In September 1666 the Great Fire destroyed four-fifths of the ancient City of London within three days. All that had been familiar, settled, *known*, was suddenly and entirely swept away. Londoners faced an emptiness that was not only physical but also historical, social, financial, and conceptual. *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* is the first study to situate the literature of Restoration and early Augustan England within the historical and cultural contexts of the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire. Cynthia Wall reads the marked topographical specificity of plays, poems, and novels as part of a wider cultural network of responses to changing perceptions of urban space, and she shows how the literatures of the period – along with the technologies of surveying, mapping, rebuilding, and official redescribing the city – attempt to reinvest the city with comprehensible meaning and create new spaces for new genres.

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THE LITERARY AND CULTURAL SPACES OF RESTORATION LONDON

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Contents

List of illustrations vii
Preface ix
Acknowledgments xvii

PART I. DESCRIBING LONDON

1 The Great Fire and rhetorics of loss 3
2 *Londini Renascenti:* the spaces of rebuilding 39
3 Redrawing London: maps and texts 76

PART II. INHABITING LONDON

4 The art of writing the streets of London 115
5 New narratives of public spaces: parks and shops 148
6 Narratives of private spaces: churches, houses and novels 182

Notes 221
Bibiography 243
Index 268

Illustrations

1 "A Map or Groundplot of the Citty of London and the Suburbes thereof," by John Leake, engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar (1666). (Courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library.) *page* 37

2 John Evelyn's third plan for redrawing London (1666). (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 48

3 Richard Newcourt's first plan for redrawing London (1666). (Guildhall Library Ms 3441, Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 49

4 From Mills's and Oliver's *Survey of the Building Sites* (1667): Pissing Alley. (GL Ms 84, Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 57

5 From Mills's and Oliver's *Survey of the Building Sites* (1667): Mr. Lascoe's house covering Mr. Wharton's house (1672). (GL Ms 84, Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 58

6 St. Bride Fleet Street List of Householders (1666). (GL Ms 14819, Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 61

7 St. Benet Gracechurch Account of Inhabitants (1670). (GL Ms 4056, Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 62

8 The Monument, from Strype's *Survey of London* (1720). (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 74

9 Detail of Langbourn and Candlewick Wards, showing the Monument, from Strype's *Survey of London* (1720). (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 75

10 Detail from the "Agas Map" (c.1552). (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 79

11 Newcourt and Faithorne's plan of the West End (1658). (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 81

12 *A Plan of the City and Suburbs of LONDON as fortified by Order of PARLIAMENT in the Years 1642 & 1643.* (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 82

13 From Ogilby & Morgan's *Survey* (1676); detail (Smithfield, Bartholomew Close). (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 85

14 From Jefferys's edition (c.1749) of Morden & Lea's map (1720) based on Morgan's map (1682); elevations reinstated (and Moll's route around Newgate, chapter four). (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 87

15 From Strype's *Survey of London* (1720); Smithfield, Bartholomew Close. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 88

16 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); Southampton Square. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 92

17 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); King's Square (Soho Square). (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 93

18 From Ogilby and Morgan's map (1676): Drapers' Gardens; Pinners' Hall. (Courtesy of the Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.) 139

19 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); engraving of Lincoln's Inn. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 151

20 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); Covent Garden. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library) 160

21 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); St. James's House and Park. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 161

22 Leybourn's combined plan of the markets. (Document AF410, Courtesy of the Corporation of London Records Office.) 169

23 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); market spaces. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 171

24 From Strype's *Survey* (1720); The Royal Exchange. (Courtesy of Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library.) 172

25 From Daniel Defoe, *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, illustrated by George Cruikshank (London: David Bogue, 1853); Crusoe's hut. (By Permission of the British Library.) 200

26 From A. E. Richardson and C. Lovett Gill, *London Houses from 1660 to 1820* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1911); first floor plan of Ashburnham House, Westminster, designed by Inigo Jones. (By Permission of the British Library.) 208

27 "A new mapp of the City of London, much enlarged since the Great Fire in 1666," by Wenceslaus Hollar (1706). (By Permission of the British Library.) 219

28 "A New Plan of the City of London, Westminster, and Southwark," published for Stow's *Survey* [Strype], 1720. (By Permission of the British Library.) 220

Preface

In September 1666, the Great Fire destroyed four-fifths of the ancient commercial and topographic center of London within three days. All that had been familiar, settled, phenomenologically *given* was suddenly and entirely swept away; Londoners faced an emptiness that was not only physical and structural but also historical, social, financial, *conceptual*. In the decades that followed, the demands of rebuilding the city generated an intense and widespread interest in urban redefinition that shaped a new set of technologies and a new set of literatures. This study situates the literature of Restoration and early Augustan England (roughly 1666 to 1730) within the historical and cultural contexts of the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire, reading the marked topographical specificity of the plays, poems, and novels as part of a wider cultural network of responses to changing perceptions of urban space. I want to argue that the literatures of this period share with the technologies of surveying, mapping, rebuilding, and officially redescribing the city an attempt to reinvest a city emptied of nominal topographic familiarity with comprehensible meaning, to reattach some sort of signification to the signs, both literal and figurative, of the city's streets and structures.

Part I, "Describing London," focuses primarily on the technical and cultural texts of the Fire and rebuilding to show in what different but conceptually related ways the changing, fluid boundaries of London came to shape a new kind of cultural self-consciousness that would in turn shape new kinds of literary self-representation. Part I reads the different disciplinary documents – political, journalistic, architectural, cartographic, and topographical – precisely for their common conceptual concerns. I assume that the disciplinary differences will remain obvious enough; I am interested in the ways their rhetorical features *correspond* in narrative structure, vocabulary, and even in imagery. I argue that such correspondence supplies evidence first, for shared cultural awareness – that is, that similarities across disciplinary strategies indicate similarities in disciplinary intent – and second, for the basic argument of part II, that the specific literary genres of the Restoration and early eighteenth century are equally grounded, conceptually and structurally, in the cultural strategies of remapping, rebuilding, and renegotiating the boundaries of urban space.

Chapter one, "The Great Fire and rhetorics of loss," describes how the narratives of the Fire, reiterated through various forms of public discourse such as royal proclamations, newspapers, sermons, and poems, on the one hand begin the cultural process of spatial self-awareness and on the other formulate patterns of narrative structure and emphasis that cross generic and diachronic boundaries. The contours of loss were publicized; the narratives of loss consistently structure themselves around litanies of street names, the sense of fragmentation, the inadequacy of traditional metaphors, the disruption of social space. The various forms of cultural texts combine, in reporting and renarrativizing the Fire, to create a consistent rhetorical pattern of response that literally as well as figuratively lays the ground for future, more "literary" representations of and in the city.

Chapter two, "*Londini Renascenti*: the spaces of rebuilding," argues how both the exigencies and the documents of rebuilding – the idealized plans by Wren, Evelyn, and Newcourt, the massive surveying by Mills and Oliver, the property disputes in the Fire Courts, and the publicization of the local and general concerns of rebuilding in the city's newspapers – contributed to an awareness of the contours and the implications of spatial boundaries across a wide swathe of citizenry, from distant landlords to social tiers of tenants within the same house, from members of Court to members of the guilds, from parish clerk to parish widow. Spatial debates became a matter of truly public concern. How the City was finally to look – what should be preserved and recovered, what should be changed and improved – was not in the end decided by King or Parliament or Men of Leisured Science (although lengthily debated by all those), but in fact by the cumulative pressures, desires, debates, and decisions of individual citizens, the tenants, the merchants, the shopkeepers, the tradespeople – the taverners and poulterers and brewers and chandlers, as much as the landlords and officials. Through such cultural reconstruction the contours of London both large and local became themselves possessive property, the conscious concern of virtually all Londoners. Thus, although most of my evidence and most of my argument have to do with texts, and therefore with those who wrote and read them, those texts also directly concerned, sometimes described, and always imply not just those whose historical responses, in the words of Pocock, "were verbalized, recorded, and presented," but also the "*mentalité* of the silent and inarticulate majority" (*Virtue, Commerce, History*, 18) whose voices appear (often verbatim) in the newspaper accounts, the Fire Courts, the trial minutes, the surveying records, the parish records, the many documents of cultural recovery.

Chapter three, "Redrawing London: maps and texts," charts the visual and verbal changes in spatial self-perception of the City. Both the strategies of cartography and the grammars of topography changed in response to the Fire and its demands for recovery, and reveal a perception of urban space that itself is changed, become abstract, modern, as much a product of social and economic practices and fluctuations as of physical structures and relations. Very few maps of

London before the Fire were drawn by Londoners, and such as existed (based primarily on Tudor map-stock) were largely bird's-eye-views, luxuriantly detailed elevations which privileged the viewer's sense of spatial comprehensibility over topographical accuracy. After the Fire, however, scores of new maps by London mapmakers appeared, and they unanimously favor the topographical comprehensiveness of the two-dimensional groundplan, which enables the accurate visual recovery of even the most obscure courts and alleys. The dense topographical anarchy of the medieval street patterns was thus stringently recovered rather than (as before) politely refigured. The textual topographies, on the other hand, mark a slightly different sense of change. As with the maps, before the Fire there were few published descriptions of London printed in London, and those few were based almost entirely on John Stow's 1598 *Survey of London*. Such topographies described the City as much in terms of history as in spatial structure, and their grammars were the grammars of stasis, built on forms of "to be" and resting on verbs of immotion and possession: "there sits," "there stands," "there lies"; "here have you," "here have we." Topographies after the Fire, however, are both more numerous and more "active," borrowing explicitly a technical vocabulary from new surveying strategies and, in response to the increasing anxieties about the expanding *new* building in the "out-parts," working out ever more comprehensive ways of capturing and containing the sense of the rapidly changing city for its own inhabitants.

The text which closes part I and leads directly into part II is Defoe's *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-26), because in the London section of the *Tour* Defoe comes closest to explicitly articulating what Henri Lefebvre calls "the production of space," the modern sense of space as abstract, shifting, culturally rather than simply physically produced. Defoe creates a surveyor's "Line" that *travels* with the energy and ingenuity of his novelistic characters around the contours of the city, creating as much as marking them, and offering a sense of spatial awareness that employs and celebrates elasticity, that replaces a view with a tour, and moves from description into narrative, into what Michel de Certeau calls a storied sense of space.

Defoe provides an apt transition into part II partly because he so explicitly connects cultural, disciplinary, and generic concerns from the 1660s to the 1730s. As Richard Helgerson has argued in *Forms of Nationhood*, "an atlas and a lengthy poem [can] be considered points on a single line – a line that also passes through an odd assortment of other texts, descriptive and antiquarian . . . [because] they are bound by a dense net of intertextual relations. Nor are the relations only between texts. They are also between people" (131). Throughout this book I make (and find) explicit and implicit connections between maps and poems, architectural treatises and comedies, topographies and novels, partly because the different genres share conceptual and rhetorical strategies, and partly because the mapsellers were also booksellers (Ogilby, Morden), the mapmakers were fablists (Hollar, Ogilby), the urban planners were Royal Society Fellows (Evelyn, Wren, Hooke), the architects and builders were writers (Wren, North, Pratt, Barbon), the playwrights were architects (Vanbrugh), the playwrights were Royal Society Fellows (Dryden), the playwrights satirized Royal Society Fellows (Shadwell, Behn, Centlivre), the poets satirized Royal Society Fellows (Swift), the novelists were spatial planners (Defoe), and above all, the most obvious: all were concerned with rebuilding or rewriting the city, and all were, in one way or another, at one end or the other, inhabitants of the city.

Defoe's works dominate the second part of the book, "Inhabiting London," because he does articulate so well and in so many generic forms the concerns and strategies of managing the many new forms of modern urban space in its various public and private forms. But I also look closely at how the urban poetry of Dryden, Pope, Gay, and Swift, and the formal and conceptual strategies of Restoration drama, participate in this larger literary reoccupation of London. Part II privileges literary texts and reads them as various generic manifestations of the same larger cultural attempt to reinvest place name with meaning, to remap social structures within spatial boundaries, to chart, contain, and inhabit the strange new spaces of the modern city. Defoe's urban novels and novelistic treatises most consistently employ the innovations in cultural and technical strategies within his narrative innovations. I take care to contextualize these works within and against the substantial body of pre-Fire works that also center on London (the Jacobean city plays, the London tavern songs, the occasional poems, the cony-catching manuals), illustrating the ways in which I see the post-Fire London literature as more specific, more concentrated, and more jointly involved not in negotiating within *given* space but in discovering and defining what had become a sort of *terra incognita*: some things could no longer be taken for granted; they needed to be *asserted*.

At one point I had considered making genre itself the chapter-boundary: how do poems, plays, novels, *as* genres, separately represent and negotiate the urban space? But I decided finally to organize the literary material spatially, as I had in some ways ordered the cultural material generically, because of course different works often shape and imaginatively occupy the various spaces of London in a number of ways at once, and it became more interesting to me to study the ways that poems, plays, and novels approached the street spaces, the public buildings, the houses, and the dark corners of the city.

Chapter four, "The art of writing the streets of London," marks the most obvious and insistent connection with the other cultural material of the rebuilding in the nearly ubiquitous literary fascination with London streets. Street space in London before the Fire had been generally subordinate, liminal space designed for (or, at least "sustaining") transition, transportation – a physical configuration that either helped or hindered passage from one place to another, but which was literally and physically overshadowed by the combined domestic and commercial buildings of the City. But analogically like the cartographic changes – designed to recover the tiniest topographic corners of the vanished London – poems, plays, and novels from the 1670s to the 1720s not only recover and repeat the litanies of street names, they explore them as social and experiential territories, defining their cultural as well as physical implications. Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*, Pope's *Dunciad*, and Gay's *Trivia* trace the literary as well as social demographies of the city, as has been persuasively explored by Aubrey Williams and Pat Rogers, among others; but I emphasize their context of guidebooks and builders' manuals doing the same thing, and try to show that not only does Augustan poetic form work to contain contemporary urban content, it is also created by and lends new energies to the shifting meanings and ambiguous possibilities of the newly recovered streets. Prose fiction of the period offers a different avenue of approach. From Richard Head's *The English Rogue* (1667), Ned Ward's *The London Spy* (1698-1700), and Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), we see that the streets of London, carefully named and almost literally mapped, become alternative habitations, sometimes safer than houses; the intimate knowledge of these streets means the difference between freedom and arrest. Their new fictional strategies repeople the streets, suggesting ways of navigation through the art of narration.

Chapter five looks at "New narratives of public spaces: parks and shops" as sites of social and economic exchange, and of psychological and phenomenological *change*. With the obvious institutional structures of St. Paul's and the Exchange destroyed and very publicly rebuilt (in both the practical and the conceptual sense), how had the sense of public space changed? Much of early Restoration drama spends most of its setting-time conspicuously *outside* the area of rebuilding, in the parks (St. James's, Hyde Park, the Mall) – in the public spaces of London which had *not* changed, which had no need of reinvestment, which offered a psychological refuge to an audience apparently interested in distancing itself from topographic unfamiliarity, particularly from that looming economic and social power of the City. The later plays spend more time in the rebuilt City, eventually contributing to rather than satirizing its growing gentrification. Meanwhile, in the City itself, trade was resettling and the shops opened for business. Defoe's *The Complete English Tradesman* (1725) creates a sort of how-to manual for the shopkeeper – who increasingly attends the theater – that in proto-novelistic moments stocks shops and warehouses with individualized characters and supplies a living realized context for those moments in Augustan poetry when, as in Swift's "Description of a City Shower" (1710), daggled females flee from the rain to cheapen goods in shops. The mercantile world of the City is abandoned by drama but peopled by narrative.

With the rebuilding, and particularly with speculators like Nicholas Barbon making affordable private houses that *look* like the new houses of the wealthy, along with a wider European move from "civic community to bourgeois privacy" (as Lawrence Manley argues in *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*), the perception of private space in the city also shifts. In chapter six, "Narratives of private space: churches, houses, and novels," I look briefly at the rebuilt Anglican churches and their role in Restoration drama as sites of *sexualized* space, and then more closely at the Dissenting churches forced into concealment by religious persecution. Although Dissenting meeting-houses rarely appear in imaginative literature in this period (except as satiric targets in drama), Defoe's early experience with their social and structural vulnerability and necessary architectural deceptions clearly shaped his fictional creations of private spaces in the domestic structures of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Roxana* (1724); all his works, from the *Tour* and the *Tradesman* to his urban novels, are concerned with "an Inside answerable to the Outside," or the other way around – with a private space that looks "nothing like a Habitation."

Finally in this chapter I explore the relation between the changes in cultural perceptions of urban space and the emergence of the novel as an extended narrative that visualizes and inhabits forms of public and more emphatically private space. I argue that the early English novel is a particularly spatial exploration of urban change, and that understanding its cultural contexts of destruction, rebuilding, and redefinition recovers some of the contemporary power and resonance of street names, place lists, public places, private spaces, and the vast netting of topographical allusion. The novel, like other new and newly adapted kinds of texts at the time, both produced and was produced by the cultural reorganization of space.

Any attempt at comprehensiveness naturally invites a search for what's left out, and specialists in all the disciplines and genres that I'm trying to bring together here will find significant gaps. Beyond the disciplinary categories of London's cartography, architecture, and history in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, all of which could be thickened by a book of their own, the issues of gender, class, and race may seem to some be under-represented here. I have addressed gender and class (and some ethnic and religious) considerations throughout, but I have privileged space itself as a concept, partly because as a conceptual issue it has only recently begun to receive critical literary attention in the wake of new theories in cultural geography, and partly because in its historical appearance in London in 1666 it began as a wider cultural moment of more primitive *human* concern. My literary approach is largely phenomenological, trying to recover and understand what it might have meant to a tenant or a poet of London to suffer the loss of an experiential *given*, to confront the various abrupt intersections and transformations of physically and socially determined spaces. I hope what I have put together offers a persuasive structure within which to fit much of the period's more traditional literary patterns and idiosyncracies, and I hope as I have gone along that I have resisted the temptation to explain *everything* in terms of spatial reconstruction – that the more usual elements of explanation (political, religious, philosophical, social, technological) are in no danger of my hubristically displacing them. I want this book to add another dimension to our understanding of the shape, the concerns, the common ground, of Restoration and early Augustan literature, and to see them as part of yet another larger cultural network of assumptions and experiences in the historical production and experience and expression of a world.

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PART I

DESCRIBING LONDON

CHAPTER ONE

THE GREAT FIRE AND RHETORICS OF LOSS

> [T]he vast yron Chaines of the Cittie streetes . . . were many of them mealted, & reduc'd to cinders by the vehement heats: nor was I yet able to passe through any of the narrower streets, but kept the widest . . . The bielanes & narrower streetes were quite fill'd up with rubbish, nor could one have possibly knowne where he was, but by the ruine of some church, or hall, that had some remarkable towre or pinacle remaining. John Evelyn, *Diary*, September 7, 1666[1]

> *Entring* the *City* once *exactly known*,
> *Thalia* found her *marks* were *gone*. [Simon Ford], *Londons Remains*, 1667[2]

> Tis changd, without a Metaphor, I may say
> From *Terr' del foego* to *Incognita*.
> Elkanah Settle, *An Elegie On the late Fire And Ruines of London*, 1667[3]

From his walk through the hot ruins of London, John Evelyn marked in his diary the conditions of fundamental change, of terrifying difference: the ancient, familiar, topographically stable city had become inaccessible and unknowable within the space of four days. The streets were filled with rubbish but emptied of meaning; the city once exactly known was signless. The intricate, irregular webbing of narrow medieval streets had always had at least the epistemological advantage of historically denotative place names, as Stow had patiently pointed out in 1598:[4] "Iuie lane, so called of Iuie growing on the walles of the Prebend almes houses" (*Survey*, 277); "Loue lane, so called of wantons" (*Survey*, 236); the Fire began in the place "from *empty'd Tripes* call'd *Pudding-Lane*" (Ford, *Londons Remains*, 10). J. Hillis Miller has recently explored the power of topography in the psychological and cultural coextension of place name with place meaning: "Place names seem to be intrinsic to the places they name. The names are motivated. By a species of Cratylism they tell what the places are like. The place is carried into the name and becomes available to us there. You can get to the place by way of its name."[5] But in medieval London, "seeming" *was* being: place names were functionally intrinsic to – not just traditionally associated with – the places they named.[6] What happens to a city, to a culture, when its oldest, most reliable signs suddenly and completely lose their referents? When the defensive chains of the streets are quite literally as well as figuratively melted, when alien new space must be navigated by deformed spatial referents, by architectural ruins, by the dreadful contingency of a *piece* of public edifice remaining, and remaining identifiable?

The answer is, in part, a cultural reconception of space. What had been taken for granted, as obvious everyday background both private and public, social and commercial – as more or less static, assumed, phenomenologically *given* – was suddenly foregrounded, its impact in shaping daily life made apparent by absence, its power by loss. Merleau-Ponty defines space not as "the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible."[7] The aftermath of the Fire produced a shift in the cultural perception of space from that of setting to that of enabling context; when the city was destroyed, its whole abstract network of associative meaning disappeared and a new relational context for living had to be constructed. Edward Soja, among others,[8] has argued for a necessarily dialectical relationship between physical and experiential space, between where we live and how we live in it. Both material and ideational space are socially produced, and conversely, spatiality can never fully be separated from physical and psychological spaces; "Social life is never entirely free of such restrictive impingements or the physical friction of distance."[9] The rhetorics of loss generated by the Fire, in official narratives, sermons, diaries, and poems, all share to some degree a heightened spatial consciousness in imagery and expression, an awareness of a new kind of conceptual emptiness in the ruined physical spaces, of boundaries previously invisible and now transgressed, of structures previously assumed and now collapsed, of spaces once fixed and stable, now shifting and treacherous.

Perspective is everything, of course; to the Elizabethans, London was already growing too fast for fancy, too unwieldy for commerce or aesthetics, and laws were passed repeatedly and unsuccessfully to keep boundaries fixed and populations stable. Spiro Kostof notes that any city, "however perfect its initial shape, is never complete, never at rest. Thousands of witting and unwitting acts every day alter its lines in ways that are perceptible only over a certain stretch of time. City walls are pulled down and filled in; once rational grids are slowly obscured; a slashing diagonal is run through close-grained residential neighborhoods."[10] But: perspective is everything. London, though never topographically rational and no more than others at rest, had seemed – at least in nostalgic retrospect to post-Fire writers – by virtue of its age, size, history, and even its idiosyncratic configurations, in some sense known, open, available, part of the psychological and cultural horizon. The narratives of the Fire and the rebuilding generically and conceptually grope for new ways to express loss, to define emptiness, to articulate need, to recover and define an old London in the process of defining and constructing a new one – to find "the means whereby the position of things becomes [once again] possible" – and the possibility whereby the position of things becomes meaningful.

"Londoners," of course, is a problematic term. On a very basic level I do mean virtually all the inhabitants of London, regardless of class or trade or gender; one of the central interests of this study is precisely the common conceptual and rhetorical ground that is immediately and then selectively shared by widely different genres and even disciplines. But I will take care not to oversimplify, and to distinguish social difference when it becomes relevant. The different genres often speak to different audiences, of course; a broadside ballad describing the Fire spells things out differently from a Latin poem, and a surveying manual and a topographic guide address widely different needs. But the Fire was perhaps distinctive in its levelling properties, at least for crucial moments – experiential and rhetorical.

The Fire literally and figuratively levelled London at a crucially important historical and cultural moment in the mid-seventeenth century. England, lagging behind the Continent, had been poised on the edge of political, economic, social, aesthetic, and urban change: the monarchy had been restored and Charles II was encouraging new forms of arts and sciences; trading power and therefore merchants' power was increasing; Inigo Jones had earlier begun to open up his baroque piazzas in the west and to open up or at least prepare popular as well as aristocratic appreciation for architectural change; and London was becoming what Kostof defines as an industrial rather than pre-industrial city, with urban ownership divorced from urban land use, and that land use increasingly specialized and segregated, both commercially and socially.[11] By destroying four-fifths of the historical, commercial, topographic, and imaginative center of London within four days, the Fire threw existing and potential changes into calcined relief, bringing to a culturally universal level the history and meaning and shape of London to Londoners.

But the Fire also specifically heightened a larger sense of cultural, religious, and political insecurity. Many writers of London before the Fire had already remarked on the changes or depredations to the urban landscape made by the Commonwealth, such as the pulling down of the Cross in Cheapside in 1644. The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 seemed to promise vast social and cultural changes for the City, not the least of which would be a tense return of the Church of England as the state religion, battling and then persecuting the Dissenters on the one hand, and the Roman Catholics on the other. England was also fighting the Dutch for trade supremacy, and in the spring of 1665 the Dutch ships sailed into the Thames (as Neander and his friends watch in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatick Poesy*) – to be defeated, but with the price of the *sense* of invasion. And then the plague: over 97,000 killed, and all the city dislocated as people attempted to escape from or hide in their houses. The whole context of city life in London in the years immediately before the Fire was mined with anxiety, disruption, instability, indeterminacy. The Fire completed the job with a devastating literalness, laying bare the psychological as well as the physical structures that needed to be rebuilt.

The shape and structure of the old City will emerge cumulatively and comparatively throughout this study. This work will be archaeological to some extent in Foucault's sense, concerned with "discourse in its own volume" and attempting "to define discourses in their specificity,"[12] sifting through contemporary and synchronic responses to the Fire and reconstructing the London of the past through the eyes of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The mass of published and private narratives of the Fire records a moment of widespread spatial and cultural self-analysis, re-articulations of urban self-definition, not only by courtiers and administrators, but also by gentlemen and clergy, Anglicans and Nonconformists, poets "high" and "low," and, through various legal and civic documents, by those often silenced by or in literary texts. J. G. A. Pocock has defined as one of the jobs of the historian to "study the processes by which humans acquire new means of verbalization and new ways of using those they already possess."[13] He argues that "the perception of the new is carried out over time, and in the form of a debate about time; the historical animal deals with experience by discussing old ways of perceiving it, as a necessary preliminary to erecting new ways, which then serve as means of perceiving both the new experience and the old modes of perception" (*Virtue, Commerce, History*, 29). The Great Fire, according to the nineteenth-century Laureate Robert Southey, "inspired more bad poetry than was happily destroyed by it"[14] – but another way of putting it, perhaps, is that the Great Fire reworked old and generated new rhetorics and vocabularies of loss, and in the demands of the rebuilding, produced yet another level of conceptualizing and shaping space, and of articulating spatial discourse within the contexts of political, economic, social, religious, and aesthetic assumptions, expectations, and changes.

For Londoners in 1666, the perception of the new was indeed carried out over time, but that "new" and those "perceptions" were historically and psychologically gargantuan, far too uncontainable in their first instances for either individual or institution. Too many distinctions seemed to collapse: the streets were closed, emptied of buildings and refilled with rubble, their defensive chains melted; the privacy of houses, the sanctuaries of churches, the institutionalized spaces of the Company Halls, all alike were blown open and lost; rich and poor spilled homeless into Moorfields; the very fabric of urban and social meaning was undone into topographic incoherence.

This chapter will look at the earliest accounts of the Fire – in newspapers, proclamations, sermons, and poems – and explore how these different genres combine to produce a common ground of rhetorical response in narrative structure, descriptive vocabulary, and imagery. Although I will note relevant generic differences in the various narratives of the Fire, I am more concerned in part I to set out cultural and rhetorical similarities, leaving more explicit generic examinations for part II. I will look first at the different genres of loss – official narratives in the *London Gazette*, royal proclamations, sermons, and poems, analyzing their rhetorical patterns as they represent the city first as a whole collapsed and then as fragments to be interpreted. In place etymologies, in lists, and in literalized metaphors, the stories of the Fire find ways to recover and reassert boundaries, to reinvest traditional imagery with local relevance, to lay foundations for refamiliarization – common images of loss become common narratives of loss. I will then look at three spatial categories of loss – public space, private space, and their mediators, the streets – to set up the cultural and conceptual contexts for the literary rebuilding of the city explored in part II. Like the newspapers, proclamations, and sermons, the poems, plays, and novels of the Restoration will often focus intensely on defining what was lost; yet in the very process of recovering the old, the rhetorics of loss (and later, rebuilding) found themselves in new spaces of their own making.

Genres of loss: official narratives, sermons, and poems

The history of the Fire includes all the narratives of itself; all its retellings by definition reshape the events.[15] I want to emphasize the literalness of that "reshaping." The "official" narratives – the account of the Fire in the *London Gazette*, the structures of response in the royal proclamations, and the local voices captured in the court proceedings – set up formal and conceptual patterns of spatial emphasis that will come to be repeated and refined throughout other genres in terms of the loss and reconfiguration of public spaces, private spaces, and those peculiar intermediaries, the streets. The different forms and demands of various genres shaped their common conceptual ground of spatial anxiety, variously voicing and imaging an apocalypse of division, of shattering, of dismembering, of a city seen suddenly in parts, and simultaneously articulating the human struggle to deal with the new, to make things conceptually, physically, linguistically whole.

Official accounts of the Fire emerge both from the *London Gazette* of that week (Number 85, September 3–10, 1666), and from Charles's assorted proclamations to deal with the Fire. The *London Gazette*, the earliest regular "newspaper" in England, was at that time one of only two news sheets permitted to be published since Cromwell had suppressed all newspapers in 1655, and was basically the mouthpiece of the government.[16] The *Gazette* offers a "factual" account in the sense of the day, which includes a gesture to God for theoretical considerations (determining whether the Fire was an "unhappy chance" or "the heavy hand of God upon us for our sins") and to the King for practical ones ("His Majesties care was most signal in this occasion"). But the *Gazette* also gives a succinct and conceptually telling account that moves in and out of impersonal documentary prose about the temporal and spatial progress of the Fire.

The *Gazette*'s narrative begins with an interruption: "The ordinary course of this Paper having been interrupted by a sad and lamentable accident of Fire lately hapned in the City of *London*." That sense of narrative as well as experiential interruption underlies various forms of perceived physical, social, and spatial disruption. I will quote extensively from the account because it sets up what will become three dominant rhetorical emphases in narrative accounts of the Fire in (1) assigning spatial significance (2) locating spatial consequences, and (3) fastening on spatial boundaries:

> On the second instant at one of the clock in the Morning there hapned to break out a sad deplorable Fire, in *Pudding-lane*, neer *New Fishstreet*, which falling out at that hour of the night, and in a quarter of the town so close built with wooden pitched houses, spread itself so far before day, and with such distraction to the inhabitants and Neighbours, that . . . this lamentable Fire in a short time became too big to be mastred by any Engines or working neer it . . . spreading it self up to *Grace-church street*, and downwards from *Cannon-street* to the Water-side as far as the *Three Cranes* in the *Vintrey*.
>
> The people in all parts about it distracted by the vastness of it, and their particular care to carry away their Goods, many attempts were made to prevent the spreading of it by pulling down Houses, and making great Intervals, but all in vain, the Fire seising upon the Timber and Rubbish and so continuing itself, even through those spaces, and raging in a bright flame all Monday and Tuesday . . . By the favour of God the Wind slackned a little on Tuesday night & the Flames meeting with Brick-buildings at the Temple, by little and little it was observed to lose its force on that side, so that on Wednesday morning we began to hope well . . . [A] stop was put to it at the *Temple-church*, neer *Holborn-bridge*, *Pie-corner*, *Aldersgate*, *Cripplegate*, neer the lower end of *Coleman-street*, at the end of *Basing-hall-street*, by the *Postern*, at the *Standard* in *Cornhill*, at the Church in *Fanchurch-street*, neer *Clothworkers Hall* in *Mincing-lane*, at the middle of *Mark-lane*, and at the *Tower-dock*.

First, the physical impact of the Fire is assigned a causal relation to particular urban spaces, emphasizing the significant details of local space ("a quarter of the town so close built"); second, that collapse of physical space prefigures, causes, and contains a temporary social and psychological collapse ("distracted by the vastness"); third, street names emerge as talismanic, simultaneously defining boundaries and charting boundlessness.

Place becomes premise (in both senses) of the Fire, functioning as a source for its physical, moral, and political explanations. The *London Gazette* notes that "this Fire happened in a part of the Town where tho the Commodities were not very rich, yet they were so bulky that they could not well be removed, so that the inhabitants of that part where it first began have sustained very great loss." Pudding Lane, where the Fire started, east towards the Tower and close to the river, was an area of closely built wooden houses and warehouses stuffed with oil, flax, wines, and other highly combustible materials, as Simon Ford's poem notes: "what was the *Nurse* of *Trade*, becomes its *Fate*."[17] The overhanging roofs nearly met over the narrow, twisting streets. The area had very little visible or open public space; the close commercial fabric literally did provide the fuel that sustained the vast power of the fire. Edward Waterhouse (1619–1670), a Royal Society Fellow (though described by Anthony Wood as "a cock-brain'd man" and by the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a "fantastical preacher"), centers his *Short Narrative Of the late Dreadful Fire in London* (1667) on the particulars of that commercial space:

> This little pittyful [Pudding] Lane, crowded in behind little *East-cheap* on the West St. *Buttolph's-lane* on the East, and *Thames-street* on the South of it, was the place where the Fire originated, and that forwarded by a Bakers stack of wood in the house, and by all the neighbouring houses, which were as so many matches to kindle and carry it on to its havock; there the Fire meeting with the Star Inn on *Fish-street-hill* on the back of it, and that Inn full of Hay, and other combustibles, and with the houses opposite to it, and closed with it at the top, burned three ways at once, into *Thames-street*, (the lodge of all combustibles, Oyl, Hemp, Flax, Pitch, Tar, Cordage, Hops, Wines, Brandies, and other materials favourable to Fire; all heavy goods being in ware-houses there neer the waterside, and all the wharfs for Coale, Timber, Wood, &c. being in a line consumed by it unto *Fish-street-hill*. (45–47)

Waterhouse's narrative, like so many Fire narratives, underscores the fact that place is a condition of story; that both the pattern and the narration of the Fire's destruction depend intimately on the topographical contours of the city, themselves shaped historically into social, political, and physical idiosyncracies.

Most narratives look for providential or political – moral or conspiratorial – causes for the Fire. Yet these too are usually topographically located and defined. A number of the sermons (most but not all by Anglican ministers) are fond of attaching blame to Moorfields in particular; Robert Elborough ("Minister of the Parish that was lately St. *Laurence Pountney*") thinks the Fire was brought on by the breaking of Sabbath by walking in Moorfields and Hyde Park;[18] so does Thomas Brooks ("late Preacher of the Word at S. *Margarets*"), who apostrophizes:

> Ah, *London! London!* were there none within nor without thy Walls that made light of this Institution of God and that did offer violence to the Queen of days by their looseness and prophaneness, by their sitting at their doors, by their walking in *Moor-fields*, by their sportings and wrestlings there.[19]

Moorfields itself lay just north of London Wall, a popular pleasure ground from the sixteenth century, in which, according to Stow's version of Fitzstephen, "the youths are exercised in leaping, dancing, shooting, wrastling, casting the stone, and practising their shields" (Stow, *Survey*, 85). The "suburb without the walls" had long had an uneasy status and lay in easy moral as well as physical proximity to the cause of the Fire. Politically, on the other hand, the area where the Fire began was heavily populated with French and Dutch tradespeople, a number of whom were Roman Catholic, and so place seemed ideologically as well as physically inflammable. Catholics, along with Quakers and Nonconformists, had been predicting a fiery wrath of God on the Sodom-and-Gomorrah that was London in the years before the Fire; the ground was prepared for the public presumption of a *plot*.[20] In a not uncommon response to panic, natives viewed foreigners more than ever as intruders, as aliens intent on changing and even destroying familiar, lived, English space, as a (perhaps apocryphal) contemporary Dutch account notes: "All foreigners alike were held to be guilty . . . A poor woman walking in Moorfields, who had chickens in her apron, was seized by the mob, who declared that she carried fireballs, and not only did they violently abuse her, but they beat her with sticks and cut off her breasts."[21] Although Charles quickly issued proclamations denying foreign sabotage, going in person to calm the crowds, and the later trials initiated to discover any treasonous human agency found nothing of substance, the undercurrents of fear and suspicion increasingly exacerbated one bitter xenophobic division in the moment of – and presumably because of – other traditional collapses.

The *Gazette*'s narrative outlines the consequences of spatial disruption in terms of at least temporary social and psychological collapse within and without the walls of London. The emphasis on disruption and distraction, for example, even within the structure of the narrative itself, in its various repetitions, gives a public voice to the stunned confusion of individuals and of the populace as a whole: by the end of the second paragraph quoted above, the objective "people" have slid into the subjective "we" (who "began to hope"). The account emphasizes – indeed, distractingly repeats – the distraction of the inhabitants and the jumble made of the city not only by the Fire but also by the efforts to escape and quench it ("with such distraction to the inhabitants" and "the people in all parts about it distracted by the vastness of it"). Sense of time, sense of identity, were notoriously shaken by the loss of spatial address: the most famous marker of time himself, Samuel Pepys, who circumscribed his day within rhythms bounded by watch and routine, wonders: "it is a strange thing to see how long this time did look since Sunday, having been alway full of variety of actions, and little sleep, that it looked like a week or more. And I had forgot almost the day of the week."[22] And away in Oxford, the antiquary Anthony Wood recorded:

> The fire. Soe suddenly did it come and therby caused such distraction and severall forgat their names when they with their money or goods under their armes were examined by the watch that then immediatly was appointed. Others that had occasion to write letters a day or 2 after it ended, forgat the day of the mounth and the mounth of the year.[23]

Familiar social boundaries were momentarily swept away with the physical and psychological ones. Those "people" who turn into "we" in the *Gazette* account, of various ranks and conditions, "were necessitated to remove themselves and goods into the open fields, where they were forced to continue some time." The temporary spatial collapse of social divisions remarked in this official narrative is continually pointed to in letters, diaries, poems, and sermons; Evelyn notes, for example: "I then went towards Islington, & high-gate, where one might have seene two hundred thousand people of all ranks & degrees, dispersed, & laying along by their heapes of what they could save from the *Incendium*, deploring their losse" (Evelyn, *Diary*, III:461). The spectre of such visible social disintegration persistently haunts all immediate genres of the narrative accounts of the Fire, and according to those accounts, all levels of London consciousness. Part of the (unsuccessful) rebuilding rhetoric would become the spatial resorting of class, stabilizing these collapsed social boundaries through redefining place.

The identification and recovery of boundaries in all forms of reconstruction – narrative, social, architectural – always begins and often ends with the topographical. Streets constitute boundaries, and on one level the *Gazette*'s litany of streets at the end of the quoted excerpt marks the containment of the Fire. But at the same time the streets now measured the extent of the uncontained, and the perception of that extent. What had for centuries sorted out the known now marked the preliminary boundaries of a temporal and spatial unknown. On September 4, Evelyn writes: "The burning still rages; I went now on horse back, & it was now gotten as far as the Inner Temple; all *Fleetstreete*, old baily, Ludgate hill, Warwick Lane, Newgate, Paules Chaine, Wattling-streete now flaming & most of it reduc'd to ashes" (Evelyn, *Diary*, III:454). One London citizen, Henry Griffith, described the Fire to his kinsman with a list large enough to contain both the *Gazette*'s and Evelyn's – large enough to contain all the sense of the unknown in the vast detail of the previously known:

> It has burnt all from the Towre to the Temple, and part of that too along the Thames side, carrying before itt the Custome House, Billingsgate, London Bridge, Coleharbour, Queenehith, Baynard's Castle, Black and White Fryers, from east to west. Northwards itt burnt to Cripple and Mooregate, and something further to Moor Fields, carrying before itt Cannon and Lumbart Street, Cornehill, Exchange, Bartholomew Lane, Lothbury, and most of the Buildings towards Moor Fields, Guildhall, Aldermanbury, Basinghall, and Colman-street. North-westward it burnt the Poultry, Cheapside, Bread and Friday streets, Fishstreet, Doctors' Commons, Paul's Church-yard, Newgate Market, Catteaton street, Wood and Milk streets, Frost [Foster] Lane, St. Martens to and from Aldersgate, Pye Corner to Smithfield, Holborn to the bridge, Ludgate-hill, Old Bailey, the Fleet and Fleet street to the Church, all Shooe and part of Fetter lanes. Northeastward, Threadneedle street, Augustine Fryers, part of Bishopsgate streete, Gratia [Gracechurch] street, Eastcheape, Fenchurch street, almost to Marke Lane End a good way past the Church, part of Lime street, Minsing Lane, Tower street, and most of Marke Lane, together with all lanes, alleys, streets, and parish churches within this compasse.[24]

Over the next sixty years "all lanes, alleys, streets," along with yards, closes, greens, squares, markets, courts, rows, rents, "or any other Place, by what Name soever call'd,"[25] will increasingly dominate the vocabulary of topographic as well as literary efforts to reclaim and remap the lost city, from the guides of Edward Hatton and William Stow to the satires of Ned Ward and the novels of Daniel Defoe.

Charles II's proclamations and declarations essentially recapitulate the categories of concern and expression of the newspaper, although with some interesting generic differences. Declarations and proclamations by their very form work differently from (but may include) narrative reports. The monarch declares or proclaims what is; or rather, the act of monarchical declaration creates truth. There's an idealism of fixity in that authority. For example, one of Charles's first proclamations, *A proclamation for restoring goods imbezzll'd during the late fire and since* (September 19, 1666), marks the confusion of persons and property and *commands* restoration. But at this point in time Charles's declarations and proclamations are doubly destabilized, partly by the magnitude of what needs pronouncing upon, and partly because the monarchy had been so newly reestablished, and on such different, ideologically unsettled ground. A proclamation in such a case shifts sideways in power and weight, becoming more a representation of things past or things redesired or things reconstituted, but itself only the form of the familiar, the form of authority, a signifier not quite firmly reattached to its signified, and all the seams showing – as the offer of a reward in this proclamation to bolster the royal decree seems to suggest.[26] Yet various forms of evidence have persuaded historians of the Fire that Charles, whatever his daily habits and aptitudes as a ruler might be, acted promptly, efficiently, and responsibly in organizing the efforts to put out the Fire and to rebuild the City. His recorded voice is thus granted a practical and moral if not an ideological or phenomenological authority. A month after the Fire, when he calls for a commemorative fast throughout the country, he offers the nation a narrative that in retelling the story of the Fire re-marks the boundaries of spatial collapse:

> Whereas it hath pleased Almighty God by a most lamentable and devouring Fire . . . to lay waste the greatest part of the City of *London* within the Walls, and some part of the Suburbs, whereof more then fourscore Parishes, and all the Houses, Churches, Chappels, Hospitals, and other the great and Magnificent Buildings of pious or publique use which were within that Circuit, are now brought into Ashes and become one ruinous Heap: A Visitation so dreadful, that scarce any Age or Nation hath ever seen or felt the like . . . [A]ll men ought to look upon it as a Judgment upon the whole Nation, and to humble themselves accordingly.[27]

His interpretive structure parallels many of the didactic declarations of the sermons and poems, and is intended among other things to transform spatial collapse into social unity and spiritual integrity: what levels London into one ruinous heap ought figuratively to collapse national pride; what literally levels houses, churches, chapels, and hospitals simultaneously levels former social distinctions: "Many Persons and Families, who were formerly able to give great relief to others, are now become great objects of Charity themselves." The king posits a conceptually *whole* moral to make narrative sense of these shattered parts.

The *London Gazette* offers a public voice of authority; Charles presumably speaks for himself in his declarations; the records of the court proceedings in which Catholics were tried for starting the Fire, on the other hand, record not so much a witch-hunt as a chorus of local, confused, and indeterminate voices. The documents in the *True and Faithful Account*,[28] which comprises "Informations touching the Insolency of Popish Priests and Jesuites; and the Increase of Popery, brought to the Honourable Committee appointed by the Parliament for that purpose," have been systematically dismissed as a source of significant historical evidence – Bell calls them "the statements of chatterboxes" (*Great Fire*, xii). Yet the legal narratives give local (if secondhand) voice to people besides the educated and the literary. The committee's accounts offer a series of internal miniature fire-narratives, the individual human experiences of particular houses and streets set within the larger physical and narrative spaces of the city. We hear with a sense of realism if not with a guarantee of accuracy the voices of different people caught in particular local dramas.

The committee appointed to investigate the origins of the Fire opens its account with its own exploratory narrative – *A True and Faithful Account of the Several Informations . . . [concerning] the late Dreadful Burning of the City of London* (1667) that supplies a different local perspective on space, using units of measurement rather than names of streets to compute limits and to reinforce the importance of the spatial references in its contents:

> Upon the second of *September* 1666, the Fire began in *London*, at one *Farryners* House, a Baker in *Pudding-Lane*, between the hours of one and two in the morning, and continued burning until the sixth of *September* following; consuming, as by the Surveyors appears in print, three hundred seventy three Acres within the Walls of the City of *London*, and sixty three Acres three Roods without the Walls. There remains seventy five Acres three Roods yet standing within the Walls unburnt. Eighty nine Parish Churches, besides Chappels, burnt. Eleven Parishes within the Walls left standing. Houses burnt, thirteen thousand two hundred. Per *Jonas Moore*, *Ralph Gatrix* Surveyors.

The opening Fire narrative is followed by dozens of "eyewitness" accounts of Catholic "confessions," either in wish or in deed. Each of these accounts is firmly located topographically, as, for example, "That near *West-Smithfield* in *Cheek-Lane*, there was a man taken in the very Act of Firing a House" (*Faithful Account*, 19), or "Mr. *Oakes*, a Physician dwelling in *Shadwell*, Informed, That a little after the Burning of *London*, one Mr. *Carpenter* a Minister, came to his house on *Tower-Wharf*, and spake to him to this purpose" (*Faithful Account*, 29). The topographical details grant a plausible authority to the individual account, locate the witness and the hearer or reader within the familiar pattern of London streets, and implicitly or explicitly underline the loss of that familiarity. In one account we get a version of Fire rhetoric which might be called a catechism, employing the repeated patterns of topography and suspicion but, like most of the narratives, its open-endedness and ambiguity transform it into a narrative of uncertain human experience rather than a document of pure xenophobia:

> A Citizen being Fired out of his House, had hyred a Lodging in Queens street in *Covent-Garden*; and going up *Holborn* (there being a Crowd of people) steps in amongst them, and hears a woman say, That she had a hand in Firing the City. The people askt her, whether she were an Anabaptist? She said No: Are you an Independent? She said No: Are you a Presbyterian? She said No? [sic] Are you a *Roman Catholic*? to which she would give no answer. The Citizen asked her, But Mrs. had you a hand in Burning the City? She answered, what will you have me to say? I have confessed it already, and do deserve to Dye for it; This she said with great trembling, and seemed to be

> much troubled. The Citizen inquires for a Constable, the people reply, There was one gone for. But a Gallant comes, and takes her by the Arm, and leads her away, saying, he would have her examined, and forthwith another Gallant closeth with him, and they both carryed her to the *Griffin* Tavern in *Holborn*. (*Faithful Account*, 17)

This is both a peculiar and a typical narrative; the voice of the central figure, the woman confessing, is embedded in the Citizen's account, which itself is reported by the Committee. Its levels of abstraction would seem to remove immediacy, yet the dialogue is vividly vernacular and some sort of plot, if not a simply "papist" one, seems present if submerged. The woman's account seems not to be believed (but at least this particular crowd of people isn't rushing to cut off her breasts), and it's not at all clear whether she's rescued or flung out of the frying pan into the fire (so to speak) with the arrival of the two "gallants." The account ends with what tends to be the result of most of the reports: the citizen, after tracking her to the public house and reporting her to some officers, "leaves his name with the captain, and where he might be found, but was never called for to justify the words spoken by her." Most accounts end with the witness admitting that the apprehended suspect was "heard of no more," or the witness "could never hear nor learn" of his or her tale producing verifiable results. In fact, although these accounts are presented as authoritatively grounded both in specificity of streets and of eyewitnessed dialogue, the inconclusivity of narrative here prefigures the result of the committee's findings as a whole: the Roman Catholics were established not to have designed nor started the Fire nor systematically hindered the efforts to stop it.[29] The Great Fire certainly fuelled religious and political fears, but even in these official Fire narratives the larger psychic consequences seem at least for the moment to rhetorically consume them.

For the genres of sermons and poems – providential as well as political – a whole biblical as well as classical vocabulary and set of images waited empty as it were to express the devastation of the London Fire. Job, Isaiah, Matthew, Proverbs, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Nebuchadnezzar; Homer and Virgil and Tacitus; even the previous recorded memories of fires, all give voice to the early responses to the Fire, yet seem suddenly inadequate to their burden. The familiar vocabulary, capacious as it is, gets consistently distorted partly because its historical familiarity cannot express the enormity of the new – its perceptual value and power are precisely disqualified by its well-worn shape, its different contexts of comfort – it simply no longer fits. As with Manley's account of the "dynamics of Tudor complaint," the traditional models "were not simply backward-looking in their appeal to long-established social myths and models, but, in their response to social crisis, generative of new ones" (Manley, *Literature and Culture*, 75). The images of the sermonic analyses, the metaphorical properties of the vocabulary, are destabilized precisely because they are literalized. The power of a metaphor lies partly in its distance from its referent; as Karsten Harries says, "Metaphors speak of what remains absent."[30] "She has roses in her cheeks" loses its particular descriptive appeal if the flower actually sprouts out of the skin. After the Fire a number of sermons and poems begin to shudder away from the existing but disconcertingly inadequate imagery of loss and begin to reconstruct new rhetorics to locate and articulate the spaces emptied, the contours to be redrawn.

Most genres of Fire narratives generally construct some sort of Foucauldian heterotopias in both their extremes, offering on the one hand an ultimately unsuccessful rhetoric of spatial "illusion" (or otherness) that tries to expose each real space as illusory – that is, contrasting the real, suffering, ruined London with its eternally, fundamentally reliable biblical counterpart; or on the other hand a rhetoric of "compensation," creating an ideal future space that transcends this one, that supplies the promise of a better London, the old city purified, refined, restored.[31] It is largely and perhaps not surprisingly the sermons that self-consciously offer a dismally ill-fitting cliché of the House of God, and the poems that figure the equally mis-sized phoenix of rebuilding.

For the sermons, I quote mostly from Anglican divines and from some Nonconformist ministers, and will note their particular backgrounds and interests as I go,[32] but I am interested here in marking the common rhetorical ground that the Fire sermons display. Although these years were deeply troubled with regulations and persecutions, the texts after the Fire, much like Defoe's representation of the different clergy during the plague in *A Journal of the Plague Year,* are striking in their (if temporary) *common* voice of loss: "*nor did the Church Ministers… make any Difficulty of accepting their Assistance, so that many of those who they called silenced Ministers, had their Mouths open'd on this Occasion, and preach'd publickly to the people*."[33] Other explanations for momentary religious unity or a particular flourish of rhetoric may also apply in each case, of course; Nonconformists may well have been broadcasting their loyalty by widely distributing the moral blame over the metropolis as a whole, rather than pointing directly to the wicked sinful Court. Defoe's agenda in the *Journal* is still promoting mutual tolerance between Anglicans and Dissenters in applauding the nonsectarian courage of the silenced ministers. And many of the Anglican priests might have had their eye on their patron in his pew as they shaped their ringing discourses. But none of these angles alone can account for the uniformity of rhetorical response that begins with the obvious – what shall we do with this unspeakable disaster, this shocking ruin, this shattered whole – and moves into variously odd ways of fitting traditional metaphors to brutally concrete particulars. Many of these ministers were speaking in a sense from the ruins of their own churches, to the homeless of their own parish.

The first sweeping image of London in the sermons is that the whole vanishes – London was, but is no more – or that it is transformed, its wholeness of structure and order (however optimistically remembered) flung into antithesis, most usually an Isaiahan heap, as Robert Elborough, minister of St. Laurence Pountney (and schoolmate of Pepys, who thought him a fool) points out: "My beloved, our eyes have seen, our goods and estates have found, and our persons have experienced the greatness of Gods Judgment, when he hath made a *City an heap, and a ruine of a defenced City, Isa.25.2*" (*London's Calamity*). (On the tenth of September Evelyn notes: "I went again to the ruines, for it was now no longer a Citty" [Evelyn, III:462]). The Puritan Thomas Brooks (1608–1680), ejected in 1662 from St. Margaret's, New Fish Street Hill and then preacher in Moorfields, printed a sort of extended sermon that in its title alone twice reduces London to a ruinous heap:

> *LONDON'S LAMENTATIONS: or, A serious Discourse concerning that late fiery Dispensation that turned our (once renowned) City into a ruinous Heap. Also the several lessons that are incumbent upon those whose Houses have escaped the consuming Flames.* By *THOMAS BROOKS, late Preacher of the Word at S.* Margarets, *New-Fish-street*, where that Fatal Fire first began that turned *London* into a ruinous Heap.

Within the discourse the theme is repeated; what had been structured, placed, properly and functionally differentiated – "Houses, Churches, Chappels, Hospitals, and other the great and magnificent buildings of Pious or Publick use, which were within that Circuit" (*London's Lamentations*, 26) – are now "one ruinous heap," "a common ruine," "a heap of Rubbish" (*London's Lamentations*, 26, 38). The *Counsel to the Afflicted* retells the fury of the fire such that "none was able to quench it, until it had consumed the greatest part of that renowned City, and had made of a City an Heap, of a defenced City a ruine."[34] William Gearing (fl. 1659–1679, rector of Christ Church, Surrey) also lingers on the details of the city "made ruinous heaps."[35] Over and over again, the city is called a "heap," shapeless, prostrate, its *indistinguishability* its distinguishing mark.

Language itself seems collapsed, the familiar discourse inadequate to express the cultural and spiritual horror. Lawrence Manley notes the general earlier "inarticulateness of the image of the city" (*Literature and Culture*, 75); the immediate post-Fire literatures become experiments in articulation. Robert Elborough declaims that the Fire is kindled "not within the usual Lines of Communication, but in the Center whence those Lines are drawn" (*London's Calamity*, 3). London-born Nathaniel Hardy (1618–1670), Dean of Rochester and Rector of St. Dionis, Backchurch, in Fenchurch Street, apologizes for his language in his epistle dedicatory to *Lamentation, Mourning and Woe*, claiming it is the effect and emblem of his experience and that "broken Language" is the "best Rhetorick":

> I *First* preached, *and have now* published *this Discourse as a* Testimony *of my* sorrow *for* Londons Ruines. *If the* phrase *and* composure *be* (*as I am* conscious *they are*) *very* defective, *my* Apology *is, That it was a time of* Distraction; *besides*, broken *Language is the best* Rhetorick *upon a* mournful *occasion: And considering those manifold* Relations *and* Obligations *I have to that once illustrious* City, *it will not (I hope) be looked upon as a* presumption, *that I have thus* publickly *expressed my* sorrow; *for that* cloud *of* smoke *which hath* covered her, *or rather that* flame *of* fire *which hath* laid her honour in the dust.[36]

Even in a time when printers made inconsistently free use of italics, Hardy's epistle dedicatory is particularly fraught; whether intentional or otherwise (on the part of Hardy or the printer), the visual (not to mention transcribal) effect is of passionate disorder. It's not just the nouns that get their typographical emphasis – the emphasized words tell enough of the thumping narrative on their own: "broken," "mournful," "publickly," "covered her," "laid her honour in the dust."

A primary rhetorical response of the sermons to the sense of cultural shattering is to rebuild the idea of the House of God. The function of sermons is generally to instruct and either to comfort or to disconcert as needed. Sermons *explain*; they open texts, interpret events, offer answers. They close the spiritual and temporal distance between the Bible and this world, applying the vocabulary and imagery of scripture to local everyday life. Sermons in general after the Fire remain more allegorical, less locally, topographically explicit, than the poetry or private narratives do – and not surprisingly, as their psychological or spiritual success is predicated on the translation to another world, a Foucauldian heterotopia of illusion (or Elsewhere) – thus in William Gearing's dismal *No Abiding City* we are adjured to remember that, even if our greatest cities don't hold up ("your continual repairing them sheweth them to be of no long continuance" [191]), there is a heavenly city "too high for any Adversary to approach" (227), which "hath foundations in the Plural number; it hath many foundations, firm and immoveable, foundations that cannot be shaken" (228). (Yet even in his pessimism is a rhetoric of assurance: "*Foundations* in the plural" – foundations, foundations, foundations – hammering solidity home, so to speak.) And in Gearing's even more dismal and punishing *God's Soveraignty Displayed*, after reminding us that "Death is neer, Death is in your streets, Death is creeping in at your houses, and entring in at your windows" (11), and that God "hath cast you out of your pleasant habitations" (120), there is the assurance that "he, who is the keeper of *Israel*, is your home and habitation."[37] William Thomas (1593–1667), an ejected Puritan minister writing from Oxford as a "well-wisher to the City," consoles the Londoners:

> But O, How great a comfort is it, that a Mans outward Estate is never so lost, ruined, and laid in the rubbish, but God can renew it, and make it as good as ever it was . . . And though (as here it is said, *verse* 14) all young mens musick be gone, yet (as it is, *Zech.* 8.5.) *the streets of the City* (if it be a City of *truth and holiness*, verse 3) *shall be full of Boyes and Girles playing in the streets thereof*, which to God is very feasible and familiar.[38]

The ministers offer the comfort of the house of God, of the foundations of heaven, as security for the loss of these. The fact that those images lay in waiting, that the house of God was a familiar structure that withstood the Fire and remained available, must have had a certain comfort in its very historical as well as religious sanction.

On the other hand, shifts in sermonic discourse suggest that such historical sanction suddenly seemed inadequate, even inappropriate; that this heterotopic house of God, eternal and stalwart as it might be, might seem, in some secret corner of the heart (at least for a moment), to have its own psychologically shaken foundations to all the one hundred thousand homeless in Moorfields, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in boats on the Thames, in the houses of friends. There is certainly a sense in which the allegorical comforts administered from afar change shape, and not always subtly, the closer the minister is to London. Familiar images spring suddenly into sharp, local, detailed relief. Robert Elborough, for example – the minister of the burned St. Laurence Pountney (a church dating from 1275 and not rebuilt after the Fire) unpacks Ezekiel's text in surprisingly specific ways:

> *The flaming flame shall not be quenched*. He doth not say, they shall not endeavour to quench it. In a common Calamity, who will not put to his helping hand? though in our sad disaster I wish every one had consciencioussly [sic] discharged their duty: But notwithstanding their endeavours it shall not be quenched. Such, such shall be the rage and violence of it, as that aching hearts and helping hands, as that, to speak in our dialect and usual practice, Buckets, Engines, Ladders, Hooks, the opening of Pipes, and sweeping of Channels, shall not avail any thing at all: No, they would not withdraw the fewel of their corruption, and God would not withdraw the Fire of his indignation. *(London's Calamity,* 4*)*

The text pulls back out of details of individual duty and fire-fighting techniques and into larger spiritual matters, but the not-specially-biblical images of opened pipes and swept channels distinctly localize the full translation into the more abstract City of Heaven and House of God.

Nathaniel Hardy (he of the broken rhetoric) tries on several images to accommodate the disaster in *Lamentation, Mourning, and Woe*, all of them either exhausted old clichés or silly new ones. At one point he compares London to a withered, scorched, burnt laurel leaf (21); at another to old Troy (a common trope before the Fire as well) (21); to a Camera Regis and a King's Coffer (25); and much to Pepys's disgust, he declaims: "this large *Volume* in *Folio* [is] abridged almost to an *Octavo*, there being, as is probably computed, scarce a *sixth* part remaining *within* the Walls" (21). Hardy had preached this sermon at St. Martin's in the Fields (safely west – though not by that much – of the Fire's limits) the Sunday after the Fire. Pepys writes: "to church again, and there preached Deane Harding [Hardy]; but methinks *a bad poor sermon, though proper for the time* – nor eloquent, in saying at this time that the City is reduced from a large Folio to a Decimo tertio" (*Diary*, VII:283, my emphasis). Hardy's own church was safely outside the sweep of the Fire, but as he notes in his epistle dedicatory, "London *was the* place *of my* Birth, Baptism, Education, *and* (*excepting those* years *which I lived in the* University *of* Oxford) in *and* about *the* City, *hath been the* place *of my* abode *and* habitation to this day" (A2V). As with Elborough's emphatic local detail, Hardy's personal connections with London may explain his eventual rhetorical shift from the inadequate metaphors of laurels and folios and Troys to a specific reference to James Howell's *Londinopolis* (a 1657 version of John Stow's *Survey of London*) and a very expressive, explicit litany of local sorrows:

> Let the *Merchants weep* for the *downfall* of that *Royal Exchange* (where they used to drive on their mutual Commerce) with the several *Wharfs* and *Keyes*, which were so commodious for landing their Goods.
>
> Let the several *Companies weep* for the *ruine* of their *Halls*, where they were wont to *meet* each other in love and unity . . .
>
> *Finally*, Let all the *Inhabitants* of this *City*, and her adjacent parts, *weep* to consider how many *Families* have not where to hide their *heads*, but are *scattered* up and down the *Fields* for *want* of their *Habitations*: Yea, how many *wealthy Citizens* are very much *impoverished*, and *some* of them brought to a *morsel of bread*. (Hardy, *Lamentation*, 23–24)

The loss of generic buildings and institutions is contextualized with specific mention of the Royal Exchange and the implicit but equally specific gesture towards the city livery companies whose halls burned down (including the Brewers, the Butchers, the Clothworkers, the Cordwainers, among others), and Christ's Hospital in Newgate Street. Thirteen years later, in a commemorative sermon, Henry Hesketh (1637?-1710), rector of Charlwood, Surrey, and after 1678 vicar of St. Helen, Bishopsgate, employs the same specificity of local detail to make his larger point:

> If the Stones were calcined in our Walls, and the Beams consumed to powder, it was because these had cryed each to other, as unable to support the

> Load of our Frauds and Violences . . . If our great Conventions and Halls were not, it was but to impose a Fast for their former Plethories. And, in a word, if our City was made a fiery Oven, it was because we had contracted Dross, from which we needed refining.[39]

Each biblical allusion follows a locally specific clause; the biblically general larger point about the "fiery oven" acquires precisely historicized detail in calcined stones and powdered beams.

Biblical metaphors and allusions in general – which would rhetorically seem as if divinely lying in wait for this their aptest purpose – are suddenly troubled because in fact they are no longer metaphors. Their meaning no longer lies in absence but in presence. They are not the dead metaphors or nonmetaphors of classical rhetoric which have more or less imperceptibly slid into ordinary discourse; they are *abruptly* literalized, and tested in that literalization. The foundations *are* shaken, owls *do* inhabit temples, the flaming flame was *not* quenched, and God *hath* cast everybody out of their pleasant habitations. Allegory becomes documentary, and the emphasis of narrative shifts; detail of experience (calcined stones, opened pipes, swept channels, rubbished streets) combine powerfully with details of place to such an extent that *this place* is reexamined in hindsight; *this place* has been lost: *where is it and what was it*?

The fire poems are occupied with and shaped by the same concerns as the sermons, but they tend to deal with narrative and imagery in rather different ways. In their formal rigor (well, structure) and insistent optimism, they tend to create more compensatory heterotopias. The large body of poems, mostly by "divines or solid citizens or journalists, not members of the facile gentlemanly mob," as one editor of such poems puts it,[40] records a variety of voices speaking expressly and locally from the ruins and employing poetic structures as well as imagery to express the experience of the Fire but also to define and perhaps contain the boundaries of that experience. The imagery of collapse and chaos and transformation is equally present: John Allison (1645–1683), a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, watches the fire's "fury still increas'd, and all / Houses and Churches Undistinguisht fall, / Resolv'd to know no limits, less than a City Wall";[41] John Tabor (b. 1607), registrar to the Bishop of Ely, claims that "Even the whole City in a manner lies / A ruinous heap to all spectators eyes";[42] Simon Ford (1619?-1699) – a Puritan under the Royalists, a Royalist under the Puritans, and finally Chaplain of Bridewell in 1670 – apostrophises: "Lo, here, a *City* to a *Chaos* turn'd."[43] And appropriately (if to some surprisingly) the City Poet Elkanah Settle, butt of Dryden and Pope, quite aptly articulates the conceptual and physical transformation within the linguistic: "Tis changd, without a Metaphor, I may say / From *Terr' del foego* to *Incognita*" (Settle, *Elegie*, 6). But verse form itself, often ostentatiously chosen, suggests the sharp conceptual contrast to the unbounded and unexpected destruction of the Fire not just by the effort of linear narrative, but also by varieties of strict formal containment and prescription. John Allison, for example, couches his version of the fire "In an humble Imitation of the most Incomparable Mr. Cowley his *Pindarick* Strain." The choice is conceptually apt, both for the pindaric accommodation of bombasity and the Cowleyan element of irregularity, fluctuation, surprise:

VII.
The Watches now in every street
Eccho the dreadful noyse of Fire,
Which calls with the same energy from bed,
As the last Trumpet shall the dead,
And bids them all draw nigher,
The shiv'ring multitudes in bodies meet
And some it raiseth by its light, and others by its heat.

Most of the poems, however, occupy more insistently symmetrical heroic couplets, as if the steady stately march of iambic pentameter is at least an effective psychological container for the fire, as in Joseph Guillim's (d. 1670, fellow of Brasenose College) *The Dreadful Burning of London*:

And here, although whole Streets but prove a Prey
To hungry Flames, through which they eat their Way:
How few among such multitudes engage,
To check their progress, or to quench their rage?

As the destructive Fire doth forward creep,
Its shining train whole Streets away doth sweep.
Which wandring Flames, lose and destroy their way,
And having ruin'd all, themselves decay.[44]

The destruction of whole streets – that conceptual enormity requiring repetition – is contained in neighboring stanzas; the voracious unpredictability of the flames is countered by the (tedious) padded predictability of the rhymes; indeed, the force of the wandring Flames seems dissipated by the very fact of being described so, decaying within the rhyme itself.

The poems often actively assert their wish, if not their ability, to effect change through sheer poetic power, as if the invocation itself might push things along. Guillim, for example, in his epistle dedicatory to Sir William Turner, Knight and Alderman, confesses: "Having made a Poetical Attempt in describing the dismal Ruine of so Renown'd a City, I wish now I could so much farther play the

Poet, as to be like that *Thracian*, whose strains could make confus'd Stones rally into Order" (*Dreadful Burning*, A3); and Simon Ford apostrophises:

> This *Quill* should dig down *Mountains*, and my Muse
> The list'ning *Marbles* from their Beds seduce.
>
> Th' whole *Parian Quarrey* should obey her calls,
> And march a Voluntier to *London's Walls*.
> (*Londons Resurrection*, lines 19–22)

The vocabulary and stock of imagery seems initially as capacious as the biblical store, although generally classical in bent: Ford calls on Orpheus for his lyre and Amphion for his flute (as does Guillim), and Troy is the constant reference. A number of poems (by William Smith, Simon Ford, John Crouch, and Joseph Guillim, for example) are written in Latin or Greek, with or without English translations. There is also the large batch of poets for whom the classical imagery is either unavailable or inadequate – yet what Robert Aubin calls the "wretched conceits, puns, and dubious syntax and grammar" of the "Pie Corner muse" (Aubin, *London in Flames*, ix) may also be read as the conceptual efforts of a wide range of people to give voice and form to the unspeakable, the unthinkable.

John Tabor, like Nathaniel Hardy, confesses his own sense of linguistic incapacity, but channels it into firm, perhaps comforting and certainly reliable structures of heroic verse in *Seasonable Thoughts in Sad Times*. His preface to the reader announces that he was all set to write a poem about the war and the plague of the previous year:

> But then the startling and astonishing news of the Cities Conflagration turned my Muse to a new wrack of tormenting griefs, rending me as many others for a time capable of nothing but to stand in the way for News . . . till at length occurring the joyful report of the miraculous extinguishing of the Flames, and unexpected Preservation of the unconsumed part of the City and Suburbs, my mind became more sedate and quiet. (A4)

Then all the horrors of the past few years get compressed into (admittedly rather versically challenged) couplets.

But Tabor's verses also begin to negotiate the enormity of change through the anticipation of perspectives over time:

> Upon *September*'s second day i'th'year
> Much talkt of *Sixty six, did there appear
> By two i' th' morning those consuming Flames,
> *Which did break out first in the Street* of Thames.
> (*Seasonable Thoughts*, 21)

The asterisk points the reader to the marginal note: "**Sept*. 2. 1666. [by] two in the morning began this fire, which was not suppresst in all places till Friday morning following." Standing thus close to the Fire, the poet accommodates his sense of enormity by assuming language more appropriate to fifty years hence, and declaring its historicity by stepping outside the self-appointed boundaries of verse with a visually separate assertion of fact, typographically emphasizing separation, dissonance, distance.

Perspectives of distance often combine grammatically. In another of Ford's poems, for example, the living city is defined by and entombs its own past:

> The *City now* is the *once*-*City*'s Tomb,
> A *Sceleton* of *fleshless Bones* become.
> Its *Venerable Ruines* have the *Name*
> Of what it *was*, but *little* else the *same*.[45]

London *was*, now. London was, but is no more. In Thomas Brooks's sermon *Londons Lamentations* (1670), the London of the present gets buried in the grammatical past:

> *London* in those former times was but a little City, and had but a few men in it in comparison with **what it was now**. *London* was then but a great Banqueting-house, to **what it was now**: Nor the consumption of *London* by fire then, was nothing proportionable to the consumption of it by fire now . . . O what Age or Nation has ever seen or felt such a dreadful visitation as **this that been**. *(26)*

Over fifty years later, Defoe will employ much the same linguistic pattern in his novels to much the same effect as he superimposes an image of a past London onto a present, as in the scene in *Colonel Jack*, when Jack runs away with his first stolen bag:

> [S]o away he had me through *Long-alley*, and Cross *Hog lane*, and *Holloway lane*, into the middle of the great Field, which **since** that, has been call'd the *Farthing pye-house-field* . . . so we went on, cross'd the Road at *Anniseed Cleer*, and went into the Field where **now** the Great Hospital stands.[46]

A bit like Jack, Brooks offers the reader two Londons simultaneously, or rather, two pasts of London: its historical past, the London known; and the passing of that past, the London destroyed. These historical animals, in Pocock's words, are carrying out their perception of the new – the sudden collapse of familiar space – within the grammar of temporal collapse, testing old ways of perception and attempting new ways of articulation.

All genres of Fire narratives thus move in a sense forward and backward over place as well as over time; following the contours, the names, the places of the streets as the fire sweeps through them, plotting its course by the nature of the streets and buildings that determine it; and then backwards over the same ground as the Fire has reshaped it. The city as a whole has been changed; the narratives that attempt to deal with the change see the whole transformed into heap, the ordered city into jumbled ruin; the known into unknown.

Spaces of loss: public buildings, private dwellings, and streets

I will conclude this chapter with three brief historicized meditations on the destroyed public, private, and intermediary urban spaces, and their conceptual implications for later literary genres and works. These spaces of loss, recorded in Fire genres in terms of fragmentation and loss, get imaginatively rebuilt in later literatures. The streets, literally emptied, closed, and impassable after the Fire, are imaginatively repeopled, becoming structures of meaning in poetry and avenues of possibility in prose. Public buildings and public spaces, figured as forlorn and treacherous in the immediate aftermath, become phoenixes of social meaning as they are reconstructed into fixtures of institutional identity. And private spaces – exposed and destroyed by the fire, made public in vulnerability, and demanding attention to personal detail in recovery – become the ultimate dwelling-place of narrative, the home for the most crucial retellings of private, individual, daily life.

In one of the more richly complicated printed consolations or quasi-sermons, O. S.'s *Counsel to the Afflicted*, the text introduces through the device of "Objections" a variety of anguished human voices in different situations, with different concerns and points of view, and either imagines or reports, in "Objection 17," a person consciously concerned with the disruption of public space: "It is not my own private loss that troubles me . . . but I am much afflicted to see *London* the glory of *England*, the chief and principal City of this Nation laid in ashes, and to see so many magnificent Buildings, so many goodly Churches, stately Halls, fair Houses, useful Hospitals, &c. demolished" (*Counsel to the Afflicted*, 118). The destruction of recognized public buildings meant that the larger, normally implicit, institutional framework for daily life was itself abruptly destabilized, rendering institutionality itself more visible. The Fire and rebuilding narratives ask: What were these framing public structures that grew up slowly to define us?

Consistently, the various Fire narratives list and name the range of public spaces and structures destroyed or changed. As with the litany of street names, although with different purposes and effects, a litany of buildings burned carries more semiotic weight than just a tabulation of damage; it implies a disintegration of fundamental structure, conceptual as well as architectural. Such a litany *also* supplies a form of textual reconnection. Lists *record* fragments; lists also *connect* them. The Fire and rebuilding coincided with and perhaps contributed to a cultural fascination for lists: newspapers tabulated victories and losses at sea, and gradually admitted advertisements that sorted properties and consumer goods (see chapter two); topographies and maps increasingly listed as well as depicted streets (see chapter three); the Royal Society was busy identifying and labelling the phenomena of both microcosm and macrocosm; Robinson Crusoe is as known for his inventory of goods and inventions as *Gulliver's Travels* is for its list of human vices and atrocities. In a sense, the *literary* details of everyday life live more in itemized lists than in visual description. Lists become part of the restructuring of the experience of urban space in London after the Fire, as well as of its rebuilding and reshaping. And a list of buildings destroyed marks a physically and perhaps conceptually larger emptiness.

Evelyn notes that the *way* that the Fire destroyed public space was by overextending it on the one hand: "it burned both in breadth & length, The Churches, Publique Halls, Exchange, Hospitals, Monuments, & ornaments, leaping after a prodigious manner from house to house & streete to streete, at greate distance one from the other" (*Diary*, III:452). It took an effort; the Fire also seemed to implode the spaces between the structures:

> No Church, no Hall, no House, no Hospitall
> Can stand before it, but it ruines all:
> What will not burn, it breaks with piercing heat,
> And tumbling down with rubbish fills the street.
> (Tabor, *Seasonable Thoughts*, 22)

Evelyn, after his own litany of streets ("all *Fleetstreets*, old baily, Ludgate hill, Warwick Lane, Newgate, Paules Chaine, Wattling-streete now flaming"), adds another list – of the ornamental interstices of public spaces literally melted down: "The lead, yronworke, bells, plate &c mealted; the exquisitely wrought Mercers Chapell, the Sumptuous Exchange, the august fabricque of Christ church, all the rest of the Companies Halls, sumptuous buildings, Arches, Enteries, all in dust" (Evelyn, *Diary*, III:460). Thomas Brooks's sermon suggests that what formerly marked divisions and even held things apart now seemed to work *with* the Fire:

> [C]onsider the extensiveness of it. How did this dreadful fire spread it self, both with and against the wind, till it had gained so great a force, as that it despised all mens attempts? It quickly spread it self from the East to the West, to the destruction of Houses of State, of Trade, of Publick Magistracy, besides Mynes of Charity; it spread it self with that violence, that it soon crumbled into ashes our most stately Habitations, Halls, Chappels, Churches, and famous Monuments. Those Magnificent Structures of the

> City that formerly had put stops, and given checks to the furious flames, fall now like Stubble before the violence of a spreading fire.
>
> (Brooks, *London's Lamentations*, 20)

In the margin beside this quotation, visually and textually reinforcing both separation and enormity, sits this summary point: "Within the Walls of the City, there were eighty one Parishes consumed. For every hour the fire lasted, there was a whole Parish consumed." The public structures that had marked differences, ordered space, checked fire, controlled threats, were now consumed whole, "flaked and enervated," as the strange but apt Edward Waterhouse put it: "from the East to the West it prostrated Houses, Halls, Chappels, Churches, Monuments; all which it so flaked and enervated, that it has left few standing walls, stout enough to bear a roof" (*A Short Narrative*, 68–69). Of Guildhall ("once the Glory of our Isle, / Become but now the Cities Funeral Pile" [Guillim, *Dreadful Burning*, 9]) – the center of civic government, where lord mayors and sheriffs were elected, where the Court of Common Council met, and where important trials were held – only the exterior walls survived. Of the Royal Exchange, built by financier Sir Thomas Gresham and opened in 1570 as a covered meeting place for the country's merchants, the one thing that survived the desolation of the interior was the figure of Gresham himself – a fact that seemed full of latent significance to many chroniclers: "Sir *Tho: Gresshams* Statue, though falln to the ground from its nich in the Ro: Exchange remain'd intire, when all those of the Kings since the Conquest were broken to pieces" (Evelyn, *Diary*, III:460). Pepys simply marks the fact: "The Exchange a sad sight, nothing standing there of all the statues or pillars but Sir Tho. Gresham's picture in the corner" (Pepys, *Diary*, VII:276). Whole poems would be devoted to the rebuilding of the Exchange alone, and royal reopenings of the city, arranged by Thomas Jordan, made it a processional focal point; the rebuilt Exchange would occupy a central imaginative place in the imaginative rebuilding of London's economy in the works of Restoration and Augustan writers.

The city was shaken into pieces; fragments of public buildings pointed to but no longer contained meaning. The Fire enacted a very disturbing transformation of the public sphere, so to speak, and a list of its chief markers becomes an indicator of the thing that is not. At the ruin of St. Paul's, Evelyn remarks the new meaninglessness of architectural signs:

> that beautifull Portico (for structure comparable to any in Europ, as not long before repaird by the late King) now rent in pieces, flakes of vast Stone Split in sunder, & nothing remaining intire but the Inscription in the *Architrave* which shewing by whom it was built, had not one letter of it defac'd: which I could not but take notice of ... (Evelyn, *Diary*, III:458–59)

The poems and narratives try to articulate the fragments of spatial meaning left in their city, to reconstruct a wholeness at least of meaning or implication:

> A half burnt Steeple was the Sign o' th' Street.
> A dumb deformity could nothing say,
> No, not so much as give ye time o' th' day.[47]

But the poems often confess themselves no more effective in articulating meaning than the scattered fragments they describe:

> But when the Churches and the Bellfries burn,
> The Bells are dumb, and their black towers mourn.
> What Fire is this, makes the bells cease to chime?
> (Guillim, *Dreadful Burning*, 8)

The frame of the question itself suggests the impossibility of an answer, the sense of poetic energy left open, drifting, itself ungrounded. Texts remain without their contexts; as with the street names, signs suddenly point nowhere. Empty space has supplanted designated place.

But perhaps most lasting in its literary effect on later writers – most particularly Defoe – was the sense of spatial *treachery* that marked the collapse of public buildings. The ruin of St. Paul's was particularly haunting. Pepys writes: "[Sept.] 7. Walked thence and saw all the town burned, and a miserable sight of Pauls church, with all the roofs fallen and the body of the Quire fallen into St Fayths – Paul's school also – Ludgate – Fleet street – my father's house, and the church, and a good part of the Temple the like" (*Diary*, VII:279). The sanctuaries have not simply disappeared, they have even more fundamentally betrayed their trust. Evelyn, with Pepys, remarks the collapse of St. Faith's, but more particularly in its ruined function as archival refuge: "the ruines of the Vaulted roofe, falling brake into St. Faithes, which being filled with the magazines of bookes, belonging to the Stationer<s>, & carried thither for safty, they were all consumed burning for a weeke following" (*Diary*, III:459). The destruction of the choir of St. Paul's into St. Faith's was an historical as well as structural collapse. In 1256 old St. Paul's had expanded over the territory of a small parish church, and in compensation had given the parishioners space in the crypt beneath. It was to a larger, lighter version of this crypt space that the publishers rushed to store their books during the Fire, relying on the thick stone walls for protection. The trust was misplaced, and in fact the space was permanently lost: the rebuilt St. Paul's did not reappoint internal space for the stationers ("The *Saint* was tortur'd when he broke his *Faith*!" shouts the royalist verse-writer John Crouch in *Londinenses Lacrymae* [6]).[48] "Even the Churches were no *Sanctuary*," says the anonymous author of *London Undone*, repeating the most obsessive cry. Guillim's poem houses structural betrayal and spiritual desolation within the formally ironic stability of heroic couplets:

> When to St. *Pauls* among the Books [the Fire] came,
> Learn'd Authors, for to shun the dreadful flame,
> To the magnifick Temple soon do flye
> For Refuge, as their only Sanctuary:
> Yet could not safety at the Altar find
> Though they had been like Saints themselves inshrin'd.
> Where shall we refuge seek, and pray? while thus,
> Heaven takes the very House of Prayer from us.
>
> (*Dreadful Burning,* 9, 11)

John Allison's pindaric odes express insecurity more structurally:

> XV.
>
> When great Pauls was seen to fall,
> People bid adieu to all,
> And what hopes they had, resign'd,
> For they had little reason sure
> To think anything secure
> When they cast their eyes behind.
>
> (*Upon the late Lamentable Fire*)

The physical temple of God, like its sermonic metaphors, was culturally collapsed, no longer (perhaps never?) what it seemed. Later Restoration and early eighteenth-century literature – and culture – would begin more widely and systematically to "read" the architectural spaces of buildings.

The issue of spatial treachery, like the later rebuilding issues of the pace of change, the extent of unfamiliarity, and the elasticity of boundaries, is often exaggerated in perception, or at least in post-Fire writers' accounts of cultural perception. London streets and buildings had long been notoriously dangerous in their physical instabilities. The prolific seventeenth-century artisan-writer Nehemiah Wallington (1598–1658), for example, writes over and over again about the sudden accidents and deaths of his neighbors, and the near-escapes of himself and his family, from collapsing chimneys, falling machinery, runaway carts, and fatal missteps, in the houses and streets of the city.[49] The old St. Paul's itself had long been functionally misoccupied by pedlars, con artists, stall-keepers, thieves, and gallants. But we don't speak ill of the dead: the study of literary rhetoric and cultural self-perceptions has of course as much to do with perceived change and self-representation as with actual change and accurate representation; the past by definition is fixed and thus seems stable; the Fire lit up all treacheries at once.

Not only were the public structures and signposts of London gone – the cultural and physical contexts or settings of daily urban life – but the smaller, closer, most profoundly meaningful of individual texts as well: the private spaces of ordinary life, the half-invisible details and habits of hundreds of thousands of private lives. Of course, "private" is not much of a social construct or concept in the mid-seventeenth century, even among the wealthy, and particularly not in the center of old London. The large shops of the more prosperous tradesmen often had the family living above the shop on one or two floors (with at least two people in each bedroom), and the upper floors and cellars rented or leased out to others of various classes and pursuits. (Todgers's in *Martin Chuzzlewit* has not evolved in use or size or convenience from its seventeenth-century foremodels.) And smaller houses could be even more packed, compressing whole families per room.[50] So "privacy" was not exactly dislodged by the Fire, and the homeless groupings in Moorfields would not be traumatized by the crowding *per se*, or by the lack of personal space. But "private life" in the sense of intimate, personal, domestic, *physical* details – the architectural spaces, however cramped and dark and dirty, that shaped the comings and goings of an individual's daily life, that *was* as well as *represented* the familiar, the secure, the given – all of that was fundamentally disrupted, all the more so from being repeated in thousands and thousands of cases, in 13,200 homes and shops destroyed, in 100,000 people evicted from their daily life. In that sense, private life as well as public life, personal as well as urban space, text as well as context, disappeared and would need to be redrawn as well as rebuilt.

Stockton in *Counsel to the Afflicted* records or at least imagines a number of those individual voices expressing several shifting concerns of domestic dislocation, social confusion, and personal vulnerability. One of his plaintiffs, for example, expresses repetitively the disconcertingness of disruption:

> I had a very sweet and commodious dwelling, where I lived very comfortably, and now I am greatly unsettled; I know not well where to dispose my self, I can't light on a house that pleaseth me, but am put to great straits, and am much troubled for the loss of my former habitation, and the inconvenience of my present abode. *(Counsel to the Afflicted, 93)*

There is no such thing as ordinary life; people are destabilized, unfixed, marginalized within their own lives.

Standing around in Moorfields visually disturbs social barriers, and *all* the homeless find themselves for the moment in a conspicuous equality, as Evelyn observes:

> I left this smoking & sulltry heape, which mounted up in dismall clowds night & day, the poore Inhabitans dispersd all about St. Georges, Moore filds,

> as far as higate, & severall miles in Circle, Some under tents, others under miserab<l>e Hutts and Hovells, without a rag, or any necessary utinsils, bed or board, who from delicatnesse, riches & easy accommodations in stately & well furnishd houses, were now reduc'd to extreamest misery & poverty. (*Diary*, III:457)

Anthony Wood, from his safe distance in Oxford, hammers out the providential moral in repetitively concrete, intimate, insistent detail:

> These that had a house to-day were the next glad of the shelter of an hedge or pigstie or stable. Those that were this day riding wantonly in coaches, were, the next, glad to ride in dung-carts to save their lives. Those that thought the ground too unworthy to be touched by their feet, did run up to the knees in dirt and water to save themselves from the fury of fire or the falling of houses. Those that faired deliciously this day and nothing curious enough to satiate their palatts, were within a few days following glad of a browne crust. Those that delighted themselves in downe bedds and silken curteynes, are now glad of the shelter of a hedge. (Wood, *Life and Times*, 86)

Rich and poor alike are thrown in a heap and must scrabble for their physical and social boundaries. The image of silken curtains as emblematic social boundaries haunts Pepys as well: "To Sir W. Coventry at St. James's, who lay without Curtains, having removed all his goods – as the King at White-hall and everybody had done and was doing" (*Diary*, VII:279). Presumably the king still didn't sleep in a curtainless bed, much less in the shelter of a hedge, but Pepys as well as Wood makes the cross-class generalization that all interior goods were removed because all interior boundaries were threatened.

The most personal, intimate, and constant boundaries of private life – the curtains around one's bed, that promised warmth and darkness and privacy and protection from disease (so they believed) – were now rhetorically transferred to *outside*. The spaces of intimate life were pulled open to public curiosity: Pepys and Evelyn, and presumably many others, daily walked the streets or sat on bridges to observe the progress of the Fire and the response of the people. Pepys, wandering among the homeless in Moorfields, "drank there, and paid twopence for a plain penny loaf" (*Diary*, VII:276). Distinctions between interior and exterior, privacy and exposure, collapse at least momentarily with the distinctions of class and privilege.

Among the unsettled, bewildered crowds in Moorfields, each individual, each family tries to pull together some sort of material life with tokens of the familiar, as Pepys observes:

> Walked into Moore-fields (our feet ready to burn, walking through the town among the hot coles) and find that full of people, and poor wretches carrying their goods there, and everybody keeping his goods together by themselfs (and

> a great blessing it is to them that it is fair weather for them to keep abroad night and day). *(Diary,* VII:276*)*

Things assume great significance as the pegs of daily life, individually and collectively the pieces of larger personal patterns of identity. Pepys himself is every bit as materially conservative and detailed as Crusoe in his prioritization of and care for his goods in the fear of the Fire: he and Sir W[illiam?] Penn dug a pit behind their houses "and put our wine in it, and I my parmazan cheese as well as my wine and some other things" (*Diary*, VII:274). A week later he confesses: "[Sept.] 14. . . . I was troubled in being at home, to see all my goods lie up and down the house in a bad condition, and strange workmen going to and fro might take what they would almost" (*Diary*, VII:285). The Fire scattered or destroyed personal goods, or forced people to scatter, bury, conceal, remove their goods, or in its aftermath left personal effects lying up and down the house. Things, as well as people, had lost their place.

But what seems most to haunt many of the accounts of the loss of domestic space is, as with the public buildings, the sense of spatial treachery in the ruin of one's house – the physical and conceptual *context* for one's "things." Pepys, looking as usual in vivid, personalized detail, describes the bewildered and disbelieving attachment to domestic sites in the people and the pigeons in much the same, sad, tolerant, associative terms:

> Poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats or clambering from one pair of stair by the waterside to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons I perceive were loath to leave their houses, but hovered about the window and balconies till they were some of them burned, their wings, and fell down. *(Diary,* VII:268*)*

As with the public spaces, sources of shelter become sources of threat. Fire narratives in general, of course, are accounts of suddenly treacherous interiors – the investigations into papist plots, for example, opened up dozens of strange private dramas. And providential literature characteristically emphasizes the hidden local power of the unseen: William Gearing cheers his flock with the reminder that the plague still lurks in the ruins of the city: "Death is neer, Death is in your streets, Death is creeping in at your houses, and entring in at your windows" (*God's Soveraignty*, 11). A city that had the year before been devastated in its most private spaces and was thus already domestically destabilized, now had even the illusory surface comfort of home and shelter unambiguously and in one sense permanently destroyed. Pepys presumably speaks for many: "But much terrified in the nights nowadays, with dreams of fire and falling down of houses" (*Diary*, VII:287). Guillim's poem spends its first few stanzas in the silent vulnerable darkness of the bedroom:

While urgent Sleep our heavy Eyes did close,
And wrapt our mindes up in a soft Repose;
Some glowing Coal, silent, and dark as night,
Shakes its black Embers off, so shews its light.
Which through some narrow room, did gently creep
With a still foot, e're it abroad durst peep.
Which will no longer now confined be,
But steals forth with a kind of subtilty. *(Dreadful Burning,* 1–2*)*

The origin of the fire is in the dark, in the night, in the intimacy of secret space, which can no longer *confine* the threat. Like the insistent public fear that the enemy was socially "within" – the Catholics, the fanatics, those extremists amongst us – and the spiritual certainty that the Fire was God's judgment for the interior sins of the city (sometimes actually located, as in the Sabbath-breaking in Moorfields), so many of the poems and Fire narratives reveal a lurking anxiety about the general interiority of fire, nurtured in our secret darkness, in a place where literal fact and psychological metaphor far too fully overlap.

What to some made things even worse was that the antidote seemed identical to the threat: one of the most effective, dramatic, and traumatic means of stopping the Fire was by pulling down houses. Pepys notes: "Now begins the practice of blowing up of houses in Tower-street, those next the Tower, which at first did frighten people more then anything; but it stop[ped] the fire where it was done – it bringing down the houses to the ground in the same places they stood, and then it was easy to quench what little fire was in it, though it kindled nothing almost" (*Diary*, VII:275). People naturally hesitated or resisted this measure – the Lord Mayor, Sir Thomas Bludworth, deplored the violence and what he foresaw as the city's future expense in recompensing property owners – and was much blamed afterwards for his lack of foresight and initiative (unjustly, as E. S. De Beer argues in his edition of Evelyn's *Diary* [see III:452n3, III:455n3]). It is a move both counter-intuitive – it demands destruction in the name of protection – and at the same time psychologically compelling – something akin to Crusoe's panicked instinctive response to throw down his enclosures, kill his goats, and plow under his crops, to save them from being destroyed by cannibals – the urge to destroy what is dear so it cannot be lost:

And our distress in this the greater was,
In that just Heaven had made our hands (alas)
The active Instruments to tear down
Our own beloved Mansions to the ground.
*(*Wiseman, *Londons' Fatal Fire,* 6*)*

If, as postmodern cultural geographers argue, space is a socially produced dialectic, what are the short- and long-term consequences of being required to contribute to the destruction of your own domestic habitat, particularly for a greater civic good that essentially disappeared anyway? What effects would this have on the redrawing of London's lines, on individual rebuilding of personal space, of the cumulative reconstruction of public space? Part of the answer seems to lie in an apparent value shift within urban spaces, in a new prominence of streets and a new creation of distance between houses, a clearing of space between them, and so a conscious reification of private space, another articulated step into the wider context of changing European habits of living. And in literature, long after the things of houses and the pieces of daily life had been restored into homes, narratives would continue to expand within the conceptual contours of private dwellings and private lives.

London's streets disappeared during the Fire in several senses, and the narratives of Fire almost unanimously include representations of inaccessibility, unfamiliarity, dislocation, and the breakdown of network. Streets, like lists, normally link as well as separate space. But after the Fire street space was collapsed, neither linking nor separating but disfiguring and disrupting. First, it was literally not possible to get to places: "the streets [were] full of nothing but people and horses and carts loaden with goods, ready to run over one another, and removing goods from one burned house to another – they now removing out of Canning-street (which received goods in the morning) into Lumbard Streete and further" (Pepys, *Diary*, VII:270). Pepys marvels "to see how the streets and the highways are crowded with people, running and riding and getting of carts at any rate to fetch away thing[s] . . . [and] Tower-hill . . . was by this time full of people's goods, bringing their goods thither" (*Diary*, VII:272–73). The anonymous poem *London Undone* marks that "Places were lost where Coach and Cart might meet." After the Fire, Evelyn notes: "The bielanes & narrower streetes were quite fill'd up with rubbish" (*Diary*, III:461). On the fourth of September, Evelyn describes a ride through the city that in event as in narrative seems to trace transition into stoppage, moving through a list of streets that physically shift from hostility to resistance:

> The burning still rages; I went now on horse back & it was now gotten as far as the Inner Temple; all *Fleetestreete*, old baily, Ludgate hill, Warwick Lane, Newgate, Paules Chaine, Wattling-streete now flaming & most of it reduc'd to ashes, the stones of *Paules* flew like granados, the Lead mealting downe the streetes in a streame, & the very pavements of them glowing with fiery redness, so as nor horse nor man was able to tread on them, & the demolitions had stopped all the passages, so as no help could be applied. (*Diary*, III:454)

Avenues designed for access, for travel, for mobility, for passage, for transition, were filled and stopped with human panic and physical wreckage.

Second, part of the horror of the streets was not simply that their contours of buildings had disappeared, but that their very contours were changed, that the streets were "quite fill'd up with rubbish," as Evelyn says, or fallen into cellars and secret underground spaces, and one could not "have possibly knowne where he was, but by the ruines of some church, or hall, that had some remarkable towre or pinacle remaining" (*Diary*, III:461). On the first day after the Fire had been stopped, Evelyn describes "mountains" of strange emptiness that occupy space designed for passage, for connection:

> [Sept.] 7. I went this morning on foote from White hall as far as *London* bridge, thro the Late fleete streete, Ludgate hill, by St. Paules, Cheape side, Exchange, Bishopsgate, Aldersgate, & out to Morefields, thence thro Cornehill, &c: with extraordinary difficulty, clambring over mountaines of yet smoking rubbish, & frequently mistaking where I was. (*Diary*, III:458)

Streets are always in some sense containers as well as markers of space; in London in the seventeenth century, they were even visually so, with barriers set up during the Commonwealth as a part of military defence.[51] But now, says Evelyn, "the vast yron Chaines of the Cittie streetes, vast hinges, barrs & gates of Prisons were many of them mealted, & reduc'd to cinders by the vehement heats" (*Diary*, III:461). By demolishing and distorting the traditional boundaries of the city, the Fire in a sense spilled open its barriers, drawing attention to structural containers by their absence.

John Tabor's poem *Seasonable Thoughts in Sad Times* returns again and again to the power of the fire to break street bounds:

> [The Fire] *did break out first in the Street of* Thames:
> And then blown on by a strong wind into
> The City, what e're Art, or strength could do
> Of men to stop, or slack its fury, by
> The Friday did in ruines lie
> The greatest part of that within the Wall,
> And much beside of that we Suburbs call:
> For it broke thorough *Newgate*, and went on
> To *Holborn-bridge*, and had through *Ludgate* gone,
> Up *Fleetstreet* into *Temple-bar* before
> Its fury stopt, and did burn down no more . . .
> What will not burn, it breaks with piercing heat,
> And tumbling down with rubbish fills the street:
> Through *London* streets, it comes and down all goes. (21–22)

The Fire makes use of the streets and then sweeps beyond them; the streets, like the houses, seem to give up their last medieval identity and function in an act of self-destruction. In Guillim's poem it is as if the Fire knows exactly where to go and what to do when it gets there:

> The brightest of them [the flames] push tow'rd *Lumbard* Street,
> And lick up all opposing streams they meet.
> Where they the Jewels, and rich stones out-shine;
> And do the Gold but once again refine. *(Dreadful Burning, 5)*

The materials are at hand, predefined in their function by their street, and so predestined in the alchemy of fire that would use and then permanently alter the significance of their names and the pattern of their lines.

Streets as markers of territory, as signs of place and direction, were emptied of their buildings and habitations and hence of their meanings. They had become nonlocators, or rather, markers of non-existence. Henry Griffith's postscript to his letter carrying the larger litany of streets quoted earlier visually portrays the fragment it describes: "Little of the city remaynes, save part of Broad and Bishop-gate streete, all Leadenhall street, and some of the adjacent lanes about Aldgate and Cretchett Fryers."[52] In Hollar's 1666 map of the burned city, based on Leake's survey of the ruins, the explanatory inset title includes the following key: "The blanke space signifeing [sic] the burnt part & where the houses are exprest, those places yet standing."[53] (See Figure 1.) Emptiness stands for emptiness; the burned city is represented not by black ashes and drawn ruins but by blank white space, with only the street names still standing. The empty space is in stark contrast to the familiarly detailed Hollaresque houses surrounding the ruined area, where human life and habitation is minutely inscribed and shadowed and three-dimensioned; the signifying emptiness foreshadows the future emphasis on two-dimensional groundplans in the decades of the rebuilding (see chapter two). The graphics of past and present co-exist here; the empty space, unlike the elevations of the surrounding surviving space, in fact signifies a metaphorical rather than strictly representational emptiness.

London's streets before the Fire had generally been subordinate, liminal space, designed of course for travel, transition, transmission, but typically narrow, cramped, dark, dirty, closed over with extended stories, and filled in with sheds and stalls and tenements – as *spaces*, experientially overshadowed by the combined domestic/commercial space of the City. Where the public edifices would be often magnificently rebuilt, and the private dwellings generally improved in structure, the streets would actually change less than any other physical aspect of the City – as chapter three will show, there was an intensely concerted effort to recover the ancient webbing in all its tiny detail.

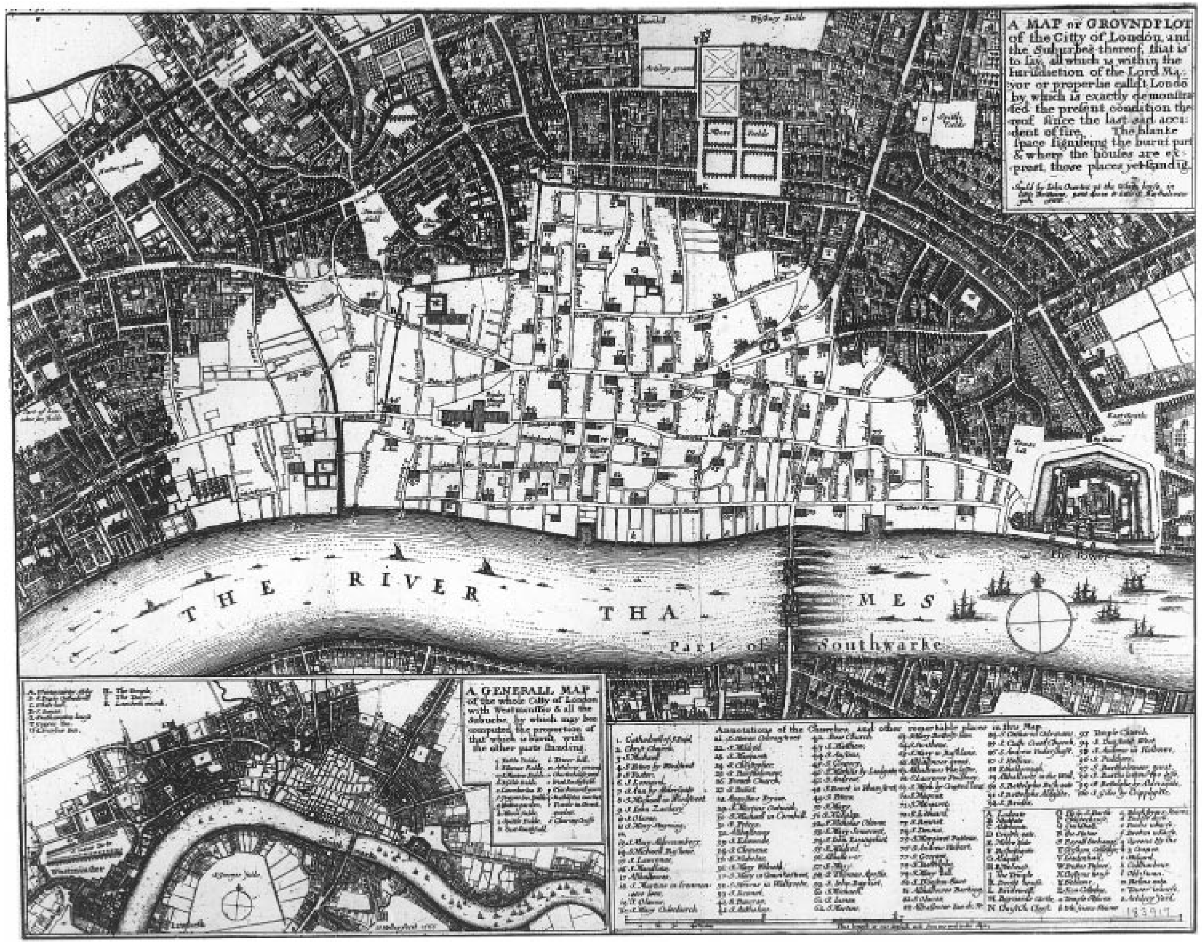
A MAP or GROVNDPLOT of the Citty of London and the Suburbes thereof, that is to say, all which is within the Iurisdiction of the Lord Mayor or properlie called London by which is exactly demonstrated the present condition thereof, since the last sad accident of fire. The blanke space signifeing the burnt part & where the houses are exprest, those places yet standing.
A GENERALL MAP of the whole Citty of London with Westminster & all the Suburbs, by which may bee computed the proportion of that which is burnt, with the other parts standing.
Annotations of the Churches, and other remarkable places in this Map.
THE RIVER THAMES
Part of Southwarke
Westminster
The Tower
Lambeth

Figure 1 John Leake's survey of the ruins, engraved by Hollar (1666).

But that difference in emphasis between architectural and topographical space is fundamentally significant. Those street names – historically familiar to their inhabitants, relatively transparent and denotative to virtually any traveller – those place indicators of now lost, ruined, distorted, unrecognizable spaces, would over the next few decades command intense cultural interest and assume great cultural importance. In fact, the English interest in London's street names and meanings continued to escalate from this period through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in both literary and topographical works. To quote Kostof slightly out of context: "The street, it seems clear in this attitude, will no longer be thought of as the space left over between buildings, but as a spatial element with its own integrity" (Kostof, *City Shaped*, 215). The rhetorics of loss and rebuilding – the journalism, poems, sermons, plays, and novels – would most often if variously live in the streets, and thus most truly be topographies – etymologically, as Miller reminds us, the writings of *place*. London streets would become the semiotic structure redefining London, reinvested with social, political, and commercial meaning in a cross-cultural and profound attempt to reattach the street signs to their signified spatiality – to make *lived* space once again *known* space.