Door and Richard follow the directions that the Black Friars give, they enter the British Museum, a "high white Victorian building" (177). Moreover, the residents of the Underside might go to London Above, and those of the Upworld might become the members of London

Below. For instance, the members of the Velvets live in London Below during the day, but walk London Above at night, like the modern myth of a femme fatale or the contemporary image of a prostitute. The rat-girl, who was found by the rats in London Below, was born in London Above and used to roam around the streets in the Upworld.

The coexistence of different spaces compels the contemporary London to recall "the spaces of the city's historical past" (Nead 8). Richard can not realize that the past and the present coexist in the city and interact with each other until he intrudes into Victorian-style London Below. The past memory or history is not only exhibited in the museum but also embedded underneath the city. Richard never knows that there is a British Museum station in the Underside until Door tells him. When Door explains to him that the station was closed in about 1933 and there are about fifty stations like this, Richard feels "like walking through history" (169). Besides deserted stations, the Beast of London can be also taken as a part of London history, for the Beast, as mean and nasty, has lived for more then three hundred years in the London sewage since the reign of the first King Charlie. The Beast represents the embedded evil and history of London, so Richard's fight with the Beast is his encounter with the evil and the haunted past of the city. The juxtaposition of different sites endorses the heterotopological qualities of London spatiality. The interlaced, different time and space in *Neverwhere* echo Lynda Nead's discussion of London modernity: "Modernity is not understood as a rupture with the past, or as a fresh start, but as a set of processes and representations that were engaged in an urgent and inventive dialogue with their own historical conditions of existence" (Nead 8).

The deeper Richard goes into the Underside, the more cityspace shakes his confidence in reality. Beyond his imagination is London Below where his rationality

and knowledge of the city do not make sense, and therefore the city appears dreamlike, unbelievable, and uncanny. After Door leaves, Richard persuades himself that whether the people he meets, like Door, the marquis, Mr. Croup, and Mr. Vandemar, or the unrecognizable roads he passes, like sewers, are not real. Richard tells himself that what happened to him during the previous two days "[becomes] less and less real, increasingly less likely" (56). However, Richard's dreams later coincide with what happens to him after encountering Door, and such a coincidence forces him to understand the fragile line between the real and the imagined. When Richard feels that he seems to be invisible in the station, it reminds him of one dream he had as a child in which nobody notices him, no matter what he does. This kind of déjà vu also comes out when Richard fights with the Great Beast of London, because he has dreamed of the Beast before. Richard's dreams belong to the imagined level, close to Soja's discussion of second epistemologies. The materialization of his dreams suggests a real-and-imagined possibility.

During his journey to the other side of London, Richard's empirical perception is dwarfed by unbelievable cityspace. Richard gradually learns that he needs imagination to experience the city. For example, Richard is astounded when Door speaks to a pigeon and asks it to deliver a message to the marquis. The pigeon's ability to communicate with people subverts Richard's empirical understanding of a normal London pigeon. When Door, Hunter and the marquis seek to look for the Angel Islington, Richard does not believe in the existence of any angels, and thinks that they are out of their mind. As he ridicules them, "You're both being silly. There are no such things as angels" (137). However, later after Richard sees the angel and drinks the wine the angel proffers, he admits that his judgment of the reality is not reliable, and "[learns], awkwardly, to trust his instincts, and to realize that the simplest

and most likely explanations for what he [has] seen and experienced recently [are] the ones that [have] been offered to him—no matter how unlikely they might seem" (201). After a series of unbelievable things happen to Richard, he gradually dismisses his entrenched view of the city. For example, while informed of finding the Black Friars who are the keepers of the key, Richard has learned "not to assume anything" (203).

The cityscape of London Below defamiliarizes Richard's recognition of London, because some lousy sites of the Underside are the counterparts of his Upworld. Before Richard's intrusion into the Underside, he often accompanies his girlfriend to browse around Harrods in Knightsbridge on weekends. Although Richard is definitely familiar with Harrods, his familiarity with this site is brimming with strangeness while he encounters the same site, put in different space of London Below. Different from Knightsbridge which is the area in the Upworld where many stores are established, Knightsbridge in London Below is a dangerous and gloomy bridge whose darkness takes passers-by away as the toll of the bridge. Harrods, one of the famous emporiums in London Above, turns out to be the place where the first Floating Market is held in the Underside. Far from luxurious and orderly department stores, the Floating market, though full of miscellaneous items, is dirty, disarrayed, "loud," "brash," and insane" (109). Because of this sense of both familiarity and strangeness, the sites of London Below arouse Richard's uncanny feeling which defamiliarizes his everyday experience of the city.

In *Neverwhere*, the boundary between the real and the imagined is always blurred. What is real and what is imagined nourish each other; therefore, the vacillating effect is produced between the two. Under Neil Gaiman's pen, the real and the imagined are interwoven to create a real-and-imagined London.

IV. Conclusion

London Below can be treated as a trope which symbolizes the ugly side and the forgotten past of the city by figuring the Beast of London, the homeless, historical remains, and dismal surroundings in the Underside. Although the city attempts to cover its negative side and past with the present and reconstruction, the past does not disappear but is inscribed in the memory of the city, like a haunting ghost awaiting the latent shocking appearance.

Through Richard's vision of the city which vacillates between London Above and London Below, the city presents its becoming. Richard does not realize that London is unstable, centerless, sinister, and dangerous underneath, until he travels to London Below. The nature of London is not London Above plus London Below, but goes beyond the sum of these two. The London spatiality is reconfigured by Richard's vision that alternates between London Above/Below, for his vision suggests that the spaces of London Above/Below permeate each other. Thus Neil Gaiman depicts the interwoven city spaces to suggest that London is replete with fluidity, changeability, fragmentation, and complexity; neither London Above nor London Below presents a complete picture of the city.