



An Unreliable Guide to London

Kit Caless (Editor) , Gary Budden (Editor) , Tim Wells , Aki Schilz , Yvvette Edwards , Eley Williams , Tim Burrows , Will Wiles , more... Irenosen Okojie , Nikesh Shukla , Courttia Newland , M. John Harrison , Chloe Aridjis , Koye Oyedeki , Paul Ewen , Noo Saro-Wiwa , Gareth E. Rees , George F , Stephanie Victoire , Sunny Singh , Juliet Jacques , Salena Godden ...less

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

An Unreliable Guide to London

Kit Caless (Editor) , Gary Budden (Editor) , Tim Wells, , Aki Schilz , Yvvette Edwards , Eley Williams , Tim Burrows , Will Wiles , more... Irenosen Okojie , Nikesh Shukla , Courttia Newland , M. John Harrison , Chloe Aridjis , Koye Oyedeji , Paul Ewen , Noo Saro-Wiwa , Gareth E. Rees , George F , Stephanie Victoire , Sunny Singh , Juliet Jacques , Salena Godden ...less

An Unreliable Guide to London Kit Caless (Editor) , Gary Budden (Editor) , Tim Wells, , Aki Schilz , Yvvette Edwards , Eley Williams , Tim Burrows , Will Wiles , more... Irenosen Okojie , Nikesh Shukla , Courttia Newland , M. John Harrison , Chloe Aridjis , Koye Oyedeji , Paul Ewen , Noo Saro-Wiwa , Gareth E. Rees , George F , Stephanie Victoire , Sunny Singh , Juliet Jacques , Salena Godden ...less

An Unreliable Guide to London brings together 26 stories about the lesser known parts of a world renowned city. Stories that stretch the reader's definition of the truth, questioning reality and fiction simultaneously. Stories of wind nymphs in North Clapham tube station, the horse sized swan at Brentford Ait, Sleeping Clinics in NW3 and the celebrations for St Margaret's Day of the Dead.

Taking its cue from travel guides, London histories and books like *Tired of London, Tired of Life, An Unreliable Guide to London* shakes up the canon of London writing with a tongue firmly rooted in its cheek.

An Unreliable Guide to London is the perfect summer read for city dwellers up and down the country. With a list of contributors reflecting the multi-layered, complex social structures of the city, it is the essential guide to London, showing you everything you never knew existed.

An Unreliable Guide to London Details

Date : Published July 2016 by Influx Press

ISBN : 9781910312223

Kit Caless (Editor) , Gary Budden (Editor) , Tim Wells, , Aki Schilz , Yvvette Edwards , Eley Williams , Tim Burrows , Will Wiles , more... Irenosen Okojie , Nikesh Shukla , Courttia Newland , M. John Harrison , Chloe Aridjis , Koye Oyedeji , Paul Ewen , Noo Saro-Wiwa , Gareth E. Rees , George F , Stephanie Victoire , Sunny Singh , Juliet Jacques , Salena Godden ...less

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fantasy, Fiction, Contemporary, Anthologies

 [Download An Unreliable Guide to London ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online An Unreliable Guide to London ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online An Unreliable Guide to London Kit Caless (Editor) , Gary Budden (Editor) , Tim Wells, , Aki Schilz , Yvvette Edwards , Eley Williams , Tim Burrows , Will Wiles , more... Irenosen Okojie , Nikesh Shukla , Courttia Newland , M. John Harrison , Chloe Aridjis , Koye Oyedeji , Paul Ewen , Noo Saro-Wiwa , Gareth E. Rees , George F , Stephanie Victoire , Sunny Singh , Juliet Jacques , Salena Godden ...less

From Reader Review An Unreliable Guide to London for online ebook

Christina Scholz says

Got this (and helped financing the first imprint) mainly because it features a new and original story by M. John Harrison ("Babies from Sand") - which, unsurprisingly, turns out to be the highlight of the book. All in all, this is a motley mix of fact and fiction inspired by one of my favourite cities, and it features everything from psychogeography via urban legend and cryptozoology all the way to surprising and accidental (and thankfully largely illusory) horror. The queer anarchist tale of "Mother Black Cap's Revenge" by George F. stands out for its energy, and I creepily enjoyed Salena Godden's "The Camden Blood Thieves" and a political joke that never gets old in "Corridors of Power" by Juliet Jacques. On the other hand, some of the other stories were just a little bland or escapist or, in the case of "Filamo" by Ireosen Okojie, just stylistically really bad (and content-wise very random and more suited for a Vandermeer anthology than this book). I'll still recommend it, mainly for the MJH, but also because it offers a wide variety of styles and perspectives from an interesting and varied selection of writers from all kinds of backgrounds (from London-based PoC to highly political voluntary squatters), so I guess it's got something for everyone.

Jayne says

Great idea for an anthology and a broad range of writers included. Most stories are good and a couple are really exceptional.

Jackie Law says

'An Unreliable Guide to London' is an anthology of twenty-three short stories set in the lesser known parts of our capital city. It is an exploration of the impact of nostalgia, resentments and a desire for recognition. It entreats the reader to observe what is and was, to reflect on all that is happening around them, wherever they may be.

Cities exist in a state of flux, continuous change which many resist. Even long term residents are transients, memory subject to interpretation. A city is an aggregation of human intentions and endeavour, at the whim of decisions causing repurcussions which are rarely appreciated at the time.

These stories tell of places that existed for a moment, told not by historians but by those who experienced them. So much happens that goes unseen, although ambience may be remembered and reminisced over. It is this which, when lost, may be craved.

The anthology is divided into four geographical areas, the tales reflections on time and place. I have picked out those from each section which particularly resonated.

West

'In Pursuit of the Swan at Brentford Ait', by Eley Williams, tells of a man who has given over his life to the research of cryptids, in particular the existence of a huge swan that legend claims exists on an uninhabited

island in the River Thames. The zeal with which the protagonist pursues his hobby provides humour alongside the history. The asides regarding his wife are glorious.

‘Staples Corner (and how we can know it)’, by Gary Budden, tells of the nightmare that is the modern shopping experience. Cavernous warehouse type emporiums, staffed by uniformed sales assistants sticking remorselessly to a script designed to maximise each customer spend suck all potential pleasure from the making of a purchase. The dispiriting experience of a young couple in need of a new laptop is portrayed with dark humour.

North

‘Mother Black Cap’s Revenge’, by George F., reveals the inverted snobbery of those who choose to live on the edges of society. Their spaces have been shut down, taken over and gentrified. Alternative venues, newly created, are invaded by those they regard as sub-culture tourists. These interlopers are treated with disdain.

Society may struggle to accept the anarchists in their midsts, but the anarchists also struggle to accept those they deem mere thrill seekers. They desire their own space, as exclusive as any capitalist club.

‘The Camden Blood Thieves’, by Saleena Godden, tells of a writer who regards her life as one of romantic solitude. During a drunken night out this becomes unbearable. She meets men in pubs, visits a club and hangs out on the streets around Camden. She feels witty and believes she is having fun. As she continues to drink, her various experiences merge and overlap. It is unclear what is real, what is distorted memory or a drunken dream. How much of life is an interpretation?

‘Notes on London’s Housing Crisis’, by Will Wiles, takes the reader to an alternative reality where housing is treated much like a car purchase. Low cost living pods slotted into purpose built structures may be upgraded; neighbouring pods added for expansion. It is designed to be flexible, affordable and upgradable; yet this fabulous idea is floundering due to individual’s greed and a lack of central investment. However impressive the potential of an idea, it seems that man can always find a way to degrade it.

‘Soft on the Inside’, by Noo Sao-Wiwa, is set in a taxidermy shop. It opines that:

“Stuffing the dead is an interesting concept [...] an ordinary cadavar on public show is considered f**ked up on all levels. Animals bodies, on the other hand, are considered fair game.”

Many of the animals’ bodies were provided by a game hunter:

“Galloway was a trophy hunter, a turd of a human being who loved animals in all the wrong ways [...] it was the thrill of the kill that got him going; each gunshot was like an ejaculation.”

When the animals are given twelve hours of life, they seek revenge on their killer.

South

‘Rose’s Woolwich’, by Paul Ewen, is a masterpiece of humour and irony. Set in a traditional pub on a Friday lunchtime it is gently mocking of the clientelle, even if their reaction to the Francis Plug like customer was entirely understandable. The lizard metaphor is fabulous.

‘In the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens’, by Sunny Singh, is a poignant, beautiful, love story about a bachelor nearing retirement. It pulled at my heart. The denouement was perfect.

‘Nightingale Lane’, by Stephanie Victoire, offers up sylphs, the spirit of a place that can remain in hidden

corners despite transience and change. They may be found by those who seek them out, forged by their past, present and future.

“we will always be here should you return. We keep all stories for all time; just remember how we taught you to see them, hear them and feel them.”

‘Thy Kingdom Come’, by Koye Oyedeki, explores how our personal histories may be stolen from under us by other’s recollections. A graffitied tower block with drug riddled stairwells may be reinvented, an improvement if only for notoriety. A bunch of insignificant boys become gangs with power, the current crop of wanabees looking on with wide eyed respect as tales are told of daring do by masters of embellishment.

“Emcee has a small army of young men who will follow him without question. He feeds their need to remain relevant, quenching their thirst for representation.”

East

‘Heavy Manners’, by Tim Wells, takes the reader through a Saturday spent in a record shop back in the day. It talks of the anticipation, exhilaration and thrill of new music.

“Country and reggae both spring from the struggles of working people. Even in the more divided 70s and 80s there was some harmony on the record shelves. Leave people to get on with it and there usually is.”

As with many of the stories in this collection, there is disdain for the here and now.

‘Tayyabs’ by Nikesh Shukla, mocks hipsters (almost too easy a trope) whilst exploring individuals’ sense of self worth. In every walk of life, it seems, there is a bartering of what is valued whilst jockeying for position.

‘Warm and Toasty’, by Yvette Edwards, is a story of kindness. After the intensity of so many of the previous tales this quenched a thirst.

‘There is Something Very Wrong with Leyton Mills Retail Park’, by Gareth E. Rees, contains some brilliantly funny observations on the fictions played out in modern life, where shop fronts are painted onto vacant units and giant ASDA people with perfect skin and hair leap over invisible objects.

“Hung on the wall next to the boy is a banner advert for air freshener: Smell the Scents of Autumn. Not the odours. It puzzles me. The artificial smell of autumn they’ve created will rid us of the odours we smell in the actual autumn? Is that the idea?”

‘Filamo’, by Irenosen Okojie was beyond my comprehension but brought to mind the Freudian musings in ‘The White Hotel’ by D.M. Thomas. I didn’t really get that story either.

.

This collection offers London life from so many angles and viewpoints. It concludes with a few paragraphs on each of the authors, and asks them to name a favourite ‘off piste’ location in the city. Mine would be St George’s Gardens, a small eighteenth century cemetery near Bloomsbury. There is something soothing about sitting amongst those peacefully resting souls, whose lives will have been anything but, just like ours.

Introducing the reader to a variety of Londoners, their aspirations and irritations, enables empathy with those whose lives and choices we may struggle to comprehend. This is London, inglorious yet profound. Such people and places are everywhere.

My copy of this book was provided gratis by the publisher, Influx Press.

Bookmuseuk says

If you ever thought of London as one sprawling city, Influx Press's *Unreliable Guide* will disabuse you.

Each one of these stories is set in a specific area of London. Taken together, they create the impression, not of an undifferentiated metropolis but a patchwork of neighbourhoods, each with its own character, instantly recognisable to those who come from its streets.

The authors have found different ways to play with the notion of an 'unreliable guide.' Some seek to capture the essence of place as known only to its residents. Others, like Eley Willams' 'In Pursuit of the Swan at Brentford Ait' – which might have been written by a 21st Century incarnation of Jerome K Jerome – tease us with the notion of what is real and what is not.

Still others depart from reality altogether. Will Wiles's 'Notes on the London Housing Crisis' is an alt-hist vision of how London could have been. Noo Saro-Wiwa's 'Soft on the Inside' is reminiscent of Andre Alexis's Giller Prize-winning apologue, *Fifteen Dogs*, while Ireosen Okojie plunges us into a vision that marries Hieronymous Bosch with Salvador Dali.

Memories play an important role. Stephanie Victoire's 'Nightingale Lane' distils Clapham South from recollections of an old soldier from Mauritius. Tim Wells' 'Heavy Manners' captures Dalston through the record shops of his youth. The narrator of Koye Oyedeji's 'Thy Kingdom Come' challenges the version of their personal history spun by his now-famous boyhood friend.

Others brush up against contemporary news. In Courttia Newlands' 'The Secret Life of Little Wormwood Scrubs', a young jogger runs past an object that the next day will make the headlines. George F's 'Mother Blackcap's Revenge' describes a glorious fightback by the LGBT community against the gentrification of Camden.

Nor does the anthology ignore London's less romantic corners – stories are spun from the unlikely locations of PC World at Staples Corner and the car park at Leyton Mills Retail Park.

Two of my favourites – Stephen Thompson's 'The Arches' and Yvette Edwards' 'Warm and Toastie' – disclose hidden acts of practical kindness that belie the notion that London is a city of unfeeling anonymity.

At the end of the book, each author recommends three of their own favourite London reads – a further treasure trove of writing to delve into if you want to explore London through its stories.

This anthology may be, as the cover insists, "Bad Advice. Limited Scope. No Practical Use." But it reveals London as lived, loved and (sometimes) loathed by Londoners themselves.

K.J. Charles says

A brilliant, brilliant collection. Stories about London, divided into north, east, south, and west (and it means those parts; no central London/Oxford Street/Tower nonsense, but the parts actual people actually live), some fantastical, some realistic, all bizarre and grimy as the city itself. I've never read anything quite so

much in the spirit of the place, even when the stories are as gloriously implausible as the one about the man hunting a huge purple cryptid swan at Brentford Ait, let alone the painful tale of a Muslim frightened to report a suspicious package near Wormwood Scrubs.

I don't even know how this works if you don't live here. Is the long extended riff on Staples Corner (and how we can know it) applicable to other shopping hellholes under flyovers? I don't know because I have the misfortune to live near Staples Corner, and the descriptions of the surreal penitential nature of going there and the existential dread that surrounds it might have been plucked from my own scarred psyche.

Customers enter the store straight after you, but you know there were only the two of you in that car park. These other customers form on entry, visitors from a world you are not privy to. The carpet is womb-red. The air is artificial and warm. The atmosphere flickers.

This unreliable guide is self-described as "Bad advice -- Limited scope -- No practical use", but if you want to know what London i>feels like, in its diversity and resentment and odd corners and constant churn, this is the book.

Dan Coxon says

Fantastic anthology of stories, and a must-read for anyone in and around London. Particularly enjoyed stories by Nikesh Shukla, Kit Caless, Gary Budden and M. John Harrison, but so many gems in here.

David Manns says

Bad Advice, Limited Scope, No Practical Use runs the line above the title, a tongue in cheek description of this rather wonderful collection of short stories about the nation's capital. These kind of anthologies can sometimes be a bit hit and miss, but on the whole, An Unreliable Guide hits far more times than it misses.

The vast majority of these authors are new to me, but they all write with a distinctive voice and their tales cover everything from place, people, psycho-geography, love, life and, in the strangest story of all, time travelling monks and a serial killer!

This book was a Kickstarter project and with short stories seemingly out of fashion amongst the big publishing houses, this is probably the way forward for such anthologies. The quality of writing is very high indeed, the stories by turns strange, heartwarming and thought provoking. Every aspect of the capital is examined, from capitalism to the disintegration of community, from LGBT rights to paranoia and loneliness, love and death.

It is available from Influx Press and is well worth seeking out.

Jonathan Natusch says

With 23 short stories from 23 different authors, this was always going to be a hit and miss collection. There's some exceptional writing here though.

The collection is divided up into four parts - West, North, South, East - with each story offering a different view of a part of the city of London. Some of them perhaps work better if you know the area that's being written about...

The highlights for me were:

- In Pursuit of the Swan at Brentford Ait by Eley Williams, a glorious tale of a man's pursuit of a mythical swan;
- Thy Kingdom Come by Koye Oyedeji, about the fluidity of stories and their acquisition by others;
- Warm and Toasty by yvette Edwards, a beautifully heartwarming tale, amidst much of the bleakness that abounds within the rest of the anthology;
- There is Something Very Wrong with Leyton Mills Retail Park by Gareth E Rees, which pokes large retail areas, and the disconnection of the surrounding populace, with a sharp stick.

Very few of the stories left me disappointed, though a few (such as Mother Black Cap's Revenge) banged an ideological drum a little hard. There were really only two efforts that left me cold - Soft on the Inside by Noo Saro-Wiwa (about stuffed animals coming to life, which entirely failed to grab me) and Filamo by Irenosen Okojie (which was impenetrable, and seemed out of place within the rest of the collection).

One gripe is with the editing. In too many stories, there are words missing from sentences. Even in the Table of Contents, there's a typo in the name of the second story.

That aside, this is a fun, often thought-provoking collection. Definitely worth a read!

Jaffa Kintigh says

The flavor of a city is the combination of its neighborhoods and all the stories of the people contained within. This off-kilter collection of tales and vignettes highlights many of the peripheral neighborhoods of London. Some stories are fantastical and absurdist, while others present a realistic take on a narrower London experience. Above all, the tales show a wonderful diversity of voice doing much justice to the multi-cultural and international megalopolis that is London.

My absolute favorite tale, which I rated 5-stars, was the profoundly moving "Warm and Toasty" by Yvette Edwards. It's a tale of hope and humanity with an eye on London's ethnic history.

I've reviewed all of the component tales of the anthology. The rest are:

- F., George--"Mother Black Cap's Revenge"--4 stars
- Newland, Courttia--"The Secret Life of Little Wormwood Scrubs"--4 stars
- Shukla, Nikesh--"Tayyabs"--4 stars
- Singh, Sunny--"In the Vauxhall Pleasure Garden"--4 stars
- Thompson, Stephen--"The Arches"--4 stars
- Budden, Gary--"Staples Corner"--3 stars
- Burrows, Tim--"Broadgate"--3 stars
- Caless, Kit--"Market Forces"--3 stars
- Godden, Salena--"The Camden Blood Thieves"--3 stars
- Jacques, Juliet--"Corridors of Power"--3 stars
- Oyedeji, Koye--"Thy Kingdom Come"--3 stars
- Rees, Gareth E.--"There is Something Very Wrong with Leyton Mills Retail Park"--3 stars
- Schilz, Aki--"Beating the Bounds"--3 stars
- Victoire, Stephanie--"Nightingale Lane"--3 stars

Williams, Eley--"In Pursuit of the Swan at Brentford Ait"--3 stars

Aridjis, Chloe--"N1, Centre of Illusion"--2 stars

Ewen, Paul--"Rose's, Woolrich"--2 stars

Harrison, M. John--"Babies From Sand"--2 stars

Okojie, Irenosen--"Filamo"--2 stars

Wells, Tim--"Heavy Manners"--2 stars

Wiles, Will--"Notes on London's Housing Crisis"--2 stars

Saro-Wiwa, Noo--"Soft on the Inside"--1 star

I received this anthology directly from Influx Press editor and contributing author, Gary Budden.

Sean Preston says

Impressive scope, and actually, a fairly reliable guide to London life. At its best when it's incensed and funny, like London.

Particularly enjoyed pieces by Saro-Wiwi, Ewen, Oyedeji.
