



Rhythmanalysis in Doris Lessing’s “Storms”: London from a Critical View of Everyday Life¹

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Abstract

The interaction between humans and space has recently been one of the dominant issues in the works of the contemporary century to explain how thinking about space as a fixed and limiting framework has evolved to an alternative multidimensional understanding of it where human interventions create alternative space. This study aims not only to move beyond the setting descriptions in a literary text but also to open up Henri Lefebvre’s theory of space, particularly his notion of rhythmanalysis, that have been utilized in the fields of architecture, sociology, geography, urban and regional planning to include literature as well. To this end, Doris Lessing’s sketch, “Storms” from the collection *London Observed: Stories and Sketches*, will be analysed since it displays various life trajectories in London and provides a critical view of the city from two different perspectives – that of the taxi driver and of the narrator – which contradict each other. Focusing on their interpretations of London and to what extent they are able to sense and make meaning of rhythms, thus, offers a new mode of observing the movement and continuity of life in the city, which also displays the relationship between humans and the spaces they occupy, and what feelings they attribute to.

Keywords: Henri Lefebvre, rhythmanalysis, rhythms, Doris Lessing, *Storms*, space

Introduction

The interconnection between space and human beings is a primary concern for theorists and scholars including critical geographers, sociologists and urban planners. In understanding this relationship, Henri Lefebvre, the French philosopher, provides a useful formulation in his ground-breaking works *The Production of Space* (1991) and *Rhythm analysis: Space, Time and*

¹ I hereby declare that this article has been extracted from the unpublished PhD dissertation of mine entitled “Configuration of Alternative Spaces Through Performative and Nomadic Acts in Doris Lessing’s Short Fiction,” Çankaya University, September 2018.

Everyday Life (2004). His studies include a wide range of discussions about the heterogeneous nature of space and the complexities of everyday life. He claims that space is acknowledged as a product of social relations and experiences embracing diversity and the analysis of rhythms gives an insight into the workings of urban life and movement in the city. In addition to these arguments in social sciences, the employment of space in the analysis of literary texts has become a significant issue. Doris Lessing is one of such authors who deals with space in her works. She values spaces in her fiction set in Africa and England: wild nature, cultivated settler lands and homesteads in the African continent as well as a variety of closed, open and transitory spaces in the city, gain importance with respect to human intervention. Among her five collections of stories, *London Observed: Stories and Sketches* lends itself to an analysis based on the city because London appears to be a unifying element in this collection. The title of the collection directly refers to the city as a frame, and stories and sketches not only focus on different life trajectories in space but also vividly demonstrate the narrator's observation of the city with its streets, parks, buildings, and Londoners in public spaces. Christine Wick Sizemore, in her book *A Female Vision of the City* (1989), demonstrates how Lessing embraces London and displays a spatial structure which allows the characters to appropriate the spaces they occupy, and have connections to their surrounding in individual ways. In a similar vein, Claire Sprague (1987) highlights the significance of London for Lessing: "[s]he is stubborn in her insistence on the city as the centre of human interaction. The city must be confronted, accepted, altered. It is the quintessential locus of human history" (p. 9-10). Based on the varied human involvement in the flow of everyday life in the city, this study aims to display a textual analysis of a sketch, "Storms" from the collection, which portrays a vision of London from two opposite perspectives – that of the taxi driver and of the narrator – including a critical view of daily routines and rhythms of the city within the framework of Lefebvre's theory of space.

Rhythms, Feelings and London in "Storms"

"Storms" revolves around the conversation between an unnamed narrator and a taxi driver, including their reflections of the storm that happened three days ago in London and their different views of everyday life in the city and its inhabitants. It opens with the narrator's arrival at London Heathrow Airport and taking a taxi to West Hampstead where s/he lives. No information is provided about the narrator, neither his/her name, nor physical appearance, nor social background is disclosed. According to Google Maps directions,² it is 30,5 kilometres from the airport to West Hampstead and takes approximately 48 minutes depending on the traffic and the route taken. In a sense, it is a relatively long time to spend in a cab, which causes the driver and the narrator to feel the need to communicate. Based on this, they share feelings and opinions and become active participants in the production of traffic congestion, and contribute to the meaning/appropriation of the city through their observations and interpretations.

The taxi driver is "a small, squashed-looking figure" (Lessing, p. 131) in tweeds and "seemed more like a countryman at a market than a London taxi driver" (p. 125). Because he does not know the fixed spatial patterns in the city to move quickly from one place to another, the narrator names him a "phantom taxi driver" since he does not seem to be a real London taxi driver because of his lack of knowledge, regarding the streets, roads and routes in the city (p. 126). He yearns for his life in the country and laments living in the city centre. What has led him to become a taxi driver in London is his first wife, whose father and brothers were taxi drivers, and her insistence on making him one of them. However, it is not an easy task to become a taxi driver

² (<https://www.google.com/maps/dir/heathrow+airport/West+Hampstead,+Londra>)

as it requires him to “learn The Knowledge” (p. 131), drive all over the city and pass an examination. In terms of city planning, there are patterns between the streets connecting one neighbourhood to another and each taxi driver is supposed to experience the city through spatial practices until they get the licence. This Knowledge serves to represent the city spatially in order to make sense of it and to legitimate particular spatial patterns, and maintains order and control. By following certain routes and obeying the traffic rules represented by the Knowledge, Londoners experience everyday life in the city and deal with potential traffic congestion.

The fact that the whole sketch takes place in a cab suggests the transitoriness of reflections and the appropriation of the cab itself as an alternative mobile space, where the narrator and the driver are in interaction and in conflict with each other. Their opposite emotions and views about the city, and also the changing environment, suggest the continuous production and reproduction of space, London in this context, through social relations, human intentions and individual interpretations. According to Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002), the city is a place which “has no completeness, no centre, no fixed parts. Instead, it is an amalgam of often disjointed processes and social heterogeneity, a place of near and far connections, a concatenation of rhythms; always edging in new directions” (p. 8). Cities are unstable complex entities, which require new perspectives to analyse how they are socially and spatially structured and how their rhythms are observed and sensed. In a similar way, Peter Preston and Paul Simpson-Housley in *Writing the City* (1994), claim that

[t]he city is an aggregation or accumulation, not just in demographic, economic or planning terms, but also in terms of feeling and emotion. Cities thus become more than their built environment, more than a set of class or economic relationships; they are also an experience to be lived, suffered, undergone. (p. 1-2)

The definition of the city cannot be reduced to physical and measurable qualities, rather it needs to be analysed in relation to the experience of its inhabitants based on emotional and physical responses.

Rhythmanalysis is a useful tool for revealing emotions and examining the everyday life in London with its diverse rhythms from the perspective of the narrator and the taxi driver. In the introduction to *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2004), Stuart Elden claims that “the analysis of rhythms provides a privileged insight into the question of everyday life” (p. viii). For Lefebvre, there is a close connection between everyday life and rhythms, which are “[e]verywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy” (p. 15). The cadences of the city can be perceived by individuals simultaneously through the use of senses, but only if one pays attention to the details of ongoing life. One significant aspect of rhythms is their regular occurrence and repetition, through which everyday activities manifest themselves in social life. As Lefebvre puts it, “rhythms imply repetitions and can be defined as movements and differences within repetition” (p. 90) and are classified in two main groups: cyclical repetitions and linear repetitions. The former is grasped “if one considers days and nights – hours and months – the seasons and years. And tides! The cyclical is generally of cosmic origin” (p. 90). In contrast, the latter “defines itself through the consecution and reproduction of the same phenomenon, almost identical, if not identical, at roughly similar intervals” (p. 90). With respect to this, in the story while social activities and daily routines such as commuting, following a timetable, going to a concert or dinner are structured in the form of linear time, natural patterns like the storm and the floods take the form of cyclical time, and both shape social manners, individual behaviours and emotions in space.

The narrator's description of her physical environment as soon as she gets out of the airport building foregrounds the impact of cyclical rhythms in the city. Because of the storm that "blew down so many of London's trees" (Lessing, p. 125) and caused flooding in the streets, the sky is "pastel-tinted" and "unreliable" (p. 125) and the people have sorrowful expressions. There is a natural cause-and-effect relationship between the storm, the wind, the floods and the damage in nature and in the built-environment. The "small and temporary" (p. 125) appearance of people under the "flying skies" (p. 125) as well as the storm, the wind and the floods constitute the material qualities of London. In this sense, nature and the cyclical rhythms seem to be an integral part of the city. As Lefebvre (2004) notes, "[c]yclical repetition and the linear repetitive separate out under analysis, but in *reality* interfere with one another constantly" (p. 8). Despite the damage by the storm and the floods in the city, everyday life flows in its usual pace in relation to the linear time and rhythms.

In addition to cyclical and linear rhythms, Lefebvre mentions the interactions between rhythms: "A rhythm is only slow or fast in relation to other rhythms with which it finds itself associated in a more or less vast unity" (p. 89). For example, the way the taxi driver moves on the road "like grandfather" (Lessing, p. 126) is slower and more cautious than the way other drivers move. With respect to the multiple and interactive nature of the rhythms, Lefebvre's notions of polyrhythmia, eurhythmia and arrhythmia provide the ground for a detailed discussion of everyday life rhythms in the city. Polyrhythmia consists of a myriad of rhythms interacting with each other in cyclical and linear time of everyday life. Eurhythmia refers to the harmonious relationship when "rhythms unite with one another in the state of health, in normal . . . everydayness" (p. 16), whereas arrhythmia is "a pathological state" (p. 16) in which there is disruption and conflict between rhythms. The continuous flow of cars on the road suggests eurhythmia in London until it is disrupted by an unusual traffic congestion in Westway,³ which alters the harmonious interaction of rhythms for a while, creating an arrhythmia in the city.

Although every individual is capable of recognizing the social, cultural, spatial and natural rhythms in the city, the way they perceive and interpret them differs according to their personality, gender, class, profession and activities in their daily life. The taxi driver, for instance, is not familiar with the "formula,"⁴ (Lessing, p. 125) which is "at once recognized by every London taxi driver" (p. 125-126). This formula refers to a path to a particular place in linear time, and like the Knowledge needed to drive in London, provides a spatial route to certain destinations. Rather than internalising the imposed linear structure of roads and streets, the taxi driver prefers "to learn other people's routes" (p. 126) and takes "the slow roads in, not the quick side roads drivers use who know an area" (p. 126), which makes the narrator think "this is one of the journeys [she is] going to be pleased to see the end of" (p. 126). The potential of going to a certain destination through diverse patterns and people's movements suggests the multiplicity of rhythms in the city. On the one hand, the taxi driver continues down the road; on the other hand, the narrator interferes in his business by suggesting not taking the route in "Kilburn High

³ In the late 1960s, "London was in the process of constructing more motorways to reduce the amount of traffic because car ownership was out of control and the streets were gridlocked. Westway is one of London's most famous urban motorways built to relieve congestion at the time" (<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/architecture/london-roads-to>).

⁴ *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* defines "formula" as (1) a set form of words in which something is defined, stated, or declared, or which is prescribed by authority or custom to be used on some ceremonial occasion.

Street⁵ [which is] always crammed” (p. 129-130). Although there is a conceived understanding of certain streets and roads like being crammed, quick or slow, the narrator’s and the taxi driver’s preferences are different. The traffic congestion on the way to the narrator’s house, causing them to “slow down on Westway, and then crawl along and then [...] to stop altogether” (p. 128) suggests the disturbance of eurhythmia (the simultaneous flow of cars) by interferences of arrhythmia (the disorder in the streets such as the closed roads, damaged drains, electricity and gas pipes). In Lefebvre’s terms, this can be seen as the inseparability of rhythms, sometimes creating harmony sometimes disharmony in the city. In a similar vein, Andrew Barry (2001) deals with such various rhythms of life entirely and comments “rather than seeing chaos and congestion as abnormalities perhaps we should see them as a normal feature of networks” (p. 162), and these rhythms seem to be a natural part of everyday life in London.

During their journey in the cab moving through the crowded streets of London, which indicates the linear repetition of traffic in the city, the storm that happened three nights ago is the first subject of conversation between the narrator and the taxi driver. In the course of the storm, the narrator was “at the top of the house” (Lessing, p. 126):

The sky kept changing completely, one minute black with the glimmer of sheet lightning far away across London, and then clear and starry, and the stars had a rinsed look because of the clear, washed air, then black again, and the temperature was changing, stuffy and warm and then suddenly cold, then warm again, while the trees, particularly the big ash at the bottom of the garden, were boiling and thrashing about and everything in the house was rattling and banging, and the roof seemed about to shake itself off. (p. 126-127)

The way she describes what happened during the storm, such as the changes in the colours of the sky, the temperature and the trembling house, appealing to sight, touch and hearing, respectively, refers to the perceived dimension of space – what one sees in the material space of the city (physical and measurable qualities) through his/her senses. There is also a play of the sky and the stars, of the temperature and the house, which is emphasised by the repetitive use of “and,” “then”, “again”, suggesting the cyclical rhythm of the city. Even the trees have their rhythms, which in turn are made up of several rhythms: leaves and flowers, for instance. While the narrator observes the storm and its effects on the environment as a natural phenomenon and describes the event in detail and with pleasure as if depicting a spectacle, the taxi driver, without adding any feeling, briefly explains that he was asleep during the storm “at the bottom of his house” and saw “the trees down in the street and his garden shed’s roof gone” (p. 126) the day after. Thus, the cyclical and linear rhythms of city life seem to be inseparable from each other.

The two distinct reactions to the storm and its impact on the environment illustrate to what extent the narrator and the taxi driver are able to sense the movement in the city. As Lefebvre states, “[i]n order to grasp and analyse rhythms, it is necessary to get outside them, but not completely. . . to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been *grasped* by it” (p. 27). In this sense, the narrator is capable of utilizing her senses to see the hidden rhythms during the storm, probably from the window of her house. Watching the storm from the window recalls Lefebvre’s chapter “Seen from the Window” in *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life* (2004). In this chapter, Lefebvre, the rhythmanalyst, observes the streets from the windows of his apartment in central Paris, which is a location providing not only rhythms and repetitions in the street but also an insight into what happens in the street: “He who walks down the street, over there,

⁵ “Kilburn High Street/Road is an important local town centre. The high road has lots of shops, a market, library, restaurants, pubs, and the Tricycle Theatre and Cinema. These all help to create Kilburn character; however, it is dominated by motor traffic” (<http://www.brnt.gov.uk/your-community/regeneration/kilburn-high-road>).

is immersed in the multiplicity of noises, murmurs, rhythms. . . . By contrast, from the window, the noises distinguish themselves, the flows separate out, rhythms respond to one another" (p. 28). Like Lefebvre's analysis of the street from the window in Paris, the narrator is able to enjoy the cyclical rhythms in London, yet the taxi driver is not as sensitive as she. He does not recognize the flows of nature at the moment of the storm because of being in sleep, and mentions only its destructive effects in his garden. Unlike the narrator's clear perception at the window, his physical location during his sleep at the bottom of the house avoids his view of the storm.

Besides the cyclical rhythms during the storm, the narrator also pays attention to the night lights on and off in the houses. When everything is all right, the lights are on and the city sparkles, but after the storm, as a result of a power cut, the city turns into a "blacked out" one where "the candles and torches [are] glimmering in every house" (Lessing, p. 127). As the narrator reveals, "London without its lights" (p. 127) is not a usual situation and echoes a past event, "the big strike⁶ in the seventies" (p. 127). This power cut exemplifies a kind of arrhythmia slowing down the rhythms of the lights in the city temporarily. Moreover, this reference to the blackout in the 1970s also suggests a palimpsest,⁷ which can be decoded to reveal previous layers of social and cultural events; in Sizemore's (1989) words,

Lessing portrays the city as a palimpsest, a layered text, that shows the passage of time through its layers. This palimpsest is also a fragment of a text and reveals the fragmentary nature of any one observer's perception of the city. (p. 7)

London in this context is portrayed as a palimpsest, a layered text built up over time, perceived and lived by the narrator and the taxi driver. When they talk about the instinctual behaviours of the cat during the storm, for instance, the driver illustrates the time of "the blitz"⁸ (Lessing, p. 127) and points to possible places the cat can hide in, such as the stairs or the beam. As the blackout and the blitz refer to the past, these two events form the layers of London's history. The city shows its presence not only in Lefebvre's cyclical and linear rhythms, but also in history, like a palimpsest.

The second subject the narrator and the taxi driver talk about in the cab is their pets: because of their protective instincts and potential to be friends, the narrator has a cat and the taxi driver used to have a dog, which he had to take to the vet a month ago. The driver overvalues the animals and says "I like animals. They are better than we are. They are kind, not cruel, like us" (Lessing, p. 131). Expressing his feelings for the dead? dog, the taxi driver's voice is "gruff and even angry" (p. 128). In addition to their friendliness, the driver mentions the animals' ability to make use of their instinct to avoid dangers. For instance, during the storm, the narrator's cat

⁶ In Britain of the 1970s, "power cuts and lengthy blackouts became a fact of life. The country's electricity network had long been vulnerable to mechanical failure or industrial action. . . . In December 1970 hospitals were forced to function on batteries and candles during a "work-to-rule" strike. Transport came to a halt, and electrical heating stopped working in many homes - anything that depended on a regular power supply was unable to function. . . . After the "Winter of Discontent" in 1978-79, Margaret Thatcher took on the mining unions. This, together with the deregulation of the energy industry, and the discovery of oil and gas in the North Sea, brought an end to the widespread blackouts which had plagued Britain" (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1525089/Decade-that-dimmed-the-strike-hit-Seventies>).

⁷ For more information on the literal and figurative use of the "palimpsest," see Sarah Dillon *The Palimpsest* (2007).

⁸ "Blitz, the German word for 'lightning', was applied by the British press to the tempest of heavy and frequent bombing raids carried out over Britain in 1940 and 1941. This concentrated, direct bombing of industrial targets and civilian centres began with heavy raids on London on 7 September 1940" (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_blitz).

“tried to get [her] to move downstairs, and had gone down himself to a safe place in the heart of the house” (p. 127). Since animals are a part of nature and act according to their instincts, this suggests the natural rhythms of the animals interweaving with the rhythms in the city.

After the spatial routes and the pets are discussed, the narrator reflects on observations of the environment from the back seat of the cab:

the fallen trees, their roots in the air like hands, that had tried to grip the soil to keep them upright, but failed. The soil packed among the roots was already being washed out. Everywhere were broken branches, and the signs of recent high water, tidemarks of rubble and leaves and twigs. It was becoming dark. October: the clocks would soon go back for the winter. (p. 128)

Like the storm view seen from the window of the house, the taxi window provides a view of the city in terms of what Lefebvre (2004) calls a “remarkable” harmony “between what one sees and what one hears (from the window)” (p. 28). In this perspective, space can be understood through physical elements and material qualities such as the plants, the trees, the stone and so on. The way the narrator identifies “fallen trees”, “the roots”, “broken branches”, “tidemarks of rubble”, “leaves and twigs” from the taxi window paints vivid pictures of London after the storm. The narrator personifies the roots of the trees as being like hands trying not to leave the ground, but the attempts are futile because the soil is washed away by the floods. The description of the environment under the influence of the storm evokes recurrent occurrences and at last is combined with the cyclical rhythm of the city, emphasised by the equinox. Not only the materiality of space but also the arousal of feelings related to cyclical and natural rhythms of the city enable the narrator to sense its changeability and continuous production.

Their journey in the cab reveals two opposite perceptions of the city through the conversation between the taxi driver and the narrator: the former hates London and its people, whom he thinks are not real Londoners but have migrated to the city. Being a Londoner means for the driver to possess certain characteristics like the proper use of the English language. He complains about the everyday manners of a London youngster in a shop, for instance, because the youngster addresses him as “grandad” and hands over the newspaper, saying “There you go, then” (Lessing, p. 128) in a casual way. In response to the narrator’s comment that “It’s a manner of speaking” (p. 129) in London, he accuses the Londoners of having “no manners at all” (p. 129). Lefebvre (2004) interprets such gestures and manners as part of body rhythms which “change according to societies, eras” (p. 38) and claims that

[t]o enter into a society, group or nationality is to accept values (that are taught), to learn a trade by following the right channels, but also to bend oneself (to be bent) to its ways. Which means to say: dressage. (p. 39)

The taxi driver, in this sense, does not have a feeling of attachment to the city, and fails to understand and adapt to the dressage of London including its spatial pattern (the quick roads), its cyclical and linear rhythms and its inhabitants. He cannot even grasp “what all these people [are] doing here at this time of the evening” because “It’s past rush hour” (Lessing, p. 130). For him, rather than going to the theatre or having supper in a restaurant at a late time in the evening, people should eat at home and save their money; he is unable to sense the social and cultural rhythms of London. The narrator recognizes “the wild dislocation that was in his voice” (p. 130) from the very beginning of their meeting in the cab and tries to make sense of “the mystery” in him (p. 129) as well as the “grief”, “sorrow” (p. 129) and “hurt” (p. 130) in his voice. The reason why he hates London and cannot appreciate its rhythms is related to his profession:

for him, being a taxi driver and on the move all day “numbs your mind, it dulls you, and you can't think the thoughts you ought to have in your mind” (p. 130). Since he had to give up music and become a taxi driver due to his first wife, he is not happy living in London. Like the driver's unawareness of the storm during his sleep at the bottom of the house, he cannot perceive and understand the flow of life in London because he is laboriously involved in his daily routine. He appears to have become an integral part of the rhythms, which prevents his perception the city from a vantage point while the narrator is more of an outsider observing and appreciating the rhythms of London.

Unlike the taxi driver, the narrator has a heightened level of awareness of her surroundings and develops a positive view of everyday life⁹ in London with its multiple rhythms. On the way home stuck in traffic congestion, the narrator attempts to persuade the driver to overcome his hatred for London¹⁰ by foregrounding the spectacle of the city's advantages: “It was like a great theatre”¹¹ which “you could watch what went on all day . . . could sit for hours in a cafe or on a bench and just watch. Always something remarkable, or amusing” (Lessing, p. 129). As is seen in the reflections of the narrator, London is not just a city, a physical entity to be filled in. Rather it is a transient metropolis, a living space where there is always movement, performance, interaction and conflict. Because the narrator compares the city to a theatre, people become both the performers on stage and the audience watching the play. In this sense, the narrator seems to be the observer, the viewer who happens to stroll around the city by taxi. Rosario Arias (2005), in her article, “All the world's a stage': Theatricality, Spectacle and the Flâneuse in Doris Lessing's Vision of London,” comments that the narrator portrays “London as a potential space, a space of creativity, where mutual bonds are established between the flâneuse/spectator and the performers” (p. 3), and reads the city as a theatre. London as a theatre stage in this context exemplifies such a metaphorical space because it is produced through relations and experiences, like a script to be performed or a text to be read through the interaction and movement of people. In this sense, the narrator seems like the audience, watching and enjoying the view whereas the taxi driver is a performer acting on the city stage. Arias also argues that in this story “the ideal standpoint is that of the observer, who can use her city eyes and read the city to discover that behind anonymous faces lies a tragedy, a comedy, a farce or a romance, for example” (p. 7). Unlike the taxi driver's dislike for the city including its “noise and rush” (Lessing, p. 129), “streets full of litter and blown leaves” (p. 130), closed parks and congested roads as well as his criticism of people, the narrator praises the city¹² by highlighting its parks, such as Regent's Park and Hampstead Heath. In addition to the glimmering lights at night in

⁹ Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier claim “every day is simultaneously the site of, the theatre for, and what is at stake in a conflict between the great indestructible rhythms and the processes imposed by the socio-economic organisation of production, consumption, circulation and habitat” (p. 73). Like the narrator's use of the theatre metaphor for the everyday life in the city, Lefebvre and Régulier emphasise its inclusive capacity as a site and theatre to bring all elements together.

¹⁰ Lessing's fondness of London can be observed in the narrator's attitude towards the city as a remarkable view to be watched and involved in.

¹¹ Deborah Epstein-Nord in “The City as Theatre” discusses the image of theatre in urban representation of the city in the early nineteenth century because it “suggests not only entertainment and performance but also a relationship of distance and tentativeness between spectator and the action on the stage. The urban spectator of this period, whether writer or imagined subject, experienced the sights and people of the street as passing shows or as monuments to be glimpsed briefly or from afar” (p. 152). In a similar way, the narrator takes pleasure from watching the flow of life in the city.

¹² In reading the city as a text, Christine Wick Sizemore, in her book *A Female Vision of the City* (1989), presents spatial elements of the city with reference to Kevin Lynch's architectural structures such as landmarks, nodes, districts, paths and edges. For more information, see Lynch *The Image of the City* (1960).

the city when there is a power cut, even the people's experiences in the streets and parks that the narrator observes are remarkable and amusing, as they would be in a theatre.

Conclusion

In "Storms," Lessing portrays a vision of London from two different perspectives – that of the taxi driver and of the narrator – which contradict each other. While the driver has a critical view of everyday life in London including the traffic congestion, complexities of spatial patterns on the streets, social life and manners of Londoners, the narrator presents a theatrical view of the city as a remarkable scene to be watched and observed throughout the day. Due to his profession and provincial background, the taxi driver complains not only about other drivers in the traffic and people socialising but also the storms and the floods. Since he has to travel all day to make a living, he might not be able to enjoy being in the city and yearns for a simple town life. Unlike him, the narrator senses the human interaction with nature and spatial patterns, in Lefebvre's terms the cyclical and linear rhythms of the city, and takes pleasure in watching them. The taxi driver, though driving every day in the streets of London, is not a rhythm analyst in Lefebvre's terms because he cannot make sense of his surrounding such as the cars on the roads, their hoot, cyclical and linear rhythms of the metropolis. He even fails to understand human relations and the social life in London. Instead of being involved in the rapid movements of urban city, he longs for a slow and more definite space like his provincial town. In contrast, the narrator is a rhythm analyst because she is able to move in the public realm such as the Heathrow airport and the streets of London, and insistently reflects her observations and meanings attached to the modern life in the metropolis. In fact, she merges with the city through her impressions and spatializes the city. The basic difference between the two characters is their relation to the spaces they wander. The former yearns for a Cartesian understanding of space that is fixed and measurable, which he can find in his town, whereas the latter avoids such a limiting experience of space and foregrounds the multiple ways of living in the city. Based on their interpretations of London, it can be seen how the city is perceived through daily routines such as commuting, travelling, walking, how it is conceived as a spatially designed space in terms of streets, roads and neighbourhoods providing order for its people and how it might be produced and reproduced by Londoners from diverse backgrounds as a social space, because the way each person reads the layers and spatial dimensions of the city is multifaceted. What brings these two characters together and makes them share their distinct viewpoints is the necessity of travelling in the cab. Like the all-encompassing nature of the city, the cab functions as a liminal point and an alternative space where people can be in interaction and in conflict temporarily. Focusing on the rhythms of the city in this sketch and discussing to what extent the two characters are able to sense and make meaning of rhythms, thus, offers a new mode of observing the movement and continuity of life, which also displays the relationship between people and the spaces they occupy.

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