liminality is, in the simplest terms, representative of the fact that there is no single London in terms of geographical entity, population or idea. London and Londoners are heterogeneous in nature, and the literary record of the city, whether in the writing of Dickens or Sinclair, is predicated upon this understanding. For those *not* from London, London's greatest quality may be regarded as its transferability as an image or concept. This is in the sense that London, in terms of its size, ethnic diversity and historical importance transcends its physical boundaries. The fact that the conference featured 63 speakers from Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Taiwan, the United States and across Britain, testifies to the universal fascination that London arouses. London is always both local and global. The essays introduced below actively produce and interrogate a discussion on the liminal, presenting London as a city of paradoxes, divided, yet multifarious.

Ivona Misterova's 'A Comparative Analysis of the First Depictions of London in Czech Literature' provides a fascinating account of the fifteenth century diplomatic mission of the Czech nobleman Leo of Rozmital and his retinue to the London court of Edward IV. We learn that London in 1466 was 'vigorous and busy', 'conducting trade with all lands' and full of 'beautiful women and expensive food'. As Misterova observes, this attractive public image was carefully fostered as can be seen from the Czech accounts of the public ceremonies and banquets they were invited to. Valuable insights are provided into how this proto-corporate hospitality functioned as a process of exchange in which the cordially-welcomed guests gave gifts in return to the women and maidens of London they encountered in their visit: 'when guests first arrive at an inn the hostess comes out with her whole family to receive them, and they have to kiss her and all the others'. This figure of the hostess at the threshold, who promises

welcome in return for tokens of love, may be seen as an historical female archetype of the city.

Susan Ash also investigates hospitality in her essay, 'Dr Barnardo and "The Queen's Shades": Liminal London, Hospitality and Victorian Child Rescue', which employs a Derridean reading 'to demonstrate how the force that makes Barnardo's power both benevolent and dreadful is related to conflicted authority associated with the rights of the "host" and the impossible obligations inherent in hospitality itself'. Ash analyses how Barnardo's fiction and autobiographical writing highlighted the dangerous liminal condition of London street children, fixed in the Victorian imagination as occupying an indeterminate status between animal and human, in order to present the need for those unique few such as himself who could contact such beings without risk to their own moral standing. At one level, therefore, Barnardo was himself playing host to this liminal zone for his respectable readership who were in return expected to participate in fundraising activities for his cause. However, Ash is also concerned to compare the hospitality Barnardo extended to the street children with the shelter offered by the Workhouse 'in such a way that only the most desperate would accept its terms' – an example of the violence which Derrida argues is always inherent in hospitality negotiations at the threshold. Despite Barnardo's stated policy of 'ever open doors', Ash concludes that his actual practice of 'philanthropic abduction' effectively deconstructed the difference between 'the "proper" and "improper" versions of hospitality' which he implicitly used to justify his approach. Her point is not to document another example of Victorian oppression, but to open upoach.

of London writing to realize that it is not fully possible to incorporate the insights of writers like De Quincey into conventional observations on the city, because his opium addiction had opened up to him a '*terrae incognitae*,' which signified a London that was not merely to be recorded, but which was to be reinvented in prose. A further question which the essay subtly broaches, is to what extent London life becomes liminal through the addict's inability to distinguish distortion from reality, and vice versa. By posing such questions, McCarron challenges readers of this literature to refrain from making moral assumptions about addiction, given the wider moral vacuum surrounding living standards in nineteenth-century London life.

On one level, the most obviously liminal zones of London are the suburbs that have spread out from its centre. As Nick Hubble explains in the introduction to the 'Intermodern London' issue of *Literary London*, the interwar expansion of the London suburbs extended the unsettling intersubjectivity of the city rather than providing an escape from it.[3] While much has been written on the Metroland to the west of London, as featured in John Betjeman's poetry for example, there is decidedly less literary research concerning the suburban offshoots to the east of London. David Fulton's 'Heaven or Hell: Representations of Ilford in the Writings of Denise Levertov and Kathleen Raine' makes a significant contribution in this respect. By focusing on the work of these two poets connected with Ilford, Fulton illuminates the dichotomous relationship that the suburbs have with the city of London. At the core of his essay is a defence of the connection between the city and suburb, which draws careful distinctions between the suburb and the countryside proper while highlighting the reluctance of modern culture to fully embrace such a dynamic:

> These were the terms with which Modernism dismissed suburbia, privileging instead the metropolis as the site of everything the suburbs

> lacked: a rich diversity of architecture, class and ethnicity; a freedom of behaviour, holding out the prospect of sexual adventure, such as would interest a flâneur; a strange intermixture of the threatening and the safe, the sordid and the sublime, the unreal and the only too real; subtle networks of intellectuals; newspapers and magazines discussing the latest ideas; the general cultural ferment that would challenge the would-be artist to innovate, while simultaneously preserving the best of tradition.

As Fulton's essay suggests, though, Ilford embodies two divergent realities, a metaphorical 'heaven' and 'hell' in the work of these writers. While Raine's writing on Ilford presents to the readers a place of marginality and tedium; Levertov

edium; Levg; Lrltov

the work of Paul Oliver, Ian Davis and Ian Bentley in *Dunroamin*, he identifies the suburbs built around London between the wars as being the product of a desire to move beyond the rigid class stratifications of the Victorian order: 'The utopian promise of a golden classless future just around the corner was encapsulated by the sunray motif of the garden gate and the stained-glass galleon on the front door.' Hubble discusses how the political shift in British society that occurred during the Second World War prevented this golden future from ever coming to pass. Nevertheless, 'the memory of that suburban utopia lingered culturally in the residual traces of middlebrow culture',

West Wickham, home of the 1940s House, is directly bisected by the Longitudinal Meridian as it plumbs its line southwards from Greenwich to the South Coast at Peacehaven. Peter Coles and Gesche Würfel's striking photo-essay, 'London-Luton: A Photographic Exploration of the Lea Valley' traverses the Meridian north of the Thames, a route which runs through the site of the 2012 London Olympics. The sense of the Meridian underlying the lines of sight in their photographs, adds a temporal dimension to the otherwise linear perspectives. The Lea Valley is shown as a 'green corridor' penetrating urban space and imperial past alike even as Olympic construction work disrupts the 'established relationships between residents and their natural and built environment, mainly through the three meter high blue fence that creates a boundary between the "old" outside world and a new dream world being created by the IOC and its selected architects, inside'. The pictures, therefore, combine documentary function, recording a threatened landscape, with personal vision and in the process suggest a 'way of seeing' these liminal spaces as intensely valuable in their own right.

In contrast, Magda Wosinska's 'Liminal Spaces and States in Jerzy Peterkiewcz's *Inner Circle*' is the first of two papers in this collection which uses the London Underground to exemplify the liminal in London writing. Focussing on Peterkiewicz's metaphorical novel, she extends the question of the liminal as a 'threshold' by inviting comparisons between native Londoners and immigrant Londoners who arrived in London following the outbreak of the Second World War. She makes reference in her paper to the fact that Peterkiewicz 'did not fully assimilate into English tradition, as he is rather a "European deeply rooted in Polishness". Like the protagonist from *Inner Circle*, Patrick, one gets the sense that Peterkiewicz's position within the wider canon of London writing is partly defined through

recognition of his cultural difference, coupled with the painful reasons behind his departure from his native Poland to take up residence in the UK, something which he coveys through Patrick as someone who is 'neither here nor there'. Wosinska's paper structures the London Underground in terms of the paradox that this transport network simultaneously defines and divides the city of London, and frequently problematises, rather than resolves, questions surrounding the city's boundaries. Wosinska refers frequently to the liminal in Peterkiewicz's work as a 'betweenness', using the 'betweenness' of moving through the London Undergrounds space, which we 'inhabit but do not live within,' to underline the predicament of the protagonist's life in London. This essay raises an important (but often overlooked question) concerning how London as a multi-cultural and ethnically diverse city is to be reconciled with the fact that many immigrants who come to live in London frequently remain as outsiders. Wosinska's paper acknowledges the distinctiveness of London life from the Polish origins of Peterkiewicz, but uses the liminality and 'betweenness' at work within his novel as a way of combining these separate spaces, and, most fundamentally, identifying such a process as continuous: by which London remains a space that is forever changing and being changed by those who inhabit the city.

Michael O'Brien's '"Tunnel Visions": Space, Transience and Escapism in Geoff Ryman's *253*' begins by deconstructing the Modernist association between travel and the movement of crowds, epitomised in Baudelaire's definition of the modern as the 'fleeting, contingent, transitory...' By examining the playfulness of Geoff Ryman's textual form in *253*

the existing discourses of flânerie and psychogeography privilege a male view point, which hinders the discovery of more complex connections between the multilayered geographical, linguistic, archetypal and commodified spaces of London.

It is hoped that these essays will inspire further work on London that continues this trend of presenting liminality not as the product of social and cultural fragmentation but as a pre-existing attribute of the city; a feature of London's essential heterogeneity.

Notes:

[1] The original cfp, conference programme and other details may still be accessed via the BCCW website: http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/acad/sa/artresearch/bccw

[2] Nick Hubble, ed., 'Intermodern London', special issue, *Literary London*, 7:1 (March 2009): http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2009/index.html

[3] Hubble, 'Introduction: Intermodern London' in Hubble, 5: http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/march2009/intro.html