



Reading London's Suburbs: From Charles Dickens to Zadie Smith

Ged Pope

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This book offers a lively overview of London suburban fiction over the last 180 years. Close readings and discussion of work by Dickens, the Grossmith brothers, H. G. Wells, and on through Orwell, Stevie Smith, V. S. Naipaul and Zadie Smith, provides a comprehensive account of key recurring approaches and themes. Suburban fiction highlights the complex connections between place and writing, and focuses on the activities individuals necessarily undertake to make place legible and habitable. Much fiction, looking in at the suburbs from without, anxiously tends to present the popular mass suburb as comprising a key set of problems associated with modernity: as being unknown and unknowable social space, as soullessly repetitive and empty, as lacking familiar co-ordinates of specific place and cultural tradition. This book explores why the suburb, in much fiction, is seen to fail in its primary function of offering a knowable, habitable landscape, a home, or even a tenable sense of identity.

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