“THE MYSTICAL CITY UNIVERSAL” : REPRESENTATIONS OF LONDON IN PETER ACKROYD’S FICTION

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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

"THE MYSTICAL CITY UNIVERSAL" : REPRESENTATIONS OF LONDON IN PETER ACKROYD'S FICTION

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Most of Peter Ackroyd's work takes place in London, and the city can be said to be a unifying element in his work. Even those of his novels that do not use London as a setting are about London and Londoners, in history and in the present. London, in Ackroyd's work, is represented by multiple points of view – firstly that of a historical personage and secondly of a researcher in the present day. Through the use of such a structure, Ackroyd parodies biography writing (by rewriting and distorting the life of a historical Londoner), and detective fiction (by making the contemporary researcher ineffectual and underqualified). These narratives, while being clearly separate and linear in themselves, focus on London, which acts as a bridge between the characters and themes in the separate centuries, culminating in their merge at the end. Thus, methods of rewriting in Ackroyd's work come together in the ulterior aim of rewriting the city of London.

The main aim of this dissertation is to account for the various types of rewriting and parody that becomes evident in Ackroyd's fiction. In the light of the discussions on parody of detective fiction and biography in each chapter, this dissertation will attempt to view Ackroyd's fiction as a chronological metamorphosis of London itself, through rewriting its artists and their texts as productions of London.

Key Words: Peter Ackroyd, London, Parody, Rewriting

ÖZ

PETER ACKROYD'UN ROMANLARINDA LONDRA

Gürenci Sağlam, Berkem

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Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Nursel İçöz

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Peter Ackroyd üç romanı dışında tüm eserlerinde mekan olarak Londra'yı kullanır. Ackroyd'un Londra'da geçmeyen romanlarında dahi, Londra, karakterlerin ağzından tanıtılarak söylemin bir parçası haline gelir. Yazarın bütün romanlarında gerek Londra'ya gerek Londra'da yaşamış ünlü kişiliklere göndermeler yapılır. 1399 Londra'sında geçen *The Clerkenwell Tales* romanından başlayarak Ackroyd Londra tarihini yeniden yazmayı amaçlamıştır. Yazar şehrin tarihini yeniden yazarken, aynı zamanda Londralı yazarlar ve eserler hakkında da yazmaktadır.

Ackroyd eserlerinde yeniden yazımcılık teknikleri arasında sayılan yaşam öyküsü ve dedektif hikayesi parodisi ile metinler arasılığı kullanmaktadır. Bu tezin amacı, Ackroyd'un yeniden yazımcılık tekniğini nasıl kullandığını incelerken, bu tekniğin asıl hedefinin şehri yeniden yazmak olduğunu savunmaktır. Bu tekniklerin kullanımı postmodern dönemde arttığı ve Ackroyd da postmodern bir yazar olarak tanındığı için, adı geçen teknikler postmodern söylem öğeleri olarak tanımlanacaklardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Peter Ackroyd, Londra, Parodi, Yeniden Yazım

For Müşerref Gürenci and Süheyla Sağlam

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Peter Ackroyd's work – be it poetry, fiction, or biography – revolves around themes concerning London, so much so that London seems to be the unifying element of his work. Indeed, most of his fiction take place in London, and even those that do not use the city as the setting are about London, or Londoners past and present. Starting with *The Clerkenwell Tales*, set in 1399, and ending (for now) with *The Plato Papers* set in the 3700s, Ackroyd's works attempt to chronicle the city throughout the ages and comment on the relationship between the city's past and present. While suggesting that past London continues to function in present London, he rewrites the past of London through the use of historiographic metafiction. Coined by Linda Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction, in its simplest state, refers to the kind of novel that questions "the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real" (*Poetics* 92), since history can only be grasped through existing texts. Thus it does not suggest that recorded history is false, but that it is up for questioning and interpretation. Indeed, the city in Ackroyd's work reflects peripheral aspects of the city's history – underground sects, cults, and crimes – a sort of history that generally goes by unnoticed, if recorded at all.

Through rewriting the city of London, Ackroyd also rewrites the lives of famous Londoners, and uses the form of biography and the detective plot as tools of investigation into their lives. As will be argued further, Ackroyd's work claims that although the past can only be known from textual data, and is thus not wholly reliable, it is always present in, and in fact is indispensible from, the present. London itself emerges as a text in his work, a text that is highly subjective and open to interpretation for the protagonists. There are at least two time frames in the works chosen for this study, where two different periods (one historical, one contemporary) carry on their seperate linear narratives in order to merge with each other at the end. In most cases, these time shifts in the novels are bound to each other through two techniques – the first being the detective plot, as a contemporary detective struggles to determine what has happened in the past and what is happening at the time. The

reader is most of the time more enlightened than this detective, as s/he has the chance to follow the historical narrative, which shows that what the detective finds out is not always true. The detectives in Ackroyd's fiction are, as Merivale and Sweeney term them, "metaphysical detectives," parodies of the more traditional detectives created by Poe, Doyle, and Christie. This form of parody questions the linear narrative and god-like authors and detectives of traditional detective fiction. Rather than being the controlling force behind the narrative, and clarifying the crimes for the reader, Ackroyd's detectives are inefficent in their investigations, and become more lost in the narrative than the reader.

The other technique used to connect these frames is that of parody of biography, as the protagonist in the contemporary narrative is bound in some way to that of the historical narrative (who is generally a historically "accurate" character), and their shared sentiments concerning London bring them together in the end in a timeless frame. The biographical information revealed in these novels is more often than not distorted. As Rana Tekcan states, "Ideally, a biography's structure or background is formed by accurate historical fact – in that sense, it claims a kinship with history" (48). By distorting these "historical facts," Ackroyd, in line with the concerns of historiographic metafiction, reminds the reader that past lives can only be known through texts that are interpretations of reality. This is not to say that all Ackroyd's novels share the techniques listed here, although a number of them incorporate similarly functioning parodies.

Four of Ackroyd's novels have been chosen for this thesis: *Chatterton*, *The House of Doctor Dee*, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, and *Hawksmoor*. Because of the need for a limited focus on parodies of biography and detective fiction, novels that do not strictly fit into the above mentioned format have been left out. Thus, *The Clerkenwell Tales*, *The Plato Papers*, *English Music*, *First Light*, *Milton in America*, and *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* have been left out for the purposes of this study. *The Lambs of London* and *The Fall of Troy* were published after the start of this thesis, and therefore have been left out. This is not to say that these novels are not connected to the central argument of rewriting the city, since besides *Milton in America* and *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, which take place in America and Paris respectively, they are all set in and are about London, as will be

discussed further in the conclusion of this dissertation. Many of these novels also employ various types and degrees of parody, but while doing so do not use either a detective figure or separate time-frames. The final chapter of this thesis attempts to analyse these other novels in light of the argument concerning London as a mystical/mythical centre. The detective figure was a priority in the choosing of the novels for detailed analysis, as he most often functions as the link between the past and present of the city, and comes into contact with the person he was investigating at the end of the novels, thus emphasizing once again that the past of London is always detectable in the present.

The main aim of this dissertation is to account for the various types of rewriting and parody that becomes evident in Ackroyd's fiction. Chapter two attempts to give a theoretical background to the terms used in this study, and their application to Ackroyd's work. The third chapter will look at the parodies of detective fiction and biographical narrative in four of Ackroyd's novels, and show how they function as parts of the aim to rewrite the city. Rather than summing up what has been previously argued, the concluding chapter will attempt to briefly discuss and place Ackroyd's other works as part of, rather than apart from, the arguments in this thesis. In this chapter, Ackroyd will also be discussed in relation to other contemporary British authors who use London in their works as more than merely a setting, such as Iain Sinclair, Michael Moorcock, Martin Amis, and David Lodge.

In the light of the discussions on parody of detective fiction and biography in each chapter, this dissertation will attempt to view Ackroyd's fiction as a chronological metamorphosis of London itself, through rewriting its artists and their texts as productions of London. As there is relatively little critical material concerning Ackroyd and his works, it is hoped that this dissertation will contribute to the assessment of his novels as experiments in rewriting. As such, there is still no extensive critical work that highlights the relationship between Ackroyd's fiction and his interest in the city of London, which is indeed the unifying factor in his work even when the setting is not London. It is hoped that a more extensive research concerning the effect of London on all of Ackroyd's fiction, not only through the perspective of rewriting, will benefit from this dissertation.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In his review of Peter Fuller's *Modern Painters: Reflections on British Art*, Ackroyd states,

> [...] the essential constituents [of postmodernism] (theatricality and an awareness of the relativity of style) have always been an essential component of English taste. The Elizabethan vogue for medieval funeral monuments, the rise of neoclassical architecture, and the revival of Gothic in the nineteenth century all suggest that stylistic borrowings and a certain theatrical historicism are essential aspects of the native genius. Post-modernism is simply a belated academic recognition of what is a very old tradition. (*The Collection* 259)

Thus, many attributes of the postmodern novel, particularly of historical metafiction, are regarded by Ackroyd as English tradition. Elsewhere he suggests "So it is that the history of English literature can profitably be seen as a history of thefts and plagiarism, of formal borrowings and melodic echoes" (*The Collection* 207), emphasizing the fact that aspects of his own literature – rewriting, parody, intertextuality – are in fact the manifestations of a national tradition. Two of his novels deal with this point thematically to a great extent. *Chatterton* is centred on Thomas Chatterton, "perhaps the greatest literary forger of all time" (Ackroyd 21) and deals with the blurring of lines between inspiration, imitation, and forgery. *The Lambs of London* similarly parodies the life of William Ireland, another English forger, who reputedly 'found' lost plays by Shakespeare.

Except for *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983), *First Light* (1989), and *Milton in America* (1996), up to 2005, all Ackroyd's novels are set in London, and it seems that the city of London is an important unifying element of his fiction. Furthermore, although these exceptions do not take place in London, they are nonetheless about London, and there is a running commentary in all the works concerning the city and its inhabitants. Starting with *The Clerkenwell Tales*, set in London in 1399, and ending (at the time of writing) with *The Plato Papers*, set in London, 2000 years in the future, Ackroyd has attempted in his fiction to chronicle

the city throughout the ages. For him, contemporary London cannot be set apart from its history as "[…] the ancient city and the modern city literally lie beside each other; one cannot be imagined without the other" (*London* 760), a theme that is repeated in his fiction. The past of London continually interacting with the present is inherent in his fiction, and this is why a contemporary narrative frames some of this fiction. In *Chatterton*, *The House of Doctor Dee*, and *Hawksmoor*, the narrative continuously shifts back and forth in time, while the settings remain the same.

History and the making of it are crucial to Ackroyd's structuring of his fictions. What he says about *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* in an interview can easily be taken as one of the central concerns of all his fiction: "[the novel was] an attempt to interfuse the past and the present and suggest that the past can only really exist in the present, and the present in the past" (Gibson and Wolfreys 223). In most of his fiction, the narrative shifts between centuries, and where he does not do so structurally, time and the nature of time are dealt with thematically. Even in *Dickens*, one of his 'straight' biographies, there are fictional chapters interspersed within Dickens' timeline, in which Dickens anachronistically interacts with his predecessors and followers. In *Chatterton* and *Hawksmoor* especially, the validity of history and historiography as informative is questioned thematically as well as structurally. Through the several different accounts of Thomas Chatterton's death that are presented in different narratives in *Chatterton*, Ackroyd emphasizes the interpretive quality of history. Linda Hutcheon calls this mode of fiction "historiographic metafiction," which she says is "obsessed with the question of how we can come to know the past today" (*Politics* 47). As Hutcheon further states,

> the question is never whether the events of the past actually took place. The past did exist – independently of our capacity to know it. Historiographic metafiction accepts this philosophically realist view of the past and then proceeds to confront it with an anti-realist one that suggests that, however true that independence may be, nevertheless the past exists *for us-now* – only as traces on and in the present. (*Politics* 73)

Thus the concern of historiographic metafiction lies not in trying to establish fact as fiction, but to point out, as Hutcheon states, that "we can only know [the past] through texts" (*Politics* 81). Likewise, the historian F. R. Ankersmit suggests that "postmodernism does not reject scientific historiography" (295) but that "in the

postmodernist view, evidence does not point towards the *past* but to other *interpretations* of the past; for that is what we use evidence for" (287). It is not history as such, but its representation in texts, and those texts in particular that are questioned:

> If the past is only known to us today through its textualized traces (which, like all texts, are always open to interpretation), then the writing of both history and historiographic metafiction becomes a form of complex intertextual cross-referencing that operates within (and does not deny) its unavoidably discursive context. (*Politics* 81)

This problematisation of texts is dealt with extensively by Ackroyd in *Chatterton*, at the point in which the literary detective Charles finds a manuscript in Chatterton's hand which illuminates 'facts' about the poet's life and death. The seeming authenticity of this manuscript prompts Charles to assume that it is real, whereas the text is discovered to be a forgery later on in the novel. This manuscript, while problematising the authenticity of texts, is also of course metafictional, as the novel itself is another fictional text, or interpretation of, Thomas Chatterton's life and death.

Questioning the representations of history is not only a fictional concern. Ankersmit, for example, insists that faced with the postmodern view of history, historiography must also redefine itself. As he suggests in "Historiography and Postmodernism," "Historians have always been searching for something they could label as the essence of the past – the principle that held everything together in the past (or in a part of it) and on the basis of which, consequently, everything could be understood" (289). While not necessarily questioning the validity of representations of the past, he feels that the role of the historian has changed:

> The wild, greedy, and uncontrolled digging into the past, inspired by the desire to discover a past reality and reconstruct it scientifically, is no longer the historian's unquestioned task. We would do better to examine the result of a hundred and fifty years' digging more attentively and ask ourselves more often what all this adds up to. The time has come that we should *think* about the past, rather than *investigate* it. (294)

In *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Hayden White defines the historical text as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the

interest of *explaining what they were by representing them*" (2, original emphasis). The historical work, therefore, like the work of fiction, is in need of a narrator who is given the task of explaining and narrating the data into a coherent whole, or discourse. White feels that the historian, like the author of a fictional work, also provides room for interpretation and invention. In explaining the differences between a historical text and a fictional text, White argues,

> It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding," "identifying," or "uncovering" the "stories" that are buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the historian "finds" his stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which "invention" also plays a part in the historians operations. The same event can serve as a different kind of element of many different historical stories, depending on the role it is assigned in a specific motific characterization of the set to which it belongs. (6-7)

Nevertheless, Ankersmit's aesthetic view of history and Hayden White's 'metahistory,' are not exactly embraced by other historians who feel that to create a relationship between history and fiction is futile. Perez Zagorin, for instance, claims that "unlike the work of literature, the historical work does not contain an invented or imaginary world. It presents itself as consisting, to a great degree, of facts and true or *probable* statements about the past" (308, my emphasis). Works like *Chatterton*, *Hawksmoor*, and other historiographic metafiction do not do anything different – Thomas Chatterton's fictional life in *Chatterton* is also based on factual evidence, with the addition of a possible (or probable) interpretation of his death. Zagorin too feels that when history is aestheticized, this "inevitably results in the trivialization of history through its failure to acknowledge features that both define history as a form of thought and give it its significance" (309). As suggested earlier, historiographic metafiction does not necessarily aim to trivialize or ignore history, but, as Hutcheon claims in "Beginning to Theorize Postmodernism," history is

> being rethought – as a human construct. And, in arguing that history does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We can not know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts. (256)

This is precisely what historiographic metafictionalists like Ackroyd foreground – not denial, but a questioning, a suspicion. As Chatterton makes the reader ask, what if some of the 'evidence' were forgeries?

Despite Ackroyd's insistence that writing about and questioning history is a British authorial trait when he suggests in his preface to *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture* that "For many hundreds of years the artists and writers of this country have used a mixture of historical styles as a form of ludic comprehension of the past" (Ackroyd 2), Hutcheon explains that postmodern historiographic metafiction differs from historical fiction mainly in its self-conscious manipulation of history ("Pastime" 62). Another difference between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction, according to Hutcheon, is in the way that historiographic metafiction uses historical data. She claims, for example, that in historiographic metafiction, "historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and inadvertent error" ("Pastime" 63). In Ackroyd's fiction, particularly when it comes to biographical facts, even the most important detail is sometimes distorted to emphasize this. An instance of this is in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, where the narrator claims that Dan Leno was born on 20 December 1850, whereas he was really born in 1860. Similarly, in *The House of Doctor Dee,* John Dee claims to have a brother although he is known to have been an only child. The historical data may thus be falsified in historiographic metafiction and also, although the data are incorporated into the text, they are rarely fully assimilated (63). The protagonists also differ in historiographic metafiction, because in historical fiction they are generally types. In historiographic metafiction, however, they "are anything but types: they are the ex-centrics, the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" (Hutcheon 63). In Ackroyd's fiction, they are generally artists of one sort – poets, authors, painters, mimics, actors, and architects.

Rewriting and Parody

History is only one of the discourses that are rewritten by Ackroyd in his novels. In his fiction, as also in some of his biographies, personalities, styles,

particular texts, and genre conventions are frequently parodied. Through presenting the novels from different historical perspectives, 17th, 18th, and 19th century styles, texts, and genres are parodied to provide an illusion of realistic discourse, after which the deviation from the convention underlines the meta-fictional quality of the work. Textual relationships, particularly interactions between them are problematic for both Ackroyd and his characters, in those novels where literary research is being conducted (*Chatterton* being the prominent one). The 'anxiety of influence,' Ackroyd feels, is a reality which should be brought to the foreground. In a 1989 interview, he states, " I've always been attracted by the reality which books or works create, so, in almost all cases, I think in the work I do the actual fiction depends to a large extent upon written texts of one form or another" (Gibson and Wolfreys 224). Concerned with the idea of a work echoing previous texts, he later claims that "A good author should be able to use pastiche and parody just as readily as he can use so-called 'original' perceptions or original sentences [. . .] I mean plagiarism's a form of individual art after all" (234). His open use of previous styles and conventions emphasizes in his fiction the cyclical nature of time, of the past manifesting itself in the present, the reason for his rewriting and questioning history in the first place.

As Matei Calinescu suggests, the method of rewriting older texts and traditions is not new, but "what older literary theory saw in terms of 'sources' and 'influences' more recent criticism is likely to recast in the language of rewriting/rereading and transtextualisation" (Calinescu 244). Rewriting is, as he states, "a relatively new and fashionable term for a number of very old techniques of literary composition" such as "imitation, parody, burlesque, transposition, pastiche, adaptation, and even translation" (244). Rewriting thus encompasses any method of influence, whether intentional or unintentional. However, it is clear that modern and especially postmodern texts, particularly the novel, have significantly transformed these 'old techniques' through difference of intent. The difference is that modern and postmodern rewriting contains "a certain playful, hide-and-seek type of indirection, a tongue-in-cheek seriousness, an often respectful and even honorific irony, and an overall tendency toward oblique and even secret or quasi-secret textual reference" (Calinescu 243). As Calinescu also makes clear, the postmodern method

of rewriting places the reader, and his relationship with the text, into the centre of the rewriting process as "rewriting ideally asks for rereading, or for the kind of attention that is characteristic of reflective rereading, both in regard to the master text and to the text that is derived from it" (243).

This reliance on the reader's interpretative skills places him/her as part of the creative process in such texts. In "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes goes further and suggests that all texts are basically derived from pre-existing ones:

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture [. . .] [the writer's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others. (146)

As Jacques Derrida, an important influence on postmodern thought suggests in *Of Grammatology*, the author's intent in the text is transformed during the process of reading since the act of reading "must always aim at a certain relationship, unperceived by the writer, between what he commands and what he does not command of the patterns of the language that he uses" (158). According to this argument, since it is impossible to arrive at the author's intended meaning, the author has lost his significance as the centre of the text. Interpretations rely on the reader, and, as Derrida claims, these are endless: "the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*" (151).

Since "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author," (Barthes 148), it is now up to the reader to decipher the rewritten text both from the text itself and from the original text or texts. The reader is therefore forced to be in the centre of the creation process of the fiction, as s/he must understand and re-create the text. As the postmodernist writer relinquishes his role as God-like author, s/he instead creates fictions which encourage readerly interpretations by using various techniques. Parody is one of the main rewriting techniques that is frequently employed in postmodern historiographic metafiction, as, like history, styles, texts, and genres are both incorporated in and also deviated from in the contemporary work. As Linda Hutcheon also suggests in *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of*

Twentieth-Century Art Forms, parody is a mode of overcoming the anxiety of influence (4).

Gerard Genette, the French theorist and critic, attempts in his work *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, to discuss the various methods of text relationships, of which parody is one. Genette suggests that any text is a transtextual text, transtextuality being, "[…] the textual transcendence of the text, which I have already defined roughly as 'all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts'" (1). He proposes that there are five kinds of transtextual relationships between texts, "hypertextuality," or "rewriting" being the subject of the study. Genette defines hypertextuality as "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (5). He then states that a hypertext and its hypotext can have two kinds of relationships, the first of which is "transformation," and the second, "imitation" or "indirect transformation" (7). Transformation occurs through parody, travesty and transposition, while imitation occurs through pastiche, caricature, and forgery.

The viewpoint in which Genette differs most from other theorists lies in his perception of parody. In contrast to the definition with which this study will conduct itself, Genette claims that parody cannot be aimed at a genre, but only at particular texts:

> A parody or travesty always takes on one (or several) individual text(s), never a genre. The notion, so commonly found, of a 'parody of genre' is a pure chimera, unless one sees it explicitly or implicitly as a *parody* in the sense of satirical imitation. One can parody only particular texts; one can imitate only a genre […]. (Genette 84-85)

On the other hand, Linda Hutcheon widens the definition of parody to such an extent that it also comes to encompass intertextuality, plagiarism, and imitation in general. What defines it, however, is criticism and ironic distance. In her work *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, she claims that:

> Parody, then, in its ironic 'trans-contextualization' and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the new incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But this irony can be

> playful as well as belittling; it can be critically constructive as well as destructive. (Hutcheon 32)

The wide perspective through which Hutcheon discusses the use of parody includes the idea that parody does not necessarily depend on a particular text or texts, as claimed by Genette, but that in postmodern novels in particular, it can be used as a parody of genre or text. She suggests that, "The contemporary novel that parodically incorporates high and low art forms" (81) frequently employs a parody of popular genres of fiction, such as "parodic versions of detective-story structures," "use of the structure of the popular spy thriller," "fantasy and science-fiction modes" and pornography (82).

Patricia Waugh, in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, devotes a whole chapter to the issue of parody, in which she draws from previous definitions and interpretations of the form. Although she does not attempt to arrive at a definition of parody, her stance is clearly closer to that of Hutcheon as she states "Parody fuses creation with critique" (68). In other words, parody, by reminding the reader of previous conventions and forms, aims to play with these at the same time. In alignment with Hutcheon, Waugh also believes that parody is a metafictional device in a postmodern text; that while parodying a traditional genre, the novel comments also upon itself.

Margaret A. Rose, while accepting that the metafictionality of parody has gained it a postmodern stance, also feels that the comic element of older types of parody, which also included the burlesque, travesty and satire, still continues. She defines parody as follows:

> parody in its broadest sense and application may be described as first imitating and then changing either, and sometimes both, the 'form' and 'content,' or style and subject-matter, or syntax and meaning of another work, or most simply, its vocabulary. In addition to, and at the same time as the preceding, most successful parodies may be said to produce from the comic incongruity between the original and its parody some comic, amusing, or humorous effect, which, together with the changes made by the parodist to the original by the rewriting of the old text, or juxtaposition of it with the new text in which it is embedded, may act as 'signals' of the parodic nature of the parody work for its readers. (Rose 45)

The element of humour, Rose feels, derives from "The sudden destruction of expectations which accompanies the perception of such incongruities" (34). Therefore, in line with Rose's claim, the comic element of parody is only distinguishable by the alert reader who must be aware of the traditional use of the convention and must be able to discern every deviation from the norm. This study, on the other hand, while acknowledging that some deviations from the conventions being parodied, whether it be style, text, or genre, may have a comic effect on some readers, also suggests that comedy need not be an essential ingredient, especially in postmodern parody. Thus, Hutcheon's stance in *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* when she states that, "The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humour in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual 'bouncing' [. . .] between complicity and distance" (32), is closer to the purposes of this study. The delight and/or pleasure derived by reader on perceiving the deviation from the original text or texts being parodied need not include comedy in the definition of parody.

An essential aspect of postmodern metafiction has been its attempt to close the gap between high and low art forms, and to achieve greater accessibility to readers in doing so. Parody becomes crucial in this attempt as its frequent use of popular conventions renders it readable to a mass audience. As Hutcheon claims, "The potential social and intellectual gap between author and reader is supposed to be closed or at least lessened by a novel which overtly acknowledges that it only exists insofar as (and while) it is read, and that it must be read against a background of accessible (because textually incorporated) culture" (81). The detective story convention, for example, a regularly parodied convention used and abused by historiographic metafictionalists, has enabled novels such as A. S. Byatt's *Possession* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* to reach both academic and popular audiences. Considering that both novels were adapted into films, the rise in accessibility is obvious. Genres that employ rigid conventions (of which the detective story is only one), that have, as Waugh states, "often passed into cinematic forms of representation in the twentieth century" such as "science fiction, ghost stories, westerns, detective stories, popular romance" (81) are sometimes used singly, and sometimes in an overlapping manner in contemporary metafiction. A. S.

Byatt's *Possession*, for instance, parodies the popular romance, the detective story, the epistolary novel, and the Victorian novel while also commenting on each and thus on itself.

Moreover, metafictional parody does not limit itself to only literary forms, conventions and texts, it also frequently makes use of forms like painting (as in Ackroyd's *Chatterton*), architecture (*Hawksmoor*), and, as listed in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, "everything from comic books and fairy tales to almanacs and newspapers provide historiographic metafiction with culturally significant intertexts" (Hutcheon 132-133). The aim is the same, to provide the reader with a familiar footing, in order to be able to emphasise the conscious deviation from it. As Patricia Waugh explains further,

> the well-worn conventions of realism or of popular fiction are used to establish a common language which is then extended by parodic undermining and often amalgamated with cultural forms from outside the mainstream literary tradition, including journalese, television influences such as soap-opera, cinematic devices and the effects of such genres as space opera. (64)

In line with the preceding argument, it could easily be stated that rewriting and parodying former works characterize literature in the postmodern period. The role of the text has changed to suggest that there can be no original text since all texts continuously interact with those before and after them. Thus, it seems that it is pointless to rewrite a particular text in the postmodern period as that text is itself, anyway, a rewriting, and not original. Similarly, if rewriting or parody is directed at a genre, the target genre is assumed to be limited in itself and defined by particular boundaries. Because these boundaries have become even more flexible in the postmodern period, genre parody has become a futile form of rewriting. Korkut argues, for instance, that "The postmodern novel [. . .] creates a non-hierarchical discursive realm where no discourse is immune to parody and where it is constantly implied that all discourses are products of language, which shapes reality and maintains an arbitrary relationship with it" (80). Postmodern parody, therefore, can be said to be discourse parody, which includes all master discourses; not only literature, but also history, science, religion and philosophy among others, adding to those mass appeal discourses such as cinema and television. This is the definition of

parody that this study will use since Ackroyd rewrites London in his work, and while doing so, also parodies history, personages, texts, and genres to emphasise the circularity of the nature of time in the city.

The two major genres that Ackroyd parodies in his fiction are those of the detective story and that of biography, which most of the time are parodied at the same time, as the detectives in the novels more often than not are bent on investigating historical personages. The detective and biography parodies also give rise to other parodies in Ackroyd's novels. Particular speech patterns and mannerisms identified by a century are parodied, as are common generic forms of the time. In *Chatterton*, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *Hawksmoor*, the confessional, a form of autobiography, is also parodied, which gains double importance in a detective text. Detective figures are helpful, as the detectives become a useful tool in bringing the historical shifts in the novels together. The detectives are set apart from their subjects of investigation at the beginning by a time gap, but they are brought together by a sense of locale. As is most obvious in *The House of Doctor Dee*, in which the investigator inherits the house of his subject of investigation, the detectives and the people they investigate are almost always inhabitants of London. Through the strong spiritual realm of the locale, the past and present come to exist at the same time, neither can be broken off from the other. At the end of the novels, the living merge with the dead – the detective becomes a part of the person he has been investigating. Thus the detective binds the historical shifts of the novels together and shows at the end the circularity of time in the city.

The novels ultimately culminate with the embrace of the living and the dead, as the investigator is always brought into contact with the person he was investigating, thus emphasizing that history is always a part of the present, particularly the history of London. In *Chatterton*, for instance, the poet Charles Wychwood assumes the role of the detective while trying to find out the circumstances of the life and death of Thomas Chatterton, after finding a portrait of him as a middle-aged man. Similarly in *The House of Doctor Dee*, Matthew Palmer, a professional researcher, investigates the previous owners of his new house. The two pseudo-detectives of these novels are linked by their interest in history and biography, and this interest enables them to enter the lives of Thomas Chatterton and

Doctor Dee, respectively. In *Chatterton*, the past co-existing in the present is illuminated by the paintings, primarily by the object of investigation, the supposed portrait of Thomas Chatterton in middle age. Towards the end of the novel, following Charles' death, the painting is brought to an art gallery to be cleaned up by a forger/painter, Stewart Merk. Merk realises that there are many faces hidden underneath the foregrounded image: "The face of the sitter dissolved, becoming two faces, one old and one young; as the paint decayed before Merk's eyes, [. . .] these two faces recurred in a series of smaller and smaller images until after a few moments they had entirely disappeared" (228). The only things discernible in the ruined painting, the forger notices are "certain letters from the titles of the books which now hovered in indeterminate space" (228). This striking scene, where the painting ultimately bursts into flames, brings together the other instances of circularity in the novel; the poets in the painting are merged in time, only separable by the texts they have created. The texts stand alone in which the faces of the different poets that have helped to shape them have been dissolved. Thus the central concerns of the novel are brought together: poets endlessly repeating and being repeated by each other, emphasizing the circularity of the nature of time, and of narrative.

Similarly, Edward, Charles's son, sees his dead father's face in the painting *The Death of Chatterton* which he feels compelled to go and visit again. At the end of the novel, as Thomas Chatterton is dying, he is joined by both Charles and George Meredith: "Two others have joined him – the young man who passes him on the stairs and the young man who sits with bowed head by the fountain – and they stand silently beside him. I will live for ever, he tells them. They link hands, and bow towards the sun" (234). Thus the three poets are united at the end in a space that is not limited by time; they are one and the same, co-existing in the world of Ackroyd's text.

The detective in *Hawksmoor* also finds himself linked to the object of his investigation. The difference in this novel lies in the fact that the detective is truly a detective - he is Detective Chief Superintendent Hawksmoor, who is investigating the strange murders committed in or around the churches built by Nicholas Dyer in the eighteenth century. Historical fact, however, reveals that the architect Nicholas

Hawksmoor, known for his eccentric and Baroque architecture, built the churches in question. In the novel, the name of the historical architect is bequeathed to the 20th century detective, while the 18th century architect, despite being a historical character, is renamed as Nicholas Dyer. The detective genre is doubly parodied in this novel, as the detective *becomes* the architect – the culprit – at the end of the novel, having carried Hawksmoor's name from the beginning, and ultimately becomes the mystery he was investigating. The circularity of time in London is underlined in this novel through the repetition of names, characters, events and words in the dual frames. The same people with the same modes of action re-emerge in the twentieth century in the same places. As Susana Onega suggests, "in the novel, nothing progresses in time, [. . .] the same events repeat themselves endlessly, and [. . .] the same people live and die only in order to be born and to live the same events again and again, eternally caught in what appears to be the ever-revolving wheel of life and death" (47). Again, at the end of the novel, Hawksmoor comes face to face with his predecessors and is engulfed, like Charles, Meredith and Chatterton, in the circular time zone: "And when I went among them, they touched fingers and formed a circle around me; and, as we came closer, all the time we moved further apart. Their words were my own but not my own, and I found myself on a winding path of smooth stones" (217). Hawksmoor is only able to achieve this after his investigation points him to the particular church that Dyer had built, thus the mystery lies again in the streets of London, which the detectives must survey for clues and evidence.

Ackroyd's other main use of parody depends on the genre of biography and autobiography, which is a continuation of his concern with historiographic metafiction. Ackroyd is a well-known biographer of Charles Dickens, T.S. Eliot, and William Blake among others, and he also uses the biography technique in his fiction, thus creating pseudo-biographies of both literary and other historical personages in his fiction by parodying the genre. For instance, in his novel *Chatterton*, the poet Thomas Chatterton, while a character in the novel, is also the subject of a fictional biography. In *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, Ackroyd goes one step further and writes the autobiography of Oscar Wilde, by structuring his novel as the journal of Wilde, written in France during his last days. The

journal, brimming with epigrams for which Wilde was well known, actually rewrites both the language of Wilde and his life. In fact, Ackroyd's fiction abounds with parodies of historical personages, both literary and non-literary, whose common point is that they are all inhabitants of London, familiar people that strut around within his fiction. Apart from Chatterton, George Meredith is also one of the main characters, along with Henry Wallis, the painter in *Chatterton*. Similarly, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* not only features Dan Leno as a character, but also George Gissing and Karl Marx. By including these well-known names in his fiction, a place where we do not expect to find them, Ackroyd rewrites their lives, distorting historical data in the process.

As discussed earlier, Ackroyd's historical and biographical novels continually leapfrog in time, constituting different frames for different centuries. While John Dee, the Elizabethan mathematician and magus, in *The House of Doctor Dee*, is given a narrative of his own set in Elizabethan London, at the same time, Matthew Palmer, a 20th century researcher has his own narrative, in which he sets out to find the truth of the house he inhabits. A similar approach is used in *Chatterton*, *Hawksmoor*, and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. The merging of historical periods with the contemporary points to the fictionality of the novel itself, as the reader must halt to adjust to the new time frame. Although both narratives develop through realistic and sometimes detective story conventions, the framing of the chapters, both separate and dependent on each other, reinforces the idea of the past shaping the present. The genre of the biography is then used with much the same aim as that of historiography, whether it is John Dee or Dan Leno, the subjects of the pseudo-biography are in the end fictional and we can only know about them from previous texts or interpretations. As Raymond Federman also suggests,

> […] the question of biography and autobiography is certainly interesting, but also problematic, for one must always approach a biography (a life told by someone other than the one who lived it) and even more so an autobiography (a life told by the one who lived it) with a great deal of suspicion as to the reliability of its facts. (87)

The suspicion arises of course because "fiction and autobiography are always interchangeable, just as life and fiction, language and fiction, that is to say history

and story are interchangeable" (Federman 89). Thus the characters in Ackroyd's pseudo-biographies are at once fictional and factual, just as London is also fictional and factual, since the reader knows of them beforehand through interpretations of their existence in other texts. Although the writers characterised in Ackroyd's novels have themselves fictionalised London in their works, they themselves become fictional characters defined by a fictional setting. The city and its authors are reproductions of each other, and all come to be fictionalised by Ackroyd in these pseudo-biographies.

While discussing Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man* in *A Theory of Parody: The Teaching of 20th Century Art Forms*, Hutcheon states "Like much British self-conscious fiction, [. . .], the novel manages to suggest the fictionality of 'reality' without entirely abandoning realism" (49). This is very much the case in Ackroyd's fiction, in which history is 'investigated' by contemporaries in a realistic medium. The fictionalised characters are characters in their own right in the novels, but at the same time, fictional researchers or detectives, who are forced to use London as a guide, investigate the identities of these fictional and factual artists.

Perhaps 'British self-conscious fiction' is a good term to define Ackroyd's fiction. As quoted earlier, he claims that many aspects of metafiction have been used by the British for centuries, and that it is a literary tradition, while postmodernism and metafiction are merely fashionable names for old techniques. It is evident that he seeks to rewrite the history of London, an ever changing and also an ever-living history, with its personages and its literature. The artists whose history emerges in his fiction are all products of London itself, they have been moulded, as it were, by the streets of the large city. It is no coincidence that most of the novelists that Ackroyd characterizes in his fiction are writers of the city themselves, most particularly Dickens, Meredith, and Gissing. The 'reality' of London is thus fictionalised twice over in Ackroyd's fiction, as he rewrites the personages and fiction of writers of London. As stated before, many aspects of rewriting are employed in his novels, whether it is of people or works, however, the defining factor is still the rewriting of place as it is place that brings the past and the present together.

Writing the City

In *The Mysteries of Paris and London*, Richard Maxwell identifies four images of the city mostly used in urban mysteries, although these should not only be limited to detective fiction. As will be seen, these elements apply to many novels which consciously personify the city and/or use the city as a metaphor for isolation. The images that Maxwell states are those of the city as labyrinth/maze, the image of the crowd, the panorama, and finally, the concern with paper and paperwork (15-20). All these gain greater importance in a mystery novel, since the city itself is pointed to as the source of the mysteries. Following a series of gruesome murders, the religious leaders in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* suggest, for example, that, "London itself – this vast urban creation which was the first of its kind upon the globe – was somehow responsible for the evil. Reverend Trussler, of the Holborn Baptist Church, compared the murders to the smoke of the London chimneys and denounced them as the necessary and inevitable results of modern existence" (Ackroyd 162).

The city as labyrinth or maze is closely identified with the writers of London – authors from Defoe to Dickens to Conrad to Ackroyd describe winding, secretive alleys that may or may not lead anywhere. As Marilyn Thomas Faulkenburg explains,

> Novelists commonly describe the city in labyrinthine terms. The changing definition of the term is significant. To the ancients, the labyrinth connoted paths of intricate deviation leading eventually to the center for the initiated from which demons were excluded by the very device of the labyrinth. In the Middle Ages that center still held in the guise of walled town with a centrally-located church giving order to the whole complex. In the nineteenth century that center begins to be eclipsed by secular institutions and by the twentieth century, novels question even the validity of presupposing that a center exists to be found. (14)

For instance, upon her first theft, Moll Flanders describes her escape as follows: "When I went away I had no Heart to run, or scarce to mend my pace; I cross'd the Street indeed, and went down the first turning I came to, and I think it was a Street that went thro' into *Fenchurch-Street*, from thence I cross'd and turn'd thro' so many ways and turnings that I could never tell which way it was, nor where I went"

(Defoe 137). In the Victorian age, the "visionary concepts of the city as a labyrinth for the initiated" (Faulkenburg 27) still holds. The rapidly expanding labyrinthine city losing its centre is a predominant image in novels from all periods in English literature although it became particularly popular in the Victorian era, the time during which the city enlarged most rapidly.

The narrow alleys, intensified by the fog, as explained below, prove menacing to Londoners and outsiders alike. Esther in *Bleak House*, for instance, expresses, "We rattled with great rapidity through such a labyrinth of streets, that I soon lost all idea where we were" (Dickens 633). Or, describing the location of Todger's in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens describes in a similar manner, "A kind of resigned distraction came over the stranger as he trod those devious mazes, and, giving himself up for lost, went in and out and round about and quietly turned back again when he came to a dead wall [. . .]" (Dickens 120). In *The Secret Agent*, Joseph Conrad similarly describes Mrs Verloc's inability to step out onto these streets: "She was alone in London: and the whole town of marvels and mud, with its maze of streets and its mass of lights, was sunk in a hopeless night, rested at the bottom of a black abyss from which no unaided woman could hope to scramble out" (Conrad 218). Even Matthew Palmer, the 20th century pseudo-detective of *The House of Doctor Dee*, deems it hard to find his way, despite the fact that he, unlike Esther, has lived in London all his life, "I found myself turning down an unexpected and unfamiliar lane. That is the nature of the city, after all: in any neighbourhood you can come across a street, or a close, that seems to have been perpetually hidden away" (265). Narrow alleys and fog-ridden by-ways make it difficult for the unassuming individual to navigate through the city, let alone make sense of it. A labyrinth or maze-like city suggests that the city hides many secrets, and in a detective novel particularly, shelters and hides criminals. The criminals are the ones who can easily find their way, and are able to use the maze-like alleys to their own advantage, as does the street-wise Fagin in *Oliver Twist*. The city is still unfathomable but creates nooks and crannies for people like Fagin who want to disappear to be able to do so: "he kept on his course, through many winding and narrow ways, until he reached Bethnal Green; then, turning suddenly off to the left,

he soon became involved in the maze of the mean and dirty streets which abound in that close and densely-populated quarter" (Dickens 121).

The image of the crowd is another that is frequently found in novels of the city, most notably in Victorian novels, as the population grew by frightening amounts in that age, bringing in all sorts of people and increasing the crime rate. As Raymond Williams claims in *The English Novel: From Dickens to Lawrence*, fear of masses and the mob, a common motif of novels that take place in London, emerged from the crowds of Victorian London. While earlier London espoused variety, by the 1880s, "the sense of the great city was [. . .] so overwhelming, that its people were often seen in a single way: as a crowd, as 'masses' or as a 'workforce.' The image could be coloured either way, for sympathy or for contempt, but its undifferentiating character was persistent and powerful" (22). Richard Maxwell suggests that the crowd may have two oppositional functions; it "can seem either as a nightmarish onslaught or a generous overflow" (17). The individual encountering the crowd, therefore, could either be alienated by it or be engulfed in it, neither of which seems very positive, as "The crowd is a collectivity that often seems close enough to grasp but then, phantasmagorically, withdraws. It thus confirms the pedestrian's isolation, even while taunting him with its complicity in an order that he has failed to fathom" (Maxwell 17). In Dickens, the image of the crowd is generally painted in a negative light, as threatening to the individual, however, in good weather, when the faces in the crowd are actually discernible, they represent not a threat but a diverse variety (but rarely is London presented in good weather). In *Bleak House* Dickens is most certainly preoccupied with the image of the crowd, and in this novel both sides of the spectrum are elaborated on. Esther describes the "crowds of people whom the pleasanter weather seemed to have brought out like many-coloured flowers" (Dickens 51), while for Jo the crowd is threatening because of the motion associated with it which engulfs him: "the crowd flowing by him in two streams – everything moving on to some purpose and to one end – until he is stirred up, and told to 'move on' too" (225). Elsewhere the crowd is described as "flitting, and whistling, and skulking" (260) or as "an unearthly fire, gleaming [. . .] on all the faces of its many thousands of wandering inhabitants, [. . .] as solemn as might be" (353-354). The crowd is generally worked within a panorama of the city –

an image that implies both vastness and vitality, even more threatening for the individual. As much as the large crowd may intimidate the solitary man, a panorama of the large city is an equally alienating device.

To capture the city in a single glance, especially the sight of sprawling London, is of course virtually impossible without the help of a sliding camera. A panoramic view of the city, not counting the frequent snapshots of the streets at ground level, is best achieved from above, preferably from the top of a building. From this height, the character atop the city is able to observe all of its elements from a detached perspective. As Raymond Williams suggests in *The Country and the City*, such an observer, whose presence emerges in Victorian fiction, is not exempt from the forces of the city, but is further alienated by them:

> The distance of the observer, now no longer in the streets but physically or spiritually above them, is a new element, but the evident fear of crowds, with the persistence of an imagery of the inhuman and the monstrous, connects with and continues that response to the mob which had been evident for so many centuries. (216-217)

Probably the most well known perspective of the city from a height is that of the view of London from the top of Todger's in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Rather than providing a relief from the oppressiveness of the city, it is evident in Dickens's novel that this perspective serves to depress the individual even more:

> The gambols of a piece of cloth upon the dyer's pole had far more interest for the moment than all the changing motion of the crowd. Yet even while the looker-on felt angry with himself for this, and wondered how it was, the tumult swelled into a roar; the hosts of objects seemed to thicken and expand a hundredfold, and after gazing round him, quite scared, he turned into Todger's again, much more rapidly than he came out; and ten to one he told M. Todger's afterwards that if he hadn't done so, he would certainly have come into the street by the shortest cut; that is to say, head-foremost. (123-124)

The view from Clara's window in Gissing's *The Nether World* is very similar to the depiction in *Martin Chuzzlewit*:

> On a clear day the view from this room was of wide extent, embracing a great part of the city; seen under a low, blurred, dripping sky, through the ragged patches of smoke from chimneys innumerable, it had a gloom impressiveness well in keeping with the mind of her who brooded over it. Directly in front, rising mist-detached from the lower masses of buildings, stood in black majesty the dome of St. Paul's; its vastness suffered no

> diminution from this high outlook, rather was exaggerated by the flying scraps of mirky vapour which softened its outline and at times gave it the appearance of floating on a vague troubled sea. Somewhat nearer, amid many spires and steeples, lay the surly bulk of Newgate, the lines of its construction shown plan-wise; its little windows multiplied for points of torment to the vision. [. . .] Down in Farrington Street the carts, wagons, vans, cabs, omnibuses, crossed and intermingled in a steaming splash bath of mud; human beings, reduced to their due paltriness, seemed to toil in exasperation along the strips of pavement, bound on errands, which were a mockery, driven automaton-like by forces they neither understood nor could resist. (280)

The force of the city is clearly dispiriting, and the only character who remains optimistic after such a view is Thomas Chatterton who claims that he feels "exhilaration [in] waking above the city and then descending into it" (191) from his attic room in *Chatterton*. As will be explained later, this positive attitude is misguided, as he is never again to ascend to his attic room.

Another image intensified in the Victorian era, most notably by Dickens and Doyle, is the fog, although depictions of this phenomenon are not strictly limited to this era. As Ackroyd comments in *London: A Biography*, "It can be said that fog is the greatest character in nineteenth-century fiction, and the novelists looked upon fog as might people upon London bridge" (429). Like the labyrinthine streets and the indistinguishable features of the crowd, the fog of London is alienating for the newcomer and also enables those who wish to, to disappear. In *Bleak House*, Esther asks: "I asked whether there was a great fire anywhere? For the streets were so full of dense brown smoke that scarcely anything was to be seen" (Dickens 25). The fog in the Victorian novel is so thick that the lights from the buildings or the infamous lampposts are unable to penetrate through it and characters are frequently at a loss as to what lies behind it. Another newcomer, Oliver, has a similar experience to that of Esther,

> It was Smithfield they were crossing, although it might have been Governor Street for anything Oliver knew to the contrary. The night was dark and foggy. The lights in the shops could scarcely struggle through the heavy mist, which thickened every moment and shrouded the streets and houses in gloom, rendering the strange place still stranger in Oliver's eyes. (98)

The fog, while hazardous enough outside, does not stay there but enters the buildings as well. As is described in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll*

and Mr. Hyde, "a lamp was set lighted on the chimney shelf, for even in the houses the fog began to lie thickly" (47). Both physically and spiritually, the varying grey, brown, yellow or black fog penetrates and defeats the weak inhabitant of the city. The impoverished Reardon in *New Grub Street*, for example, reflects that "The fog was his enemy; it would be wise to purchase a respirator if this hideous weather continued, for sometimes his throat burned, and there was a rasping in his chest which gave disagreeable admonition" (Gissing 419). According to Marian, in the same novel, the effects of the fog are not limited to health concerns; "The thick black fog penetrated every corner of the house. It could be smelt and tasted. Such an atmosphere produces low-spirited languor even in the vigorous and hopeful; to those wasted by suffering it is the very reek of the bottomless pit, poisoning the soul" (458).

The foggy days and nights of 19th century London depicted in fiction are largely associated with the criminals who make use of this veil to perform their foul deeds. In "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans," Sherlock Holmes warns Watson of this and says, "Look out of this window, Watson. See how the figures loom up, are dimly seen, and then blend once more into the cloud-bank. The thief or the murderer could roam London on such a day as the tiger does the jungle, unseen until he pounces, and then evident only to his victim" (Doyle *HLB* 83). Similarly, as Chief Inspector Heat in *The Secret Agent* tries to explain to his superior, the culprit "could have got out of the park speedily without being observed. The fog, though not very dense, was in his favour" (Conrad 87). Thus the danger of the fog is not the fog itself, but what and who might be hiding behind it. The fog, in fact, acts as an accomplice to the crime, as the murderer in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* reflects, "I looked out into the fog [. . .] 'A fine night for murder' I said" (Ackroyd 59). Both the density of the fog and the maze-like streets enable him to commit the murder outdoors and unnoticed, "she leaned back against the wall with an astonished look upon her face; she sighed and seemed eager for more, so I obliged her with a few deep cuts. Then, lost in the fog, I created such a spectacle that no eye seeing it could fail to be moved" (62). The city, however, can be hypocritical and even though it may have hidden, in its darkness and confusion,

the criminal, it may also choose to squeal on him. Consider Nancy's murder and Sikes's flight in *Oliver Twist*:

> the sun [. . .] burst upon the crowded city in clear and radiant glory. Through costly coloured glass and paper-mended window, through cathedral dome and rotten crevice, it shed its equal ray. It lighted up the room where the murdered woman lay. It did. He tried to shut it out, but it would stream in. (Dickens 313-314)

Both the detectives and criminals, especially in the Victorian novel, although not confined to this era, are supposed to be able to navigate through the fog as they do through the maze of the city in order to penetrate its secrets.

The concern with paper and paperwork, which is related to both historiography (and antiquarianism) and to detective work, is another aspect of the city that is largely used by Ackroyd. A document or manuscript could well be the evidence that the detective has been seeking all along, provided that it is not misleading or a forgery. Postmodern parodies particularly underline this possibility, as it accentuates the sceptic view towards master narratives. *Chatterton* and *The Lambs of London*, for instance, are full of papers, manuscripts and documents that turn out to be fakes. Libraries, museums and second-hand bookshops provide both history and evidence to the researcher. In *Chatterton*, Charles acquires his painting in a second-hand shop where he had gone to sell some old books. The use of these locations suggests a preoccupation with a past that has been preserved. In the same novel, Philip Sack is overwhelmed by the multitude of 'voices' he hears in the basement of the library where he works, and is petrified. Libraries frequently become microcosms of the labyrinth-like city, filled with narrow alleys, some leading to other alleys, some to dead-ends. The Reading Room of the British Museum is one particular setting for Ackroyd's characters, who are both researchers and criminals. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, nearly all the characters go to the library at some point to study and write. The narrator muses,

> Of course the interpretation of any area is a complicated and ambiguous matter. It was often remarked, for example, how magical societies and occult bookshops seemed to spring up in the vicinity of the British Museum and its great library [. . .] Mr Garnett might even have speculated on the coincidence of this particular September morning, when Karl Marx, Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, and George Gissing himself, all entered the Reading Room within the space of an hour. But such speculations are nevertheless hazardous; the connection between occult bookshops and the British

> Museum might simply be explained on the grounds that libraries are commonly the home of lonely or thwarted people who are also likely to be attracted to magical lore as a substitute for real influence or power. (138-139)

The maze of London, labyrinthine libraries, and lonely individuals in pursuit of crime (at both ends) or the occult are frequently related in Ackroyd's novels – they all imply secrecy and mystery. Interestingly, in Gissing's own *New Grub Street*, nearly all the main characters work in the same library. In this novel, the British Museum acts as the centre of literary London, and, as in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, it is a place where those wanting peace of mind can sit and work. In Gissing, the library again functions as a locale for alienated writers, whose occupation alone makes them isolated in nature. Reardon, the character least understood by those around him, and unable to keep a proper house because of his poverty, feels, "The Reading-room was his true home; its warmth enwrapped him kindly; the peculiar odour of its atmosphere – at first a cause of headache – grew dear and delightful to him" (Gissing 90). Reardon and others of similar sensitivity in this novel regard the library as the only place where they do not feel the extent of their loneliness. Furthermore, the city dwellers and frequenters of the library are easily noticeable among country people. As Jasper Milvain reflects concerning Marian and her father, "'No mistaking them for people of these parts, even if I hadn't remembered their faces. Both of them are obvious dwellers in the valley of the shadow of books'" (46). The popularity of the image of the museum in English literature is humourously depicted by David Lodge in his novel *The British Museum is Falling Down*, in which the main character Adam spends most of his time in the Reading Room while trying to write his thesis. The epitaphs at the beginning of chapters in the novel reveal a range of the words of English authors concerning the Reading Room, the books, and its usual inhabitants, among which can be listed Carlyle, Thackeray, Graham Greene and Yeats. One of Adam's entrances into the Reading Room is narrated as follows:

> The circular wall of the Reading Room wrapped the scholars in a protective layer of books, while above them arched the vast, distended belly of the dome. [. . .] The dome looked down on the scholars, and the scholars looked down on their books; and the scholars loved their books, stroking the pages with soft pale fingers. [. . .] When the scholars raised their eyes from their

> desks they saw nothing to distract them, nothing out of harmony with their books, only the smooth, curved lining of the womb. (44)

The characters are again portrayed here as solitary dwellers in the room, and the sense of comfort they derive from the books make them feel secure, as in the womb, or arms of a mother.

The British Library is the location where Matthew Palmer starts his research in *The House of Doctor Dee*, to be continued at the National Archive Centre. Although the central concern is not the city, the literary researcher of A. S. Byatt's *Possession* also begins his research in the Reading Room of the library. While researching on the poet Randolph Henry Ash, the protagonist Roland Mitchell also comments on the locale,

> The London Library was Roland's favourite place. It was shabby but civilised, alive with history but inhabited also by living poets and thinkers who could be found squatting on the slotted metal floors of the stacks, or arguing pleasantly at the turning of the stair. Here Carlyle had come, here George Eliot had progressed through the bookshelves. (2)

Similarly, in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, the library (which truly is a labyrinth) overwhelms the detective who must enter and solve the puzzle of its architecture to find clues to the murders:

> My eye became lost, on the page, along gleaming paths, as my feet were becoming lost in the troublous succession of the rooms of the library, and seeing my own wandering depicted on those parchments filled me with uneasiness and convinced me that each of those books was telling, through mysterious cachinnations, my present story. (241)

The apparent loneliness of the researchers in the library is self-inflicted, opening the possibility of the ghosts of writers past to visit them. All too often, unfortunately, the texts that are picked up by the pseudo-detectives do not turn out to be genuine, and rather than helping with the investigation, hinder it. Like the library at the end of *The Name of the Rose*, these texts make up "a library made up of fragments, quotations, unfinished sentences, amputated stumps of books" (500). As the narrator of Jorge Luis Borges's "The Library of Babel" emphasises, the library is fickle, while providing solace to the lonely researcher, it also in turn further alienates him, "Perhaps my old age and fearfulness deceive me, but I suspect that

the human species – the unique species – is about to be extinguished, but the library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret" (85).

Like Ackroyd's London, the library of Babel, according to Borges's narrator, "exists *ab aeterno*" (79) and is "*unlimited and cyclical*" (85). In almost all the accounts of the researchers in these libraries, the libraries come to represent a much larger world, a cyclical and infinite world. The narrator of "The Library of Babel" makes this clear at the very beginning of his story by saying "the universe (which others call the library)" (Borges 78). It is indeterminable whether the library comes to represent the universe, or whether the universe is trapped within the library, which guards its secrets, making ghosts of the writers and researchers who enter it.

Another aspect of the city, not recorded by Maxwell but which Ackroyd greatly emphasizes in his fiction, is the theatricality of the city and its inhabitants. As Peter Vansittart explains in *London: A Literary Companion*,

> London indeed has always been a theatre, an exhibition. On streets, in parks and taverns, and chocolate-houses, Londoners sought love and mirth, sex and companionship. Mayhew in 1862 estimates that there were 80,000 London street-walkers. The streets were a living frieze of whores, beggars, talented animals, spangled acrobats, touts, jokes, muggers, ballad-singers, pickpockets, flower-girls. (12)

One outcome of this variety is the sound of London, which is always heard even if there is nothing to be seen. The songs and voices of street merchants can be heard throughout Dickens' fiction, and in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson takes pains to illustrate that London itself is always vocal; Mr. Utterson suggests that

> By ten o'clock, when the shops were closed, the by-street was very solitary and, in spite of the low growl of London from all round, very silent. [. . .] In the course of his nightly patrols he had long grown accustomed to the quaint effect with which the footfalls of a single person, while he is still a great way off, suddenly spring out distinct from the vast hum and clatter of the city. (26)

Another notable sound echoing in the works on London is the sound of church-bells emanating from the churches located in the panoramic views. In *The Nether World*, Gissing particularizes this sound as one with a negative effect,

> A Sunday morning. In their parlour in Burton Crescent, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Snowdon were breakfasting. The sound of church bells – most depressing of

> all sounds that mingle in the voice of London – intimated that it was nearly eleven o'clock, but neither of our friends had in view the attendance of public worship (319)

and thus hints that this sound has such an effect because of the heathen atmosphere of the city, since elsewhere he states that this is "a city of the damned" (164).

The element of theatricality is one that seems to be exclusive to London only, and is foregrounded by Ackroyd in both his fiction and his critical work. As he states in an interview with Julian Wolfreys,

> I think in my perception of the city there is more exuberance, more theatricality; as we've said the theatrical aspect to London – and to Londoners - is enormously important, the essential theatricality of the people. Now, why is this, is it because they know they're living in a city in which they have to perform.... (Gibson and Wolfreys 257)

The tramps in *Hawksmoor*, the bear-fights in *The House of Doctor Dee*, the music hall characters in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the 20th century characters and 18th century street entertainers in *Chatterton*, to name a few, all show that for Ackroyd, theatricality is one of the most integral aspects of his city. For both Vansittart and Ackroyd, this element of the city is largely connected to the history of the music hall and to Punch and Judy shows performed on the street. Many Ackroyd characters, most particularly those in *Chatterton*, act as if they were descendants of characters from the music hall. Also, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the world of the music hall is presented through the focus on Dan Leno, a famous mimic and comedian in the halls. As Vansittart claims, while fairs used to be the principal modes of entertainment (in *Moll Flanders*, for example, Moll visits Bartholomew Fair), these led to the development of the music hall:

> The decline of the gardens and huge fairs assisted the rise of the music-halls, from Battersea to Edgeware Road, Hoxton to Camden Town, Shoreditch to Leicester Square, developing from eighteenth-century tavern back rooms and supper rooms, drink always encouraging an atmosphere of belligerent patriotism, sentimentality, guile, insolence and humour; taking the strain in the fight for survival, making tolerable the intolerable, transforming the vicious to mirth. (Defoe 24)

As previously suggested by Ackroyd, the theatricality of London and Londoners is a vehicle of suspension from the dullness of everyday existence, an element of humour which veils the frightening side of living in such a large and varied city.

A final element of the city dealt with extensively by the writers of London is its relationship to strangers who come to the city. Particularly evident in previous examples from Dickens is that the city does not welcome outsiders with open arms. Vansittart claims that "If London could be callous to its own impoverished citizens, it was often hostile to foreigners" (5). If the inhabitant of London is alienated by the greatness, the maze and the fog, the stranger is petrified by the impenetrable façade of the city. One particular type of newcomer to the city is the aspiring artist, most notably the writer. As previously stated, Thomas Chatterton in *Chatterton* is so excited by his prospects in the city that he is unable to control his enthusiasm regarding his future. According to Reardon, another aspiring writer, in *New Grub Street*, however, this is only a myth imposed upon young authors. He explains to his friend Biffen,

> 'Because I was conscious of brains, I thought that the only place for me was London. It's easy enough to understand this common delusion. We form our ideas of London from old literature; we think of London as if it were still the one centre of intellectual life; we think and talk like Chatterton. But the truth is that intellectual men in our day do their best to keep away from London – when once they know the place. There are libraries everywhere; papers and magazines reach the north of Scotland as soon as they reach Brompton; it's only on rare occasions, for special kinds of work, that one is bound to live in London. [. . .] It's a huge misfortune, this will-o'-the-wisp attraction exercised by London on young men of brains. They come here to be degraded, or to perish, when their true sphere is a life of peaceful remoteness. The type of man capable of success in London is more or less callous and cynical. If I had the training of boys, I would teach them to think of London as the last place where life can be lived worthily.' (Gissing 474)

For Gissing's characters, London falsely attracts new migrants under the pretence of making their lives better while as soon as they arrive, it works to make them worse. The hostile atmosphere of the city alienates both the people who have been living there for generations, and is a letdown for those who come for better circumstances.

The essential atmosphere of the city is that it is ungraspable, the combined elements of the city listed here all serve to illustrate that while it changes from century to century, as it expands, the city becomes even more unknowable. The sheer largeness of it seems to amaze authors and characters alike; Henry James, for instance, describes it as "the huge tragic city where unmeasured misery lurked beneath the dirty night" (242), and "an immeasurable breathing monster" (409) in

The Princess Casamassima. For Ackroyd and his characters, however, there is one possibility – if they investigate into the past of the city, they will adopt a vision which shows them the fluidity and circularity of the city. It is not possible to truly understand a city in flux, but it *is* possible, for some of Ackroyd's characters, to understand one's own self through its relationship with the history of the city, and to discern the flow of the city through themselves, as will be explained.

CHAPTER 3
REWRITING THE CITY IN THE PARODIES

Detective Fiction

Metafictional novels that include parodies of detective fiction are given different names by different critics. Howard Haycraft (as qtd. In Merivale and Sweeney), Patricia Merivale and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney call them "metaphysical detective stories" while Hutcheon refers to them as "postmodern parodies," "metafictional parodies," or "parodic historiographic metafictions." Regardless of its label, the characteristics of the form as mapped out by the critics are similar: the text both duplicates and deviates from classical detective fiction while underlining its metafictional aims. Merivale and Sweeney define the metaphysical detective story as

> a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective-story conventions – such as narrative closure and the detective's role as surrogate reader – with the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot. Metaphysical detective stories often emphasize this transcendence, moreover, by becoming self-reflexive (that is, by representing allegorically the text's own process of composition). (2)

Similarly, in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, Linda Hutcheon argues that the characteristics of a detective story are "the self consciousness of the form itself, its strong conventions, and the important textual function of the hermeneutic act of reading" (71) and that metafictionalists "acknowledge and exploit" the "infinitely reworkable conventions" of the form (72).

Perhaps it is best to begin with those conventions which in contemporary fiction are explicitly exploited. The "strong conventions" of the classic detective story are probably the reason that made it popular while at the same time providing the ground for its status as literature to be questioned. As Robin W. Winks claims, "detective fiction is a relatively inflexible genre, often with a form as precise as that

of a sonnet" (38), and this is why it has been regarded as "underliterature" (4) or "formulaic fiction" (38). Winks also argues that the readers of traditional detective and spy fiction read them for just this reason – their repetitiveness: " The author becomes trapped in a box of his own making. Those like Len Deighton, le Carre, Arthur Conan Doyle, who have tried to break from the box, have found that the great public, the people, are a mob, sir! And will not tolerate deviation" (38). Dennis Porter, on the other hand, argues that detective fiction cannot be deemed as formulaic since, he claims, "one important source of literary pleasure is in the artful deviation from the norm. In this respect, therefore, a detective novel is not less literary than a major work of the highbrow culture but more so. No other genre is more conscious of the models from which it borrows and from which it knowingly departs" (54) and adds that "[. . .] the most interesting detective fiction is read in large measure for its differences, for its capacity to remain faithful to a tradition at the same time that it reinvents it in unexpected ways" (55). When viewed from this perspective, detective fiction paradoxically seems to have common features with parodic detective fiction since it makes use of and deviates from texts written prior to it. However, through their detective heroes, classic detective stories seek to establish "sequence and causality" (Porter 30), which is the essential element of detective fiction that parodies of the genre constantly play with and subvert. The traditional detective, according to Porter, is the centre of the story, "Out of the *nouveau roman* of the offered evidence he constructs a traditional readable novel that ends up telling the story of the crime" (30). Sherlock Holmes, of course, is the epitome of the traditional detective – upright, snobbish, intellectual and bizarre. As Porter argues, it is he who helped mythicize the detective as hero:

> The detective as higher public servant and as the protector of an innocent citizenry threatened by the criminal classes began to appear in the popular literature of the 1850s and 1860s. But it was not until the last decades of the century in the era of High Victorianism that he achieved full mythic stature. The appearance of Sherlock Holmes coincided with the cult of heroic male action so central in British life at the height of the British Empire. (155)

In parodic metafictional detective fiction, the detective is hardly ever a hero, and the story itself never arrives at a closure. The detective, rather than establishing order in

a chaotic world, ends up struggling in the midst of this chaos and is inefficient in solving the problem/crime.

Together with the detective, the detective's double, or foil, is also a device that accentuates the heroism and dominance of the sleuth. As Winks claims, the Watson figure stands between the detective and the reader (39) – the reader may not be as intelligent as the detective, but s/he can find solace in the fact that s/he is definitely smarter than Watson. Winks argues that the necessity for Watson figures is essentially a narrative convenience since "Doyle needed the brave, slow-thinking Watson for Holmes to offer up explanations to, in order to get through great gobs of explanatory material that otherwise would have had to be written inside a cartoonist's balloon, as though Holmes were thinking to himself" (39). In almost all of the Sherlock Holmes detective stories, Holmes finds the solution before Watson has even grouped the evidence in his mind, and is thus prompted to offer a long explanation as to how he arrived at this end. Although once Holmes provides the information Watson often declares that "'It is simple enough as you explain it,'" (Doyle SS 18), he finds it impossible to deduce it himself. Through this device, the reader is enabled to follow Holmes' findings and logic. Since not all the evidence is given to the reader during the story, s/he, although smarter than Watson, likewise cannot offer an explanation before Holmes.

In metaphysical detective narratives, or parodies of the detective genre, however, a long explanation is hardly ever provided. Indeed, the 'mystery' is generally not even solved, but if it does demand a closure, it is up to the reader to put the pieces of the text together to form a whole. Thus most of the time, it is the reader who must assume the role of the detective to achieve a unified understanding of the text. As Pyrhönen suggests, "The metaphysical detective narrative demands the reader's active cooperation in filling in the many textual gaps, and thus requires the reader to participate in the 'production' and 'writing' of the text" (42). The neat chronological plot of classic detective fiction is the major parodied convention since the aim of the parody is to show disorder, rather than order. The reader, therefore, is not allowed to sit back and observe the plot unfold, s/he must order the plot him/herself from the fragmented texts, since both the deviation from the orderly plot

and the ineffectuality of the detective in the parody, like Charles in *Chatterton*, prompt him/her to do so.

Another important aspect of classic detective fiction is its relationship with the locale that it is set in, which is most often a large city, although many authors also experiment with rural settings. Even in the case when such novels are not actually set in a city, the city is still a fundamental component in detective fiction. As Jon Thompson points out,

> historical experience of the metropolis [. . .] provides the ground for detective fiction. In this context the figure of the modern/urban detective emerges in the late nineteenth century as a literary response to the alienation and crime fostered by the metropolis. By virtue of a keen rational intelligence, the detective is able to penetrate the 'teeming, mazelike" complexities of an otherwise-unknowable city. The complexity of society is thus a precondition of most detective fiction. (19-20)

According to Porter, the "population explosion" in the cities following the effects of industrialization provided new material for writers like Dickens and Hugo (16). Classic detective fiction has come to be associated with the cities of crime that they use as background for their stories. As Dennis Porter further notes,

> The Paris of Poe's tales, Collins's Yorkshire, and Doyle's London are fictional locations by means of which the threat and fascination of crime are made tangible for a reader. They are also the context that makes a crime comprehensible. [. . .] landscapes appear either as the source and extension of the crimes reported or as their anthesis. (190)

In other words, it is either the living conditions in the city that make the criminal a criminal, or, it is the criminal that makes the city a threat.

Although some later authors like Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, and the contemporary Ruth Rendell choose to locate their detective fiction in the country, Raymond Williams suggests in *The Country and the City* that this is a temporary displacement, and that the ultimate setting should be the city, "It seems to me very fitting that a mode of analysis of human relationships which come out of Baker Street, out of the fogs of the transient city, should find a temporary resting-place in this façade way of life, before it returned eventually to its true place in the streets" (249-250). Whether it is Dupin's Paris or Holmes's London, the city in which the detective story is set becomes much more than merely a setting. Jon Thompson argues that

> the London of Sherlock Holmes is almost as famous as Holmes itself. Nevertheless, it is only a representation, a fictional construct of a late-nineteenth-century London, [. . .] remarkable as much for what it excludes or domesticates – class conflict, racism, imperialism, even women – as for what it includes. This is not to deny its efficacy as a representation, for the popular image of a timeless, fog-shrouded London is largely due to Conan Doyle. (61-62)

Most of the Holmes stories commence with Watson providing a setting for his story, wherein he notes the weather, the time of the year, and other such peculiarities of the day. In almost all these instances, the darkness and fogginess of the city is emphasized, even if it is through opposition. "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," for instance, begins thus:

> It was a blazing day hot day in August. Baker Street was like an oven, and the glare of the sunlight upon the yellow brickwork of the house across the road was painful to the eye. It was hard to believe that these were the same walls which loomed so gloomingly through the fogs of winter. (Doyle *HLB* 39)

A more common sort of introduction can be found at the beginning of "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans," where Watson states "In the third week of November, in the year 1895, a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. From the Monday to the Thursday I doubt whether it was ever possible from our Windows in Baker Street to see the loom of the opposite houses" (Doyle *HLB* 83). And again, in "The Adventure of the Red Circle," "the gloom of a London winter evening had thickened into one grey curtain, a dead monotone of colour, broken only by the sharp yellow squares of the Windows and the blurred haloes of the gas-lamps" (Doyle *HLB* 71). Perhaps the most often quoted of Watson's descriptions of London is his statement at the beginning of *A Study in Scarlet* where he says " I naturally gravitated to London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained [. . .] The sight of a friendly face in the great wilderness of London is a pleasant thing indeed to a lonely man" (Doyle *ASH* 11). In the same story, Watson comments, "I reckon that of all the mazes that ever were contrived, this city is the most confusing" (57).

Doyle's London is perpetually described by Watson as a wilderness; maze-like, labyrinth-like, and always enveloped in the colours of grey and yellow, hiding

many secrets and criminals behind the dense fog. The role of Sherlock Holmes and Watson, therefore, is to see through the fog and chaos of the city, to find a way out of the maze or labyrinth. Although the classic detective, of whom Sherlock Holmes is one of the primary examples, always accomplishes this hard task, this same procedure is often subverted in parodies of the genre. As Thompson emphasizes, the confusion and chaos of the city is a requirement for the existence of the detective who is the only person capable of making sense of it,

> The figure of the modern urban detective emerges in the late nineteenth century as a literary response to the alienation and crime fostered by the metropolis. By virtue of a keen rational intelligence, the detective is able to penetrate the 'teeming, mazelike' complexities of an otherwise-unknowable city. The complexity of society is thus a precondition of most detective fiction. (19-20)

Richard Lehan suggests that "Detectives bring the city back to human scale. Dickens's Inspector Bucket, Conrad's Inspector Heat, Doyle's Sherlock Holmes – all give the city a human dimension" (84). Of course this is only possible by making the city itself one-dimensional. As Jon Thompson also argues, in traditional detective stories, the city is only penetrated on the surface:

> Holmes's acute empirical powers enable him to dominate the vast landscape of London, from its sordid back-alleys, hovels, and opium dens to the sitting rooms of royalty. Yet Holmes, like Dupin before him, does not inquire, as Marx and Freud did, into the underlying causes of things. Although Holmes is not lacking in compassion, he does display a notable lack of interest in social problems. (66-67)

Metafictional parodies of detective fiction, however, underline this gap in traditional detective fiction, as the detective is unable to find a way out of the maze, and, rather than establishing order from chaos, finds him/herself lost in the chaotic city, as shall be argued below. Merivale and Sweeney state that "the world, city, or text as labyrinth" is a characteristic theme of metaphysical detective stories (8), and the city, like the text, remains as labyrinth-like at the end of the novel as it was at the beginning; there is no solution or a way out.

Thus, the main deviation from the norm that parodies of detective fiction indulge in is the orderly structure and ultimate closure of the traditional examples of the genre. Ackroyd's novels in particular do not follow a chronological single plot of

investigation, but use multiple narratives. While *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee* also include narratives of the people being investigated, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *Hawksmoor* go one step further and provide narratives of the culprits of the crimes. All the aspects of traditional detective stories are parodied by Ackroyd – the plot, the structure, the detective, the Watson figure, and even the central mystery. In *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee* especially, there is not even a tangible mystery to be investigated – there is no murder, no theft. Rather, the two novels focus on the investigation of people stimulated by a portrait and a house, respectively. Although *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *Hawksmoor* both deal with murders and murderers, it would be faulty to term them as 'whodunit' stories as the reader knows almost from the beginning who is to blame.

Chatterton, *The House of Doctor Dee*, and *Hawksmoor* all share the integral characteristic of being parodies of the detective story: they all have an investigator and an investigation. Although the classic detective novel requires a closure at the end, Ackroyd's novels tend to be circular, thus refusing a clear-cut ending. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* could also be grouped into this category, as again there is a serial killer and many crimes. Despite the fact that the novel does not have an investigator among its characters, the narrator, who tries to gather the facts concerning the crime, forces the reader to become the detective, and to point to the true murderer.

Not all the novels involve a crime that must be investigated, there are serial killers in both *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *Hawksmoor*, but *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee* involve a different kind of investigation. The pseudo-detective of *Chatterton* is Charles Wychwood, a poet with a writer's block, whose aim is to find out the truth behind Thomas Chatterton's supposed suicide at age 17. Finding a portrait of a middle aged man who he assumes to be Chatterton, Charles tries to prove throughout the novel that the poet did not commit suicide as has been supposed, but actually lived on in secret to forge poetry attributed to Blake, Cowper, and others. The story of *Chatterton* is one of literary investigation, and there is no corpse whose murderer must be found. *The House of Doctor Dee* is based on a similar premise in which the pseudo-detective is a professional researcher called Matthew Palmer. Having inherited a house from his father, Palmer feels that it is

haunted and starts investigating the history of the house. Both *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee* involve an investigation that stems from inanimate objects, a portrait and a house respectively, which appear to haunt the investigators who possess them. They also share the fact that the people who are being investigated are given their own narratives within the larger text – both Thomas Chatterton and John Dee give their accounts of their stories, as the 20th century investigators try to unearth histories and secrets in the other chapters.

In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* and *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd also makes use of multiple narratives, but in these novels there really are crimes, and numerous corpses. *Dan Leno* begins with the trial of Elizabeth Cree (*The Trial of Elizabeth Cree* is also the American title of the novel), who is supposed to be guilty of her husband's supposed suicide. Parallel to the story line following her testimony, there are chapters which narrate the investigation of the crimes committed around Limehouse. The story is strongly reminiscent of the Jack the Ripper murders, although the connection can never be fully made. Again there are numerous narrative voices, including those of George Gissing and Karl Marx, and despite the fact that there are several policemen on the case, it is up to the reader to play Sherlock Holmes and group the evidence together. In *Hawksmoor*, the crimes are connected with occult practices, and the story line is much darker than in the other novels. The starting point is Nicholas Hawksmoor's commission to build six churches in London, which is historically accurate. In the novel, however, Nicholas Hawksmoor is given the name of Nicholas Dyer, while a 20th century detective is called Nicholas Hawksmoor. In his own narrative, Nicholas Dyer recounts the building of the churches – his aim is to form a pentagram or pentacle[1] with the churches he builds – while he sacrifices a body for each. The 20th century narrative, on the other hand, has an external narrator who focuses on Hawksmoor's investigation of murders being committed near the churches that Dyer built two centuries ago. In other words, the 'sacrifices' Dyer committed in the 18th century are replicated in the 20th century.

The House of Doctor Dee and *Hawksmoor* both deal with the dark underworld of London by juxtaposing a historical narrative with that of a 20th

[1] A six pointed star, commonly associated with Satanism and Satanic ritual.

century investigator. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* involves narratives of all the 'suspects,' leaving the reader to assume the part of the detective and make sense of the texts, and *Chatterton* makes use of not two, but three narrative periods. All detective fiction, both classic and metafictional, aims to discover 'truth' – whether that of a murder or of a historical character. *Chatterton* does not delve into occultism or crimes in historical London, but it is much more metafictional than Ackroyd's other novels that parody the detective genre. It is also the only one of these four novels that does not have a specifically London location. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* takes place in or around Limehouse, *The House of Doctor Dee* is set in a particular house in a particular district, and *Hawksmoor* takes the reader on a tour of all Dyer's churches. Although mostly set in London, *Chatterton* is not a product of a particular district. In contrast to the other novels, it does not involve a running commentary on specifically London locations, but is heavily involved with particularly London characters. The majority of the characters in *Chatterton* are unmistakably Dickensian, parodied to underline the influence of the music hall and the theatricality of Londoners. According to Ackroyd, Londoners all share a theatrical spirit, which is a product of the history of the city – a culture accumulated and strengthened throughout the ages, which repeats itself in people of different times (*London* 138-145). *Hawksmoor* develops this idea to the extent of declaring that everything in London repeats itself – the architect is repeated in the detective who assumes his name, the murders are committed in the same places in London, and even the names of the contemporary victims are variations on the names of the victims in the 18th century. In *The House of Doctor Dee*, John Dee similarly becomes a ghost in contemporary London, forcing Palmer to investigate his personal secrets, the secrets of the house he lived in, and thus the secrets of London. The true account of Chatterton's death in *Chatterton* is also implied to be a secret of the city, and Chatterton's forgeries repeat themselves in the novelist Harriet Scope's plagiarism of plot lines.

The image of London as both eternal/infinite, and also endlessly repeating itself, where nothing/nobody really 'dies' is again the concern of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, in which the British Museum with its library sits as a central landmark. Researchers of various times are drawn to the library in their quests of

finding the truth. This is where, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, George Gissing and Karl Marx read and work. It is also the place where the 20th century investigator/narrator must go for answers. In his reported narrative, George Gissing observes that occult bookshops and secret societies situate themselves close to the British museum. Ackroyd discusses this in *London: A Biography*, in which he points out that locations in London are always paralleled, that the contemporary always repeats the past in London. Just as contemporary London inhabitants repeat music hall characters and Dickensian motifs, the locations of London are also repeated; the same shops spring up in the same districts, as also the actual events, such as murders happening in the same locations, as argued in *Hawksmoor*. Hence London is both repetitive and endless; the circularity enhances its infiniteness.

Biography

It has been suggested earlier that Ackroyd regards many modes attributed to the postmodern novel – the use of historiographic metafiction and postmodern parody in particular – as inherent in the English literary heritage. The use of biography (which is also considered as a text reflecting largely historical reality) in fiction is likewise taken by him as a product of the English imagination. In *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, after citing the example of Bede, he suggests that the "mingling of biography and fiction seems to spring naturally from English writing" (41). For Ackroyd, there is in fact no distinction to be made between fiction and biography writing. In the same work, he claims that, "The novel and the biography are aspects of the same creative process. In fact it might be suggested that the greatest writers are those, like Johnson, who effortlessly transcend the limitations of genre" (347), and continues, "The radical reshaping of a life is primarily the imperative of the artist who must fashion the narrative to accord with his or her own personal vision; it is also necessary to alter or discard facts and details in order to create a coherent character out of the raw materials lying all around" (351).

As Gerald P. Mulderig suggests, "biography remains a curiously undertheorized genre (36), in fact, most discussions concerning the genre can be found to be generally written by biographers themselves, in introductory chapters to biographies. Mulderig claims further that, "When biography is theorized at all, writers, including biographers themselves, tend to focus on the relationship that exists between the biographer and the biographical subject" (36-37). This approach seems to be the most appropriate in the light of Ackroyd's choices of subjects in both his novels and his biographies. When viewed in a group, the common elements of his biographical subjects are fairly obvious: they are all English, are writers of varying prominence, and have all spent some part of their lives in London. As the same qualities can be ascribed to Ackroyd himself, it is evident that his practice of life-writing is highly self-reflexive, as will be argued further below.

A review of his works underlines the point Ackroyd makes that biographies should not be taken as metanarratives, as they offer a vision, not reality. On the one hand there are the so-called "straight" biographies; *Dickens*, *T.S.Eliot*, *Blake*, *Thomas More*, and lately, *Shakespeare: A Biography*, and on the other, novels in which historical, most often literary or at least artistically inclined, figures parade; *Chatterton*, *Hawksmoor*, *The House of Doctor Dee*, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, *The Plato Papers*, *English Music*, and *The Lambs of London*. Still another category would include *Milton in America* and *The Last Testament of Oscar Wild*e, neither of which could be placed in either of the above lists, as they should be considered a pseudo-biography and a pseudo-autobiography respectively. What is notable is that all of the artistic personages parodied in these works are "of London" – not Londoners all, but artists who have produced their works in London and have lived there, thus acquiring and becoming a character of London (with the exception of Plato, obviously, who in *The Plato Papers* is placed in a London of the future). Similarly intriguing are the frequent allusions to Dickens and Oscar Wilde, both of whom already have works based on them. In many of the other works they are referred to, quoted, or merely mentioned. Considering that they were arguably equally colourful personages in their eras, and have works based particularly in London, it is evident that Ackroyd consciously seeks to choose for his biographies and pseudo-biographies people who have distinctively contributed to the literary and

otherwise history of the city. It is perhaps necessary to briefly analyse at least some of these biographies in order to clarify Ackroyd's use of the biography genre, as he will parody this genre in his fiction.

Ackroyd's focus in his biographies, as in his fiction, is the city. The degree of concentration on the locale, however, varies. In his biographies *Blake*, *Dickens*, and *Thomas More*, his point is especially clear whereas the one on T. S. Eliot, although establishing the American born author as an urban writer, does not rely heavily on the English capital. Ackroyd states of St. Louis, where T. S. Eliot grew up, that

> Children who live in such places grow up amid dereliction and rapid decay – and for those of a sensitive nature, first awakening impressions are associated with images that spring from such decay. Throughout his life, Eliot was to identify himself as an urban poet, and in his adolescent years he derived a strange pleasure from walking through the alleys and the slums. (24)

Nevertheless, according to Ackroyd's biography, Eliot never was the poet of a single city, unlike Blake or Dickens, but was the urban poet of the concept of a decaying city – whether it is St. Louis, Boston, Paris, or London. The poetry he writes in Paris, for example, is described by Ackroyd as "visions of the urban wanderer, given a darker shade as the images of Paris, of bars and nightclubs, supplant those of Boston" (44). And although Eliot "regarded London with disdain," (96) it was still the city in which he resided for the majority of his life, even continuing to live there during the blitz. He was also a member of the Reading Room of the British Museum (74) and was immensely fascinated with the music hall (214), thus establishing himself a place within Ackroyd's real and imaginary characters.

In the biography *Dickens*, concerning the author's early stories, Ackroyd claims that, "like Daniel Defoe before him, he is always very particular about street names, which is the real sign of a Londoner writing about London (161). This statement is largely self-reflexive, as in both his fiction and his biographies, Ackroyd is very meticulous in pointing out the names of the streets along which especially Thomas More, William Blake, and Charles Dickens take their walks, and furthermore he also strives to describe these places in contemporary London – describing what a particular building was replaced with, or when a street was renamed. When reading these biographies, one gets the impression that besides

academic research, he has also done an extensive topographical analysis. When describing Thomas More's house, for instance, he elaborates on the view as follows:

> the view from More's house on the Chelsea side, across the Thames, was of the woods and pastures of Surrey filled with wild duck and waterfowl, while beyond rose the hills of Clapham and of Sydenham. Yet London was always clearly visible, with the steeple of St. Paul's rising above the roof-tops; indeed More created or preserved an 'eminence' in his garden from which the prospect was at its best. He never wished to lose sight of his own earthly city. (248)

Such a lengthy description shows the extent of Ackroyd's interest and particularity in setting when writing a biography, parallel to his interests when writing fiction.

As evidenced from the example of T. S. Eliot, Ackroyd establishes in his biographies the relationship of the man to the city early on, mostly during childhood. When the child Thomas More is walking home from school,

> The city surrounded More once again, and he noticed everything: his prose works are filled with brief but vivid intimations of London life, from the sight of someone squatting against a wall in order to 'ease himselfe in the open strete' to the beggars who display their cancerous or cankered legs on 'frydays aboute saynt sauyour and at ye Sanygate' [. . .]. (25)

Again, when relating the childhood of Blake, "And of course beyond the streets of his early childhood lay 'infinite London,' which is 'the spiritual Four-Fold London eternal' [. . .]. He had a very strong sense of place, and all his life he was profoundly and variously affected by specific areas of London" (31). Naturally, Ackroyd is even more particular concerning Charles Dickens' childhood (indeed, the author's childhood spans at least six chapters in Ackroyd's biography):

> [St. Paul's] is the very symbol of London, of its grimy and labyrinthine ways in which we all might lose our path. It was his first view of the city. The lonely boy looking down at the city, the city which bewildered him, which seemed a symbol of his own loss of hope and peace, the city which he would eventually master. (64)

In this respect all these writers seem to be a continuation of each other – establishers of a visionary London sensibility. Thomas More "was always a Londoner" (216), and when he was hanged, "he was leaving London for eternity" (393), Blake "was a Londoner, affected by all forms of London drama and London literature" (180), and Dickens "is the novelist of the city, the novelist of the huddling tenements and of the

crowded streets" (26). What Ackroyd presents in his biographies is a line of continuum, at the end of which he seems also to place himself. His comments on the authors he chooses to write biographies of can easily be suggestive of his life and work as well, thus making all these works self-reflexive attempts.

The biography that most shows the link between its subject and London is undoubtedly *Dickens*. The book differs from the other biographies in many respects – for example, in this more than in any other, Ackroyd strives to depict the life of the novelist through the novels and vice versa, and shows how a small incident in Dickens's daily life prompted him to insert such a scene in the novel he was then writing. Moreover, there are fictional interludes within the chapters which enable the reader to visualise Dickens outside the fact-ridden narrative of the biography. There are altogether seven interludes such as this, set off from the others by larger fonts and roman numerals. In the first, the narrator asks, "But what if it were possible, after all, for Charles Dickens to enter one of his own novels?" (107), and then presents Dickens coming across and consoling Little Dorrit, who is afraid of London because it is "so barren and so wild" (107). Even though Dickens is aware that he has met his own creation (and he also meets Maggie and William Dorrit in this section), the characters regard themselves as real beings and not constructs. Paradoxically of course they have in fact been fictionalised twice over - first by Dickens, who regards himself as real but is being fictionalised here by Ackroyd, and secondly by Ackroyd in *Dickens*. At this point, however, "into the small chamber rushed a young man, elegantly dressed and carrying a pair of lilac gloves in his left hand. 'Sir,' he said to William Dorrit, 'I have come to congratulate you on your great expectations. My name is – '" (11). Shaken by his apparent lack of control over his own characters, Dickens shouts "'No! This place is not for you' [. . .] I must take you away from this place before it is too late'" (111-112), while in the pages of *Little Dorrit*, the sudden appearance of a character from *Great Expectations* throws Charles Dickens into such a panic that he starts to become invisible and is unable to see his body. Evidently his characters have achieved an independence that now projects them as out of the novelist's reach.

A similar theme is taken up once more in the fifth interlude when someone (who could be and probably is Ackroyd) says to Dickens: "'Could it be that the

author is not so important, so central, as we tend to believe? That he is in some sense not responsible for his creations?'" (793). This anachronistic theoretical remark is of course lost on the nineteenth century author, who replies with, " 'Come now, I am not so tired as that!'" (793). Although he denies the possibility, the fact that Ackroyd is now 'playing' with the characters out of context shows Dickens's inability to exert control over them. There is a clear demonstration of this in the fourth interlude as characters as various as Uriah Heep, the Micawbers, Oliver Twist, Pip, David Copperfield, Fagin, Little Nell, Mrs Gamp and Paul Dombey, to name a few, assemble and go to Greenwich Fair together. The characters are thrown off balance when the sky suddenly darkens in the middle of the fair, and the following scene takes place:

> Ebenezer Scrooge was standing behind them. 'I have seen something like this before. It is a prelude to some change in the narrative.' Little Nell and Paul Dombey clung tightly to each other when they heard this. Martin Chuzzlewit merely laughed. 'Nothing can happen to us,' he called across to them. 'We are immortal.' [. . . .]
> 'No!' Mr Pickwick stepped from behind a stall selling toys and put his beaming, rubicund face against the dark sky. 'We can go on. We can outface the storm of dying. We cannot die.' They murmured among themselves for a little and then, with one common shout of joy, they continued with their dancing and singing upon the hill. (649)

Ackroyd, with the very act of inserting them in a biography, which presumes its subject is dead, implies that the characters have outlived their creator. In one way, the same process puts the creator himself (Dickens) on an equal footing with his creations, as Ackroyd also immortalises Dickens by making him a character as well. To complicate matters even further, Ackroyd in turn immortalises the author of *Dickens* by fictionalising himself in the last two fictional chapters of the biography.

Following up on the subject of biography-writing which is introduced by Dickens when, in the fifth interlude he declares "'Oh, biographers. Biographers are simply novelists without imagination'" (794), thus narrowing the gap between the two genres, the reader sees in the sixth interlude an interview between an unknown character who asks the questions and the biographer of the book s/he is reading. In this section, the narrative (or interview) becomes largely self-reflectional as the fictionalised Ackroyd answers questions about biography writing. He expresses, for example, his thoughts on the futility of writing a 'true' biography as the researcher

can only up to a point gather information about his subject. When the interviewer asks, "*Are there any particular virtues to this biograp*hy?" (941, original emphasis), he answers, "Well, the first thing to say is that it is very thoroughly researched. I have a kind of complex about discovering *everything* there is to know, but this is probably because I realize just how much cannot be known. Cannot now be recovered" (941). This unrecoverable element is clarified by Lars Ole Sauerberg; "The gap between the available empirical data and the actual presence of a person is unbridgeable, since texts and other kinds of documentation will never let us have the impression of the whole of that person" (191). This is the essence of Ackroyd's parody, it does not necessarily aim to undermine the genre by explicitly suggesting that biographies are futile attempts to recreate their subjects, but that what is known is bound to the 'empirical data' as suggested by Sauerberg. Ackroyd therefore questions the perception of biography as he does history, and reinstates his argument that what readers perceive as 'true' are bound to texts in which there are bound to be 'gaps.' Therefore, in his biographies as in his fiction, Ackroyd emphasises the lack of certain proof when it comes to understanding events and people of the past, since they can only be known through texts.

In this same interlude where he parodies an interview with himself, the fictionalised Ackroyd also consciously disputes comments made by the 'real' Ackroyd in his critical work and interviews. When he states that "All I wanted to do was understand [Dickens] [. . .]. In that sense he was like a character in a novel I might write – I never like or dislike any of the characters I have created. I simply try to understand them and, in understanding them, to bring them to life" (945), the interviewer asks, "So in that sense biographies are like novels?" (945), a question asked frequently to the 'real' Ackroyd who generally replies in the positive. The fictionalised Ackroyd, however, replies,

> I always used to say that, but I never really believed it. It just sounded good at the time. The only real connection between the two, as far as I am concerned, is in the need to make the narrative coherent. To impose a pattern upon the world. That is all. You also need similar skills, of course, the most important being to cover up your own inadequacies. (945-946)

This statement is contradictory in itself, as the last sentence makes clear. The skill necessary to cover up the inadequacies of the researcher, or the lack of texts in

finding data, is compensated largely through the imagination of the biographer. Thus the required skills for both types of writing is evidently imagination, and if imagination is necessary in order to write a biography, then it is similar to writing novels despite what the fictionalised Ackroyd claims. Actually, this is exactly what Ackroyd himself says in an interview with Jeremy Gibson. When Gibson asks "What do you see as the pros and cons of fiction and biography as genres?," he answers,

> I certainly don't believe there's any real or any *genuine* difference between the two activities. [. . .] For example, I always think of biography as being a form of fiction, and of course it is a form of fiction. All forms of history are forms of fiction. And in both cases, in both fiction and biography, you're trying to construct a narrative, and characters, and atmosphere. [. . .] on a more grandiose scale, it's certainly true that in biography you are creating fiction just as assiduously as you are in a conventional novel, because you rely upon interpretation. That's all you have to rely upon, and interpretation is a matter of acumen. (Gibson and Wolfreys 223)

The fact that he has inserted a fictionalised version of himself disputing his own arguments in a conventional biography is evidence of Ackroyd's claims that a biography is just as fictional as a novel. Likewise, the reverse of this action, parodying the biography in his fiction, as will be argued further below, shows that features of each form are used in the other. Parodying biographical techniques in a novel is in itself demonstrative of Ackroyd's belief that firstly, biography and history writing are interpretative activities, and as a result of this, texts of history, although necessary for both types of writing, can be misleading, inaccurate, or at best, not sufficient. As Rana Tekcan suggests, "Biography, after all, *is* a well-staged illusion" (48), and for Ackroyd, what better stage is there than London?

Chatterton

As previously stated, *Chatterton* is the most metafictional of Ackroyd's detective parodies. The novel mainly deals with the question of forgery and its relationship with the theoretical notions of intertextuality, imitation, parody, plagiarism and pastiche, through three narratives in different centuries. There is Charles Wychwood's 20th century narrative, which is narrated by an external

narrator who focuses on Charles, Harriet Scope, and Philip Slack. In the 19th century the narrative is that of George Meredith, who poses as Chatterton for a painting, and finally there are two narratives of Thomas Chatterton's time, one a forgery and one a 'true' account. Although the twentieth-century narrative progresses chronologically, the presence of the others, interspersed within the main narrative, remind the reader that this detective story is a parody. The concepts dealt with in each of the narratives are similar – the blurring of the lines between imitation, plagiarism, and intertextuality. The central discussion of the novel revolves around romantic originality as opposed to poststructuralist and postmodern palimpsest. The juxtaposition is materialized by the presence of Chatterton and Charles, one heralded and saved from obscurity by the Romantics, and the other a twentieth-century poet with a writer's block. Charles' friend Philip should also be included in this argument, a writer who finds it impossible to write anything that has not been written before. The novel, as all of Ackroyd's works, seems to be in line with the idea of the palimpsest and the novel is full of parallels and allusions to other texts. The interrelatedness of art forms are underlined by Ackroyd in this novel through his use of different art forms such as literature, painting, and music, to emphasize his view of London as a palimpsestous city.

The novel opens with what seems like an encyclopaedia entry on Thomas Chatterton – a short biography with mention of the major works and the painting that was drawn by Henry Wallis of his death – thus introducing to the reader the factual episodes of Chatterton's life and death, most of which will be contested throughout the novel. Following the excerpt and before Charles's narrative begins, there are two pages that introduce small fragments of the different narratives in the novel – Chatterton's in the 18th, Meredith's in the 19th, and Harriet Scope and Charles Wychwood's in the 20th century.

The book is entitled *Chatterton* and, appropriately, the main focus of the novel is to create a fictional account of Thomas Chatterton's brief life. Far from being a conventional biography, which can also arguably be largely fictionalised, Chatterton's life is presented to the reader as an interpretation of what *may* have happened to the 18th century poet. Given the circumstances of Thomas Chatterton's death, and the romanticism and mystery surrounding his demise, his is a particularly

apt life to elucidate. Ackroyd does this through two very different methods which come to define his multi-dimensional view of parody – he not only creates an original end to Chatterton's life, but he also reminds the reader of other fictional reproductions of Chatterton. The first major immortalisations of Chatterton include Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," Coleridge's "Monody on the Death of Chatterton," and Henry Wallis's painting, "Chatterton." The painting in particular is an essential part of the narrative, and its extended use and abuse in the novel suggests the interrelatedness of art forms and a blurring of the boundaries between them, as will be dwelt on further in the following pages.

Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" is concerned with the awareness of a day when "Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty" (35) may come upon the persona who has "Lived in pleasant thought" (36) so far. He is thus reminded of the tragedy of Chatterton's life, and says:

> I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
> The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
> Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
> Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
> By our own spirits are we deified:
> We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
> But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. (43-49)

The lines that have secured the legend surrounding Thomas Chatterton, the last two, are repeated by Harriet Scrope in the novel without a realisation of their context. More importantly, the poem sets the tone as to how Chatterton was regarded by the Romantic poets, and also how he continues to be regarded, which Ackroyd drastically changes in the novel. For Wordsworth, Chatterton is a "marvellous Boy," full of genius, who ends in "despondency and madness," setting what is now a stereotypical image of the over-looked poet in misery, poverty, and madness. Coleridge's "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" is similar in tone when the persona expresses his grief at the tragedy, "I weep, that heaven-born Genius so should fall; / And oft, in Fancy's saddest hour, my soul / Averted shudders at the poisoned bowl" (26-29), and later on,

> The dread dependence on the low-born mind;
> Told every pang, with which thy soul must smart,
> Neglect, and grinning Scorn, and Want combined!
> Recoiling quick, thou bad'st the friend of pain
> Roll the black tide of Death through every freezing vein! (98-102)

These works share a very romanticised notion of the young poet who commits suicide because his pride is unable to minister to his neglect and poverty. Ackroyd challenges this thought firstly by having Chatterton die accidentally – an accident provoked by the hormones of the teenage poet. The description of the death in *Chatterton* is hardly romantic – in fact, it is all too realistic, as will be argued further below. Ackroyd's concern here is not to shatter the reader's romantic notions, indeed, Chatterton's death remains a tragedy in the novel, but to question which facts have led us to believe that Chatterton committed suicide.

As early as 1837, when *The Life of Thomas Chatterton Including his Unpublished Poems and Correspondence* was originally published, John Dix writes,

> On the 24th of August, 1770, Thomas Chatterton, at the age of seventeen years and nine months, overcome by despair and distress, terminated his clouded career by swallowing poison – according to the best authorities, *arsenic* in *water*, and died in consequence the next day. His room, when broken open, was found covered with little scraps of paper, and all his unfinished pieces were cautiously destroyed before his death. (292)

In *Chatterton*, Ackroyd challenges this conventional biographical account in all ways possible. The scattered pieces of paper are explained as being the discarded remnants of poetry which he wrote when he was drunk, the arsenic (which he mixes with brandy) as a medication for the clap, and he is anything but in despair, in fact, according to Ackroyd, he feels "on top of the world" (223). Indeed, there is no real reason, even in Dix's account, to come to the conclusion that Thomas Chatterton committed suicide – that most telling piece of evidence, the suicide note, is not present. Although Dix also claims that "Insanity was hereditary in [Chatterton's] family, and a combination of adverse circumstances acting on his too excitable mind, fostered the seeds of mental disorder," thus hinting at the reason of his suicide and perhaps even the absence of a note, this is an issue never brought up by Ackroyd in

his novel. Therefore it is impossible to label Ackroyd's interpretation as not possible, because there is not adequate evidence to suggest so. However, the focus here is not to justify the fiction – it is, instead, to show how Ackroyd illustrates the lack of texts and the fictional aspects of "factual" texts in biographical, and thus historical discourse. As Ackroyd himself says in his preface to Nick Groom's *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture*, "His supposed suicide has of course assisted this process, although there are those who believe that it was not self-murder at all. It was, perhaps, an accident that created the 'legend' of the poet to be seen lying on a narrow bed in Henry Wallis's painting" (1).

Thomas Chatterton's life is not the only instance of biographical parody in the novel. In the sections taking place in the 19th century, three other fictionalised factual characters emerge – George Meredith, Mary Meredith, and Henry Wallis. In *The Amazing Victorian: A Life of George Meredith*, Mervyn Jones argues "Whether Wallis and Mary were already lovers when the picture was painted; whether Wallis, sardonically or otherwise, asked Meredith to pose; whether the suggestion came from Mary, or whether Meredith volunteered – these are intriguing questions that cannot be answered" (80). To answer these questions is of course what Ackroyd seeks to do. In the novel, it becomes quite evident that the relationship between George and Mary is somewhat strained, and the reader is taken through the steps of Mary and Henry becoming closer as George continues to pose for the Chatterton painting. Jones also claims that "In most accounts, [George Meredith] has been blamed for breaking off the relationship and his conduct – considering that Mary was ill, was responsible for a twelve-month-old child, and was short of money – has been seen as heartless" (81). This is definitely not the case in *Chatterton*, where Meredith is arguably one of the most likable of the characters, whereas Mary is portrayed as a very aloof and detached character, which Jones also makes a note of in the biography, "Mary, for her part, had an independent and self-reliant personality" (81). Again, Ackroyd strives to foreground how easily fiction can overlap so-called 'facts.' Using especially those moments of ambiguity and mystery, he provides interpretations that, although they can be contested, can not readily be denied.

The first narrative is that of Charles, who the external narrator observes as he is walking around London. On first sight, Charles hardly resembles any detective

that the reader knows of, he certainly is not Sherlock Holmes as he walks with his hands in his pockets and holds a conversation with a dog that he meets on the street. He does, however, conform to the stereotype set by Holmes, Hercule Poirot, and others on account of his eccentricity. As Robert A. W. Lowndes states in *The Mystery Writer's Art*, "Sherlock Holmes, Father Brown, Hercule Poirot, Philo Vance, Sir Henry Merivale, and Nero Wolfe – to list but a few – are all, to one degree or another, bizarre characters" (4). Charles Wychwood talks to many objects, both animate and inanimate throughout the novel, whether it may be a dog, cat, or painting. This habit is not his only 'bizarre' characteristic; a definitely more amusing one is his habit of eating the pages of classics when he is nervous. As he and his friend Philip journey to the country by train, he takes along a copy of *Great Expectations*, which he subsequently eats rather than reads. Rather than acknowledging that this is hardly a 'normal' activity, he offers a piece to his friend, who "gracefully decline[s]," and takes the book away from Charles, proclaiming "It's bad for you" (49). Tracing the eccentricities of Lord Peter Wimsey, Poirot and Marple, Porter suggests that "A foppish lord, a vain and overweight Belgian, and an elderly gentlewoman are only the most familiar of twentieth-century English examples of eccentric detectives" (137). In contrast to Charles Wychwood, the role of the detective, however eccentric, was to "establish sequence and causality" (Porter 30), and s/he appeared as a hero who set things right and established order. Unlike traditional detectives, Charles gets tangled in a mystery that he himself creates and rather than deducting answers through rationalization, he follows his instincts and imagination.

According to Porter, the detective as protector of the innocent, "achieved full mythic stature" in the last decades of the 19th century and became the British male hero (155), as emphasised by the vain and bossy Sherlock Holmes. Charles Wychwood, along with other pseudo-detectives in metaphysical/metafictional detective stories, is as far removed from Holmes in this respect, as is the dog that he encounters on the street. Jumping to conclusions without any real evidence, Charles is the anti-hero, and the reader, for once, feels smarter than the detective as s/he sees his incompetence in investigation.

At the start of the novel, Charles is going to an antique shop to sell some old books, which is where he discovers the portrait of Thomas Chatterton as a middle-aged man. The name of the antique shop, "Leno Antiques," instantly brings associations to the mind of the reader. While being an allusion to Ackroyd's own future novel, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), it is also an indicator of the characters within. The owners of the shop, in their speech and actions, echo the theatricality of the profession, while Dan Leno's mimicry foreshadows the Chatterton forgeries. The books that he intends to sell show Charles' deviation from the heroic qualities of the classical detectives. They are about flute playing, and when he first bought them, "he had decided that he was destined to become a flautist" (9), while the act of selling them prompts him to "contemplate[d] a new career as a bookseller" (10). Undecided about his identity and his life, Charles buys the painting because it fascinates him, and because he feels that "there [is] something familiar about his face" (11), and hence the investigation begins. We see however that even his son's instincts are greater than his, as when Charles takes the portrait home, Edward's first comment after seeing it is "'It's a fake'" (14), a fact that Charles never finds out because of his premature death. Although, on contemplation, he says to his son, "'You and I, Eddie' [. . .] 'are going to investigate that picture. We're going to solve the mystery,'" the fact remains that Edward solves the mystery before it even begins, despite the fact that Charles refuses to even consider this chance.

The possibility of the manuscripts he finds being forgeries is another point that does not enter Charles' mind. Chapter Six of the novel is composed entirely of the manuscript that Charles finds, a first person account of Chatterton's days supposedly by himself. The implications in this manuscript are endless – most importantly, on the advice of his publisher, Chatterton apparently forges his own death in order to forge the works of other recently deceased writers: "And so it was (to look forward a little) that after my untimely Departure from this life I first began upon the *newly discovered Works* of Mr Gray, Mr Akenside, Mr Churchill, Mr Collins and Sundry others: I even coppied Mr Blake, from my own love of his Gothick Style, but this was for the Foolery only" (92). The fact that the manuscript *seems* real (it is convincing) is enough for Charles to rationalize the mystery of

Chatterton. Based on our knowledge, that Blake lived between 1757-1827, and Chatterton between 1752-1770, it would have been hardly possible for Chatterton to have copied Blake. But this is, of course, the nature of the revelation – the manuscript is proof that Chatterton lived on, that he did not commit suicide in 1770. Charles does the maths in his head and, exasperated by Philip who does not seem to get the full picture, he even throws in Sherlock Holmes' infamous catchphrase to Watson, "'Do you see how it works? Joynson persuades Chatterton to fake his own death, then Chatterton forges the great poetry of his time, and then Joynson sells it. Elementary. [. . .] You know, [. . .] half the poetry of the eighteenth century is probably written by him'" (94).

Not knowing that the manuscript itself is actually a forgery, Charles immediately assumes that he has unearthed the mystery, although he in fact dies before discovering the truth. According to Sweeney, "*Chatterton* [. . .] qualifies as a metaphysical detective story, because the sleuth dies before solving the mystery – that is, before discovering that the evidence of the forger's faked death had itself been forged" (261-262). The only person who gets to learn the truth is the reader, this time through an apparently 'real' account of Thomas Chatterton's last days, which is not a first person narrative as was the forgery, but a third person one. Although the biographical information given at the beginning of the novel states that Chatterton committed suicide probably as a result of poverty, the narrative towards the end of the novel suggests an entirely different explanation – an "explanation of Chatterton's death not deduced by any of the characters: that he died not in a suicide attempt, but in a misguided effort to cure himself of venereal disease. Like one of Borges's fictitious metaphysical detective stories, then, *Chatterton* is designed so that its readers may be 'more discerning than the detective'" (Sweeney 261-262).

Indeed, the inability of Charles Wychwood to evaluate clues and evidence elevates the reader to the role of the all-knowing classic detective. Whereas traditional detective fiction employed foil characters to distinguish the detective as the real hero, in *Chatterton*, it is Charles who acts as a foil to the smart(er) reader. As Porter suggests, "The functional significance of Watson in the Holmes stories generally resides in his performance of the dual role of naive narrator and false detective, or 'perpetual fool.' [. . .] Watson's average man's chattiness is the

appropriate foil to the taciturnity of the detective genius" (37). In *Chatterton*, it is Charles who is too gullible, and believes everything he sees, he is, in short, ineffectual as a detective, whereas the reader is forced to question the truth behind the clues or evidence, with the aid of the running commentary on 'truth' in the novel, an aspect of *Chatterton* which will be dealt with later. Even though Joel Black argues that "[. . .] the protagonist's principal activity in postmodern detective fiction is no longer detection (that is, seeking answers to the traditional questions, 'Whodunit?' or 'Where is it?'), but the reading and interpretation of texts," (91) it becomes evident that Charles is unable to achieve even that. Despite his son's realisation that the painting is a fake, and Philip, his friend from university, questions the authenticity of the manuscript, Charles is ineffectual to the degree of not even questioning his evidence. Thus Charles becomes Watson to the readers' Holmes, while he is naive enough himself to thrust the role of Watson upon Philip. Mimicking a Holmesian attitude when talking to Philip, he says, "Elementary" concerning what he has found out, assuming that his deduction is superior to that of Philip. It becomes clear, towards the end of the novel, however, that Philip achieves a greater level of satisfaction at the closure of the mystery. While Charles dies as a result of a brain tumour that he refuses to acknowledge, Philip carries on his life with Charles' wife, stepping into his shoes as it were.

Although like the detectives before him Charles is self-assured and confident that he will solve the mystery of Chatterton, it is evident in the novel that he does not have much reason to feel so. He does not have the comfort of easy living that offered his predecessors the leisure in which they were able to follow their investigations, even though the problems with his health do parallel the handicaps of previous detectives. Firstly, with perhaps the exception of Hercule Poirot, who is retired from the police force, the efforts of the famous detectives were largely amateur pastimes, almost hobbies, although how indeed they made a living is not known. Sherlock Holmes, Lord Peter Wimsey, and Miss Marple are all members of the upper-middle, or leisure class and have all the time in the world to pursue criminals. In fact, as Dennis Porter argues, this is one of the factors that helps in distinguishing them as heroes; he states of Holmes that " His attraction is not only that of power through reason but also of leisure and privilege, of upper-middle-class

bachelor life, of heroic adventure punctuated by pipe smoking in gentleman's chambers, meditation, and opera. Holmes never has to stop to earn his living or appear at an Office the way a clerk does" (156). Holmes occasionally takes up disguises to fool his suspects, and chases them through the streets of the city into even the most despicable areas of Victorian London. Hercule Poirot does not even attempt forays like this, and as Porter suggests, "His triumph is the triumph of subtlety and the sedentary life" (159). Miss Marple, similarly, concludes most of her mysteries without even moving from the living room, as her main power lies in her ability to get suspects to open up over tea.

The leisurely time offered to his predecessors is not, however, given to Charles. Although he does not worry much (if at all) over his health and money problems, his wife's and Philip's anguish makes the reader think of him like more of an invalid than a hero. His nonchalance regarding these problems, his refusal to even admit them (particularly concerning his writing block) invoke pity, not admiration, and underline his inability to solve the mystery behind Chatterton's death.

An integral aspect of the mystery, in fact, of all mysteries, emerges in the novel through the questioning of whether mysteries are indeed solvable. Charles must look to history for guidance and is content with finding manuscripts that he assumes belonged to Chatterton, since they are written in the first person. The manuscript, the entirety of which is given in Chapter 6, is Charles' most prized evidence as it suggests that Thomas Chatterton did not die at age 17 in 1770, but that he forged his own death in order to write forged poetry of living and dead poets. This raises two essential questions which must be dealt with in order to arrive at the true nature of the mystery/crime. The first is, how reliable are historical documents? How is the contemporary researcher/detective to determine which manuscripts are forged and which are not? The second question, which emerges out of the first, lies in the nature of forgery itself, which is dealt with in various degrees in all of the four narratives in the novel. The reference book which Charles consults states of Chatterton that he was "the faker of medieval poetry and perhaps the greatest literary forger of all time" (21). According to Charles, however, his works make Chatterton "the greatest poet in history" (94). A central discussion thus emerges in the novel concerning the distinctions between inspiration, imitation, plagiarism, and forgery.

Is Chatterton's Rowley sequence less original because it was not written by a medieval monk, but by someone who could imitate the speech and mannerisms of one? Is the creator of this work a forger, and thus an imitator/plagiarist, or a poet, and therefore highly original? The question that must be answered is this: is an inspired work less original than the work it was inspired from? Or, in line with poststructuralist and postmodern beliefs, is inspiration/imitation an essential ingredient of art that does not hinder, but strengthens originality? Greg Clingham argues that these two central issues are dealt with together in the novel through Chatterton's work as "In their seemingly gratuitous textuality, and their 'inauthentic' claim to reflect the real world of the past, Chatterton's forgeries raise the question of what history is, and they thereby figure their own historicality" (39). In other words, Thomas Chatterton's 'forgery' of the monk Rowley's works and of fifteenth-century Bristol is an interpretation of history, just as *Chatterton*, as a pseudo-biography (or history) is Ackroyd's interpretation of history. The plausibility and historical accuracy of events in *Chatterton* reinforce the idea that a historical text is just as subjective as a fictional text, and that they both can be a means to understand the culture/thoughts of the time that they reflect. Thus the central discussions in the novel come to reflect on the work itself, forming the metafictional basis of the novel.

The reliability of history and history writing is questioned in the multiple narratives of the novel. The central mystery – how did Chatterton die – is given many interpretations, implying that history is also an interpretation. There is the written account at the beginning of the novel, the painting by Henry Wallis (also featured on the cover), the death revealed by the forged manuscript, and finally, the 'true' account as given in Part 3. The encyclopaedic excerpt on page 1 claims that

> in May 1770 [Chatterton] moved to a small attic room in Brooke Street, Holborn. It was here on the morning of 24 August 1770, apparently worn down by his struggle against poverty and failure, that he swallowed arsenic. When the door of his room was broken open, small scraps of paper – covered with his writing – were found scattered across the floor. (1)

It is this same image of death that Henry Wallis aims to capture in his painting of the death of Chatterton. Admittedly for Wallis, this is a very romanticized version, and although he finds the room in which Chatterton died and decorates it according to the description of the death, he knows that he cannot paint

the death exactly as it probably occurred. To George Meredith, who questions the accuracy of the representation, he says, "'I need the reality of the room for the greater reality of the death. I cannot paint the taking of the arsenic, the convulsions, the foaming at the mouth. Not unless I give you poison, George – '" (143). What confuses George Meredith is the pains that Wallis goes to in order to create a 'realistic' interpretation of a death that requires a model to pose as a subject who died 60 years previously. During the process of the painting, Meredith continues to question his own role as model, as he imitates for the sake of verisimilitude. Observing the painting, he declares "'I will be immortalized [. . .] Not with a kiss but with a brush. When all our little feelings are forgotten, I will be there still. Now that *is* immortality [. . .] But is it Meredith or is it Chatterton?'" (161). His confusion is apt, as Greg Clingham also argues, "Since 1856, the 'facts' of Chatterton's death, and even his place in literary history, have been influenced by the details and the impact of Wallis's painting" (50). The painting indeed reflects all the known facts concerning Chatterton's death as explained in the excerpt at the beginning of the novel – the torn pieces of paper and the open window. Meredith claims rightly, "this will always be remembered as the true death of Chatterton" (157). It could be argued that it is Ackroyd who 'immortalizes' Meredith by inserting his account of the process of the painting in *Chatterton*. Either way, he is immortalized through a process of interpretation, or fiction. Neither the painting nor the novel in which he figures as a character claims to be a true account of his life or personality.

Wallis's painting comes to represent the central claim that history is itself a representation that may have different interpretations. In this context, Charles's inability in solving the mystery is normal, as the more he researches, the more interpretations he comes across. An accurate account of Chatterton's death would have been ugly, whereas the romantic representation in Wallis's painting is much more acceptable. As Clingham states, "Ackroyd's plot momentarily makes the death poignant and pathetic in unexpected ways, materially and pointedly contrasting it with the aesthetic *beauty* of the death as rendered in Wallis's painting, [. . .] and questioning the romantic mythologization of the death as the tragic and sublime gesture of the archetypal poetic spirit" (44). Similarly, in *The Amazing Victorian: A Life of George Meredith*, Mervyn Jones states (concerning the painting) that "the

sentimental appeal is ludicrous; the calmness of the body disguises the agonies of someone genuinely dying of arsenic poisoning; and Chatterton's red hair is a false colour, reminding us of the dye of a 1980's punk" (80). In the 18th century account that is interspersed between Chapters 13-15, it becomes obvious that the real manner in which the novel claims that Chatterton died is far from beautiful:

> There is a pain in his belly like the colic but burning so, my liver and spleen might roast in the heat. What is happening to me? He tries to rise from his bed, but the agony throws him down again and he rolls in terror to stare at the wall. Oh God the arsenic. He vomits over the bed, and in that same spasm the shit runs across his thin buttocks – how hot it is – and trickles down his thighs, the smell of it mixing with the rank odour of the sweat pouring out of his body. Everything is fleeing from me. I am the house on fire. Oh god the poison. I am being melted down. (227)

This is of course in direct contrast to Wallis's painting, which is described by Nick Groom in the Introduction to *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture* as "the most enduring image of Romanticism" where "the poet [is] in a tiny garret, sprawling supine on his bed: young and beautiful, and exquisite corpse. This angelic poet has suffered for his genius – starving and destitute, mad and suicidal, and now dead. [. . .] The poet crucified by his prodigious genius, his flaming head haloed with shredded manuscripts, his lifeless feet resting against his writing desk" (3).

The conflict in representations of death is also dealt with in the 20th century narrative of Harriet Scrope, whose friend, Sarah Tilt, is writing a book called *The Art of Death*, which is concerned with the representations of death in painting. As the two women converse about the book, Harriet wonders whether the bodies rotted while death was being painted, as she sincerely believes that really dead people were used as models for these paintings. She is shocked to discover from her friend that models like George Meredith were used for this aim:

> ' So what did the artists use?' Again, the child's question.
> 'They used models, as they were supposed to.'
> 'Models? Models pretending to be dead?'
> 'As far as I know, they weren't killed on the spot. What do you want? Blood?'
> Harriet was tapping the spoon against the tip of her nose. 'And so the dead can be exalted by others feigning death?'
> 'The whole point of death is that it can be made beautiful. And the real thing is never very pretty.' (34)

Henry Wallis, and other painters of death in *Chatterton* are thus portrayed as forgers of a different type – imitators of reality who use models to imitate death in order to make it beautiful. Another subplot that relates to this central theme is the story of Stewart Merk, assistant to the painter Seymour, who helps with the paintings when Seymour gets old, and then subsequently forges new paintings, since he has come to know Seymour's style well. Paralleling nicely Chatterton's life, Merk is at first condemned and then is drawn into an agreement with the gallery, where they proceed to continue selling the paintings as Seymour's, despite having found out that they are fakes. To confuse the matter even further, Harriet Scrope, astonished as she may seem in the above-mentioned scene, is a plagiarist herself. An author of popular romances, Scrope is trying to have her memoirs written, while also trying to hide the fact that the plots of her early novels are plagiarized from the novels of Harrison Bentley, an obscure writer.

All the texts in *Chatterton* are in one way or another imitations, copies, or blatant forgeries. Philip Slack, perhaps one of the most stable characters in the novel, abandons the idea of writing his own novel for precisely this reason – he realizes that his effort to create anything original will be futile, as he will merely be unconsciously imitating existing ideas. After discovering Harriet's deception, he is unable to blame her and thinks,

> He had once attempted to write a novel but he had abandoned it after some forty pages: not only had he written with painful slowness and uncertainty, but even the pages he had managed to complete seemed to him to be filled with images and phrases from the work of other writers whom he admired. It had become a patchwork of other voices and other styles, and it was the overwhelming difficulty of recognizing his own voice among them that had led him to abandon the project. (70)

It is no coincidence that it is Philip who comes across evidence of Harriet's plagiarism, for a number of reasons. Firstly, he is the reverse Watson figure. Although Charles insists on seeing him as his helper, it is Philip's discoveries and inhibitions that help them arrive at the true solution. Secondly and most obviously, he is a librarian with access to even the remotest corners of the library. Thirdly, having explored his inability to write, he has discovered the cause of it – unlike Charles, who believes he has tremendous talent but is unable and unwilling to find the reason behind his poor performance and lack of achievement. Most importantly,

as we discover in the final chapter, Philip may be the author of the novel we hold in our hands. Having gotten closer to Vivien, Charles's widowed wife, he tells her of his experience of trying to write a novel:

> 'So I tried writing my own novel but it didn't work, you know. I kept on imitating other people. I had no real story, either, but now – ' he hesitated – 'but now, with this – with Charles's theory – I might be able to - '
> [. . .]
> 'Of course,' he added, grave again, 'I must tell it in my own way. How Chatterton might have lived on.' (232)

Interestingly, the novels of Harrison Bentley that Harriet plagiarizes from also have plots that resemble that of *Chatterton*, and allude to Ackroyd's other works as well. The name of the first novel is *The Last Testament*, an open allusion to Ackroyd's own *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983), where he rewrites Oscar Wilde's final days in Paris. The plot concerns a poet who realizes that it was his wife who wrote poems by him when he was ill. Philip is reminded of a Scrope novel in which a secretary forges "her employer's 'posthumous' publications" (69). Paralleling both Chatterton's and Stewart Merk's careers, this cyclical theme throws light on *Chatterton* itself. Although it was Charles who wanted to solve the mystery behind the Chatterton painting and who had started writing, it is Philip who accomplishes the task after Charles's death. The other novel, entitled *Stage Fire* is concerned with an actor who thinks that the ghosts of dead performers possess him and who "has a triumphant career upon the stage" (69), very similar to that of Dan Leno's thoughts in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. Harriet's plagiarized novel is about a poet, haunted by the ghosts of old writers but who "had been acclaimed as the most original poet of his age" (69). Besides emphasizing the thin line between originality and imitation, the premise of this novel in particular is repetitively employed by Ackroyd in numerous other works, of which *Chatterton* is one. Charles, a poet himself, is haunted by the dead poet Chatterton and is prompted to discover the secrets surrounding the mystery of his life.

The solution to the tangible mystery – the Chatterton painting found in Leno's Antique's, lies in the painting itself, however, it is not something that drastically changes our knowledge of English literature as Charles has supposed it would. Rather, the solution of the mystery is concerned with Philip's revelations in

the library, the infinite allusions between texts, the presence of the dead among the living. What the painting reveals once it has been stripped down, is the interaction of all these poets. In a part of the novel that has been quoted earlier, Stewart Merk, who has been given the task of cleaning up Chatterton's portrait, sees, just before the painting starts to melt, "The face of the sitter dissolved, becoming two faces, one old and one young; as the paint decayed before Merk's eyes, the flakes becoming clots of colour which dropped onto the floor, these two faces recurred in a series of smaller and smaller images until after a few moments they had entirely disappeared" (228). Not entirely sure what to do, Merk furiously stamps on the portrait and shouts "'Dead? Yes?'" (228). In these last pages of the novel, it becomes evident that neither of the poets is truly dead, but they exist, as Susana Onega suggests, in "a cyclical space-time continuum" (60). As Chatterton dies in the last paragraph of the novel, we see him transported to this continuum. He sees that "Two others have joined him – the young man who passes him on the stairs [Meredith] and the young man who sits with bowed head by the fountain [Charles] – and they stand silently beside him. I will live for ever, he tells them. They link hands, and bow towards the sun" (234). The space remains the same but is at the same time infinite – Charles, George Meredith, and Thomas Chatterton are brought together in the cyclical time-frame of their location; London.

Like many young Dickensian characters, the 17-year-old Thomas Chatterton is full of excitement on his first arrival in the big city, and at living in an attic room so high up above the spectacle of London. In a letter to this mother, he writes, "I enjoy *high* spirits. I am *elevated* beyond expression, and have *lofty* thoughts of my approaching *emminnence*" (191, original emphasis). Chatterton's panoramic view of the city from his location is not negative, but positive. He sees that

> the sun hovers above the rooftops of London and already the mist has dispersed over the adjoining fields, driven away by the encroaching heat. A warm breeze stirs the tops of the trees and the birds rustle on the branches, preparing to sing. Many of the citizens hurrying through the narrow streets look up in surprise at the bright air, [. . .] at least this is Thomas Chatterton's vision, as he gets up from his bed and stares down at the rooftops from the window of his attic room in Brooke Street. (191)

Chatterton's enthusiasm concerning his life in London becomes even more evident when we compare his gaze to another view of London similarly observed from

above. The depiction of the view from the top of Todger's in Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* is as follows:

> If the day were bright, you observed upon the house-tops, stretching far away, a long dark path: the shadow of the Monument: and turning round, the tall original was close beside you, with every hair erect upon his golden head, as if the doings of the city frightened him. Then there were steeples, towers, belfries, garret-windows, wilderness upon wilderness. Smoke and noise enough for all the world at once. (123)

Chatterton, of course, is observing the London of the 18th century, a full century before the characters of Martin Chuzzlewit describe the same city from a similar height. Although not yet as wild as Victorian London, and with a noticeable absence of the infamous fog, the city in *Chatterton* is nonetheless a maze with a frightening crowd. It is integral, however, that Chatterton views this image of London without regarding himself as a possible victim, but as an aspiring observer.

He in fact delights in all the peculiar elements of the city; the maze, the crowd, the theatre:

> Each day he has felt the same exhilaration, waking above the city and then descending into it, wandering lost through its courts and alleys, savouring its smells, feeling the excitement of its crowded thoroughfares and then, at night, walking back to Brooke Street by the light of the flares and to the sound of the fiddle or the barrel-organ. (191)

The reason for this elation is of course his elevation, as he feels suspended above the city and does not need to fear becoming engulfed in it. He does not see himself as a part of the crowd, but as an external observer of the theatre of the city – a willing outsider. As Raymond Williams suggests in *The English Novel* concerning George Gissing, this response to the city, "this experience of separation – the consciousness of the educated observer – relates to the major experience of the city" (156), an experience generally related to authors who seek the city as a theme. Thus, even the discovery that he has caught the clap (gonorrhoea) from his landlady and that he needs an immediate "London kill-or-cure" (194) as his friend Daniel Hanway calls it, a dose of arsenic and opium mixed together, does not dampen Chatterton's spirits. Learning that he is from Bristol, Mr Cross the druggist assumes that he wants the arsenic to commit suicide, as an outsider could not survive in London, and he says to

Chatterton, "you may not know, sir, how in this city sudden grief or great misfortune often urge young people to destroy themselves. We read of it every day" (197).

Although he understands well what London can do to the desperate, Chatterton is confident that he is not one of those people. On the contrary, he revels in the theatrical atmosphere of the city and competes with the street entertainers on his way back to his attic. For him, the city represents progress, where he will become famous. The other aspects of the city he does not care about, as they do not touch him personally. He observes it externally, as an author and when talking with the publisher of *The Town and Country*, says,

> When I first came to London I thought I had entered a new age of miracles, but these stinking alleys and close packed tenements seem to breed only monsters. Monsters of our own making. . .
>
> But you seem to take pleasure in it, Mr Chatterton. You see the poetry in it, do you not? There is a smile playing on your face.
>
> And, indeed, Chatterton burst out laughing. (211)

Considering that he has newly encountered "an idiot boy" (209) on the street, whom he assumes is a product of the city; this outburst of laughter seems rather callous of Chatterton. However, taking into account his youth, the encounter with this boy is still emotional, despite his good spirits. He gives the boy money and promises to visit him the next day, but of course is unable to fulfil this promise. As he looks at the boy, he contemplates, "How the boy lived [he] could not imagine, but he had heard stories of deformed children abandoned by their parents and left to wander the streets. And did they then become like the city itself – brooding, secret, invulnerable?" (210).

The aspect of London that Chatterton truly appreciates is its theatricality. Although the novel only presents him to the reader as an inhabitant of London, and we do not know whether it is the city that has this effect on him, numerous episodes of his fondness for theatre and pantomime are noted. For instance, when he leaves the druggist and goes to a small coffeehouse, he takes great pleasure in pretending to the waiter that he has just taken the arsenic which he places on the table for effect. As "he rolls his eyes, and adopts a series of savage and unearthly expressions as if he were being poisoned on the very spot," (198) this alarms the boy who implores him to terminate this act. Another example occurs as he is hurrying to his editor and

publisher, when he confronts on the street a posture master. This man, who bends his body to represent letters of the alphabet greatly intrigues Chatterton, who starts imitating him. He studies all the entertainer's tricks and starts performing them all, upon which the posture master, sensing that his profession is slipping away from his fingers, ends it by calling him "a mad boy indeed" (203).

As Ackroyd suggests in a 1997 interview, "There's always an element of campery about Londoners, they act constantly, and you find it in the pubs, in street stalls, there's an extraordinary gaiety, in the old-fashioned sense, which is just as powerful as the misery; think of the cockney music-hall" (Gibson and Wolfreys 257-258). *Chatterton* discloses this theatrical aspect of London at the very beginning, as Charles enters Leno Antiques. As explained earlier, the scene actually begins with Charles walking down the street, talking to a dog, and pretending that they are a man-dog team, "Like Charlie Brown and Snoopy. Like the Indian Boy and Lassie"(7). The sign in front of the shop that he enters bears the inscription, "'Leno Antiques. Don't Linger. Make Us Very Happy. Walk Up, Do'" (8). As Susana Onega argues, "Entering the shop, Charles finds himself transported from the world of common day to the fantastic world of a parodic Dickensian 'Old Curiosity Shop'" (62).

Indeed, with the implications of their names, their appearance, and their speech and behaviour, the Lenos live in an amusing, theatrical world. Their name reminds the reader of Dan Leno, the music hall mimic and comedian, from whom they appear to have descended. Charles sees that despite the heat, Mr Leno is wearing a suit, and that on his face, "a bright purple birthmark splayed across his right cheek; it has given him a momentarily savage appearance" (8). Mrs Leno appears equally grotesque to Charles, as she, also wearing black, races into the shop in her wheelchair, upon which Charles discerns "the small violet hat which perched precariously on her apparently lustrous brown hair" (9). Mrs Leno's full name being "Sibyl Poetry Leno" betrays her fictionality, especially as she wanders around the shop as if she were seeing it for the first time. Her playfulness and flirtatiousness merely amuses Charles, who is unable to get either of the Lenos to understand his name, as they keep calling him "Mr Witch" and "Mr Wood" rather than Wychwood. According to Onega, "besides their undeniable Dickensian parentage, their grotesque

behavior also betrays their condition of 'Punch and Judy' and of music-hall characters" (63). As in Punch and Judy, the Lenos interact more with each other than they do with Charles. Although she is sitting right next to them, Mr Leno constantly repeats Charles's words to Mrs Leno, as if either she was not listening, or did not understand:

> 'I would like more, you know. Those are valuable books.'
> 'He would like more, Mrs Leno.'
> 'Would he? I would like to run barefoot in Brighton Rock, but what does that signify?'
> 'With feathers in her hair.' Mr Leno sighed. (11)

Here could be added the character of Claire, who works with Vivien Wychwood in the gallery, and lives in a largely fictional world where the gallery is in fact a school and she a student. Accordingly, she calls Cumberland and Maitland the "Head" and the "Deputy," respectively and speaks most of the time in riddles. As Ackroyd himself states in an interview, the theatricality and fictionality of his characters directly derive from the fact that they are Londoners, as "they know they're living in a city in which they have to perform" (Gibson and Wolfreys 257).

Perhaps the most theatrical figure, and the only one who is overtly aware of her fictionality is Harriet Scrope. An unhappy middle-aged author, who has gained her reputation by plagiarising the plots of other novels, Harriet is, if not very likable, a highly amusing woman. She imitates others not only in her career but also in her personal life, constantly pretending that she is someone else, and, quite literally, her imagination has no limits. Solemn and thoughtful when she is alone, she only talks to her cat, Mr Gaskell, and refers to herself in the third person as "Mother." Her first encounter with another character in the novel is with Mary, her assistant, who she despises. In this primary scene, the theatricality of her character is brought forth in the extreme, to be underlined throughout the rest of the novel:

> A sudden gust of air from the opened door sent Harriet's nostrils quivering, and she turned in alarm to Mary: 'Is there a smell in here?' She dropped to her knees and began sniffing the carpet. [. . .]
>
> Their bottoms knocked against each other as they waded in tandem across the carpet, and Harriet glanced at her sharply. 'What are you doing with my bum? I'm the only one who's allowed down there.' Mary rose awkwardly, still managing to smile at Harriet who was now experimentally licking a stray tuft from the carpet. (25)

An extremely difficult woman to have a conversation with, let alone get along with, Harriet's theatricality is essentially selfish, and for her own benefit. Having lived as an invented person throughout her life, she says to Mary, "didn't you know? Everything is made up" (28) which seems to include herself too. Although she proclaims to Sarah Tilt "'I've given my life to English literature,'" (35) she constantly misquotes authors and texts, and it is evident that even her identity as a writer is a character that she has created for herself. She finds it impossible to write her memoirs as she has not really lived her own life, but has portrayed different characters, and is thus forced to ask first Mary, and then Charles, to make-up her life for her. This is again an instance of Ackroyd foregrounding the argument that autobiographies and biographies are highly fictional rather than factual.

Among the things that Harriet makes up is London itself. She glorifies and trivializes the vicious aspects of the city, and loves the fact that she lives close to the gallows placed there in the previous century: "She took particular delight in showing visitors the small plaque, which marks the spot where the gallows had one stood: 'They were hanged for sixpence,' she used to say, 'and now there's no such coin! What strange tricks history plays on our pockets'" (28). Harriet literally rewrites London by changing the names of the streets to suit the characters that live in them, and therefore personifies the districts of the city by implying that they interact with the people who live there, people who are drawn to particular areas. She regularly takes long walks, which she thinks calm her, and as the narrator states,

> In the course of these long and erratic journeys she had renamed all the familiar streets around her, and now it was through The Valley Of Bones [because of the Georgian houses], Tart's Paradise [gathering place of prostitutes] and The Boulevard of Broken Dreams [gathering place of homosexuals] that she made her way. (29)

It is evident why she chooses these particular streets to walk in, as she seeks the spectacle of the characters that inhabit the area, and the scenes they might cause; people here she feels are as theatrical as her.

Harriet's theatrical character brings the themes of the novel to the same grounds. For her, her plagiarism, or imitation, of Harrison Bentley's novels is not much different from the way she imitates Mary, or acts the part of a cockney. The whole novel is based on levels of imitation, from Harriet's blatant plagiarism to

Philip's anxiety of influence. The idea that the products of imitation are not any less original is carried throughout, and the final scene of the novel where all the poets stand hand in hand suggests that influence is infinite. As 20th century characters may show signs derived from Dickensian characters, music-hall artists and old entertainment shows, contemporary authors could just as well show influences on them from past authors, not having to worry about their influences being known. This world of infinite allusions is acknowledged by Ackroyd as a product of London, as all the characters are united in their sense of place. London rewrites itself, is rewritten by characters (like Harriet), and is written and rewritten by authors, as Ackroyd overtly creates characters that are termed 'Dickensian.'

The House of Doctor Dee

The structure and main story line of *The House of Doctor Dee* bears similarities to that of *Chatterton*. Matthew Palmer, a researcher by profession, inherits a house from his father and, intrigued by its ghostly quality, starts investigating its history. As Thomas Chatterton did in *Chatterton*, John Dee has his own narrative frame, which enables the reader to become aware of the circumstances of Dee's life that Palmer is unable to discover throughout his research. The chapters that have Matthew Palmer as protagonist are in chronological order, starting from chapter 1 to 7. Chapters dealing with Dee's life in the sixteenth century, however, are titled rather than numbered: "The Spectacle," "The Library," "The Hospital," "The Abbey," "The Chamber of Demonstration," "The City," "The Closet," and "The Garden." The last chapter, entitled "The Vision," brings both narratives and their protagonists together and provides a dual ending. And, although at first the reader changes centuries every chapter, towards the middle of the novel the focus shifts greatly to John Dee, as "The City" follows "The Chamber of Demonstration," and "The Garden" follows "The Closet," without a twentieth century narrative between them. All in all, the chapters that deal with Dee's life catch up with and exceed those of Matthew Palmer as eight chapters are devoted to Dee, seven to Palmer, and one at the end which unites them.

The chapters in different time frames are linked to each other through several devices, as are the characters. For example, "The Abbey" starts with almost the same words with which Chapter Four had ended. "The Abbey," in turn, is linked to Chapter Five by the image of a woman dressed all in white. As will be discussed, the shared qualities of the chapters do not follow a certain order but are circular as while Matthew visits his father at hospital in Chapter One, John Dee visits his own father in the chapter titled "The Hospital," which follows Chapter Three.

Similar to *Chatterton*, there are again three time frames, inhabited by three men who are linked to each other in a ghostly fashion, although one of them does not have a narrative belonging to himself. It seems, at first, that Matthew Palmer, his father, and John Dee are the three men in question, but the end of the novel, again bearing a strong resemblance to that of *Chatterton*, culminates in the seeming embrace of John Dee, Matthew Palmer, and Peter Ackroyd himself. In particular, John Dee's house reverberates with the spirits of its previous owners, and, in general, the city of London unites its dead and living inhabitants in a spiritual realm. As Susana Onega suggests, in the last chapter, Ackroyd's voice joins that of Dee and Palmer (129), and, increasing in intensity, the novel ends with the words of all three speaking together: "Come closer, come towards me so that we may become one. Then will London be redeemed, now and for ever, and all those with whom we dwell – living or dead – will become the mystical city universal" (277). What was suggested at the end of *Chatterton* is explicitly expressed through *The House of Doctor Dee* (written six years after the former) – that it is the spiritual realm of London that unites its inhabitants; its visionaries.

John Dee is presented as a fictional character in many works, of which Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (Prospero is based on Dee) and Umberto Eco's *Foucault's Pendulum* could be considered as the most significant. Although his primary interests lay in mathematics, astronomy and astrology, fictionalisations of Dee generally concentrate on his role of magus, the mysterious side of his character. It should be noted, however, that in Dee's times, "mathematics was still popularly associated with the magical 'black arts,' the term 'calculating' [. . .] being synonymous with conjuration" (Woolley 12), and even a formal division between astronomy and astrology had not yet been established. Also, as Ackroyd claims in

London: The Biography, "in London it is impossible to distinguish magic from other versions of intellectual and mechanical aptitude. Dr. Dee, the great Elizabethan magus of Mortlake, for example, was an engineer and a geographer as well as an alchemist" (501).

The Dee narratives in *The House of Doctor Dee* do not have a date, although it is certain that Palmer's narrative takes place in 1993. Based on a conventional chronological biography, the novel seems to span a period from a little before 1582 (when Dee first met Edward Kelley, who would become his scryer) to 1608-1609, his death. Although Ackroyd's novel is in some respects surprisingly faithful to factual records of Dee's life, there are of course major discrepancies, designed to remind the reader that some things can not be known, and that what we are reading is a fictional reconstruction. One of the major binding elements between the narratives in the novel is the creation of a homunculus, a laboratory concoction of a human being. However, despite his apparent interest in alchemy, neither Benjamin Woolley's *The Queen's Conjurer*, nor Peter French's *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus* gives evidence that Dee ever experimented with such a creation.

Another significant deviation concerns Dee's wife. In Ackroyd's novel, he is married to a Katherine Dee, whereas according to Benjamin Woolley's biography, John Dee married Katherine in the mid-1560's and that "Nothing more is known about Katherine. They apparently had no children, or at least none that survived, and she died some time before 1575" (94). If we switch Katherine with Jane (Dee's wife during his friendship with Kelley), the calculation still does not add up. In the novel, Kelley tries to kill Dee's wife whereas according to any conventional biography of Dee, Kelley tries to persuade John to 'share' his wife, thus a different agenda altogether on Kelley's part. Such details may be lost on a reader who gets acquainted with Dee from Ackroyd's novel for the first time, and indeed they do nothing to hinder the narrative, but they are nevertheless there for the researcher to pick up. These deviations are once more conscious reminders that *The House of Doctor Dee* is a fictional text. The question that Ackroyd raises by distorting such facts is whether conventional biographies and histories are to be believed in, or may they be as fictional as his own narrative?

The chapter titled "The Spectacle" is suggestive in its argument concerning biographical and autobiographical discourse. In this chapter, the narrator is John Dee himself, and he is telling his life-story to a Bartholomew Gray. Most of what he narrates is true according to the biographies of Dee, except that Ackroyd gives him brothers whereas he was an only child. Arguably, it might be Dee who is giving himself brothers – merely lying to his friend about the subject (in line with Harriet Scrope's attempts with autobiography in *Chatterton*), because, for want of a better reason, he always wanted to have some. John Dee at this point does something that a good biography or autobiography must not do and jumbles his chronology, giving his birthday in the middle of the narrative. His companion of course picks this up and says, "'Your birth,' [. . .] 'is out of its place, and should have come at the beginning of your discourse. Ordering, as well as inventing, is true argument of a fine wit. Surely so premature a scholar should know that?'" (34). This episode in itself is a clue for the reader that deviations from facts will be made in the course of the novel, and that the readers should not be believing in everything that either Dee or Ackroyd is telling them. Behind the figure of Dee, the figure of the author is always apparent, clarifying his opinions.

Already suggested by the entrance of Ackroyd into his own novel, the metafictionality of the text is also overtly dealt with, especially in the concluding chapter entitled "The Vision." When the author Ackroyd enters his own novel and becomes a character, he observes his fictional characters and immediately starts questioning their reality: "I do not understand how much of this history is known, and how much is my own invention. And what is the past, after all? Is it that which is created in the formal act of writing, or does it have some substantial reality? Am I discovering it, or inventing it?" (274-75). In *Chatterton*, the fictionality of the historical characters was thematically implied through forgeries and different interpretations of what may have happened to the poet Chatterton. In this novel, the author himself questions and defends himself in the face of history and his audience, and tries to grasp an undeniable reality:

> *The House of Doctor Dee* itself leads me to that conclusion: no doubt you expected it to be written by the author whose name appears on the cover and the title-page, but in fact many of the words and phrases are taken from John Dee himself. If they are not his words, they belong to his contemporaries. [. . .] But is Doctor Dee now more than a projection of my own attitudes and

> obsessions, or is he an historical figure whom I have tried genuinely to recreate? (275)

Following this confession of open plagiarism, Peter Ackroyd and John Dee walk together through the streets of London, their unifying factor – the "mystical city universal" (277).

The novel starts with a sentence that puts the central themes in motion: "I inherited the house from my father" (1). As Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys state,

> The simple past tense of the sentence may be read as indicating a possibly endless tradition of inheritance, and thus allows for readings seeking thematic connections between this and other texts by Ackroyd, particularly those concerned with fathers and the possible break in filial continuity. The novel begins by recalling the past and the legacy of the past on or in the present, as the means by which the narrating subject seeks both to orient himself, to determine his identity in relationship to other identities, and to commence his narrative. (188)

Numerous investigations begin upon Palmer's inheritance of the house; the research he conducts of the house leads Matthew to investigate Dr. Dee, his own relationship with Dee, his father's relationship with Dee, his relationship with his father, Dee's relationship with his father, his father's relationship with Daniel Moore (Palmer's friend), his father's research of Dee, Dr. Dee's relationship with Edward Kelley, and so on, an endless array of relationships between men of London (which are not all so pure), and can be loosely fit under the word "inheritance," all foreshadowed from the first sentence. As suggested by Gibson and Wolfreys, the house, like many buildings in London which act as centres in the labyrinthine city, has its own narrative to tell and "serves in an emblematic manner for the writer as a figure for the secret history and the spectral revenance of London as a whole, all traces of the city being interwoven" (189). The theme progresses from the particular to the general, from a man to his house to his city. It is no wonder that as Matthew enters the house for the first time he feels as if he "were about to enter a human body" (3).

The body implied, or, the figure of John Dee, is of utmost importance in Palmer's recognition of the essence of the house. Through being an Elizabethan magus, scientist, philosopher, antiquarian, astronomer, astrologer and mathematician, he shares common traits with both Matthew and Ackroyd, foremost being their

interest in the past. Of course this is again similar to the relationship between Thomas Chatterton and Charles, both being poets who are interested in the past; John Dee and Matthew Palmer are likewise both researchers and are thus concerned with digging up history. Although he does research professionally, Matthew's qualifications in investigation are no further than that of Charles Wychwood because of his emotional attachment to the house.

In *The House of Doctor Dee*, we have not one, but two pseudo-detectives of the past, whose investigations and characters at times overlap each other. As John Dee investigates into the past of London, trying to find where the ancient city built by giants lies, Matthew Palmer tries to discover the truth behind another of Dee's investigations; the creation of the homunculus, which is, in Dee's words, a "new life without the help of any womb" (104). Although not as ineffectual in his investigation as Charles, Matthew is unable to keep an emotional distance from the object of his research, since in learning of Dee's life and practices, he is also forced to deal with his father's secrets which emerge out of the history of the house. Even though the merging of John Dee and Matthew Palmer occurs in the last chapter titled "The Vision," it is evident throughout the novel that they have other common qualities besides an interest in the past.

Neither John Dee nor Matthew Palmer are successful detectives, although for differing reasons. The problem that John Dee faces is that, as implied by his many interests, he is unable to focus on a single investigation, and this weakness causes him to be naive enough to believe in anybody who might help in advancing any of these inquiries. In Ackroyd's novel, Dee's deception by his "scryer" Edward Kelley stems from Dee's devotion to knowledge of all kinds, and his conviction that Kelley is in the same frame of mind. Dee readily believes in everything that Kelley tells him – whether concerning the ancient city of London, the authenticity of recovered manuscripts, or, a crystal stone in which angels appear. Despite the fact that Dee and Kelley work together in their investigation of recovering the ancient city of London, this Holmes-Watson relationship is shattered from the very beginning as the later deceptions of Kelley reveal that everything Kelley said to Dee was a hoax.

Matthew Palmer, in turn, is also equally unreliable. Besides his emotional attachment to the investigation because of his father, his actions in the course of the

novel force the reader to question his mental health. Upon moving into his inherited house, he becomes prone to hearing voices, and experiencing visions and extraordinary dreams. Not having met Matthew before he inherited the house, the reader has no choice but to regard him only through his relationship with the house. Despite the first person narration, Matthew refrains from revealing anything of his life apart from the instances which have direct relation to his investigation. The chapters that form Dee's life, in contrast, although also narrated in the first person, give much more depth to the character, as his motivations and emotions are clear. In fact, Matthew's character is manifested only to the extent of displaying his spiritual attachment to the house and John Dee. The house, acting as the centre of a mythical city, is both the mystery awaiting to be solved, and the main character of the novel, as it is the unifying element of the central characters.

Matthew's eerie actions in the novel are explained as the results of the haunting quality of the house (and city) that he inhabits. The spectral figures he meets in and around the house are linked to the sixteenth century, as they are the doubles of the characters that Dee encounters. Seemingly normal at the outset of the novel, Matthew's understanding of the nature of the house and the city results in his becoming a visionary at the end. As stated before, although not much is known about Matthew at the beginning, the essential element is that he inherited a house which he is forced to understand.

Due to a complicated relationship with his father, Matthew is far from eager to undertake this investigation, as he is afraid of what he will discover regarding his father. In the first chapter, he comes across as a character that lives more in the past than the present, and has abnormally cold relations with his parents. He states, "I had not been with [my father] when he died. I had been working in the British Library throughout that day, and by the time I reached the hospital my mother was, as she said, 'winding things up'" (5). Self-admittedly, he hates both his mother and his father (who, incidentally, also hate each other), and has only one friend, Daniel Moore, with whom his singular common interest is their profession:

> He was a professional researcher, like me, and we had seen each other so many times in the British Library, the National Archive Centre, the newspaper collection at Colindale, and elsewhere, that we began to talk. There is a camaderie that grows up among those who work with old books and old papers, largely, I suspect, because we understand that we are at odds

> with the rest of the world: we are travelling backwards, while all those around us are still moving forward. (12-13)

Matthew and Daniel work together in the investigation of the house, in fact, it is Daniel who suggests it by saying, "'I do think, Matthew, that we ought to find out who owned this house. It's almost a professional duty'" (15).

Neither of these Holmes-Watson relationships are based on truth. As is revealed later on in the novel, Daniel already knows whom the house belonged to. The first test of their friendship occurs when Matthew spots Daniel coming out of a bar dressed as a woman, which Daniel dismisses as being part of the research he is doing for a book he is writing on the history of London radicalism (45). It turns out, however, that Daniel was Matthew's father's lover, and that they performed sexual magic in Dee's house, which Matthew unsuccessfully tries to replicate with a prostitute. Thus, although unlike the ethical morality of the relationship between Holmes and Watson, Matthew and Daniel continue to work together in their investigation. In fact, Matthew is unable to do the work himself and can not let go of Daniel, who he regards as his last grip on reality.

In the following chapters it becomes evident that John Dee also has similar relationships with his own father and helper/friend. In as much as Matthew and John Dee are doubles in the novel, their fathers and helpers in their investigations, and indeed the investigations themselves are doubled. Dee's visit to his dying father in the chapter titled "The Hospital" is a repetition of Matthew's visit in the first chapter. Similar to Matthew, Dee is not at all attached to his family, particularly his father, as he expresses, "I wished to lead my days in some quiet and comfort and, Lord, to meet [my father] at every twist and turn of my house in Clerkenwell was not to be thought of. So, the rest of my family being gone into the earth, I thought it best to procure him a chamber where he could disturb no one on his way towards death" (95). The extent of Dee's antagonism towards his father becomes clear as quite soon afterwards, he readily admits a complete stranger to live in his house, with the name of Edward Kelley.

Seemingly appearing out of nowhere, it is clear to the reader, much sooner than to Dee, that Kelley is an untrustworthy character. Although Dee suspects at long last that Kelley has a hidden agenda, he is forced to hold on to him, as he is the

one who sees the images in the crystal ball. It is only when Dee's wife Katherine falls seriously ill and a servant tells him of Kelley slipping medicine into his wife's room that Dee understands Kelley's intention of putting his wife away. Only after a brief investigation of Kelley's rooms and with undeniable evidence of Kelley's deception in his possession does Dee find the courage to confront him and send him away, but of course the damage is already done and by this time his wife has died.

Both Edward Kelley and Daniel Moore start out as helpers in the investigation. Indeed, in both cases it is they who bring about an investigation. While Daniel tells Matthew that it is his obligation to do research on the house, it is Kelley who informs Dee of manuscripts and stones that confirm his theory of a buried city. Despite being instigators of the investigations to be carried out by the protagonists, they in turn become suspects in the cases because they both withhold evidence and lie about their own interests.

Matthew's and Dee's investigations evolve throughout the novel and become much broader than they had initially planned. Dee's interest in the buried city changes shape as soon as he realises that it was all a hoax designed by Kelley and Overbury, and that all the evidence were forgeries. Having started out as a material quest, it evolves into a spiritual one – a quest of a spiritual city which can not be grasped by the help of tangible evidence like manuscripts and books. Having devoted his whole life to science and learning, he realises that he had been seeing the world without love, and that what he had been seeking could not be found through knowledge alone. While he wanders around his garden, a spirit in the shape of his wife tells him that "'You do not require the study of a long time, but humbleness of spirit and cleanness of heart. In finding nothing, you will gain all things'" (256), and later on, "'Your faith must now be placed in love and not in wisdom, in surrendering and not in power'" (256). Dee's wife's words reveal what was dealt with more expansively in *Chatterton*, that knowledge from historical 'evidence' is unreliable, and that truth can only be grasped from elsewhere. Both individually and professionally, this is the mistake that both Dee and Palmer make in their investigations – they rely too heavily on tangible evidence whereas what they seek is spiritual. This is the last chapter in which we see Dee before the final one in which he will have solved the mystery and merged with Matthew and Ackroyd. The

resolution is based on his vision, and his realisation that "I must find my own vision before I may be redeemed. There is a great city which I believe to be my proper home, for is it not true that each man must spend eternity in the house he has built for himself?" (257), which elevates him to the role of a visionary. The solution to the mystery lies in Dee's finding out that the mystical city which he thought was buried, is in fact right before his eyes, the same city in which he lives. His obsession with learning and the past had blindfolded him to the present. His disinterestedness in the present, as manifested in his treatment of his father and his total devotion to Kelley culminates in Kelley poisoning his wife, who is the only person through whom Dee relates to the present. Thus of course it is the ghost of his wife who comes back to show him that what he is seeking for is evident all around him.

One of Dee's points of research, that of the homunculus, also comes to an end by this revelation. Dee reveals in his chapters that he is working on making a "little man," a theme that is repeated in the twentieth century narrative where the build up of tension causes the reader to suspect that Matthew is a result of either Dee's or his father's creation of a homunculus. Suspicions are aroused firstly by the gardener who finds glass tubes and small bones buried in the garden and secondly by a paper which Matthew finds in his father's handwriting with the title "Doctor Dee's Recipe." In this "recipe" for the creation of a homunculus, it is stated that,

> It will be a true homunculus, [. . .] and can be taught like any other child; it will grow and prosper with all its intellect and faculties, until its thirtieth year when it will fall asleep and return to its unformed state. One of the generation of the Inspirati must then cherish it, and place it again within glass, so that this secret and wonderful being may grow once again and walk upon the world. If you speak to it the sacred words it will prophesy about future events most cunningly, but its chief glory is that with proper care and reverence it will be constantly regenerated and so live for ever. (123)

Given that Matthew is 29 years old with no recollection of his childhood and no love towards his parents, it is easy to assume that either Dee had created him, and his father had "regenerated" him, or, that his father had used Dee's recipe to make him. The suspicion is prolonged in both the 16th and 20th century narratives to the extent where the reader firmly comes to believe in either one of these options. When in the end his mother tells Matthew that he was adopted by saying "'You're not my son, Matthew. [Your father] found you. He adopted you. He said that you were very

special. Unique. I had to go along with it, because I knew that I could never give him any children'" (177), and also that she had caught his father doing things with him, is the mystery somewhat revealed. Matthew arrives at a similar solution as Dee's interpretation of the spirit of his wife:

> That was the secret, after all. I had grown up in a world without love – a world of magic, of money, of possession – and so I had none for myself or for others. That was why I had seen ghosts rather than real people. That was why I was haunted by voices from the past and not from my own time. That was why I had dreamed of being imprisoned in glass, cold and apart. The myth of the homunculus was just another aspect of my father's loveless existence – such an image of sterility and false innocence could have come from no other source. Now everything had to be changed. (178)

Shortly after this, when his mother's boyfriend talks to him of old stones having been found, another link between the two narratives comes to the surface: "I thought only one thing: a buried city has been discovered. Something from the past had been restored" (179).

The reasonable explanation seems to be that although Matthew is not a homunculus but adopted, his father nonetheless did try to create one (since small bones where found buried in the garden), and that despite not having tried to create a real one, Dee did write a recipe. The homunculus itself should be regarded as a symbol; in Matthew's father's case, a symbol of his isolation and 'lovelessness' as Matthew terms it. For Matthew and Dee, on the other hand, while representing loneliness and alienation at the beginning, it comes to represent a re-birth. After having abandoned the project because Kelley had found out the secret behind it, Dee sees himself as a homunculus when he sees the spirit of his wife for the first time:

> After a very few moments there appeared a woman far off, though it were only in the corner of the room, so clear and transparent that I could see a man child within her. She advanced towards me then, her arms outstretched, and I perceived that this child inside her womb was my own self.
>
> 'Mother,' I cried. 'No, not mother, but wife. You are my wife standing before me in spirit! How could you bear me within your womb?' (245)

It is after this revelation that he is ready for the second visitation from his wife in "The Garden," when he can be born again in a world with love. Similarly, Matthew only begins to understand his own identity when he realises that he is *not* a

homunculus, as quoted before. An encounter with an imagined homunculus at the end of Chapter 7 prepares him for the final chapter in which he will join Ackroyd and Dee:

> There was an unformed creature perched upon the gate when I returned, and for a few moments we looked at each other: the human regarded the homunculus, reflecting upon its long life and upon its vision of the world, and the homunculus regarded the human.
>
> 'I have been expecting you,' I said, 'although I know you are a figment and a sick man's dream. You are the fantasy of those who believe in the reality of time and the power of the material world: while I clung to those illusions, you haunted me. You were my father's creature, and so you were an image of my fears. But there is a higher life by far, quite beyond the passage of time. So now I leave you. There never was a homunculus.' Then it opened its mouth and screamed. I walked down the path, and went inside the house where he was expecting me. (268)

Therefore what both Matthew and Dee gain from their dreams and encounters with a homunculus is a vision of the world, and particularly the city where they live, as a timeless and spiritual entity. Ackroyd does not really clarify what this vision is, or what it is that brings these two men together. As Gibson and Wolfreys suggest,

> he insists on the subjective perception of a possible thread, rather then defining the connection itself. Resisting the forcing of the mystical and hermetic, the novelist tentatively traces possible imaginative concatenations, thereby hinting at the city's identity whilst also suggestively retaining its ineffability in instances of tentative, provisional comprehension [. . .] what is most important for Ackroyd is the acknowledgement of the possibility of a certain movement or 'flow,' rather than the act of deciphering what the flow might mean. (190)

The narrator at the end of the novel provides the link between London past and London present by stating, "Oh, Dee, Dee, come out from that passage where I glimpsed you then for a moment, wandering through the eternal city of your time and mine" (275). Here the narrator recalls his first encounter with Dee and it is clear that what makes past London prevail through time (hence making it eternal) are the texts that enable it and its past inhabitants to live on. Once written about, London and its characters are able to spiritually continue inhabiting space. As he walks through the streets looking for Dee the narrator states,

> Then, as I shone my light in the dark streets of London, it struck against the great roof of fog that enclosed me: it was as if all the heaven, and earth, and sea, and the fountains of water, and dust of the streets, were mingled and

> wreathed together. Here also were walking beside me the forgotten inhabitants of London, the light upon their faces for the first time – the Moravians of Arrow Lane, the Ranters, the followers of Jakob Boehme. And who else was with me? Mary, in her white leather coat; Nathaniel Cadman; Margaret Lucas; Ferdinand Griffen; Matthew Palmer; Edward Kelley; Daniel Moore; Katherine Dee; and so many others, all them still living within the city. (276)

The torch light illuminating the 'forgotten inhabitants of London' once again suggests that seemingly long-gone characters are able to be resurrected, as it were, or are brought into the light, into rememberance, by those who read and write about them. What Ackroyd seems to argue is that people are never actually gone, but that they continue to live in the present even though they might have been forgotten for the time being. Interest in the past (a trait shared by Dee, Palmer and Ackroyd) enables both the past characters of London, and past London itself to continue existing and influencing the present.

Matthew, John Dee and Ackroyd are linked to each other by their common interest in the past, but more importantly, they "do not connect to one another but are connected by the flow of London through them" (Gibson and Wolfreys 194-195). Dee's house as a microcosm of the great city functions to demonstrate this flow among its inhabitants, about whom the only information is gathered from some papers that Matthew finds. One of these is a Mr. Abraham Crowley, from whom his father bought the house in 1963 (219), an allusion to the occultist Aleister Crowley who in fact died in 1947, and was not alive at the date mentioned in the novel. Another scrap of paper belongs to the 18th century owners, two brothers who saw ghosts in the house, one is of a magazine cutting from the 19th century of a medium called Stephen Cosway who visited the house and felt ghostly presences. Perhaps the most relevant owner is an early 20th century author suffering under the anxiety of influence and whose fright of libraries recalls Philip of *Chatterton*, who writes:

> Nevertheless it always comes back – this fear that whatever I happen to be writing comes from another source, that I am stealing someone else's plot or words, that I am relying upon the themes or images of other novelists. That is why there are occasions when I leave the house and travel to the London Library in St James's Square. The shelves of English fiction there are both my terror and my consolation: I search for evidence to convict me, but I find nothing. And yet, even in that moment of relief, I am still haunted by the fear

> that somewhere among these volumes will be discovered the same novel I myself am writing. (222-223)

Although these inhabitants are all haunted by the past of London, none of them are able to illuminate these ghosts. Only Palmer is able to do this, and remains as the twentieth-century focus of the novel because he is a researcher. How can the past of London be detected and brought into the light if not for someone opening the texts and setting them free, as both Palmer and Ackroyd do for Dr. Dee?

The novel ends with Dee listening to Matthew and Daniel talking about him:

> John Dee heard all these things, and rejoiced. And, yes, I see him now. I put out my arms in welcome, and he sings softly to me.
>
> 'London Bridge is falling down,
> Falling down, falling down...'
>
> Oh you, who tried to find the light within all things, help me to create another bridge across the two shores. And so join with me, in celebration. Come closer, come towards me so that we may become one. Then will London be redeemed, now and for ever, and all those with whom we dwell – living or dead – will become the mystical city universal. (277)

As in Chatterton, Palmer, Dee, and Ackroyd merge into one; having solved the mystery of London by becoming elements in its flow. They are now granted with the vision of London as an eternal, mystical, spiritual city, having each opened, read and written texts which enable London past to continue existing in the present.

In all probability, Dee and Palmer are rewarded with the solution to the mystery most importantly because they were interested in the past and wanted to investigate it further, since they realized that there *was* a mystery in need of investigation, a precondition to becoming a London visionary. London figures in this novel as the most prominent feature – the city is the catalyst, the evidence, and the mystery and solution. John Dee's house acts as the centre of the large city and is the means through which Palmer especially comes to terms with his own identity, and his relationship with the city. The ending of the novel clearly establishes this central role that the city is given as it underlines the fluidity of London – the flow of the city which parallels itself through its visionary inhabitants.

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem provides a different twist to the multiple narratives explored in the previous novels. While both *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee* merged narratives from different periods to show the continuity, or flow, of the city, the narratives of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* are centred in a single century. Set in 1880-1881, a distinguishing feature of this novel is its use of different *types* of narratives and its concentration on a diverse number of people. The central story, presented by an omniscient third person narrator, revolves around a woman on trial (Elizabeth Cree) for the murder of her husband and on a set of murders around the district of Limehouse performed by what the media of the period has labelled the 'Limehouse Golem.' Although the outset of the novel does not imply any relationship between these two crimes, the later narratives reveal a shared history, and a common murderer. Besides the story of Elizabeth Cree, the third person narrator also enlightens the reader with the stories of George Gissing, Karl Marx, and Dan Leno, all of whom come to occupy significant roles in the Limehouse murders. While Gissing and Marx prove to be suspects in the investigation, Leno in turn is suspected of being the golem's next victim.

Another important narrative is the journal of John Cree, the murdered husband of Elizabeth, who in this journal admits to being the golem, and reveals his motives and inspirations for the murders. Ackroyd takes pains to underline the 'reality' of this journal, because at the beginning of each entry the availability of the journal is expressed as being "*preserved in the Manuscript Department of the British Museum, with the call-mark Add. Ms. 1624/566*" (24), as is the case in Chapter Seven. This, however, is merely an illusory reality since it is implied towards the end of the novel that Elizabeth forged the journal to throw the blame of the Limehouse murders on her innocent husband, since she is the real golem. A realistic account of Elizabeth's trial is also provided, as in intervening chapters the reader follows the opening and closing speeches of the prosecution and defence, the cross-examination of the suspect and of witnesses. The first narrative of the trial is presented with the words, "*All extracts from the trial of Elizabeth Cree, for the murder of her husband, are taken from the full reports in the* Illustrated Police News Courts *and* Weekly Record *from the 4th to the 12th of February, 1881*" (9), again

providing an illusion of reality. Furthermore, newspaper accounts related to the murders add to this illusion as in Chapter Thirty-Seven which begins, "*The* Morning Advertiser *of the 3rd October, 1880, carried the following announcement on its front page*" (216). The most significant evidential narrative for the detective reader, an account that the detectives in the novel have no idea of, is the first person narrative in which Elizabeth Cree relates her life. Presumably presented according to the prompts during the trial, Elizabeth in this narrative hints at having committed many more murders than attributed to the golem, as whoever comes into contact and in some way annoys her seems to die, one after another, in similar freak accident conditions.

As was also the case in the other novels discussed, there are a number of characters in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* that assume the names of, and therefore the identities of, real historical people. There is, however, an essential difference in this novel because, since the structure is also different from the others, the leading character is Elizabeth Cree, and she is not obviously linked to a historical character in the manner that Charles was linked to Chatterton, or Matthew to John Dee. Elizabeth is indeed linked to other characters, as will be argued below, but in a more subtle way. Thus the concern with a parody of biographical conventions in this novel is somewhat enlarged to include George Gissing, Karl Marx, and Dan Leno, who, even though his name is carried to the title, is not given a major role in the course of events.

The character that is most involved in the plot is George Gissing, whose residence in London at the time of the novel's setting is accurate according to his biographers (Halperin 25; Donnelly 33). His wife Nell, the alcoholic prostitute, is similarly authentic, as are many other details in the novel. A flashback in Chapter Twenty-One shows Gissing reminiscing of his first meeting with his wife:

> He had been eighteen years old at the time; he had been an eager and promising student at Owens College in Manchester, and was preparing for his entrance examinations to the University of London when he met Nell Harrison. She was seventeen, but was already an alcoholic who earned her drink by prostitution. Gissing became infatuated with her after a chance meeting in a Manchester public house; he was an idealist who believed that, in the best theatrical tradition, he could 'rescue' Nell. (110-111)

It continues, "He used his scholarship funds to feed and clothe her; he even bought her a sewing machine [. . .] so that she could earn a proper living as a seamstress" (111). Ackroyd's meticulous research into his London subjects becomes obvious when we turn to Mabel Collins Donnelly's account of the same incident in her biography *George Gissing: Grave Comedian*:

> This time the young woman of Gissing's choice possessed not only such qualities as youth, comeliness, and dependency upon a knight who would protect her, but the most compelling attraction of all – beautiful, injured innocence. She was Marianne Helen Harrison, 'Nell,' only seventeen when George Gissing met her. She had already turned to prostitution as a livelihood, and she became thereafter her benefactor's mistress, in 1878 his wife, and, finally, his tormenter. (22)

The sewing machine is again similarly accounted for; "he was not to be dissuaded from the attachment and indeed began to 'reclaim' the girl by giving her a sewing machine so that she could abandon her former trade" (23). The narratives, so similar that Ackroyd seems to have merely copied down the facts, if not from this then another biography, show his concern is establishing a factual basis in his fiction before attempting to deviate from it.

In the novel there are major deviations from the narratives of the traditional biographies. The majority of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* shows Gissing working in the British Museum writing either an article titled "Romanticism and Crime," or another one on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine. And even though Halperin suggests of 1878 that "He worked a great deal at the British Museum both for the sake of the light and the warmth there," (26) there is no evidence that Gissing wrote on either of these topics. Fuelled by a common interest in London and Dickens (although Gissing seems to loathe the city rather than admire it as his biographers make it clear that he left the city whenever possible), Ackroyd has simply rewritten how Gissing *might* have spent his time during 1880 and 1881. Indeed, there is no proof to suggest that the events surrounding the character Gissing in the novel could *not* have happened to the real author. He *was* living in London at the time and was spending his days walking around London and in the British Museum working on articles, albeit different ones. Once again, Ackroyd underlines his suggestion that we can only know about the past through texts, but who is to say that they are all accurate?

A similar situation arises in the representation of Karl Marx. Ackroyd's attempt at verissimilitude when describing Marx's house in London, for example, is extraordinary. In *Karl Marx*, Isaiah Berlin quotes Marx's son-in-law (Paul Lafargue) describing his study as follows:

> 'It was on the first floor and well lighted by a broad window looking on the park. The fireplace was opposite the window, and was flanked by bookshelves, on the top of which packets of newspapers and manuscripts were piled up to the ceiling. On one side of the window stood two tables, likewise loaded with miscellaneous papers, newspapers and books. In the middle of the room was a small plain writing-table and a windsor chair. Between this chair and one of the bookshelves was a leather-coloured sofa on which Marx would lie down and rest occasionally.' (229)

In Ackroyd's narrative, Marx's function is as a misplaced victim – the Limehouse golem, thinking that it is Marx's house, goes to his friend Solomon Weil's house and kills him. Learning of his involvement with the murder victim, Chief Inspector Kildare and Detective Paul Bryden visit Marx at his home to question him. Here is how his study is related in this novel:

> They were shown into his study *on the first floor* by one of Marx's daughters, Eleanor, who at the time was also looking after her mother [. . .]. The room which they entered was *filled with books*, scattered around as if the spirit had been drained from them and they had sunk exhausted to the floor; the atmosphere was heavy with the scent of cigar-smoke [. . .]. Karl Marx was sitting at *a small desk in the middle of his study* [. . .]. He invited both men to sit on *a leather sofa* beneath *the window* and, walking up and down on the small avenue of carpet left between the books, he politely asked them their business. (89-90, emphasis added)

This might seem a minute detail, but indeed the research done merely on the description of a room is interesting precisely *because* it is a detail. Likewise, Marx's wife is also presented in a historically accurate time frame. The reader is informed in the novel that she has cancer and will die soon, and 1881 is the year in which she did die (Berlin 231). However, Berlin's biography does not give any evidence to suggest that Marx ever had a friend called Solomon Weil, or that he was trying to write an epic poem about Lambeth; the two factors that tie the fictional character to the narrative of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, as will be discussed further below.

As stated before, although he gives his name to the title of the novel, Dan Leno himself does not feature at length in the novel. This could be attributed to

Ackroyd listing him as of those 'London Visionaries,' the distinguished group that includes people he has used as characters in his other works – Thomas Chatterton, John Dee, Nicholas Hawksmoor, Wilde, etc. In contrast, this novel does not revolve around Leno (as was the case in Ackroyd's treatment of the others in their respective novels), and even Gissing and Marx are much more influential characters in the course of the narrative. Leno does have, however, a special place in the plot(s) as he is linked in someway to all the victims murdered by the golem. Despite this evidence, suspicion of him is very brief, and he is rather seen as a potential victim by the investigators.

Similar to his treatment of Gissing and Marx, Ackroyd makes factual changes in the fictionalisation of the music hall artist. In the novel the third person narrator states that "the day of his birth, the 20th of December, 1850, was also, curiously enough, that of Elizabeth Cree" (22). According to the novel, Leno is 30 years old when the events take place, in contrast to his real birthday, which is given as Deccember 20, 1860 (wikipedia), which would make him 20 and too young for the functions of his fictional character. Only two short chapters of *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* are devoted to Dan Leno exclusively, at other instances he figures only in Elizabeth Cree's narrative of her life. Notwithstanding the birth dates, most of the information given in these chapters is factually accurate, such as his parents' stage names, that he appeared for the first time on stage when he was 4 at the Cosmotheca Music Hall, and that he was billed as 'contortionist and posturer' (Ackroyd 22, wikipedia). The change in his birthdate does not matter greatly in the novel, and it is evident that Ackroyd has merely appropriated Leno's life to meet the ends of his own novel. He thus reminds the reader once again that despite his use of real people as characters, what they are reading is not a factual biography, but a fiction.

None of the many characters in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* are discardible in their relation to the central murders depicted in the novel, and most of them are eerily connected to each other by combining forces. The most significant of these is the Reading Room of the British Museum, which acts as the centre of the city the characters have in common – as did John Dee's house in *The House of Doctor Dee*. All the main characters enter the Reading Room at some point; in fact,

some of them go there regularly every day. John Cree, Elizabeth Cree, Karl Marx, George Gissing, Solomon Weil, Dan Leno; all characters directly involved in the mystery, the suspects, victims, and the murderess herself, visit the library for different reasons. George Gissing sees the library as a place where he can escape the problems of daily life (as does the character, Reardon, in *New Grub Street*) and sees it as a vehicle for capturing the essence of the city:

> if the air indeed were one vast library, one great vessel in which all the noises of the city were preserved, then nothing need be lost. Not one voice, or laugh, or threat, or song, or footfall, but it reverberated through eternity. He remembered reading in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of an ancient myth which supposed that all lost things could be discovered on the other side of the moon. And perhaps there was such a place where perpetual, infinite, London would one day be found. (246)

The studies conducted by the characters in the British Museum reveal their interest in the city, as in the memorable instance in Chapter Eleven, when John Cree goes to the Reading Room and sits between George Gissing and Karl Marx, neither of whom he recognizes. The third person narrator describes John Cree's situation as follows:

> he had come to London in order to escape from the shadow of his father and also to pursue a literary career [. . .] But he believed that now, in the life of the poor, he might have found his great theme. He often recalled a remark by the publisher Philip Carew that 'there was a grand book to be written about London.' Why not release his own private misery within the general sufferings of so many? (44-45)

John Cree's personal miseries have in fact no relation to the London poor, in whom he is interested as an outsider. Having received a substantial inheritance following his father's convenient death which occurs soon after he has married Elizabeth, his unhappiness has nothing to do with poverty, but is presumably related to his marriage. The life of the poor is of course the central theme of the novelist sitting next to Cree in the library, George Gissing, to whom Cree is connected through a similar interest in the London poor. Karl Marx, sitting on the other side and reading Tennyson and Dickens's *Bleak House* is said to be interested in a similar topic: "Now he was once again contemplating the composition of a long poem, which was to be set in the turbulent streets of Limehouse and entitled *The Secret Sorrows of London*. That was why he had spent many hours in the neighbourhood of the East End" (45). The combination of these authors looking at poverty-stricken London for

inspiration lays the ground for Ackroyd's essential interest in criticizing realistic fiction, as will be discussed later in this chapter. The Reading Room itself, however, is the central concern here, as it acts both as a centre to the city in which all its occupants are interested, and also as a refuge for these residents.

The murders committed by the Golem are themselves a parody of murders previously committed in London and written about by Thomas De Quincey in "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts." The fact that nearly all the characters read De Quincey at some point in the novel serves to illustrate the connection between Londoners and writers of London, and the circularity of events in London. The reading material is largely shared in the novel, as Gissing, Marx, and Leno all read Dickens at some point, and Marx reads Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* without knowing that he sees the author every day at the library. Blake and Oscar Wilde are also alluded to significantly, as having influenced or being influenced by the theme of poverty and crime. The works of De Quincey, however, most particularly the essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts," is a central motif in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*. In John Cree's first journal entry, he relates his visit to the murder site that De Quincey writes about,

> I had an hour or two before the night came on and I knew well enough that, a little way down towards the river, stood the house which had witnessed the immortal Ratcliffe Highway murders of 1812. On a spot as sacred to the memory as Tyburn or Golgotha, an entire family had been mysteriously and silently despatched into eternity by an artist whose exploits will be preserved for ever in the pages of Thomas De Quincey. (25)

Whether it is John Cree or Elizabeth Cree, it is the Limehouse murderer who writes this journal, and De Quincey's essay increases in importance as the themes of murder as an art, and the blurring of art and life come into the foreground. Moreover, it is revealed towards the end of the novel that Elizabeth Cree forged letters of recommendation for the British Library and asked for De Quincey's collected works, Defoe's *History of the Devil* and "certain volumes on contemporary surgical techniques" (270), all evidence of the fact that she is the golem. Again in the journal, when he comes home after having been to the theatre and watched Dan Leno, John Cree remembers that he has recently read the essay on pantomime by De Quincey, "Laugh, Scream, and Speech" (191).

The 'real' John Cree also reads De Quincey, as Elizabeth says at her trial that she saw a book on laudanum by De Quincey on her husband's bedside table (most probably *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*), thus the text comes to act as evidence in her testimony (34). Gissing, similarly reads both "On Murder" and *Confessions* for an article he himself is writing entitled "Romanticism and Crime," in which he quotes at length from the previous essay and therefore adds another narrative to the evident ones. Dan Leno also reads De Quincey's essay on pantomime, when he is researching the clown Joseph Grimaldi (200), after having read *The Memoirs of Joseph Grimaldi* edited by Dickens (194). Interested in Grimaldi because he feels that he is in someway connected to the clown, and sees himself and his work as a continuation of his, he leaves De Quincey's book on his table. Inspector Kildare, when he comes to question Leno sees the book thus placed – "That was why, on the following morning, the book on the side-table was turned to the next essay in this volume by De Quincey – it was the essay entitled 'On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts,' just as Detective Inspector Kildare noticed when he came to question the funniest man on earth" (200). The detective is certainly right when he suggests to Dan Leno that "the murderer must have studied [the essay] before he killed your friend. There are too many resemblances for it to be entirely natural" (204).

The detectives are wrong in supposing, however, that the Marr murders depicted by De Quincey in "On Murder" are the only murders inspiring the crimes committed around Limehouse. Of course, for them to have noticed the other influential murderer would surely have been anachronistic. The serial killer that seems to have inspired Ackroyd just as much as Williams seems to be Jack the Ripper, as there are significant connections to be made. For example, since not all the deaths in Whitechapel in 1888 could be attributed to Jack the Ripper, they were called the "Whitechapel Murders" (Begg 13) as the ones in the novel are called the Limehouse Murders before the coining of the word golem. Most importantly, the locale of both sets of murders is almost identical – Whitechapel and Limehouse, both areas in the East End most affected by poverty. As Paul Begg explains, the legend of Jack the Ripper carrying on to this day has two significant reasons, both of which the legend of the Limehouse golem also shares. Firstly, the murders are still fascinating

because of *where* the murders occurred – the poverty-stricken East End of London (4). Secondly, "One of the reasons why the Whitechapel murders are remembered today is because they focused attention on the deficiencies and inadequacies of the police" (70), which Ackroyd uses as a tool for his parody of detectives.

Inventing another series of murders which the police are ineffective in solving, Ackroyd's portrayal of Detective Inspector Kildare shows that the investigators do not have a single clue as to the identity of the culprit, as was the case in the Jack the Ripper murders. Ackroyd's parody of Detective Inspector Kildare reaches beyond a portrayal of his inability to solve the crimes and gains a new dimension with the implications of Kildare's homosexuality. The Holmes-Watson relationship is given from a fresh perspective by Kildare, who shares his apartment with a George Flood, a civil engineer who acts as a helper figure with his "fine, enquiring mind which had in the past proved invaluable to his friend" (257). When Kildare arrives home, he kisses Flood on the cheek, Flood, in turn, kisses the top of Kildare's head as he brings him a drink. These clues are given from the sidelines while the two converse about the identity of the golem, but when Kildare "reache[s] down and stroke[s] his friend's mutton-chop whiskers," (259) the level of their relationship becomes obvious. When in the last chapter Kildare and Flood go to the theatre together, Ackroyd humorously describes them as looking "exactly like two professional gentleman who had left their wives at home," (278) suggesting that they are successful actors on the London stage. As a detective, however, Kildare is far from successful, and although a professional detective, he is baffled when the golem is concerned. The role of the detective in this novel, in fact, is given to the reader, who feels equally inefficient in pointing the finger at the murderer. Almost from the beginning, the primary evidence, John Cree's journal, is thrust upon us as real/believable, and the reader is forced to choose between the concrete and made-up evidence. The detective reader must sort through the various accounts to discover who the true murderer is, as the journal turns out to be a forgery, and Elizabeth Cree a compulsive liar.

Interestingly, the story of Jack the Ripper reveals that there really was a journal related incident. According to Paul Begg, the case of a Mrs. Maybrick bears significant similarities to that of Elizabeth Cree:

> A 'diary' purporting to have been written by James Maybrick claims that he was inflamed by his wife's infidelity and driven to commit the Jack the Ripper crimes. Despite two best-selling books arguing in favour of the 'diary's' genuineness, it is widely regarded to be a forgery, although who forged it is the subject of considerable and often over-heated debate. James Maybrick's wife, Florence, was accused of his murder and convicted, largely on the evidence of a mentally unstable judge. (100)

There are indeed parallels between the two cases – Florence was also accused of poisoning her husband (100), as is Elizabeth. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Ackroyd provides an explanation to this debated journal, and shows it as a forgery forged by the real murderer to lay the blame on her husband.

Another interesting connection between Ackroyd's novel and the little that is known about the Whitechapel murders is the role of George Gissing in both. It is suggested in Richard Wittington-Egan's *A Casebook on Jack the Ripper* that George Gissing was questioned by the police as a suspect in the Ripper murders, although it is considered ludicrous that he might have been directly involved with them (Morton 2). In Ackroyd's novel Gissing is questioned by Inspector Kildare as a very possible suspect, as he was the last person to see one of the victims alive. He is detained in prison for the night, after which his alibi checks out and he is let off. Thus Ackroyd exonerates Gissing, and shows that his interest in the London poor is not a sufficient motive for actually murdering them.

Although significant parallels can be detected, Ackroyd has altered the types and dates of his murders to deviate from any points of connection to be made between them. The Ripper is notorious for having killed only prostitutes, but the 'golem' in Ackroyd's novel does not only attack women of this profession. Among many others, Cree also kills a whole family, and a male Jewish scholar. The Marr murders, to which the Gerrard murders performed by Cree are an allusion, were committed in 1811-1812, and the Jack the Ripper murders in 1888. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, however, takes place between 1880-1881, set away from both, yet creating a curious amalgam from the dates of the others. Ackroyd also seems to have merged the two sets of murders performed by John Williams as he has Elizabeth copy them. Despite its being an accident, the golem inadvertently imitates Williams's murders of the Williamson family (not Marr) when she leaves Gerrard's sister asleep in her room, thus allowing her to escape (De Quincey 130). Another

integral difference in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is that less than half of Elizabeth Cree's victims are attributed to the golem; according to her first person account, she has murdered many more people, but without the butchering and mutilation. Up to the golem murders, it is evident that she tried to make her murders seem either accidental or expected deaths. Of course the most obvious deviation from the others is the sex of the murderer. Although Elizabeth Cree conducts her 'art' dressed as a man, she nonetheless is the only female murderer in the cycle of East End crimes alluded to.

All this points to Ackroyd's intertextual view of art and life, and in this novel more than in any other, he clearly shows the blurring of the boundaries between the two. Cases of art imitating life, and life in turn imitating art are underlined throughout the novel. As Ukko Hanninen also argues, the novel "highlights its own intertextual position and thematizes intertextuality itself; the theme of texts influencing our thinking and behaviour (the idea of the intertextual 'self') becomes more important than the murder plot" (54). It is significant that the Limehouse golem sees her murders as an art form (following De Quincey's suggestion) and strives to replicate a set of murders that she has read of. It is also not a coincidence that all the characters (most of whom are borrowed from life) read De Quincey and are in some way affected by his work. Gissing's comments regarding De Quincey's work shed some light as to why he has been chosen as a connecting factor between the characters. In his essay "Romanticism and Crime," Gissing writes,

> [De Quincey] is primarily concerned with the fatal figure of John Williams, of course, but he takes care to place his creation (for that is what the murderer essentially becomes) before the scenery of a massive and monstrous city; few writers had so keen and horrified a sense of place, and within this relatively short essay he evokes a sinister, crepuscular London, a haven for strange powers, a city of footsteps and flaring lights, of houses packed close together, of lachrymose alleys and false doors. London becomes a brooding presence behind, or perhaps even within, the murders themselves; it is as if John Williams had in fact become an avenging angel of the city. (38)

"On Murder" here is regarded as a text of London, as is also John Williams and the murders he commits. The same manifestation is repeated in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, the novel becoming, like "On Murder," one of the texts that feed the identity of the city as a city of poverty, crime, and theatre. The Reading Room of

the British Museum, where these readers, authors and accounts can be found, thus comes to act as the central locale of connection – a microcosm of the city whose inhabitants are connected intertextually. Hence it comes as no surprise when the third person narrator suggests that, "The murders in Limehouse led indirectly to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, written by Oscar Wilde some eight years later, in which opium dens and cheap theatres of that area play a large part in a somewhat melodramatic narrative" (164). The scene in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where Dorian muses on the relationship between the city and sin comes suggestively to the mind. As he sits back in his hansom cab on his way to an opium den he observes his surroundings as follows:

> From some of the bars came the sound of horrible laughter. In others, drunkards brawled and screamed. [. . .] Dorian Gray watched with listless eyes the sordid shame of the great city [. . .]. There were opium dens, where one could buy oblivion, dens of horror where the memory of old sins could be destroyed by the madness of sins that were new. (197)

Merely this suggestion provides endless points of intertextuality: murders committed by Williams inspire De Quincey to write "On Murder," a woman who reads this is inspired to commit similar murders, *her* murders in turn inspire other writers to write on the subject. Indeed, it is not only novelists who Ackroyd claims are inspired, but performers of all arts,

> [The murders] also inspired the famous sequence of paintings by James McNeill Whistler, 'Limehouse Nocturnes,' in which the brooding presence of the riverine streets is conveyed by vividian green, ultramarine, ivory and black [. . .] It was in conditions such as these that Somerset Maugham and David Carreras, then young children, first became aware of their fascination for drama – and indeed Carreras himself in the 1920s wrote a play based upon the Limehouse killings entitled *No Man Knows My Name*. (164)

Ackroyd makes clear his own connections here to those who try to seek them out. His mention of Somerset Maugham is an example of this, as the character of Elizabeth Cree, also known as 'Lambeth Marsh Lizzie' brings to mind Maugham's novel, *Liza of Lambeth*. As Hanninen also suggests, there are no great points of resemblance between the two characters besides the fact that Liza also goes to a theatre performance which considerably affects her.

As Gibson and Wolfreys also argue, the authors and works alluded to by Ackroyd are all texts that belong to and try to define London;

> Ackroyd implies that the city, its streets and buildings, its localities and details, can only be known through textual form. The city can only be known through the textual act, an act which is a response recognizing the already textual condition of the city. The city can never be recovered except as the labyrinthine archive of textual memory. Endless replications and palimpsests are the only true forms of the city; there is no 'original,' single identity for London, which can be represented faithfully and unequivocally. (202)

As was the case in *The House of Doctor Dee*, Ackroyd does not seek to define London – either in the 19th century or the present. Rather, he reminds the reader of those who have played a part in defining the city, the authors who have used London in their work as more than merely a background setting – De Quincey, Gissing, Dickens, Oscar Wilde. Hence his own novels come to occupy a place in this cyclical rewriting of London without trying to actually define the city, as the city, being 'infinite' according to Ackroyd, is therefore resistant to a single definition.

While endeavouring to remind us of those authors who have written London, Ackroyd uses this opportunity to criticise them also. Indeed, it is not only detective and crime fiction that is parodied in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, but all 'realistic' and naturalistic fiction through its structure, its use of multiple narratives and its characters. In the case of Elizabeth Cree, for example, Onega suggests that, "The daughter of a reformed prostitute turned Methodist bigot, Elizabeth may be considered as a living emblem of the Dickensian orphan deprived of its romantic halo" (142). The first person account narrated by Elizabeth of the poor conditions she lived in, her theatre days, and her marriage to John Cree does indeed on the surface resemble a Dickensian orphan story, and emphasises the theatricality of the city in both cases. Onega adds, "Or rather, she is the emblem of the monsters bred by Utilitarian mercantilism and Methodist repression in the slums of London, or, in Doctor Dee's terms, the monsters created by the 'world without love'" (142). This seems more to be the case, and Elizabeth is therefore transported from a Dickens novel into a Gissing one, as in Ackroyd's depiction of her, she is a product of the poor districts of the city. Hardened by these conditions, she becomes pure evil and does not think twice about killing, even if the victim is her own mother. Hanninen sees the resemblance between Ackroyd's Lambeth Marsh Lizzie and Maugham's Liza and argues that, "Ackroyd exaggerates the book's scenes of poverty and

degradation and adds an 'improbable' crime plot so as to mock Maugham's 'realistic' fiction" (57).

The central direction of Ackroyd's parody is turned to the authors frequently alluded to in his works; writers of London. He makes clear, at the beginning of Chapter Eleven, that the city is made up of texts that have striven to explain it. The third person narrator describes the setting thus:

> The early autumn of 1880, in the weeks just before the emergence of the Limehouse Golem, was exceptionally cold and damp. The notorious pea-soupers of the period, so ably memorialised by Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Conan Doyle, were quite as dark as their literary reputation would suggest; but it was the smell and the taste of the fog which most affected Londoners. Their lungs seemed to be filled with the quintessence of coal dust, while their tongues and nostrils were caked with a substance which was known colloquially as 'miner's phlegm.' (43)

This passage and its context do indeed resemble both Stevenson's and Doyle's major works, and, once again, it is not a coincidence that their names are evoked at this point. Both Doyle's Holmes, and the detective's relationship with his partner are parodied by Kildare and Flood in the novel, as is Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the character of Elizabeth Cree. Having gotten into the habit of strolling around the streets dressed as a man (in costumes of which she gets from her roles in the music-hall), Elizabeth becomes so attached to her dual personality that she is unable to shake it off. Her disguise, of course, in the end engulfs her original personality and pressures her to murder innocent people, just like Mr. Hyde. In a similar vein, this dual personality is once again also reminiscent of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, where the portrait of the main character, although seeming to 'double' him, ends up being more 'real' than the artificial Dorian Gray, murderer.

In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, Ackroyd equally compliments Dickens and Gissing of having created their own visions of London in the 19th century, albeit criticising their works as portraying a romanticised 'reality': "Charles Dickens and certain 'problem novelists' had described the horrors of urban poverty before, but these accounts were characteristically sentimentalised or sensationalised to take account of the public taste for Gothic effects," (268) comments the third person narrator. As Hanninen also argues, Ackroyd mainly uses the figure of George Gissing to parody novels of this period (58). Tracing Gissing's life following his

move to London, his marriage to an alcoholic prostitute, and his poverty, Ackroyd reinvokes Gissing's memorable characters in Gissing as a character in his own novel. Gissing's life is said to "sound[s] like a mere melodrama from the London stage, something which might be performed on the boards of a 'theatre of sensation' like the Cosmotheka in Bell Street, but it is a true story – the truest story George Gissing ever completed" (112). The third person narrator of *Dan Leno*, furthermore, makes Gissing realise the defects of his fiction:

> In such a [naturalist] light even Nell [his wife] could be considered a heroine of the new age. There was only one difficulty and it was, appropriately, a stylistic one; despite Gissing's interest in realism and unstudied naturalism, his own prose encompassed the romantic, the rhetorical and the picturesque. Within the narrative of *Workers in the Dawn*, for example, he had bathed the city in an iridescent glow and turned its inhabitants into stage heroes or stage crowds on the model of the sensation plays in the penny gaffs. [. . .] This was not the language of a realist. (136-137)

It is evident that for Gissing, the sensation plays performed in the city are a reflection of the 'reality' of London. In his effort to write of the city, he becomes unable to distinguish literary London from the reality of London, as it is the theatricality of the city and its inhabitants that produce these works. While underlining the importance of the city and the music hall in the works of the novelist, Ackroyd shows the place of Gissing's works in the multitude of texts that make up the history of London. As Hanniken also points out, Ackroyd toys with Gissing's efforts at realism, and parodies realism while also showing the novelist as a very sympathetic character (58). Arguably, Gissing is one of the most likeable characters, along with Dan Leno, in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*.

The underlying theme concerning the city that is composed of texts that are unable to decipher it is taken up once again by the shape – or shapelessness – of the symbol of the murderer. The Golem is described by several characters, most notably by Solomon Weil, a Jewish scholar who becomes an accidental victim of the Golem when Elizabeth mistakes him for Karl Marx. Firstly, however, it is the third person narrator who introduces the being to the reader:

> 'Golem' is the medieval Jewish word for an artificial being created by the magician or the rabbi; it literally means 'thing without form,' and perhaps sprang from the same fears which surrounded the fifteenth-century concept of the 'homunculus' which was supposed to have been given material shape in

> the laboratories of Hamburg and Moscow. It was an object of horror, sometimes said to be made of red clay or sand, and in the mid-eighteenth century it was associated with spectres and succubi who have a taste for blood. The secret of how it came to be revived in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and how it aroused the same anxieties and horrors as its medieval counterpart, is to be found within the annals of London's past. (4)

For readers of Ackroyd's fiction, two aspects of this definition are essential in our understanding of the novel. The first is the mention of the homunculus, which, in *The House of Doctor Dee*, was thematicized as being a clue to the characters for an understanding of the city they live in. The second is the implication that the identity of the golem is connected with the streets of the city.

Solomon Weil reads a similar definition to his friend Karl from *Knowledge of Sacred Things* by Hartlib, "'Our ancestors thought of the golem as an homunculus, a material being created by magic, a piece of red clay brought to life in the sorcerer's laboratory. It is a fearful thing and, according to the ancient legend, it sustains its life by ingesting the spirit or soul of a human being'" (68). He adds in explanation, "We give it life in our own image. We breathe our own spirit into its shape. And that, don't you see, is what the visible world must be – a golem of giant size?" (68). It is because he leaves this book open on the table that the police find, the next day, his severed penis lying next to a picture of the golem, and thus providing the nickname for the murderer. Although he does not mention the city as such, Weil's definition of the golem throws light on Ackroyd's vision of London in this novel. The spirits or souls of human beings that make the golem are the texts of writers who have contributed to the making of 'infinite' London. It does not retain a single identity, but a culmination of different identities made up from different versions of it. As Gibson and Wolfreys explain,

> the Golem of the novel is multiple, assuming as many shapes as there are narrative and textual formulations in the novel, which is, moreover, a novel always acknowledging its indebtedness and the possibility of its form to prior acts of writing which allow it to take shape, and without which it would be a shapeless mass, matter without form. (206)

Just like the golem, "London has no form, no shape, unless narrated, unless it takes place" (206). The reaction of Londoners to the Golem-related deaths supports this view further:

> The brutal murder of the Jewish scholar, only six days after that of the prostitute in the same area, provoked a frenzied interest among ordinary Londoners. It was almost as if they had been waiting impatiently for these murders to happen – as if the new conditions of the metropolis required some vivid identification, some flagrant confirmation of its status as the largest and darkest city of the world [. . .] So in the intonation of 'golem' the public may have divined the horror of an artificial life and a form without a spirit – the cadence and inflection of the word echoing and mocking 'soul.' It was an emblem for the city which surrounded them and the search for the Limehouse Golem became, curiously enough, a search for the secret of London itself. (88)

In both *The House of Doctor Dee* and *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, therefore, the inexplicable beings that detectives search for end up being London itself. However, the case does not finish once this culprit has been established, since it remains as undecipherable and uncatchable as it was in the beginning. The cyclical frame of the novel underlines the fact that the city will always be ungraspable no matter how many detectives search for it. Following Elizabeth's hanging for the murder of her husband, the play she wrote is staged, with Dan Leno playing the female lead, which Elizabeth had based on herself. Rising up from a trapdoor, Dan Leno ends the play, and Ackroyd's novel, with the words, "'Ladies and gentlemen,' [. . .] 'here we are *again*!'" (282), the same words with which Elizabeth, as the trapdoor is opened under her, ended her life in Chapter One. The novel thus begins with a woman falling down a trapdoor on a noose, and ends with a man dressed as a woman rising up from one, both uttering the same words. Visions, versions, and interpretations of the city therefore will continue, as they must, since it is these souls and/or texts with which the city feeds itself.

Hawksmoor

As in *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee*, Ackroyd chooses, in *Hawksmoor*, to build his narrative in multiple but parallel centuries, this time concentrating on two central characters, Nicholas Dyer and Nicholas Hawksmoor (who only enters his own narrative in the middle of the novel). In Chapter 1, the narrative is that of Nicholas Dyer, an architect, and the date is 1711, the year in

which he is commissioned to build seven new churches in London. Dyer's narrative is constructed on an autobiographical journal that he is writing. While he writes of the everyday, he also undertakes to tell the story of his life up to that period. Through his journal, the reader learns of two disastrous events that signified changes for the city of London: the great plague of 1665 and the great fire of 1666. As Dyer becomes more confessional in his narrative, it becomes clear that he has satanic plans for the churches that he is commissioned to build. By positioning his seven churches to correspond to the "Seven Planets in the lower orbs of Heaven," (186) he aims to build vaults, labyrinths and crypts beneath them and to sacrifice a victim for each, which according to Dyer should preferably be a virgin boy, since this is what the Druids who worshipped Baal Saman sacrificed (21). As he kills each of these victims, the same murders are paralleled in the twentieth century narrative, which is narrated, as in *Chatterton* and *The House of Doctor Dee*, by an external third-person narrator. Unlike *The House of Doctor Dee* in which the eighteenth century narratives gained predominance over that of the contemporary, the two time spheres in *Hawksmoor* are given equal length, and each chapter juxtaposes the one before it by changing centuries, writing styles, and narrative types. The eighteenth century text is composed of Dyer's journal, which serves as both diary and autobiography as Dyer relates his life story while also commenting on everyday occurrences. This journal is written in accordance with eighteenth century language and spelling, and acts as a contrast to the plainer and familiar language of the twentieth century narrative. This style underlines the metafictionality of the novel as the pace changes between the chapters remind the reader of the fictionality of the narrative and thus prevents him/her from becoming engrossed in the plots of either of the narratives.

Detective Chief Superintendent Nicholas Hawksmoor, the central character of the twentieth century narrative, enters the novel in only the sixth chapter, in Part Two of the book. In fact, by the time he has been introduced, three bodies have already been found. The twentieth century chapters until the time he emerges as an investigator are third person narratives that detail the conditions of each church as they are in the twentieth century (especially the sort of people who visit them), and focus on the lives of the victims. As soon as he enters the novel, parallels between the eighteenth and twentieth century narratives become clearer. Most importantly,

the fictional detective carries the name of the historical architect who was commissioned to build six (not seven) churches in London in the eighteenth century. The surname given to the fictional architect, "Dyer," suggests what the reader comprehends towards the end of the novel – that he has died and been born again over the centuries, and that he and Nicholas Hawksmoor are linked to each other in some mysterious manner. The two also, of course, share the same Christian name, have assistants who are named almost identically (Walter Pyne and Walter Payne – which is also suggestive linguistically as it shows the evolution of language, spelling, and pronunciation), and have similarly inquisitive landladies of the same age and build (Mrs Best and Mrs West). Significantly, they also inhabit the same area of London, and visit the same places in line with the plots of their respective narratives. Hawksmoor, of course, is unaware of the underlying depth of the murders that he is asked to investigate and solve, and each clue he comes across throughout the novel baffles him further, rather than clarifying in any way the pattern of the crimes. As in a Hollywood detective film, he is only able to grasp some fragment of the explanation once he has been taken off the case because of insanity. As will be explained further, Hawksmoor is the embodiment of the parodied detective.

Among the novels studied, *Hawksmoor* is the most complex in terms of being a parody of biography. The primary reason of this is the doubling of the characters of Dyer and Hawksmoor. Furthermore, there is more than parody of biography at stake in Dyer's eighteenth century narrative, as his autobiographical journal hints at parodies of autobiography, the confessional narrative, and of diary writing. The central concern, however, remains the same, which is the questioning of the factual reliability of these sources. The reader's only choice of gaining insight into Dyer's character is to believe his own version of his life. That this version might not be fully reliable is obvious from what we learn about Dyer's character, and this unreliability of the text is what Ackroyd seeks to underline.

The character Nicholas Dyer is based on that of the eighteenth century architect Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736). Ackroyd has chosen to replace the name of the architect and has given the name "Hawksmoor" to the twentieth century detective in order to suggest that he is a reincarnation of Dyer the murderer. In the novel, there are three instances in particular that contextualise Dyer in eighteenth

century London. The first is an excerpt at the beginning, before the chapters start, where Dyer's architectural commission is explained, the second, Dyer's own attempt of autobiography in the first chapter where he writes of his childhood, and finally, the encyclopaedia entry which Nicholas Hawksmoor consults in the final chapter. None of the information given in these passages is wholly accurate, as Ackroyd has once again distorted facts for no apparent reason. Although Nicholas Hawksmoor's date of birth is not known for sure, he has been estimated to have been born in 1661 (Downes 12). In Ackroyd's novel, however, Dyer gives his birth date as 1654, as does the encyclopaedia entry that the detective Hawksmoor reads. The encyclopaedia also gives the date of death as 1715, despite the fact that he died in 1736. Another significant deviation from fact is that both Dyer and the encyclopaedia state that he was born in London, even though the architect whose life Dyer's is based on was not a Londoner, but was born in Nottinghamshire. Ackroyd situates Dyer in the middle of the big city, rather than having him being born elsewhere and then having him transported to London later. In line with Dyer's concern in literally rebuilding London, his statement that "I know these Streets as well as a strowling Beggar: I was born in this Nest of Death and Contagion," (47) becomes more acceptable if the reader envisions him as a Londoner. Dyer's vision of the city is of course very dark indeed, he in fact says that it is the "Capital of Darknesse," it is his canvas on which he will draw his satanic ritual. As will be discussed below, it is his childhood in London that determines his final plan, thus the fictional representation of the architect has to be born in and brought up in the city.

Harder to determine is whether the real Hawksmoor shared any of Dyer's infatuations, as not much is known about his character or personality. For example, in his book about Hawksmoor, Kerry Downes focuses on his career as an architect rather than Hawksmoor as a man. As is pointed out, there is relatively only a small amount of data through which to interpret his life:

> In the case of Nicholas Hawksmoor, a considerable body of work survives, but its identity for the modern world, as well as what we may call the architect's image, depends largely on documentary studies. We are fortunate in having over five hundred drawings either from his own hand or made under his direction: these are really part of his architectural work although they are hidden in libraries and museums. There are also about 170 letters which throw much light on his ideas and methods of working, and – less explicitly – on his personality. (9)

Since much of what survives Hawksmoor are plans of buildings and the buildings themselves, the author of *Hawksmoor* has freely taken the liberty to envision the man as one of those mysteries of the city. Continuing with his concern to depict a dark, mysterious London in which there is a considerable amount of interest in the occult and the supernatural, Ackroyd treats Hawksmoor the architect, disguised as "Dyer" as one of the secrets of the city.

Perhaps the most significant deviation from the factual records of Hawksmoor's life in Ackroyd's novel are the churches themselves, the buildings which participate in the Satanic sign that Dyer is bent on erecting. At the very beginning of the novel, an introductory excerpt informs the reader of the following:

> Thus in 1711, the ninth year of the reign of Queen Anne, an Act of Parliament was passed to erect seven new Parish churches in the Cities of London and Westminster, which commission was delivered to Her Majesty's Office of Works in Scotland Yard. And the time came when Nicholas Dyer, architect, began to construct a model of the first church. (1)

As his death is recorded in the novel as 1715, this information suggests that Dyer's narrative encompasses four years, during which time he builds the seven churches. In Kerry Downes's *Hawksmoor*, however, it is stated that the 1711 Act of Parliament was for the building of fifty new churches (103). Furthermore, according to the same source, Hawksmoor's job was not to design the churches by himself:

> [Hawksmoor and William Dickinson] were to find and survey sites, treat for their purchase, obtain artificers, make estimates, record the progress of work both for payment and for the information of the commissioners, and to see in general that designs were carried out correctly and soundly. As administrative architects they were not required to design the churches, although they were in a favourable position when the Commission came to consider designs. (104)

In the novel, however, Dyer seems to be the sole person responsible for the design and construction of these churches, as he progresses from one to the other methodogically. Downes's account clearly demonstrates the implausibility of this as it is only "By December by 1715 [that] Hawksmoor had four of his own designs under construction. [. . .] He and James remained in office, until the virtual winding up of the Commission in 1733; by that time Hawksmoor had produced two more churches, James one, and both in collaboration two others" (104-105). All in all,

Hawksmoor seems to have designed six of the churches, in contrast to the alleged seven in the novel, which form a satanic order.

The six churches built by Hawksmoor are Christ Church, Spitalfields, St. Alfege Greenwich, St. Anne's Limehouse, St. George Bloomsbury, St. George-in-the-East Wapping and St. Mary Woolnoth. In *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd adds one more to be built by Dyer: Little St. Hugh. The name of this imaginary church is again evocative in adding another mystery and gruesome past to the city of London. Little St. Hugh (1247-1255), an allegedly murdered boy, was seen as a martyr since "shortly after his disappearance, a local Jew named Copin [. . .] admitted to killing the child after he was threatened with torture. In his confession Copin stated that it was the custom of the Jews to crucify a Christian child every year. Copin was executed" (wikipedia). The bloodshed does not end with this event merely, as the death of the boy affects more lives:

> Some six months earlier, King Henry III had sold his rights to tax the Jews to his brother, Richard, Earl of Cornwall. Having lost his source of income, he decided that he was eligible for the Jews' money if they were convicted of crimes. As a result, some ninety Jews were arrested and held in the Tower of London, while they were charged with involvement in the ritual murder. Eighteen of them were hanged – it was the first time ever that the civil government handed out a death sentence for ritual murder – and King Henry was able to take over their property. (wikipedia)

Knowledge of the history of the boy and the consequences of his death show parallels to Dyer's narrative, making his name an apt allusive choice for an imaginary church to be built by Dyer. Both stories involve a ritual sacrifice – it is blood spilt in his churches (preferably the blood of little boys) that ensure the success of Dyer's ultimate plan. They are also stories of murder for selfish concerns – Dyer sacrifices others for his own immortality as King Henry III had 18 men hanged for money. Similar to the deviation in the year and circumstances of Hawksmoor's birth, this addition of a new church is not circumstantial, but necessary for the plot line.

Through his autobiographical journal, Dyer reveals how he came to be introduced to his satanic beliefs and his motives for the murders. Following his parents' deaths during the plague, he meets on the street a magus called Mirabilis who takes him to a meeting house where he shows him an image of his dead mother,

thus at once gaining his trust and respect. After staying with Mirabilis for a week in Black Step Lane, he learns that

> Christ was the Serpent who deceiv'd Eve, and in the form of a Serpent entered the Virgin's womb; he feigned to die and rise again, but it was the Devil who truly was crucified. [. . .] that the Virgin Mary, after Christ's birth, did marry once and that Cain was the Author of much goodnesse to Mankind. [. . .] that Sathan is the God of this World and fit to be worshipp'd I will offer certaine proof and, first, the soveraignty of his worship. (21)

Living with his aunt soon after this, he quickly becomes apprentice to a mason in order to be able to fulfil his plans, which begin to take shape following his acquaintance with Mirabilis. It is only after he has completed the majority of it that Dyer reveals at length the extent of his plan:

> And thus will I complete the Figure: Spittle-Fields, Wapping and Limehouse have made the Triangle; Bloomsbury and St Mary Woolnoth have next created the major Pentacle-starre; and, with Greenwich, all these will form the Sextuple abode of Baal-Berith or the Lord of the Covenant. Then, with the church of Little St Hugh, the septilateral Figure will rise about Black Step Lane and, in this Pattern, every Straight line is enrich'd with a point at Infinity and every Plane with a line at Infinity. Let him that has Understanding count the Number: the seven Churches are built in conjunction with the Seven Planets in the lower orbs of Heaven, the seven Circles of the Heavens, the seven Starres in Ursa Minor and the seven Starres in the Pleiades. Little St Hugh was flung in the Pitte with the seven Marks upon his Hands, Feet, Sides and Breast which thus exhibit the seven Demons – Beydelus, Metucgayn, Adulec, Demeymes, Gadix, Uquizuz and Sol. I have built an everlasting Order, which I may run through laughing: no one can catch me now. (186)

In Chapter Eleven, as Dyer enters the crypt of the completed Little St Hugh not to emerge again, he has supposedly been successful in this satanic plan of achieving immortality. As Onega explains further,

> Since Dyer's disappearance in the crypt of Little St Hugh in 1715 until Detective Hawksmoor enters the church, Dyer has undergone a series of split or doppelganger reincarnations both as victim and as murderer: each time he is reborn as a child or a tramp, the new reincarnation is subsequently murdered by his 'shadow' or dark emanation. In his last, twentieth-century reincarnation, Dyer's evil or shadow facet is embodied by the tramp called 'The Architect,' his good or rational side, by Nicholas Hawksmoor. So, after finishing the talismanic pattern of the churches, all that remains to be done is to reconcile these two opposed and split personalities, the 'light' and the 'shadow,' Dyer's divine and satanic emanations or, in Jungian terms, his split ego's conscious

> and unconscious facets, which must be brought into harmony in order for Dyer to achieve the godlike totality of the Self. (55)

The links between Dyer and the characters in the twentieth century narrative are numerous. Following the first chapter where Dyer introduces himself, for instance, the second chapter is devoted to the first victim of the twentieth century, a 10 year-old boy called Thomas whose story bears striking resemblance to Dyer's narrative of his boyhood in the preceding chapter. They are both alienated from their peers at school and spend most of their time reading; Dyer reads *Doctor Faustus* as Thomas reads *Dr Faustus and Queen Elizabeth*. Moreover, cultural anecdotes and their development over the two centuries are interesting to note. Dyer relates that,

> it was known to us Boys that we might call the Devil if we said the Lord's Prayer backwards; but I never did it myself then. There were many other unaccountable Notions among us: that a Kiss stole a minute of our lives, and that we must spit upon a dead Creature and sing *Go you back from whence you came/And do not choose to ask my name*. (12)

The third person narrator of Thomas's story also relates similar practices of boys in the twentieth century: "so it was [Thomas] learned that, if you say the Lord's Prayer backwards, you can raise the Devil; he learned, also, that if you see a dead animal you must spit on it and repeat, 'Fever, fever, stay away, don't come inside my bed today.' He heard that a kiss takes a minute off your life [. . .]" (29). The difference between what is said upon seeing a dead animal is intriguing because of the additional phrase in the twentieth century of fevers going away. It seems to suggest that the words changed after the occurrence of the plagues that devastated the city, underlining the central role that the city plays in the development of language and speech. Details such as this reveal to the reader the reincarnations that Dyer goes through, and show that unlike an ordinary murderer pursued by a detective, Dyer is at once murderer, victim, and investigator.

In fact, the whole novel revolves around Dyer, and despite the title, Hawksmoor is, as Gibson and Wolfreys suggest, merely a "barely sketched cardboard cut-out" like the fictional detectives before him (95). We meet him when he is given the case to solve in the middle of the novel, and it is evident from the very beginning that despite his appearance as a classical detective much in the manner of Sherlock Holmes, that he is a parody. As he is going to the site of the

third murder of a child called Dan Dee (by creating an amalgam of the names of Dan Leno and John Dee, Ackroyd here alludes to both his own novels where they were central characters, and to the historical personages themselves, who, like Dyer, may have been jointly reincarnated in London), Hawksmoor panics before he even gets there: "Hawksmoor bit the inside of his mouth and drew blood: once again, as with every such inquiry, he was faced with the possibility of failure" (110). In spite of his lengthy title, he lacks the certainty of Sherlock Holmes, or even the misguided self-confidence of Charles Wychwood in *Chatterton*. According to his landlady Mrs West, he is "a tall man wearing a dark coat, despite the summer heat, slightly balding but with a moustache darker than was usual in a man of his age" (119).

A cross between Holmes and Poirot in appearance, the reader is also informed, through the third-person narrator of these chapters, that Hawksmoor also embodies those qualities that are the core of success for detectives like Dupin and Holmes, who are known to discourse on the same subject at length:

> [Hawksmoor] liked to consider himself a scientist, or even a scholar, since it was from close observation and rational deduction that he came to a proper understanding of each case; he prided himself on his acquaintance with chemistry, anatomy and even mathematics since it was these disciplines which helped him to resolve situations at which others trembled. For he knew that even during extreme events the laws of cause and effect still operated; he could fathom the mind of a murderer, for example, from a close study of the footprints which he left behind – not, it would seem, by any act of sympathy but rather from the principles of reason and of method. Given that the normal male tread is twenty eight inches, Hawksmoor had calculated that a hurried step was some thirty six inches, and a running gait some forty inches. On these objective grounds, he was able to deduce panic, flight, horror or shame, and by understanding them, he could control them. (153)

Thus Hawksmoor agrees, along with other fictional detectives like Dupin and Holmes, on the importance of observation and deduction. Unfortunately for him, however, he finds himself trying to solve a case that does not conform to his expectations and his reliance on these techniques is therefore useless. By the time the two ultimate bodies are found, he is in despair at his inability to solve the case, "The pattern, as Hawksmoor saw it, was growing larger; and, as it expanded, it seemed about to include him and his unsuccessful investigations" (189). Of course this is essential to Dyer's plan, the pattern *is* supposed to include Hawksmoor, since at the end of the novel he is required to merge with Dyer and become one – as was

also the case in *Chatterton*, *The House of Doctor Dee*, and to some extent in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*.

Trained as a classic detective, Hawksmoor is accustomed to order and pattern in the cases he investigates (as the reader is also accustomed to order and pattern in narrative). The increasingly complex narrative of *Hawksmoor*, however, disrupts the expectations of both the detective and the reader. Moreover, the reader is unable to cling to the hope that the detective will clarify the evidence or the case, as even the interior of a police station, which again resembles a scene from a crime film, is enough to throw this detective off balance:

> Two or three constables looked up incuriously as he came in, and he made no effort to introduce himself to them; the telephones rang occasionally and one man, smoking furiously, was bent over a typewriter. Hawksmoor watched him for one moment and then sat quietly in the far corner of the open room: the open files, the plastic cups lying on the floor, the pieces of official paper pinned casually to a cork board, the discarded newspapers, the telephones ringing again, all of this disorder confused and wearied him. (117)

As Hawksmoor commences on investigating the case, a pattern that is given due consideration in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* is again reminded to the reader, that murders tend to be repeated in similar fashions in close proximities. Throughout the years of his murder investigations, Hawksmoor is quite confident in the patterns of crime in London that he has detected. As he is walking from the church in Wapping to the one in Limehouse, this pattern is revealed to the reader:

> He grew to understand that most criminals tend to remain in the same districts, continuing with their activities until they are arrested, and he sometimes speculated that these same areas had been used with similar intent for centuries past: even murderers, who rapidly became Hawksmoor's speciality, rarely moved from the same spot but killed again and again until they were discovered. And sometimes he speculated, also, that they were drawn to those places where murders had occurred before. [. . .] It had been in this district, as Hawksmoor knew, that the Marr murders of 1812 had occurred – the predator being a certain John Williams, who, according to De Quincey whose account Hawksmoor avidly read, 'asserted his own supremacy above all the children of Cain.' He killed four in a house by Ratcliffe Highway – a man, wife, servant and child – by shattering their skulls with a mallet and then gratuitously cutting their throats as they lay dying. Then, twelve days later and in the same quarter, he repeated his acts upon another family. [. . .] And it did not take any knowledge of the even more celebrated Whitechapel murders, all of them conducted in the streets and alleys around Christ Church, Spitalfields, to understand, as Hawksmoor

> did, that certain streets or patches of ground provoked a malevolence which generally seemed to be quite without motive. (115-116)

Another instance of Ackroyd parodying Ackroyd as he parodies others, these observations also have an interesting place in *Hawksmoor*. Despite having traced this order of violence in London, Hawksmoor fails to recognize that the murders he is currently investigating are also reproductions of previous murders. His failure to grasp the pattern of the murders, besides revealing his inability to solve the case, also once again disrupts the reader, who relies on the detective to make some sense out of the fragmentary evidence.

In contrast to traditional detective fiction, Hawksmoor is equally lost at the end of the novel as he was at the beginning of the case. Gibson and Wolfreys argue that

> Hawksmoor is the most obvious of English detectives, a humourless walking parody, not of policemen but of fictional detectives [. . .]. Nothing more than a virtual trope himself, he succumbs to a lack of form and internal, hermeneutic logic because the narrative in which he finds himself will not behave according to the rules of the game. Out of his depth, or, more precisely, out of the novel in which he should be found, Hawksmoor finds himself quite literally ill-placed in Ackroyd's text. (95)

Rather than clarifying the case, the narrative, as it progresses, becomes more and more ambiguous, both for Hawksmoor and the reader. From the second chapter onwards, the reader starts trying to make connections between the narratives divided by a time frame. Images and words common to both of the centuries are endlessly repeated as if to spite the reader, who fails to interpret the significance of this repetition. As in his earlier fiction, and as argued previously, these images do nothing more than emphasize the circularity of life in London. Rhymes repeated by children, and the sounds heard on the street are repeated in both time frames, and Dyer dying and being reborn numerous times in the same locations are evidence of Ackroyd's suggestion that the city is timeless. Onega states that,

> circularity is expressed through the repetition of key words, such as 'pattern,' 'shadow,' 'time,' 'child,' 'tramp,' and 'dust,' which recurrently point to the most complex layers of meaning underlying the surface message of the novel. Moreover, the crisscrossing of references does not move, as one might expect, in a single direction, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, but rather works forward and backward at the same time, disrupting traditional

> notions of chronological linearity in favour of a circular, or mythical conception of time. (47)

Perhaps the most significant key word and one that seems to be repeated more often than the others is that of "dust." Dust comes to represent in the novel a trace of the past in the present, a theme that is emphasized in Ackroyd's fiction. Gibson and Wolfreys similarly suggest that dust "becomes a recurrent figure, for the passage of time, and as the undecidable trace across time. Barely discernible, dust is the unreadable trace, the mute sign of Being's historicity (much like the residue, we might speculate, of 'older' language within our own articulation)" (103). The question of where exactly dust comes from comes up several times in the novel in both periods, although no one is able to answer it. In Chapter 1, for example, Dyer asks his assistant Walter, "Is Dust immortal then, [. . .] so that we may see it blowing through the centuries?" who upon some reflection murmurs "For Dust thou art and shalt to Dust return" (17). The twentieth century Thomas, one of Dyer's doubles, also asks his mother, "'Where does dust come from?'" who replies "'I don't know where it comes from, but I do know where it's going to,' and she [blows] the dust from the table into the air" (34). The only person who seems to know where dust comes from, in fact, chooses not to relate it to either her companion or the reader. An elderly female tramp, in Chapter 4, says out of nowhere, "'Dust, just look at the dust, [. . .] and you know where it comes from, don't you? Yes, you know'" (69). It is not even clear whether she is talking to someone or to herself, and this expression strengthens the air of mystery around the word dust and its origins. Seemingly coming from nowhere, dust prevails across the centuries in *Hawksmoor*, and suggests that the past always has a place in the present, and that the present is only meaningful through knowledge of the past.

Another argument that was dealt with extensively in *Chatterton* is once again brought in in *Hawksmoor* in a metafictional and parodic manner. When Nicholas Dyer goes to a play in Chapter 6, he meets there Vannbrugghe,[2] another architect. They start talking but Dyer proclaims, "I asked him what he said, for there was such a mish-mash of conversation around us that I could scarcely understand him [. . .]

[2] Sir John Vanbrugh, dramatist and architect, lived between 1664-1726, and collaborated with Nicholas Hawksmoor on several projects. www. wikipedia.com

Thus is it a *Hospital for Fools,*" thus christening the play with a name (174). The rest of the conversation is given in drama form, complete with the list of Dramatis Personae at the beginning, which includes "John Vannbrugghe: An Architect in Fashion / Nicholas Dyer: A Nothing, a Neighbour" (174), among others. A parody of Restoration comedy in which the characters argue about art, the episode comes as a disturbance to the linear narrative of the chapter and reminds the reader once again of the fictionality of the text. The subject of the conversation is apt as Vannbrugghe and Dyer argue about imitation and its close relationship to plagiarism:

> VANNBRUGGHE. (*Growing impatient*) There is nothing so pedantick as many Quotations, and your reverence for the Ancients is an excuse for mere Plagiarism.
> DYER. This is not so. (*He gets up from the Table, walks awkwardly about, and then resumes his Seat*). Even the magnificent Virgil has borrowed almost all his Works: his Eclogues from Theocritus, his Georgicks from Hesiod and Aratus, his Aeneid from Homer. Aristotle himself derived many things from Hippocrates, Pliny from Dioscorides, and we are assur'd that Homer himself built upon some Predecessors. You will have Variety and Novelty, which is nothing but unruly Fancy. It is only from Imitation –
> VANNBRUGGHE. (*laughing*) Plagiarism!
> DYER. (with a grave countenance) – only from Imitation that we have Order and Massiveness.
> [. . .]
> DYER. – And Spenser copied his master Chaucer. The world is a continued Allegory and dark Conceit.
> VANNBRUGGHE. And what is your Allegory, sir?
> DYER. (Somewhat drunken now) I build in Hieroglyph and in Shadow, like my Ancients. [. . .]
> For just as in the Narration of Fables we may see strange Shapes and Passages which lead to unseen Doors, so my Churches are the Vesture of other active Powers. (180)

A sinister explanation of his art, Dyer clearly sees his buildings as texts that can be read, and interpreted, as this novel and its readers also attempt to do. Self-reflexive on at least two levels (Dyer discoursing on his art, and Ackroyd likewise), this parody of Restoration comedy in the middle of the chapter acts as a criticism on the ideas of the age. It is interesting to note at this point that although Dyer describes Vanbrugghe before the play as "a self-conceited Puppy who was born a Boy and will die before he is a Man" (173), and it is clear that they are not like-minded at all, Kerry Downes's factual account of the architect's life mentions the "friendship, respect, encouragement and sponsorship of Wren and Vanbrugh" (11) towards him,

both of whom Ackroyd's fictional architect despises. A little more information regarding the real Vanbrugh's life also throws light upon the motive for the change of narrative technique:

> In 1690 [Vanbrugh] was in France [. . .] and was imprisoned for two years as a spy – probably as a hostage for exchange with a French agent. It is presumed that he cast an interested eye on French architecture before his arrest – it is not unknown nowadays for architectural historians to be arrested on suspicion of espionage – but the proximate result of his experience was his emergence as a writer of 'Restoration' comedies. (47)

Thus it seems as if the disruption of the narrative is a result of Vanbrugghe's place in it. Almost as soon as he enters the narrative, the narrative transforms itself according to the literary interests of the character.

Before exiting the stage, Vanbrugghe and Dyer both sing a song to the audience, by way of their final comments. Vanbrugghe's song reveals how out of place Dyer is in the Age of Reason:

> What foolish Frenzy does this Man possess
> to cling to Ancients and expect Success?
> To bring old Customs on the modern Stage
> When nought but Sense and Reason please this Age? (181)

This parodic play ends with the songs, after which Dyer immediately exits, therefore abandoning the format of the Restoration comedy, and returning to the prose narrative. A boy calls out after him, "What, no Epilogue?" to which he replies, "No, and there will be none, for this Play is follow'd by a Masquerade" (181). In line with Ackroyd's arguments of art in the novels discussed so far, Dyer's insistence on looking towards the ancients for imitation and inspiration, is also an allusion to Ackroyd's own work, most particularly *Chatterton*, in which both the title character, and his counterpart in the twentieth century felt the same concerns. The explicit parallels that occur between centuries in much of Ackroyd's fiction act as prevailing statements on not only art, but life and reality, as repeating what has occurred before. For Ackroyd as for Dyer, reality of the present can only be grasped through awareness of what happened in the past, as it is conditioned by it, and continues by inhabiting it. Therefore Dyer's duplication in different selves over the centuries, but remaining essentially the same, is in line with the argument that was discussed in the novels prior to it, that the geographic location moulds and shapes a person and

enables him/her to repeat himself/herself over the years. Hence the other doubles in previous novels that parallel this argument: Chatterton – Charles, Dee – Palmer, Marr – Elizabeth Cree, and Dyer – Hawksmoor. The difference in *Hawksmoor* is that Dyer is shown as a parallel to not only detective Hawksmoor, but also to several other characters in the novel: victims, suspects, and murderers.

The binding factor, as implied throughout the novel, is again the sense of place. The sinister atmosphere in the novel throws a mysterious shadow over the city which enables the doubles to emerge. The emphasis given to architecture underlines Ackroyd's argument of an eternal city suggested in the previous novels. The connections between architecture and the city, and thus the characters and the city, are suggested early on, when Dyer teaches his assistant to consider the following:

> 1) That it was Cain who built the first City, 2) That there is a true Science in the World called *Scientia Umbrarum* which, as to the publick teaching of it, has been suppressed but which the proper Artificer must comprehend, 3) That Architecture aims at Eternity and must contain the Eternal Powers: not only our Altars and Sacrifices, but the Forms of our Temples, must be mysticall, 4) That the miseries of the present Life, and the Barbarities of Mankind, the fatall disadvantages we are all under and the Hazard we run of being eternally Undone, lead the True Architect not to Harmony or to Rationall Beauty but to quite another Game [. . .] I build my Churches firmly on this Dunghill Earth and with a full Conception of Degenerated Nature. (9)

Dyer regards his occupation as possessing the ability to create eternity and therefore visualises himself as some sort of god, building everlasting structures. Accordingly, these buildings are very powerful, and incorporate the essence of the city, which he describes as "mysticall." The uncontrollable chaos of the city is what conditions him as a creator to design his mysterious churches. As he explains further to his helper in Chapter 4, he is a product of this dark city:

> But this Capital City of the World of Affliction is still the Capitol of Darknesse, or the Dungeon of Man's Desires: still in the Centre are no proper Streets nor Houses but a Wilderness of dirty rotten Sheds, always tumbling or taking Fire, with winding crooked passages, lakes of Mire and rills of stinking Mud, as befits the smokey grove of Moloch [. . .] Thus London grows more Monstrous, Straggling and out of all Shape: in this Hive of Noise and Ignorance, Nat, we are tyed to the World as to a sensible Carcasse and as we cross the stinking Body we call out *What News?* or *What's a clock?*. And thus do I pass my Days a stranger to mankind. I'll not be a Stander-by, but you will not see me pass among them in the World. (47-48)

A dark mind emanating from the dark city, Dyer understands the infinity and circularity of the city, and works to develop it according to the same pattern. Having grown up through plagues and fires, he is aware that disasters easily bring buildings and streets down, thus his aim in becoming an architect is in direct relation to the city that he grew up in, as he wishes to make secure structures, such as will prevail eternally.

Hawksmoor's inability to solve the case is connected to his insufficient understanding of the city that he dwells in. Unlike Dyer's interpretation, and despite the patterns he has formulated regarding the murders that took place in certain locations, he is unable to see the chaos of London as a unified whole, and feels threatened rather than at home in the city. In fact, he does not seem to have thought at length about the significance of the city and its influence on his own identity, and thus, like the text, he becomes a botch of fragmentary personalities. As long as he is unable to grasp the circularity of the city and the people who inhabit it, the case remains unsolved. In line with this, the figure of the beggar and tramp increases in importance. Dyer, for example, claims that, "I know these Streets as well as a strolling Beggar: I was born in this Nest of Death and Contagion and now, as they say, I have learned to feather it" (47). Comprehension of the city thus comes from a wisdom, a vision granted to tramps and beggars who patrol its streets daily. It is no coincidence that Dyer's final incarnation is in the shape of a tramp, nicknamed "The Architect." Piecing together the fragmentary evidence, Hawksmoor finally understands that this tramp holds some of the answers – not only to the case, but also to his identity and the mysteries of the city. It is in the final pages of the last chapter that Hawksmoor realises what the reader has known all along – that all the churches (locations of the murders) were built by the same man. Going to the library, he looks Dyer up and reads a brief account of his life. A similar excerpt from an encyclopaedia was also given in *Chatterton*; it is significant that the entry is given at the end of the novel, whereas in *Chatterton* it served as an introduction. Rather than being the person investigated, Dyer is the mystery, he is at once victim, suspect and murderer. The entry itself is a historically accurate one, withstanding one exception: the name of the architect.

For Hawksmoor to truly understand what Dyer has attempted to do, he has to go to the final church to find the spirit of the architect whose name he carries. His walk to the church parallels Dyer's journey to the same location in the previous chapter. Dyer describes in Chapter 11 his journey:

> The Noises of the City so confused me, and left me so weak, that I could barely stand but coach'd it quite up to Fenchurch Street where a Cart, overturn'd upon the Road, forced me to alight. Once more I could hear the Cryes around me: *Buy my dish of great Eeles*, one call'd and to its Echoe another took up the Plaint of *Any Kitchin stuff need you, my Maides?* and I murmur'd these to my self as I trod upon the Stones. As I came up into Lime Street the Skie grew dark with the Cold and yet here was an Old Woman with a Child on her Back singing *Fine Writing Inke! Fine Writing Inke!* and I too might have been a Child Againe, so familiarly did it sound. Then there rose that Cry which I have heard all my life, *Have you something to Mend, have you something to Mend?* and I passed thro' Leadenhall Street weeping, for I knew I would never more hear it. (208)

As he walks towards the place where Dyer performed the ultimate sacrifice and achieved the immortality that he sought, Hawksmoor is similarly caught up in the noises of the city and likewise is reminded of his childhood:

> A seller of hot chestnuts stood on the corner of Gracechurch Street, and for a moment Hawksmoor watched the coals of his brazier as they brightened and then dimmed with the passage of the wind down the crowded thoroughfares; he went up to him saying, 'Little St Hugh?' and the man, not pausing in his cries, pointed up Lime Street. And his refrain of *Hot Chestnuts! Hot Chestnuts!* Was taken up by another calling *Woe! Woe!* and then by a third who called out *Paper! Paper!* These were the calls he had known all his life and Hawksmoor grew melancholy as he walked up Lime Street into St Mary Axe. (215)

Both characters, divided by time, are unified through their experience of the same emotions as they walk down identical streets hearing similar sounds. The parallels between the two characters begin seemingly coincidentally at the start of the novel and increase in intensity as Hawksmoor gets closer to solving the case.

Like the previous novels, the closure of the novel necessitates the separate characters to become one in order for some sort of unity to be established, and it is in the darkness of the church of Little St Hugh that the characters are finally able to merge and complete the circular frame of the novel and of the city. As Hawksmoor

sits in the darkness, he becomes aware of his own image sitting next to him like a shadow; turning around, he realises that it is not merely a shadow:

> They were face to face, and yet they looked past one another at the pattern which they cast upon the stone: for when there was a shape there was a reflection, and when there was a light there was a shadow, and where there was a sound there was an echo, and who could say where one had ended and the other had begun? And when they spoke they spoke with one voice: [. . .] And then in my dream I looked down at myself and saw in what rags I stood; and I am a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity. (217)

Speaking through a common "I," Dyer reveals that he is now in possession of the last remaining fragment of himself, Hawksmoor, as is reincarnated yet again as a beggar child. As argued before, the unity is achieved at last, and it is implied that Dyer has now become immortal, and has brought together his name and his body. To regard this cycle as Dyer's sole achievement, however, would be too simplistic an interpretation, as his spirit is not the only one that is reincarnated throughout the history of the city. Many minor characters, as well as events, are repeated in the twentieth century narrative, therefore clarifying that it is the sense of place – the eternal essence of London – that enables the repetition. Dyer himself admits, as quoted earlier, that it is through the architecture that he is able to achieve immortality; it is the buildings themselves that haunt the city and encourage circularity. Like the libraries in the previous novels, and Doctor Dee's house in *The House of Doctor Dee*, the churches, in *Hawksmoor*, act as the connections that enable the people from different centuries to merge with one another. As a guide says at the beginning of Chapter 2, "'It was the great German poet, Heine, who said that London defies the imagination and breaks the heart' [. . .] 'And yet there are other poets who have said of London that it contains something grand and everlasting'" (26). Presumably, Ackroyd belongs to the latter group.

CHAPTER 4

A DISCUSSION OF ACKROYD'S OTHER NOVELS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ackroyd states in "London Luminaries and Cockney Visionaries" (in *The Collection*),

> I want to talk to you of those London luminaries and those Cockney visionaries who in their art have expressed the true nature and spirit of [London]. I want to describe those artists, poets, dramatists, novelists, actors who have recreated all the variety, the energy and the spectacle which this city expects and demands of its inhabitants. They have expressed the horror, too, for this also has been one of the dark places of the earth. (342)

Among these visionaries can be listed Blake, Turner, Dickens, Nicholas Hawksmoor, Thomas Chatterton, and John Dee, for most of whom he has fulfilled in his novels and biographies this promise to describe them. For Ackroyd, London is the spiritual centre of English cultural and literary heritage. In his biography of London, for example, he suggests that "English drama, and the English novel, spring out of the very conditions of London. In Jonson, and Smolett and Fielding, the poetry of the streets finds its fulfillment" (754). The London visionaries that he 'talks' to us about in his novels are those aware of their indebtedness to the city, those who discern the flow of London through them. Ackroyd has already employed many of these people as characters in his novels, often juxtaposed against 20th century characters on a quest regarding their own past. While doing so, he presents London as not merely a location, but a spiritual centre that brings these characters of different centuries together, a city that repeats and rewrites itself as newer generations delve into its secrets. His novels make it evident that time, like the Thames, always 'flows' in London, that it is never stable, thus London past co-exists in London present, as do past Londoners similarly, continue existing in the city. Reminders of the past are always evident in the present as long as the characters (especially those who belong to contemporary time) choose to look for them and interpret them.

This thesis has illustrated this argument by focusing on four of Ackroyd's works; *Chatterton*, *The House of Doctor Dee*, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, and *Hawksmoor*. These particular four novels were chosen because they share more

than the central suggestions regarding London, as they all involve rewriting history, parody of detective fiction, and parody of biography. This is not to say that his other novels are not in line with the concern of rewriting London and its inhabitants. In fact, excepting one of his earliest, *First Light*, and his most recent *The Fall of Troy*, all other Ackroyd novels display a multitude of historically accurate London characters seeking their own London. His novels, as previously stated, also make use of varying degrees of parody, aimed at times at people, texts, genres, and whole eras, again to emphasize the circularity of London and the art produced there.

The Clerkenwell Tales (2003), for instance, uses a significant amount of different types of parody. It can be described as a historical novel and attempts to draw a paralel to *The Canterbury Tales*, thus is a parody of text, and depending on its plot line, is also a parody of the genre of apocalyptic literature. At the beginning of *The Clerkenwell Tales*, a list is given as to the characters of the novel, and a warning is presented to the reader to illustrate the link to Chaucer:

> The reader may recall that many of the characters within this narrative are also to be found in *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer. As William Blake remarked, 'the characters of Chaucer's pilgrims are the characters which compose all ages and nations: as one age falls, another rises, different to mortal sight, but to immortals only the same….' (vii)

The novel offers a multitude of voices, in line with *The Canterbury Tales*, and gives the 'tale' of each seperate character. The setting of the novel is London in 1399, Richard II is King, and the plot revolves around gossip of an impending apocalypse at the turn of the century. Ackroyd delves into the underworld of medieval London and shows signs of murders, fires and general mayhem which foretell the apocalypse, as also does Sister Clarice, a nun who sees visions of the future. It becomes evident that Ackroyd wants to reveal the violence of London's history as for him it is an important defining characteristic of the city. He states in *London: The Biography* that the late medieval city was the "true home of fallen humankind" (88) and that "London has always possessed a reputation of violence; it stretches back as far as the written records [. . .]. The memoirs of every century are filled with blood lust" (472-473). Throughout the novel the characters comment frequently on crime and the city, or at least darkness and the city, which seems to suggest that the story could not have been set in any other location. Rather than being merely a setting, London itself

is always suggested as having a hand in each of the crimes. In Chapter 3 (The Merchant's Tale), for example, after the merchant's wife kills him in order to marry his apprentice, it is stated that "There was an ancient belief, however, that murder could never be concealed in London and that it would always find its season to appear" (34). The city appears to be timeless, a character always present in the sensibilities of Londoners, and, as suggested in the Introduction to this thesis, although it may choose to harbour murderers at times, it can just as easily give them up and bring them out into the open. When Clarice, the prophetic nun, is imprisoned in Chapter 17 (The Squire's Tale), she thinks, "They say that this is a fair city but among fair herbs creep adders, snails, and other venomous worms" (157), revealing the multi-faceted feature of the city. As the squire, Gybon Maghfeld, makes his way to where he will question Clarice, he observes another characteristic of the city:

> There were citizens moving about from street to street, or from lane to lane, with intense looks of fear and amazement. He observed their faces as he passed them, but he recognized none of them. He was then struck by a curious possibility. What if these figures were created out of panic fear, out of the anger and excitement of the city itself? They might emerge at times of fire or of the death, a visible group of walkers in the night. They might appear on the same London streets through all of the city's history. (163)

This personification and observation of London is very close to Ackroyd's arguments concerning the city in the novels previously discussed. Again there are the suggestions that London is (at least spiritually) alive, endless, different but at the same time, continuous. The last sentence in the quotation especially demonstrates that although London may change during the course of history, the same sort of people, produced by the city itself, will be on the same streets following similar events that are bound to happen in the city, thus once again underlining the 'flow,' continuity, and circularity of the city.

One of Ackroyd's novels that seems to be the least concerned with the capital is *Milton in America* (1996), which concentrates more on being a parody of the life of John Milton. The novel begins in 1660 in London and shows Milton's self-exile to America upon the Restoration and his life there. Already blind, Milton instructs Goosequill, his assistant, to chronicle his days in a diary. The novel has no grounds in historical event as there is no evidence that Milton went to America, if at all, at this time of his life. Although he did go into hiding in 1660 after the Restoration,

this only lasted for a couple of years after which he spent his last years in London. *Milton in America*, however, claims to account for his years in America and his attempts to 'civilise' and 'purify' the settlers he comes across there. The bulk of the novel does not directly focus on actions, but rather Goosequill's *relation* of Milton's life, thus providing a commentary once again on the distance between biographers and subjects. Goosequill starts telling Milton's story to his wife Kate (a settler) after John Milton dissappears from the settlement. Goosequill, Goose for short, remains undeniably an urban English character despite his American country wife. Even when Kate attempts to convince him of the beauties of nature and life in the country, Goose humourously tries to show her that London has it all:

- We have only a few hills in London, Kate, but we have Cornhill.
- We have moors where the wild beasts roam.
- We have Moorfields, where the wild men are imprisoned.
- We have the sea.
- We have the Marshalsea. (69)

The expanse and width of America, its greatest assets, is here contrasted with the tightly-knit city of London, featuring one of its most literally famous prisons, the Marshalsea (where Dickens' father was imprisoned, and where sections of Dickens' *Little Dorrit* take place). As Ackroyd claims in *London: The Biography*, "There has always been so much to create anxiety in the city – the noise, the endless rush, the violence of the mob. London has always been compared to a prison and to a grave" (193), "the image of the city as prison runs very deep" (253), and also in *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, "The prison is everywhere in London writing" (312). In Goose's case, however, this is not necessarily a negative image, and even though it may be a matter of complaint while living there, it is evident that it is missed when away. Goosequill is inherently one of Ackroyd's theatrical Londoners who revels in his own quality and constantly requests Kate to enact scenes with him, whether they may be of the day they first met, or a memory of something that John Milton did. Neither Milton himself nor Goose can keep themselves from comparing their surroundings with the city they have come from. In one of Milton's diary entries (for August 25, 1661), for example, it is stated that "Between three or four of the afternoon, in clear calm weather, [an earthquake] came with a noise like that of continual thunder or the rattling of coaches in London" (145). Although when

compared to Milton, Goose is a very easy-going, humourous and happy man, especially after he marries Kate, his rare moments of melancholy occur when he thinks of the city he left behind. In Chapter Three, he states, "I would give everything I possess, which is nothing, to see the old city again" (173). Even though sadly he dies on American soil before he can make this wish come true, his presence in the novel nonetheless reveals a character who carries the city with or inside him, as a means for its spirirt to carry on, to demonstrate the theatricality and continuity of the city in contrast to the grim and serious settlers of America.

The Lambs of London (2004) is in many aspects similar to the previous *Chatterton*. Both novels include significant historical literary people, their scandalous lives, and the issue of forgery. *The Lambs of London* centers on Charles and Mary Lamb, and William Henry Ireland, a young boy who works in his father's bookshop and who 'reproduces' lost plays by Shakespeare. Charles Lamb seems to be an extension of Philip in *Chatterton* (although he also shares similarities with his namesake Charles Wychwood), and is a writer who struggles with expression because he feels that everything has already been written, thus providing justification for the act of forgery. It is stated close to the beginning of the novel that

> At times [. . .] Charles felt himself to be a deeply historical personage. Every moment and gesture he made had already been endlessly repeated in this place. The low murmur and sweet smell of drink were the past itself, covering him and laying claim to him. He could say nothing that had not been uttered before. (31)

Thomas de Quincey and Sheridan are also characters in this novel, and it is de Quincey who compares Ireland with Chatterton and feels that the discovery of a new play by Shakespeare may be a forgery.

The parallel between Chatterton and Ireland, and their feelings towards their city are made clear in a conversation that Ireland has with de Quincey. Ireland says,

> 'I have lived in the city all my life. There are some spots that I love. But I have no real passion for it.'
> 'Why ever not? It has made you.'
> 'And may yet break me.' (185)

The same suggestion that London, the capital of culture, has the power to destroy the idealistic young is again present here. Ireland is aware of what the chemist had

warned young Chatterton of in *Chatterton*, "So you may not know, sir, how in this city sudden grief or great misfortune often urge young people to destroy themselves. We read of it every day" (197). As in *Chatterton*, the connection between London and suicide is underlined in *The Lambs of London* and the narrator comments regarding Shakespeare's plays, forged or otherwise, that, "Many members of the audience were acquainted with early death; in the condition of London it was not an unexpected event. In London, too, suicide by water was not uncommon" (144). Again in this novel, suicide, murder, and violence are presented as if they were diseases bred by the city itself. Mary Lamb, for example, is shown as a girl coaxed into madness by the violence of the city, and ends up murdering her own mother before being sent to an institution (most of which is historically accurate). Soon before she finds out that William Ireland is the forger of the Shakespeare manuscript, and subsequently murders her mother, she says to her brother (Charles), "'I cannot bear this violence [. . .]. Wherever I go in London, I see barbarism and cruelty,'" who replies, "'Cities are places of death, Mary [. . .]. I read recently that the first cities were built upon graveyards'" (193). The novel, although more conventionally realistic than *Chatterton* or other Ackroyd novels, still attempts to establish an eerie, mysterious, violent atmosphere of the city, most particularly of London, and argues once again that even though people and events may change throughout history, they are nonetheless rewritings, or repetitions, of one another, leaving the city in an endless, but at the same time, static pose. William Ireland's words seem to explain Ackroyd's motives when he claims, "'There is always more to explore. This is London'" (133).

The best example in Ackroyd's work of the city ruining or destroying the individual is in *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983). Set in Paris in 1900, the book concerns Oscar Wilde's last years as a recluse in the French capital and assumes to be the writer's journal, or autobiography. In many respects it can be read like a confessional, as Wilde goes back to his childhood and relates his whole life, seemingly without omission of details. Undoubtedly this very format of the book encourages a questioning of the genres of confessionals and autobiographies, as both are centered largely on one person's perception of events. When Wilde shows his journal to his friends over lunch, one of them (Frank Harris) remarks, " 'You have

obviously changed the facts to suit your own purpose'" (160-161), while the other (Bosie, or Lord Alfred Douglas) says, " 'It's full of lies, but of course you are. It is absurd and mean and foolish. But then you are. Of course you must publish it'" (161). According to his friends, who participated in many of the events related in the journal, calling Wilde's effort 'subjective' would be an understatement, and such comments related in the book itself place the reader in the rather uncomfortable position of not being allowed to trust in Wilde's relation of his life. Most of the factual information given in Wilde's narrative is authentic although, as always, Ackroyd has changed seemingly unimportant details in order to emphasize that factual information can not always be reliable since they are learned from previous texts that may be as subjective as this one.

Throughout his autobiography Wilde continously emhasizes that he is connected to London on a deeply spiritual level and that, in fact, he is a product of this city. Through Wilde, Ackroyd once again shows the dual faces of London – its magnificence on the one hand, and its destructiveness on the other. Wilde describes his earliest impressions of the city as follows:

> In my youthful imagination I saw London as a vast furnace which might maim or destroy all those that it touched, but which also created light and heat. It was as if all the powers of the earth had been concentrated on this spot, and my personality was immeasurably enriched by it. Since those days, I have always been an inhabitant of cities: I could not have known then that I was one day to become a monument to the diseases or urban civilisation. In London I thought to understand every form of activity but, instead, I tasted every aspect of human corruption. (43)

Despite its being one of Ackroyd's rare books that does not take place in London, and although Wilde came to London later in his life thus was not born there, the book suggests that most of Wilde's personality was derived from having been an inhabitant of the city. As was also the case in *Milton in America*, even when Ackroyd's works do not actually take place in London, the characters' Londonness, or London sensibility, comes through, and one gets the impression that the work is as much about London as the others. Wilde carries the same qualities of London, being theatrical and prone to exaggeration, sparkly and witty on the one hand, and corrupted on the other. All these elements are mostly confessed by the man himself, and when he reflects on what he has tried to achieve in his art, he says, "I

exaggerated wildly, and turned the things I loved into parody" (170-171). This is a largely self-reflective statement on Ackroyd's part, who, in this book parodies the genre of autobiography and mimics the exaggeration of Wilde 'wildly' by doing so.

The effects of nineteenth century London and its culture on Wilde are clear from the start. Like Dickens, and presumably like Ackroyd himself, he is engrossed by the spectacle of empirical power in London as much as he is by the deragatory poverty and perversity of the city. This duality, and the hypocrisy of the late Victorians in their struggle to perceive only what they wanted to perceive by turning a blind eye on the other is, it is claimed, at the core of Wilde's fate. Wilde is unable to stay away from the city of vice and, metaphorically speaking, because of this is put on trial by the city of virtue. As Wilde suggests, "the mind has its Whitechapel as well as its West End, and, in my hunger for new sights of degradation and new sins, I loved to enter narrow rookeries. I wandered through the grey, and sordid streets of the city with only my lust for company" (107). The Wilde in Ackroyd's novel is unmistakenly paralleled to Wilde's own Dorian Gray, who, fashionable and elegant in polite society, also runs off to the opium dens of East London whenever he has the opportunity. In this respect he is also reminiscent of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, where by day the doctor is respectable and entertains high society, while turning to the city of prostitution and murder by night. It can not be a coincidence that these novels all take place in London, as it is the spirit of the place which enables its people and events to repeat themselves ad infinitum, emphasizing that the city flows through its inhabitants and brings them together, as previously discussed.

The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde is not concerned with bringing two time periods in the history of London together, as was the case in some of the other novels, but more in the duality of the city itself – as centre for both virtue and vice – existing at the same time, but being denied by the former. Wilde confesses, for instance, that

> [. . .] I went occassionally to a boy's brothel in the Lower Cut. It was disguised as a tailor's shop, although no clothes were ever made there. It often seemed curious to me that such a place should exist so close to the Strand – that such infamy and vice should burn so near to the fashionable world and yet not set it on fire. (107)

This is the point at which Stevenson's, Wilde's, and Ackroyd's interests meet (and indeed this interest can easily be traced back to Richardson); to show the real city behind the façade of light, virtue, and gentility, and to reveal the city of darkness, vice and corruption beneath.

Besides the biography *Dickens*, it is in his first published novel, *The Great Fire of London* (1983), that Ackroyd reveals his cultural and literary indebtedness to Charles Dickens. The novel is designed as a sequel to Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and the reader is given through a preface entitled "the story so far," a summary of the first novel. It is stated here that "Although this could not be described as a true story, certain events have certain concequences" (3), thereby suggesting that fiction may affect reality. The novel ends on a similar note, a repetition of the sentence at the beginning, with "This is not a true story, but certain things follow from other things" (168). While on the one hand reminding the reader that both Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and his own *The Great Fire of London* are fictional works, Ackroyd also implies that despite being fabrications, the novels are in a sense influentially real. As Onega suggests, "in the world of *The Great Fire of London*, the boundaries between fiction and reality are non-existent, that the difference between fictional characters and real people; between real and fictional Great Fires, and between real and fictional worlds simply does not hold" (31).

In this novel, London is once again (or more accurately, for the first time) represented as a palimpsest – a highly textual city, the texts of which are all connected with each other. The novel also shows significant foreshadowings of Ackroyd's later works, of which *Dan Leno* is one, since it also begins and ends with the same sentence, therefore both novels suggest a circularity and lack of closure of texts written about London. The novel that it acts as a precursor, though, is *Hawksmoor*, as there are significant parallels to be made. The title *The Great Fire of London*, for example, brings to mind the fire of 1666, the great fire of London that burnt down many of the city's churches which Nicholas Hawksmoor, in turn, was commissioned to build again. The fire in the novel occurs at the end of the novel in the 20th century, and thus hints once again that events in London are bound to repeat themselves by building a bridge between centuries.

The Great Fire of London has a number of different plots, most of which centre on the film-maker Stephen Spender's attempt to adapt *Little Dorrit* into film. Spender's fascination with the novel comes from his shared interest in the city with its author. He feels that "Dickens understood London" (16), and, by undertaking this project, believes that he will in turn be able to make sense of his own London identity. Spender's ulterior aim behind filming Dickens' fictional London is to discover the solution to a mystery that he is unable to describe. He tries to explain his situation to his wife and expresses that

> 'There's something strange about London, love [. . .] That's why the Romans built their ruins here and everything. I'm sure there's something to it, some kind of magic or something. Did you know if you drew a line between all of Hawksmoor's churches, they would form a pentagle? Isn't that weird?' (16)

As he dies in the fire on the film set at the end of the novel, Spender, like all of Ackroyd's pseudo-detectives that try to discover the secret of London, fails to achieve his goals. The film is not completed, and he does not discover his London identity.

Other plots revolve around the area in which *Little Dorrit* is based, and follow characters like Little Arthur and Audrey Skelton, who live there and do not want the adaptation to be made. As their names suggest, these characters are reincarnations of Dickens characters. Within the reality of Ackroyd's novel, and as Gibson and Wolfreys also argue, we see the "interpolation of the past as fiction into a present fictional reality" (80). Spenser Spender's obsession with Dickens is a parallel of Ackroyd's own, since the film-maker's attempt to make the film of *Little Dorrit* because of his fascination with London is repeated by Ackroyd writing a sequel to Dickens's novel. The homosexual scriptwriter, novelist and academic Rowan Phillips is the character through which Ackroyd parodies himself. Although he does not suffer the same end as Spenser Spender does, Phillips is similarly disillusioned at the end of the novel. Just before the fire breaks out, he confesses to Spender that "'it might have been an illusion – an illusion on my part at least. To think that you could just take Dickens and bundle him into the twentieth century. We don't live in the same world. We don't even live in the same city'" (158-159). Ackroyd also plays with the idea of Dickens and his characters achieving a transcendental 'reality' in his biography *Dickens*, especially in the fictional chapters of the work. In the same book

he refers to Dickens's own belief in the reality of his characters. In *The Great Fire of London*, therefore, it is both Dickens's characters and also Dickens's London that Ackroyd rewrites, clearly demonstrating the blurring of the lines between reality and fiction by demonstrating that London has both a fictional and a factual reality.

English Music (1992) is set in 1992 and centres on Timothy Harcombe's narrative of his past. Although it does feature a double narrative set in different times – like in *Chatterton*, *Hawksmoor*, and *The House of Doctor Dee*, it is different in the sense that there is no historical character to be traced by looking to the past. There is only Timothy – Timothy in the present and Tim and his father, a medium, in the 1920s. The novel does however follow a similar pattern with the other novels as in the odd numbered chapters Tim presents his memories of his father, and in the evenly numbered chapters a third person narrator relates Tim's dreams or visions. In these chapters Tim enters English novels and paintings, conversing sometimes with the authors, sometimes with the characters. The novel largely revolves around the themes of ancestry and inheritance presented in a smaller scale by focusing on the relationship between Tim and his father, and on a larger scale by what is called 'English music.' This is explained by Tim at the start of the novel, "[My father and I] discussed what he used to call 'English music,' by which he meant not only music itself but also English history, English literature and English painting. With him one subject always led to another [. . .] from the London of Daniel Defoe to the London of Charles Dickens" (21). According to Tim's father, then, English music is everywhere all the time, which suggests that it is impossible to detach one's self from such an inheritance, and that the music is a continuum, enlargening with its past.

The works and authors (and painters and composers) alluded to in the novel are numerous, and in the evenly numbered chapters Tim enters texts which flow into each other, transporting him from one frame to another without making clear-cut boundaries between them. Thus in chapter 2 he enters *The Pilgrim's Progress*, in chapter 4 *Great Expectations*, in chapter 6 a Sherlock Holmes story and so on. None of these are pointed out, but are dependent on the reader's identification of characters and situations. As was the case in the previous novels discussed here, Ackroyd again makes use of mimicry in these chapters. He does not present Tim's dreams in a particular voice, the style changes as Tim enters different texts. When in chapter 10,

for instance, Tim listens to a lecture by William Byrd (c. 1540-1623) the composer, the language and discourse is that of the seventeenth century, or in chapter 16, when Tim enters a Blake poem, the whole chapter is composed of a poem similar in style, content and language to Blake's own. There is no certain order as to the works and authors alluded to, and it is just as possible to enter *Alice in Wonderland* as it is to enter a Hogarth painting, suggesting that all English music is harmonious with each other. The only limitation regarding them is that they seem to stop at the end of the 19th century, probably because as Tim grew up in the 1920s, to include any from the 20th century would have been anachronistic.

London as a microcosm of this shared heritage is not dwelt on extensively in this novel as it is in other Ackroyd's works. However, it is significant to note that any noteworthy comments regarding the city are presented within the works that Tim enters and that were written by Londoners. Chapter 6, for example, is significant in this sense because here Tim flows from a Sherlock Holmes story to a Dickens one. Regarding the setting, the narrator comments that, "just as age brings character and temperament, would the square itself reveal its own true nature only after the passage of time? Or was it that these houses would slowly become imbued with the spirit of the place – with the spirit of London and its past?" (122). The passage is significant as it alludes to Ackroyd's own work, most specifically *The House of Doctor Dee* and *Hawksmoor*, where buildings consumed by their past are central to the narrative. Another suggestion repeated in this chapter is that of particular districts recreating similar inhabitants throughout the centuries:

> There had always been women like her in this area of London and no doubt there would always be, but who could say whether they created the city or the city created them? It was as if the same spirit or the same character were constantly being reborn, just as the atmosphere of the East End itself had been sustained through the long years. (134)

Although it would be going too far to argue that London is central to this novel, it is still obvious that when discoursing about the English literary tradition, Ackroyd can not refrain from pointing to the importance of the city in the creation and continuity of 'English music.'

The textuality of the city, thus its immortality in texts, is foregrounded in chapter 16, the chapter in the form of a long poem which evokes poets that make up

the English literary heritage. At the beginning, the persona calls out to the ghosts and spirits of his ancestry and says, "So, spirits of Albion, who inspire and animate poetic song, / Guide my journey through your immortal realms / As I record the visions of those who came before me" (349). Of these immortal realms, London is of specific importance, as is made clear several pages later:

> Then I beheld London around [Dryden], an awful wonder of God
> Adamantine, dark, massive, cruel in every human epoch.
> Thus London speaks: 'Awake, Dryden, awake. I give myself
> Up to thee, for my streets are thoroughfares of imagination
> And my towers were built with English music.' (354)

Therefore London is both the creator and the created – it provides the imagination, the spirit of the place to be written about, and at the same time is created, built, and immortalized by the texts that come out of it. It is evident that for Ackroyd London is an essentail component of the English imagination and the English cultural heritage, and perhaps (at least in his other novels) is a microcosm of the landscape of 'English music.'

The Plato Papers (1999) differs from Ackroyd's other work in the sense that it does not take place in the past or present, but in the future. Set in the 3700s, the novel is also different because it features not a British historical character as was the case in the other novels, but centres on the character Plato. The novel does, however, continue to dwell on the questioning of history and shows how people in the future make sense of old texts that they find. Here, the population of the 3000s can not distinguish between Charles Darwin and Charles Dickens, or between T. S. Eliot and George Eliot, as only some parts of their texts have survived. The character Plato acts as historian/detective, and it is through this character that the objectivity of history writing is questioned.

Plato divides the ages of history as follows: The Age of Orpheus (c. 3500 B.C. – c. 300 B.C.), The Age of the Apostles (c. 300 B.C. – c. 1500 A.D.), The Age of Mouldwarp (c. 1500 A.D. – c. 2300 A.D.), and The Age of Witspell (c. 2300 A.D. – c. 3400 A.D.). the only evidence that Plato has to go upon in interpreting history is some partly destroyed texts which he has to make sense out of. As suggested above,

misinterpretation is inevitable, and he frequently mixes up authors and works. For instance, he finds a book titled *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, but because only a part of the name of the author is decipherable, 'Charles D -,' he mistakenly thinks the book to be by Charles Dickens, rather than Darwin. Moreover, he is unable to distinguish fact from fiction, thus underlining once again the subjectivity of history writing. Regarding *The Origin of Species*, for example, Plato says, "The rest of the name has been gauged out by some crude tool, and the phrase 'Vile Stuff!' written in a dye-based substance. Clearly the reader did not approve of the fiction! Perhaps it was too melodramatic, or romantic, for her refined taste!" (7). Mistakenly interpreting *The Origin of Species* as fiction, he in turn takes a book by E. A. Poe to be factual, and tries to theorize Americans (by now extinct) by the use of this book: "We are informed by the learned Poet that they were a highly nervous people, who suffered from a morbid acuteness of their faculties [. . .]. They were prone to the most extreme sensations of wonder or hilarity and there seems to have been an unusual amount of lunacy among the young" (40). The blurring of the lines between fact and fiction, a common concern of historiographic metafiction is humourously depicted here, made all the more funny because the central character is a parody of Plato. Here the reader is forced to be intelligent and to make sense of things, as Plato is obviously incapable of doing the same, relying as he does on fragments of the past. Knowing the historical Plato's concern with fact and truth, the character Plato's delusion in his rewriting of history may serve as merely amusement on the surface. The main argument lies in the depiction of how easy it is to misinterpret history when the historian only has texts as evidence.

One of Plato's main aims is to learn of the history of London, the city in which he himself lives. In order to do this, he uses a cave as a time machine and transports himself to the Age of Mouldwarp, and sees, "And there, stretching below me, was London! [. . .] The avenues and buildings were more elaborate and extensive than anything we had ever surmised; yet, somehow, this was the city of which I had always dreamed"(111). Ultimately what Plato finds out as a result of his wanderings in another age is that what he thought as history is a concurrent dimension, and that the Age of Mouldwarp occurs simultaneously with the Age of Witspell, by existing inside a cave. Its connection to the city is in line with Ackroyd's previous works as

by concerning himself with the subjectivity of history, the notion of an eternal city, living all its ages simultaneously, is once more emphasized.

Written in 1990, shortly after *Chatterton*, *First Light* signals towards Ackroyd's latest *The Fall of Troy* in its exploration of the past through excavation. The novel is not set in London, and indeed is not even about the city, but takes place in the fictional Pigrin Valley in Dorset. Although *First Light* also deals with themes repeated in Ackroyd's other novels such as the nature of time, and the digging up of history and ancestry, it is not, as Gibson and Wolfreys state, "one of Ackroyd's novels of possession" (149) in the sense that *Chatterton* and *Hawksmoor*, for example, are.

There are three main stories in the novel, narrated by a third person narrator. Firstly, there is that of Damien Fall, an astronomer, who runs an observatory and is intent on researching the Big Bang, secondly, there is Mark Clare who organizes an archaeological dig, and is opposed by the Mints, who own the land. Finally, there is the story of Joey and Floey Hanover, retired music-hall comedians, who come to Dorset to search for Joey's parents and childhood home. The three stories involve characters interested in origins whether they are looking for answer below, on, or above the ground. Gibson and Wolfreys argue that,

> the desired narrative of connection has to do with family, with the desire to locate one's identity within a general structure of family resemblances, traced back by narratives which are capable, through archaeology or astronomy for example, of reaching back into the past to lost and, ultimately, unrecoverable origins. (150)

In line with the questioning in the other novels concerning the subjectivity of historical texts, it is evident that in this novel, other means of historical research are equally futile. It is significant, for instance, that the ancient body found hanging upside down in the mound by the excavators is nicknamed 'The Old Barren One,' implying that clear-cut lines to history, ancestry, and origins can not be traced. As is pointed out in the novel, "Science is like fiction, you see. We make up stories, we sketch out narratives. We try to find some pattern beneath events" (159).

Despite the novel's deviation from Ackroyd's other works in the sense that London is not central, or indeed, even peripheral, to the narrative, there is a strong sense of place in *First Light*. The archaeologist Mark Clare's perception of the

setting is reminiscent of how the characters in Ackroyd's other fictions and biographies feel about London:

> For Dorset was his obsession. He believed that this place had its own sound [. . .] and its own smells. [. . .] When he lay upon the grass of Dorset it was as if he were being borne up by the hands of all those who had come before him. They were the ground on which he rested. Yes, this was a haunted place. It contained mysteries. (33)

Damien Fall also experiences the mythical quality of the setting, to the extent that he starts feeling as a 'double,' as if the Old Barren One is within him, thus reminding the readers of Hawksmoor the detective, Charles Wychwood, Matthew Palmer, and even Elizabeth Cree. As stated before, however, in spite of these connections, motifs, and themes with the rest of Ackroyd's fiction, *First Light* remains different from the rest, as does *The Fall of Troy*. Although the novel brims with allusions foremost to Hardy, and Blake, Wilde, Kipling, Ackroyd himself, Fowles, and so on, they seem to be haphazard, lacking the intention of forming tangible connections with these other writers in a common sense of place.

In his most recent novel, *The Fall of Troy* (2006), Ackroyd digresses from his usual settings and locates his story in Çanakkale, Turkey. The narrative is told from a third person point of view that does not differ throughout the novel, signalling a change from his previous work, and can be said to be the most 'realistic' in this respect of the lot. Although there are metafictional concerns in *The Fall of Troy*, they are not so overt as in the novels that used changes of narrative and point of view to underline their fictionality. Based on a partial biography of Heinrich Schliemann, excavator, the story revolves around Heinrich and Sophia Obermann and their late 19th century excavations in Çanakkale for the ancient city of Troy. The difference from his previous pseudo-biographies lies in the fact that Ackroyd has chosen to change the names of his characters (apart from *Hawksmoor*, where there is nonetheless a character named Hawksmoor), although the first names remain accurate, thus making them easily identifiable. The opposition of factual history and fictional story is dealt with clearly in the novel, especially in the depiction of the character of Heinrich Obermann, who defines himself as an archeologist although he has not studied in the field. Obermann's view of history is highly subjective as he believes that he can recover a buried city by using Homer's *The Iliad* for his guide.

Indeed, he is convinced that the poem is factual to the extent that he destroys excavated evidence that contradicts the story, and does not think twice about the ethical concerns of this practice. According to Obermann, the real clues and facts lie in *The Iliad*, and any evidence that disrupts his claim are unreliable and deceptive. His character is once again drawn remarkably close to the original treasure hunter, Heinrich Schliemann, who likewise saw no fault in disregarding objects found in his excavations that did not conform to what he was seeking.

Ackroyd's concerns in English identity or London identity are not given a place in the novel, perhaps because of an awareness of repeating himself. The identity of the Trojans is much more important in *The Fall of Troy*, who Obermann believes are ancestors of the Europeans, most notably the Greeks. Although evidence found at the site confirms that the roots are Asiatic, thus proving that Turks, and not Greeks, are descendents of the Trojans, Obermann is never swayed from his own reality, and shamelessly destroys the proof. Obermann's vision is of a city which he calls the first city" (6), that will prove the validity of *The Iliad*, and in this respect only he resembles Ackroyd's previous overtly English characters, the visionary Londoners. Obermann's son believes that his father's stories "had the truth of vision" (215), and idolizes his father as a visionary of the city.

Another significant deviation from his previous work, and one that is connected to the points already mentioned, is the question of heritage. In his other novels, heritage is confined to male characters, and as a microcosm of the larger issue, the relationships between fathers and sons is strongly highlighted (particularly in *English Music* and *The House of Doctor Dee*). Through a recognition of the past, the male characters come to an understanding of the connection between past and present, the past represented by a preceding artist, and the present by themselves. In this novel, however, the question of heritage is confined firstly to that of Sophia Obermann, Heinrich's Greek wife, who becomes convinced by her husband that Troy is her history, and secondly that of Kadri Bey, the Turkish governmental representative, who is aware that Obermann is stealing and smuggling treasures that are a part of his own country, his own heritage. Kadri Bey, however, is only a minor character in the issues of heritage that are brought forward. *The Fall of Troy*

signifies a change for Ackroyd, and in this novel he lets go of his previous concerns, especially regarding setting, nationality, and gender.

At the beginning of this thesis, several elements of big cities commonly represented by authors writing about them were listed as the city as labyrinth/maze, the crowds, the panorama, the concern with paper and paperwork (Maxwell 15-20), the theatricality, and the smells and sounds. Much of these images remain the primary concerns of contemporary London authors. There are a number of contemporary authors credited with being writers of London. In this category could be placed Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair, Will Self, Martin Amis and Michael Moorcock, among others. The London of these authors share an experience of the city as sprawling, dark, and unfathomable, as well as the presentiment that the city is crawling with its dead, infested with a ghostly history. In Martin Amis's *London Fields*, for example, this is how the narrator Sam describes his relationship with the city: "There was a time when I thought I could read the streets of London. I thought I could peer into the ramps and passages, into the smoky dispositions, and make some sense of things. But now I don't think I can. Either I'm losing it, or the streets are getting harder to read. Or both" (367). Or, as Mary Gasalee expresses in Michael Moorcock's *Mother London*, "London can keep a secret better than any city. She has unacknowledged catacombs, uncharted rivers, a wealth of subterranean mysteries deeper even than the bones of her dinasours" (72).

Among these authors, the one whose works are said to be most connected to that of Ackroyd's, and is often compared with him, is Iain Sinclair. The two writers do indeed have similar interests in depicting the city, although it would be going too far to suggest that they employ these interests in the same way. One similarity is an overt interest in the city's past, though of course this is not exclusive to either one of them. As Nick Bentley argues,

> Concerns with surfaces and appearances have been contrasted with models of the city that emphasize it as a network of hidden narratives from the past, especially in the work of Peter Ackroyd and Iain Sinclair. This is accompanied by an interest in identifying and dramatizing the city's spectres and ghosts, its underworlds and countercultural narratives. (14)

Despite the fact that many of the authors listed above also depict the city as a haunted one, it is true that it is Ackroyd and Sinclair who make this a central concern in almost all their fiction (in the case of Ackroyd, also in his biographies). Perhaps

drawing on this experience as a biographer, Ackroyd's 'ghosts' are much more tangible than are Sinclair's. Whereas in Sinclair's works, allusions to numerous London dead are evident, in Ackroyd these presences are presented as characters on whom subplots are based. The ghosts of Nicholas Hawksmoor, Thomas Chatterton, John Dee, as characters, act as stimulants in the plots of the novels, and become quests for the contemporary characters to fulfill. Both writers significantly acknowledge and allude to their predecessors, but Ackroyd's circle of debt is a little narrower than Sinclair's, who makes use of the visual arts, cinema, music, and non-British writers also, whereas Ackroyd remains more strictly confined to a particular English sensibility and literary/cultural heritage.

Stylistically the two authors are very different from each other. Ackroyd prefers in his novels to depict the flow of the city through his multiplots and characters, whereas Sinclair does the same through language. Nick Rennison argues concerning *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* (1987), "as in Sinclair's other fiction, plot (in any conventional sense) isn't the driving force behind the novel. Sinclair doesn't 'do' plot with any great enthusiasm or conviction. What drives *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* is the exceptional, manic energy of the prose" (154). In terms of subject matter, while this novel is similar to some of Ackroyd's works (*Dan Leno* in particular), centering as it does on the Jack the Ripper murders in a dark London and two contemporary 'detective' book dealers, it is clear that Sinclair does not prioratize the telling of the story lines, but concentrates his vision of the city in poetic language ornamented with cobweb-like grift sentences. Ackroyd's prose, on the other hand, is much more approachable for the common (and otherwise) reader. In his works, the characters, their motivations, plots, themes and imagery are more readily decipherable, and it is only London itself that remains the emblem of ambiguity and mystery, while at the same time acting as a connecting force between the characters and plots.

The history of London, and the rewriting of it, is for Ackroyd the motivation behind his writing, whether it be fiction, biography, poetry or essays. Thomas Wright suggests, in his introduction to *The Collection*, that London "might also be described as the informing presence of his novels as their plots seem to emerge spontaneously out of the streets of the city" (xxv). Since he resurrects artists of

London's past and uses contemporary characters to research on them, discussions of Ackroyd's work tend to attribute his style to being a postmodern one, with the use of such techniques as historiographic metafiction or parody. Ackroyd has adamantly declared many times, however, that the techniques he uses are imbedded in English literary heritage. He draws many parallels between his 'London Visionaries,' and presents his own work as a continuation of theirs and as a common tradition. In his lecture "London Luminaries and Cockney Visionaries," he says,

> I would like to mention one of my own favourite architects, Nicholas Hawksmoor, who could create two sets of designs – one in Baroque, the other in Gothic – and allow the appropriate authorities to choose according to taste. It is reminiscent of the work of Thomas Chatterton, who committed suicide in a street near the Gray's Inn Road – in the middle of the eighteenth century he wrote authentic medieval ballads. And so here we have another continuing London tradition, this experimental and self-conscious use of past styles. Of course these days it is called postmodernism, as if it never existed before, but one of the features of contemporary cultural journalism seems to be a great ignorance of the past. (*The Collection* 348)

Ackroyd's use of history, whether it is called parody, rewriting, historiographic metafiction, intertextuality, or a national tradition, aims to form connections between the past and present, to visualise the presence of the ghosts of London's past in contemporary times. In doing so, his use of pseudo-detectives to dig up the past gain prominence, as they are the ones that are burdened with building these bridges. He does not go so far as to argue that these detectives are also a common element of English tradition, as indeed it could be argued otherwise. For Ackroyd, they seem to be convenient tools, since his interest is not to concentrate on them, but on the history of London *through* them. As suggested in this thesis, London is not just a setting in Ackroyd's work, but a spiritual centre of tradition which rewrites itself for each generation, without erasing the writings of the past. The city, essentially, is made up of texts and characters (not all of which may be reliable) that have attempted to immortalise it in some way – whether through literature (Dickens, Blake, Wilde, Chatterton), drama (Dan Leno), painting (Henry Wallis), or architecture (Hawksmoor). Ackroyd, by reminding us of these people, attempts to chronicle the ages of the city to show how past visions of London contribute to an understanding of it in the present.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
TURKISH SUMMARY

PETER ACKROYD'UN ROMANLARINDA LONDRA

Giriş

Peter Ackroyd'un eserleri genel olarak doğduğu, büyüdüğü ve yaşadığı şehir olan Londra'yı ana tema olarak almaktadır. Hatta, Ackroyd şiirleri, romanları ve yaşam öykülerinde Londra'yı olayların geçtiği yer olarak kullanmadığı zamanlarda, Londra ve Londra'da yaşamış ve yaşayan kişiler hakkında yazar. Bazıları Türkçe'ye de çevirilmiş olan romanlarında, Londra'nın tarihini yeniden yazmaktadır Ackroyd ve geçmiş ve şimdiki zaman arasındaki bağlantıyı şehir bağlamında irdelemektedir. Tarihi Londra'nın yeniden yazımına 1399 yılında geçen *The Clerkenwell Tales* (*Clerkenwell Öyküleri*) romanıyla başlamış ve 3700 yıllarında geçen *The Plato Papers* (*Plato Yazıları*) ile Londra'nın geleceğine de el atmıştır. Ackroyd, Londra'nın geçmişinin, modern şehirde yaşamaya devam ettiğini iddia eder ve Londra tarihini tarihsel metinler arasıcılık tekniğini kullanarak yeniden yazar. Linda Hutcheon tarafından adlandırılmış olan bu teknik, geçmiş zamanın gerçekliğini sorgulayan romanlar için kullanılır. Hutcheon'a göre, tarihin sorgulanmasının ana sebebi, geçmişi sadece metinler aracılığıyla bilme imkanımız olmasıdır. Bu teknik, tarihin gerçek olmadığını iddia etmemektedir ve kullanılmasının amacı daha çok, tarihin sorgu ve yoruma açık olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktır. Örneğin, Ackroyd'un tarihsel mertinler arası romanlarındaki anlatılan Londra, genelde tarihçiler tarafından görmezden gelinmiş olaylar çerçevesinde anlatılır ve bu romanlarda sık sık tarihi cinayetlere, tarikatlara, yerlatı örgütlere göndermeler yapılır.

Bu çalışmada, Ackroyd'un eserleri postmodern söylem aracılığı ile işlenmiş olsa da Ackroyd, kullandığı tekniklerin postmodernizmin öğeleri olduğunu reddeder. Bu teknikler ona göre İngiliz Edebiyatı geleneğinin birer parçalarıdır. Yeniden

yazımcılık, parodi, tarihsel metinler arasıcılık gibi tekniklerin kullanımını şöyle açıklamaktadır: "İngiliz Edebiyat tarihi, çalıntı ve intikal, resmi 'borç' alımları ve melodik yankı tarihi olarak görülmelidir." Hatta bu konuyu romanlarından iki tanesi için tema olarak seçmiştir. Örneğin, *Chatterton* adlı romanında "belki de tüm zamanların en iyi edebi sahtekarı olan" şair Thomas Chatterton'ın hayatını yeniden yazar ve sahtekarlık, taklitçilik ve ilham alma gibi terimler arasındaki anlamsal çizgilerin gittikçe bulanıklaşmasını konu edinir. *Lambs of London* (*Londra'nın Kuzuları*) eserinde ise göya Shakespeare tarafından yazılmış ama kaybolmuş oyunları 'bulan' William Ireland'ın hayatını parodi etmekte ve *Chatterton* romanında kullandığı konuları tekrar etmektedir.

Yeniden Yazımcılık ve Parodi

Matie Calinescu'nun "Rewriting" ("Yeniden Yazımcılık") adlı makalesinde iddia ettiği gibi, eskimiş metinlerin ve geleneklerin kullanılması ve yeniden yazılması, yeni ortaya çıkmış bir edebi teknik değildir. Calinescu, yeniden yazımcılık teriminin parodi, taşlama, üslup taklidi, hatta çeviri gibi eski yöntemlere verilmiş yeni ve moda bir kavram olduğunu savunmaktadır. Modern ve postmodern metinler, bu eski teknikleri yeni amaçları doğrultusunda kullanarak değiştirmişlerdir. Calinescu'nun da altını çizdiği gibi, yeniden yazımcılığın postmodern kullanımı, okuyucuyu ve okuyucunun metin ile olan ilişkisini yazım sürecinin merkezine koymaktadır. Bu düşünceyi zaten postmodern düşüncenin önemli etkenlerinden Roland Barthes ve Jacques Derrida da savunmaktadırlar. Söz konusu kuramcılara göre, bir metin, tek başına – kitabın kapakları arasında – var olamaz ve kendisinden önce ve sonra gelen gelen metinlerle daima bir etkileşim içindedir. Ackroyd'un da eserlerinde savunduğu bu fikre göre, bağımsız eser diye bir olgu yoktur; her eser ya da metin, başka metinlerle ilişkilidir ve onlardan faydalanır. Okurun, eserin yaratım sürecine dahil olması ise, bu ilişkileri çözümlemesiyle pekişir. Yazar, artık her şeyi bilen, tamamıyle eseri tek başına yaratmış biri olmaktan çıkıp, Roland Barthes'ın da dediği gibi, "ölü" bir yazara dönüşür. Yazarın eseri, okuyucuların onu okuduğu ölçüde var olabilir. Ürettiği eser, 'özgün' sayılamıyacağı için, yazar da her şeyi

bilen, daha önce konulmuş 'baba' ya da 'Tanrı' sıfatlarından arındırılır. Postmodern düşüncenin sorguladığı 'metin' ve yazarın yeri bağlamında, yeniden yazımcılık ve parodi yöntemleri ayrı bir önem kazanmaktadır. Bunun sebebi ise artık bir eserin başka bir eseri veya söylemi yeniden yazdığını iddia edebilecek bir güce kavuşmuş olan okurdur.

Çok eskiden beri kullanılan parodi tekniğinin postmodern yazarlar tarafından sıkça kullanılması ve ayrı bir anlam kazanmış olması dolayısıyla terimi tanımlamak oldukça güçtür. *Palimpsests* adlı eserinde Gerar Genette, parodiyi kullanımı oldukça dar bir teknik olarak açıklar ve parodinin sadece belirli bir metin veya eseri hedef alabileceğini iddia eder. Genette, türlerin ve söylemlerin sadece taklit edilebileceğini, yapıtların ise parodi edilebileceğini savunur. Öte yandan Linda Hutcheon, parodinin tanımını o kadar geniş tutar ki, her tür eleştirel metinler arasıcılığı parodi olarak açıklar. Hutcheon'ın parodi üzerine yazdıkları içerisinde bu çalışmaya özellikle katkıda bulunan düşüncesi, parodinin, seçkinci sanat ve seçkinci olmayan sanat arasındaki sınırları kaldırmış olmasıdır. Dedektif, fantastik, bilim-kurgu romanlar ve pornografi gibi, bundan önce 'seçkinci olmayan sanat' olarak nitelendirilen metinlerin postmodern yazarlar tarafından kullanılması ve yeniden yazılması bu düşünceye dayanır. Parodiyi tanımlayan eleştirmenler, parodi tekniğinin kullanılmasının bir üst kurmaca örneği olduğunun altını çizerler. Dedektif romanı gibi geleneksel bir roman türü parodi edilirken, postmodern metin, aynı anda kendi hakkında yorumda bulunmaktan kaçınmaz. Aynı zamanda, okur bu parodinin farkına varacağı için metin, kendisinin kurmaca olmasına dikkat çekmiş olur. Postmodern parodi, kendini edebi türlerle de sınırlamamakta, aynı anda resim, mimari, masal, hatta gazetelerden dahi faydalanmaktadır. Bunun örneklerini Ackroyd'un romanlarında da görmekteyiz: *Chatterton* adlı romanda resim parodisi; *Hawksmoor* romanında da kilise binalarının, dolayısıyla mimarinin parodisi yapılmaktadır.

Dedektif Romanı Parodisi

Dedektif romanı parodisi yapan üst kurmaca romanlarına eleştirmenlerce farklı isimler verilmiştir: Patricia Merivale ve Susan Sweeney "deneyüstü dedektif hikayeleri" derken, Hutcheon "postmodern parodi," "üstkurmaca parodi" veya "parodik tarihsel üstkurmaca" demeyi tercih etmektedir. Birçok eleştirmene göre, dedektif romanlarının sıklıkla parodi edilmesinin sebebi, türün katı kuralları olmasındandır. Robin W. Winks, dedektif romanlarının basmakalıp kitaplar olarak nitelendirilmelerini ve seçkinci sanat olarak kabul edilmemelerini, bu romanların kalıplaşmış geleneklere bağlı kalmalarına bağlar. Ancak, aynı zamanda okurların bu romanlardan beklentileri de, bu kalıpların aynen korunmasıdır.

Dennis Porter'a göre, geleneksel dedektif romanlarının en öne çıkan özelliklerinden biri, romanlardaki düzen, bir diğeri de, bu düzenin oluşmasını sağlayan, olaylar arasında bağlantı kurmaya yarayan dedektifin kendisidir. Porter için dedektifin bir kahraman olarak ortaya çıkmasının nedeni, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tarafından yaratılmış olan Sherlock Holmes karakteridir. Geleneksel dedektif hikayeleri kurulu bir düzen, zeki, kabiliyetli ve yetenekli, 'kahraman' bir dedektif, ve de tatminkar bir sonuç sunmaktadırlar. Dedektif romanı parodisi yapan eserlerde ise, dedektifler hiçbir zaman birer kahraman gibi davranmazlar, tam tersine, suçluyu bulamazlar, araştırmalarını yüzlerine bulaştırırlar ve dolayısıyla roman yoruma açık bir son ile bitmek zorunda kalır. Dedektif romanı parodilerinin alışılmış dedektif hikayelerinden farkı, nizamı yapıdan uzaklaşmaları, beceriksiz dedektifler kullanmaları ve zaman zaman onlarla dalga geçmeleri ve bunun doğal bir sonucu olarak okur için doyurucu bir sonu reddetmeleridir.

Yaşam Öyküsü Parodisi

Bir çok kez söyleşilerde Ackroyd, yaşam öyküsü yazımı ile roman yazımı arasında büyük bir fark görmediğini ifade etmiştir. Ackroyd, yaşam öykülerinde roman tekniklerini, romanlarında da yaşam öyküsü tekniklerini rahatlıkla kullanır. Ackroyd'un eserlerinde, yazar için yaşam öyküleri tarih bilgisi gibi 'gerçeklik'

sunmaktan ziyade kurmaca sundukları düşüncesini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. En 'ciddi' yaşam öyküsü sayılabilecek *Dickens* adlı eserinde Charles Dickens'ın kendisinin karakter olarak okuyucunun karşısına çıktığı bölümleri burada örnek olarak gösterebiliriz. Bir yanda 'düz' yaşam öyküsü sayılabilecek eserleri yer almaktadır: *Dickens*, *T. S.Eliot*, *Blake*, *Thomas More* ve son zamanlarda basılan *Shakespeare: Yaşam Öyküsü*. Bir de, tarihsel kişiliklerin karşımıza çıktığı romanları vardırAckroyd'un: *Chatterton*, *Hawksmoor*, *The House of Doctor Dee* (*Doktor Dee'nin Evi*), *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem (Cinayet Sanatı: Roman)*, *The Plato Papers (Plato Yazıları)*, *English Music* (*İngiliz Müziği*) ve *The Lambs of London* (*Londra'nın Kuzuları*). Son olarak da diğer iki listeye de eklenilemeyecek olan *Milton in America* (*Milton Amerika'da*) ve *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (*Oscar Wilde'ın Son Vasiyeti*) eserleri yer almaktadır. Bu eserler, olsa olsa 'düzmece yaşam öyküsü' ve 'düzmece özyaşam öyküsü' olarak tabir edilebilirler. Burada dikkat etmemiz gereken, eserlerin tümünde parodi edilen karakterlerin Londra'lı olmalarıdır. Hepsi Londra'da doğmuş ya da büyümüş olmayabilir, ancak, eserleri Londra ile bağdaştırılmış ve Londra hakkında yazmış olan yazarlardır (bu listede elbette gelecek zaman Londra'sında boy gösteren Plato yer almamaktadır).

Şehrin Yeniden Yazımı

Kentsel dedektif romanları, şehri sadece bir mekan olmaktan ziyade, romana gizem katan, karakterleri yalnızlığa iten bir motif olarak kullanırlar. *The Mysteries of Paris and London* (*Paris ve Londra Gizemleri*) adlı kitabında Robert Maxwell, şehrin dört ana imgesinden bahseder. Maxwell bu kitapta yalnızca dedektif romanlarından bahsediyor olsa da, bu tezin amacı doğrultusunda şehrin imgelerini incelerken sadece dedektif romanlarıyla sınırlı kalmamakta fayda vardır ve şehri bu şekilde kullanan eserlere 'kentsel roman' demek yeterlidir. Maxwell'e göre bu imgeler, şehrin labirent olarak tasvir edilmesi, kalabalık insan toplulukları imgeleri, şehrin panoromik görünümü ve şehirdeki yazı ve kitaplara olan ilgidir. Şehrin kendisi de zaten bir gizem ifade ettiği için, bütün bunlar dedektif romanlarında ayrı bir önem kazanmaktadırlar. Örneğin, Peter Ackroyd'un *Dan Leno and the*

Limehouse Golem (*Cinayet Sanatı: Roman*) adlı romanındaki dini liderler, Londra'da işlenen cinayet ve günahlara Londra'nın kendisinin sebep olduğunu ve olan bitenin şehrin modernleşme sürecinin çok da doğal olmayan sonuçları olduğunu iddia ederler.

Şehrin labirent olarak tasvir edilmesi, İngiliz edebiyat geleneğinde oldukça eskilere dayanır. Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad ve Peter Ackroyd gibi kentsel roman yazarları, sık sık herhangi başka bir sokağa çıkmayan dolambaçlı, sırlar saklayan arka sokaklardan bahsederler. Şehrin gittikçe labirentleşen yapısı özellikle şehrin en hızlı yayıldığı Viktoryen dönemi edebiyatına yansımıştır. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın yoğun ve kesif sisiyle birleşen bu ara sokaklar, hem Londralılar hem de yabancılar için eşit derecede tehlike arz etmektedirler. Labirent gibi sokaklar, şehrin bir çok gizem barındırdığını ve sır sakladığını ima eder ve özellikle dedektif romanlarında suçluları saklamaya yararlar. Suçlular bu sokaklara daha aşina oldukları için yollarını rahatça bulmakta ve karmaşık sokakları kendi amaçları doğrultusunda kullanabilmektedirler (Charles Dickens'ın *Oliver Twist* romanındaki Fagin karakteri buna örnek gösterilebilir).

Yine Viktoryen döneminin kentsel romanlarında rastlanan bir tema, şehrin kalabalığının görüntüsüdür. Bu dönemde başkente göç önemli bir artış gösterdiğinden dolayı hem şehrin çehresi hızla değişmiş, hemde suç oranı oldukça artmıştır. Richard Maxwell'e göre dönemin edebiyatına yansıyan bu kitle görüntüsünün pek de olumlu olmayan iki anlamı olabilir: kalabalığa giren birey kalabalık tarafından dışlanabilir veya kalabalığın içinde kaybolabilir ve bireyliğini yitirir. Örneğin, Charles Dickens, romanlarında şehrin kalabalığını genelde olumsuz bir unsur olarak yansıtır. Dickens'ın romanlarında, sadece açık ve de güneşli havalarda kalabalığın birer parçası olan bireylerin farklılıkları ayırt edilebilir ve dolayısıyla şehrin çeşitliliğini göstererek olumlu bir görüntü olarak ortaya çıkar. Ancak şu da vardır ki, edebiyatta tasvir edilen Londra'da hava hiçbir zaman açık veya güzel olmaz.

Şehrin panoromik görüntüsünün edebiyata yansıması yukarıdaki motiflerle ilişkilidir ve Charles Dickens ve George Gissing'in kullandığı şekliyle, karakterin şehre kuş bakışı bakmasını gerektirir. Bu şekilde karakter şehirde yaşanan olayların içinde yer almaktan ziyade uzak bir gözetmen konumundadır. Karakterin bu uzak

duruşunun sebebi ise az önce tartışılan kentlerin korkutucu görünümlerinde yatar – labirent benzeri sokaklar, yoğun sis ve aşırı kalabalık vb. gibi.

Ackroyd'un da romanlarında sıklıkla yer verdiği kağıt, belge ve kitap kullanımı, kentsel roman yazarlarının tarihselcilik ve dedektif romanlarına olan ilgileriyle alakalıdır. Romanda dedektifin baştan beri aradığı ipucu bir belgeden veya el yazmasından çıkabilir. Postmodern parodilerde ise bu yazılı belgelerin birer taklit çıkma olasılığı yüksektir, çünkü bu romanlarda yazılı tarihin öznelliği sorgulanmaktadır. Örnek olarak, Ackroyd'un *Chatterton* ve *The Lambs of London* romanları neredeyse hepsi sahte çıkan belgelerle doludur. Özellikle Ackroyd'un romanlarında kağıt kullanımı ile ilgili olan bir diğer motif, kütüphane, müze ve sahafların araştırıcı karakterler için (sahte dedektifler) hem tarih bilgisi hem de ipucu sunmalarıdır. Bu tür mekanların kentsel romanlarda sık kullanımı, kütüphane gibi yerlerin, kentlerin küçük ölçekli benzerleri olarak yansıtılmasına sebep olur. Aynı yansıttıkları şehirler gibi gizemlerle dolu ve çıkmaz sokakları boldur.

Chatterton

Ackroyd'un dedektif romanı parodileri arasında en yoğun üstkurmaca teknikleri kullandığı eseri *Chatterton*'dır. Roman genel olarak sahteciliği konu edinmekte ve üç yüzyılda geçen üç ayrı anlatı aracılığıyla metinler arasıcılık, parodi, intihal ve uslüp taklidi gibi teorik kavramların ilişkisini sorgulamaktadır. İlk anlatı, yirminci yüzyılda geçer, harici bir anlatıcı tarafından okura aktarılır ve ana karakter olan Charles Wychwood, Harriet Scope ve Philip Slack'e odaklanır. On dokuzuncu yüzyılın aslatısı ise Henry Wallis'in şair Chatterton'ı konu edinen tablosu için poz veren George Meredith adlı yazara odaklanmaktadır. Son olarak da, Thomas Chatterton'ın zamanında geçen, biri sahte, diğeri ise 'gerçek' olan iki farklı yaşam öyküsüne tanık oluruz. Yirminci yüzyılda geçen anlatı her ne kadar kronolojik devam etse de, araya serpiştirilmiş diğer anlatılar sayesinde okuyucu her daim tetikte kalır ve okuduğunun bir üstkurmaca örneği olduğunu fark etmek zorunda kalır. Farklı karakterlere odaklanıyor olsalar da anlatıların ana temaları ortaktır ve her birinde taklitçilik, intihal ve metinler arasıcılık gibi kavramların arasındaki sınırların yok olması konu edinilir.

İsminden de belli olduğu gibi, *Chatterton* adlı roman on sekizinci yüzyılda yaşamış ve on yedi yaşında ölmüş olan şair Thomas Chattorton'ın yaşam öyküsünün bir parodisidir. Romanın amacı, geleneksel bir yaşam öyküsü yaratmaktan çok, Chatterton'a ne olmuş olabileceği üzerine bir varsayım geliştirmektir. Thomas Chatterton'ın genç yaşta ölümünün bilenen açıklaması, şairin 24 Ağustos 1770 günü, Londra'nın göbeğinde bir tavan arasında arsenik içerek intihar etmiş olmasıdır. Ackroyd'un romanı ise Chatterton'ın ölümüne, biri 'sahte' biri de 'gerçek' olmak üzere iki farklı yorum getirir. Bunlardan ilki, beceriksiz dedektif rolünü üstlenen olarak görülen Chatterton'ın el yazması özyaşam öyküsüdür. Kitabın altıncı bölümü tamamıyle bu 'el yazması' metinden oluşmaktadır. Chatterton'ın kendisi tarafından yazıldığı iddia edilen bu metne göre, şair on yedi yaşında ölmemiş, tam tersine, orta yaşına kadar yaşayıp ölü şairleri taklit ederek geçimini sağlamıştır.

Charles'ın özgün sandığı bu metnin sahte çıkması, Charles'ın ipucu ve kanıtları değerlendirmede ne kadar aciz olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Charles'ın bu konudaki beceriksizliğinin bir sonucu olarak okuyucu dedektif rolünü devralmak zorunda kalır. Her ne kadar kendine çok güvense de Charles acemi davranışlarından dolayı ve Chatterton'ın ölümünün gizemi çözülmeden önce kendisinin ölmesi sebebiyle tam bir geleneksel dedektif parodisi haline gelir.

Chatterton adlı roman, on sekizinci yüzyılda yaşamış şair Chatterton'ın ölümü üzerine varsayımlar ile doludur. Az önce bahsedilen sahte el yazması, on dokuzuncu yüzyılda ressam Henry Wallis tarafından boyanan "Chatterton'ın Ölümü" isimli tablo ve romanın sonunda okurun 'gerçek' olduğunu tahmin ettiği, Chatterton'ın son günlerinin anlatısı bunlar arasında en önemlileridir. Üçüncü bir şahıs tarafından anlatılan romanın bu kısmı, gerçekliğe özenir ve diğer anlatı hatalarını ortaya çıkarmayı kendine amaç edinir. Arsenik zehirlenmesi sonucu bir ölümün 'güzel' bir tablo ortaya çıkaramayacağı açıktır ve Wallis'in bu konu üzerine tablo yapmaya çalışması da Charles'in bulduğu el yazması metin kadar sahtedir.

Romandaki karakterlerin tamamı doğma büyüme Londra'lı olmasalar da hal ve davranışları ile Ackroyd için Londra'lılara özgü olan tiyatral (yapmacık, sahte) tavırlar sergilerler. Bunların arasında kesinlikle en önemlisi yürminci yüzyıl anlatısına ait olan Harriet Scope'dur. Londra'nın sokaklarını sürekli yeniden adlandıran bu karakter, yapmacık tavırları yüzünden son derece sevimsizdir. Yaşamı

boyunca o kadar fazla kişiliğe bürünmüştür ki özyaşam öyküsünü anlatamayacak hale geldiğinden, bunu Charles'dan istemek zorunda kalır. Romanının yirminci yüzyılda geçen kısmında Ackroyd, kendisinden önce Londra'da geçen romanlar yazan yazarlara (özellikle Charles Dickens'a) adeta selam gönderir. Yarattığı karakterlerin bir kısmı inkar edilemeyecek ölçüde Dickensvaridir ve iki yazarda da eski Londra'nın abartılı karakterlere donatılmış müzikholüne olan ilgi bu karakterler sayesinde ortaya çıkmaktadır.

The House of Doctor Dee (*Doktor Dee'nin Evi*)

The House of Doctor Dee adlı romanın yapısı, *Chatterton*'ınkine benzemektedir. Profesyonel bir araştırmacı olan Matthew Palmer'a babasından bir ev miras kalır ve evin ruhani havasından etkilenen Matthew, evin babasından önceki sahiplerini araştırmaya başlar. Bu romanda, Matthew'ın yirminci yüzyılda geçen bölümlerinin yanı sıra, on altıncı yüzyılda geçen ikinci anlatıda Matthew'in araştırdığı John Dee karakterinin hayatını takip eder okur. Matthew'in yer aldığı günümüze ait bölümler numaralandırılmışken, John Dee'e ait olanlara "Dolap," "Bahçe," "Kütüphane" ve "Şehir" vb. gibi başlıklar konmuştur.

On altıncı yüzyılda yaşamış olan John Dee, matematik, astronomi, coğrafya ve astrolojinin yanı sıra büyücülük ile de ilgilenmiştir ve Ackroyd'un romanında da bu yönü öne çıkmaktadır. Matthew ve Dee'nin anlatılarını birbirine bağlayan ortak motif, homunkülüs (laboratuvar yapımı insan) yaratımıdır. Her ne kadar büyü ve sihir ile ilgilendiği tarihsel açıdan doğru olsa da, John Dee'nin hayatının herhangi bir evresinde böyle bir deney ile ilgilendiği belirtilmemiştir. Ackroyd bu romanında Dee'nin yaşam öyküsünü parodi ettiği için, Dee'nin 'gerçek' diye bildiğimiz hayatını özellikle değiştirir. Dee'nin hayatındaki bu sapmalar, anlatıyı kesinlikle bozmaz ve Ackroyd'un amacı burada okuyucuya okuduğunun bir kurgudan ibaret olduğunu hatırlatmaktır. Hatta, okuyucunun bir "roman"dan zaten herhangi bir "gerçeklik" beklemiyor olması gerekmektedir.

Bu romanda dedektif rolüne bürünen kişi romanın yirminci yüzyılda geçen anlatısının baş kahramanı Matthew Palmer'dır. John Dee de aslında kendi

bölümlerinde kendine has araştırmalar yapmaktadır. Farklı sebeplerden dolayı karakterlerin ikisi de dedektif rolünde başarılı olamaz. John Dee'nin sorunu (birbirinden farklı ilgi alanlarından da belli olacağı üzere) tek bir araştırmaya odaklanamamasıdır. Dee'nin diğer bir zayıflığı ise romanın sonuna doğru ona ihanet eden Edward Kelley'e olan aşırı güvenidir. Matthew'ın da aynı şekilde başarısını engelleyen zayıflıkları vardır. Babasıyla olan hassas ilişkisi sebebiyle araştırmasına duygusal açıdan fazlasıyla bağlanan Matthew'ın akıl sağlığı romanın ortasına doğru okuyucu tarafından sorgulanmaya başlar. Kendisine miras kalan eve taşınması üzerine etrafta sesler duymaya ve tuhaf rüyalar ve sanrılar görmeye başlar. Matthew'ın bu halleri romanda yaşadığı evi ile olan ruhani ilişkisi sayesinde açıklanabilir. Evde gördüğü hayaller, Dee'nin on altıncı yüzyılda tanıştığı ve evine davet ettiği insanlardır.

John Dee, Matthew Palmer ve Peter Ackroyd'un ortak özelliği, tarihe olan merakları ve Londra'lı oluşlarıdır. Karakterleri birbirine bağlayan, hatta birbirlerinin devamı olmalarını sağlayan, onları tek bir yerde buluşturan Dee'nin evidir. Bu evin ve içinde bulunduğu şehrin zamansız ve kutsal olduğunu anladıkları an, Dee ve Matthew araştırmalarının sonucuna ulaşırlar. Okuyucunun beklediğinin aksine, somut bir açıklama yoktur bu romanın sonunda. Onun yerine, Londra'nın içinden geçen nehir gibi akışkan bir yapısı olduğunu ve şehrin, yüzyıllar insanları ayırsa dahi onları birleştirme gücü olduğuna tanık oluruz.

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem (*Cinayet Sanatı: Roman*)

Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem adlı romanda *Chatterton* ve *The House of Doctor Dee* (Doktor Dee'nin Evi) romanlarında gördüğümüz çoklu anlatım tekniğine rastlanmaz. Diğer romanlarda olduğu gibi farklı yüzyıllarda yaşayan farklı insanların öykülerini ve birbirleriyle olan bağlantılarını anlatmak yerine, Ackroyd, bu romanda aynı yıllarda yaşayan insanların öykülerini aktarır okura. 1880-1881 yıllarında geçen *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, anlatım çeşitliliği açısından çarpıcıdır. Romanın ana öyküsü kocasını öldürmekten yargılanan Elizabeth Cree etrafında, bir diğer öyküde Limehouse semti civarında işlenen ve medya tarafından

"Limehouse Golemi" takma adlı takılan caninin cinayetleri etrafında gelişmektedir. Romanın başlarında bu iki anlatı arasında bir bağlantı var gibi gözükmese de sonradan cinayetlerin ardında ortak bir tarih, hatta ortak bir katil olduğu ortaya çıkar. Elizabeth Cree'nin hikayesi dışında, Karl Marx, George Gissing ve Dan Leno gibi, cinayetlerin çözülmesinde önemli yerleri olan ve okurun 'gerçek' olduğunu bildiği karakterler yer almaktadır. 19. yüzyıl romancısı Gissing ve Karl Marx soruşturmalarda dedektif tarafından şüpheli olarak düşünülürken, zamanın komedyen ve taklitçilerinden Dan Leno ise golem'in bir sonraki kurbanı olacağı konusunda şüphelenilmektedir.

Bu farklı öyküler, yazarın 'gerçek' olduğunu iddia ettiği Elizabeth'in eşi John Cree'nin günlüğü, Elizabeth'in duruşma kayıtları, Elizabeth'in kendi ağzından hayat hikayesi ve çeşitli gazete haberleri gibi çeşitli anlatı türleri aracılığı ile aktarılmaktadırlar. Özellikle Elizabeth Cree'nin hayatını kendisinden dinleme fırsatı bulamayan dedektifler golem'in kim olduğunu asla bulamazlar. Ancak, bu fırsatı yakalayan okur detaylara dikkat ettiği sürece dedektif olma imkanını tadabilirler. Bu anlatıda ortaya çıkan en önemli husus, Elizabeth'in hem kocasını öldürmekten suçlu olması, hemde golem'in işlediği cinayetlerden suçlu olmasıdır. Okur, Elizabeth'in anlatısını okudukça, etrafında onu rahatsız eden insanların nasıl birden ortadan kaybolduklarını, veya bir anda nasıl 'tesadüfen'ölüverdiklerine tanık olur.

Diğer romanlarda olduğu gibi ana karakterin geçmişten bir Londralı ile bir bağlantısı yoktur bu romanda, ama Londra'da yaşamış bir çok katili taklit etmeye çalışmaktadır. Elizabeth'in kökenleri dolayısıyla (Charles Wychwood'un Thomas Chatterton'ı gibi) tek değil, bir çoktur. Romandaki diğer 'gerçek' karakterlerin öyküleri ise tarih ve yaşam öyküsü kitapları ile kıyaslandığında tutarlıdırlar. Ancak her zamanki gibi Ackroyd, bazı önemsiz gibi gözüken detayları değiştirme ihtiyacı duymuştur. Örneğin, George Gissing söz konusu yıllarda gerçekte de Londra'da yaşamıştır, alkolik ve de fahişelik yapan bir eşi vardır ve Britanya Müzesinin Okuma Odası'nda uzun saatler geçirmiştir, ama romanda öne sürülen ve yazarken gösterildiği hiçbir eseri yazdığına dair kanıt bulunmamaktadır. Karl Marx'ın öyküsünde de benzer bir durum vardır. Ackroyd, Marx'ın çalışma odasının dahi en ince detaylarını araştırmış ve romanına dahil etmiş olsa da, kendi anlatısının sürekliliği için ona gerçekten var olduğuna dair bir kanıt bulunmayan Solomon Weil

adlı bir arkadaş vermiştir. Ackroyd'un burada altını çizdiği nokta, okuduğumuz kitabın 'gerçekleri' yansıtmasını beklediğimiz bir yaşam öyküsü olmadığı, bir kurmaca olduğudur.

Bu amaç doğrultusunda, romandaki dedektifleri de parodi eder Ackroyd. Her ne kadar bu romanda dedektiflik rolü büyük ölçüde okura verilmiş olsa da, cinayet tahkikatı yapan müfettiş Kildare, aynı Charles ya da Matthew gibi işini pek de beceremeyen bir dedektiftir. Kildare, Sherlock Holmes ve Doktor Watson'ın arkadaşlığına bir gönderme olarak evini George Flood adlı bir inşaat mühendisi ile paylaşmaktadır. Bu romanda Ackroyd'un parodisinin komedi yönü ağır basar ve dedektifi eşcinselliğini saklayan bir adam olarak lanse eder. Yüzeysel olarak Flood, aynı Doktor Watson'ın Sherlock Holmes'a yaptığı gibi soruşturmalarında yardım ediyor görünse de, arada sırada birbirlerinin bıyıklarını okşamaları ya da alınlarından öpmelerinden anlaşılacağı gibi, aralarındaki ilişki tamda Holmes-Watson ilişkisi gibi değildir. Daha önce de belirtildiği gibi, bu romanda dedektif rolünü okur üstlenmek durumundadır, ancak golem konusunda kendisi de romandaki dedektiften daha bilgili değildir. Her ne kadar Elizabeth Cree'nin kendi anlattığı hayat hikayesi okura üstünlük kazandırsa da, okurun romanın en başından itibaren kendisine 'gerçek' diye sunulan John Cree'nin günlüğünün sahte olduğunu tahmin etmesine imkan yoktur.

The House of Doctor Dee romanında da olduğu gibi, Ackroyd bu romanda da Londra'yı tanımlamaya çalışmamaktadır. Bunun yerine amacı, kendisinden önce Londra hakkında yazmış ve dolayısıyla şehri tanımlamada emeği geçmiş yazarları günümüz okurlarına hatırlatmaktır. Bunların arasında ise romanda sık sık adları geçen Thomas De Quincey, George Gissing, Oscar Wilde ve Charles Dickens yer almaktadırlar. Ackroyd okurlarına bu yazarları hatırlatmaktan öte, aynı anda onları eleştirir de. Bu romanda, yaşam öyküsü ve dedektif parodilerinin yanı sıra, gerçekçilik ve doğalcılık akımları da (özellikle Gissing söz konusu olduğu için) parodi edilmektedirler. Böylece, Londra'nın her anlatıcı ile nasıl yeni bir kimlik kazandığını ortaya çıkarır ve şehri tek bir yazarın tanımlamasının da imkansız olduğunun altını çizer. Aynı golemler gibi, Londra'nın da anlatılmadığı sürece bir şekli veya biçimi yoktur.

Hawksmoor

Chatterton ve *The House of Doctor Dee*'de de yaptığı gibi bu romanda Ackroyd, iki ayrı yüz yılda geçen ve anlatılarda ki ana karakterlerin birbirleriyle ruhani bir bağlantısı olduğu bir yapıyı kullanır. Söz konusu iki karakter, 18. yüz yılda yaşamış mimar Nicholas Dyer ve 20. yüzyılda yaşayan Dedektif Nicholas Hawksmoor'dur. Ancak, romana ismini veren Hawksmoor karakterinin romanın ortasına kadar ortaya çıkmaması ilginçtir. İlk bölümde anlatı Dyer'ındır ve mimarın hem günlük olayları, hem de yaşam öyküsünü aktardığı bir günlük olarak şekillendirilmiştir. Yıl 1711'dir ve 1666'da gerçekleşmiş 'Büyük Yangın' sonrası yıkılmış kiliselerin yerine inşaa edilecek olan yedi kilisenin yeniden yapımı Nicholas Dyer'a aittir. Anlatısı sürdükçe, Dyer'ın bu kiliselerin yapımı için şeytani fikirleri olduğu ortaya çıkar. Amacı, her bir kilise için erkek bir çocuk kurban etmek ve kiliseleri "cennettin alt kürelerindeki yedi gezegen" ile paralel olabilecekleri şekilde yerleştirmektir. Dyer kiliseleri için kurban verdikçe, bu cinayetler 20. yüzyılda geçen anlatıda tekrarlanır ve Dedektif Hawksmoor ortaya çıkana kadar, bu kiliselerin 20. yüzyıldaki halleri anlatılır. İki farklı yüzyılda geçen bu anlatılar eşit derecede önemlidir ve her bölümde okurun karşısına farklı bir yüzyıl, karakterler, yazım üslubu ve anlatım tarzı çıkar. Yazarın romana verdiği bu biçim, okurun romanı okurkenki hızını etkilemektedir. Yüzyıllar arası İngilizcenin kullanımı ve kelimeler değiştiğinden, okur 18. yüzyılda geçen kısımlarda okumasını yavaşlatır ve bölümden bölüme geçiş yaparken elindeki kitabın bir kurmaca olduğunu sürekli hatırlamak zorunda kalır.

Özellikle tarihsel açıdan iki ana karakterin birbiriyle olan ilişkileri ilginçtir. Tarihsel olarak, 18. yüzyılda yaşamış olan ve 'Büyük Yangın' üzerine yeni kiliseler inşaa etmek için vazife verilen kişi, bu dönemde mimarlık yapan Nicholas Hawksmoor'dur. Ackroyd ise bu ismi romanında 20. yüzyılda yaşayan dedektife vermiştir. Ancak romanın sonuna doğru okur 'Dyer' isminin anlamını kavrayabilir. 'Dyer' yazılımı ile İngilizce de '"boyacı" anlamına gelen bu soyadın, 'dier' yazıldığında "ölücü," "ölen," "ölmeyi görev bilen" gibi anlamları vardır. Yani, 18. yüzyılda yaşayan Dyer, yüzyıllar boyunca ölüp ölüp dirilmiş ve en son 20. yüzyılda

Dedektif Nicholas Hawksmoor ile ruhani bir bağlantı kurmuştur. Bu iki karakterin aralarında iki yüzyıl olmasına rağmen şaşırtıcı bağları vardır. Aynı ön adı paylaşmalarının yanı sıra, yardımcılarının isimleri nerdeyse aynıdır (Walter Pyne ve Walter Payne) ve ikisinin de son derecede meraklı ev sahibeleri vardır (Bayan Best ve de Bayan West). Bu isim değişimleri, dilbilimsel olarak da ilginçtir ve Ackroyd bu benzerlikler hakkında yazarak İngilizcenin gelişimini açık bir şekilde ima eder. İkili aynı zamanda Londra'nın aynı yerinde yaşamaktadırlar ve anlatılarında sürekli şehrin aynı yerlerini ziyaret ederler.

Aynı zamanda Başkomiser olan Nicholas Hawksmoor, Ackroyd'un diğer dedektifleri gibi beceriksizdir ve Ackroyd'un dedektif parodisi olarak kabul edilen tüm romanlarının arasında, en bariz şekilde parodi edilen dedektiftir. Bulduğu ipuçları araştırmayı herhangi bir şekilde aydınlatmak yerine, dedektifi daha fazla şaşırtır ve bocalamasına sebep olur. Hawksmoor zaten Dyer kadar çok yönlü bir karakter olarak yazılmamıştır ve karakterin 'kurmaca' olduğu okura çok belli edilir. Hawksmoor, Sherlock Holmes ve Poe'nun Dupin'i gibi kurmaca dedektiflerin de inandığı gibi, gözlem ve tümdengelim yöntemlerinin inanıcısıdır. Maalesef, daha önce karşılaştıklarına hiç benzemeyen bu vaka için daha önce kullandığı yöntemler işe yaramamaktadır. Geleneksel bir dedektif olarak yetiştirilen Hawksmoor, belirli bir düzen ve nizama alışkındır ancak romanın gittikçe karmaşıklaşan yapısı yüzünden hem Hawksmoor'un hemde okurun beklentileri boşa çıkar. Dedektif burada okurun rahat hissetmesini sağlayamaz, hatta tam tersine, dedektifin becerikziliği okurun sabrını taşırır.

Hawksmoor'un cinayetleri çözememesinin bir sebebi de Londra'yı yeterince tanımıyor olmasıdır. Çözmeye çalıştığı cinayetlerin Londra'da daha önce işlenmiş cinayetler ile bağlantılı olduğunu anlasa da, Londra'nın karışıklığını olumlu olarak algılamak yerine, kaos ortamı olduğunu düşünüp kendine şehirde tehlikede hisseder. Hawksmoor şehrin ve içinde yaşayanların döngüselliğini anlamadığı sürece zaten cinayetleri çözemeyecektir. Ne zaman ki şehrin ve Nicholas Dyer'ın sürekli kendi kendilerini tekrar ettiğini öğrenir, o zaman 17. yüzyıl mimarının aradığı katil olduğunu anlar. Hawksmoor, ancak romanın son sayfalarında cinayet işlenen tüm kiliselerin aynı adam tarafından inşaa edildiğini anlar ve Dyer'ı araştırmaya karar verir. Dyer'ın yapmaya çalıştığını tam olarak anlayabilmesi için, Dyer'ın son olarak

inşaa ettiği ve 'ilk' kez 'öldüğü' kiliseye gidip mimarın ruhunu bulması gerekmektedir. Little St. Hugh adlı kilisenin karanlığında en sonunda iki karakter birleşirler. İki karakterin de farklı yüzyıllarda olsa dahi aynı sokaklardan geçerek aynı kiliseye gidip bu ruhani birleşmeyi yaşamaları, Dyer'ın artık ismini ve vücudunu tamamlayarak ölümsüzlüğe eriştiğini ima eder. Ancak romanın anlamını sadece Dyer'ın tamamladığı bir daire olarak algılayarak basitleştirmemeye özen göstermek gerekir. Şehrin tarihi sürecinde tekrar edilen ve dolaşmaya devam eden tek ruh Dyer'ınki değildir. 20. yüzyılda geçen anlatıda bir çok ikinci derece karakter ve olay tekrarlanmaktadır, bu da, Ackroyd'un her romanında altını çizdiği gibi mekanın yaydığı duygular sayesinde olmaktadır. Londra'nın 'sonsuz' olmasının da sebebi budur Ackroyd'a göre, şehirde herşey birbirinin tekrarı olduğundan dolayı, şehirde herhangi bir olayın ya da kimsenin son bulmasına imkan yoktur.

Sonuç

Ackroyd için Londra, İngiliz kültürel ve edebi mirasının manevi merkezidir. Romanlarında yaşam öykülerini yeniden yazdığı yazarlar veya sanatçıların her biri, Londra'yı kendisi gibi görmüş ve eserlerine konu edinmiştir. Ackroyd da aynı şeyi onları karakter olarak kullanarak ve dolayısıyla yaşam öykülerini parodi ederek Londra'yı yeniden yazar. Romanlarında Londra hiçbir zaman sadece ve sadece olayların geçtiği mekan olarak kalmaz. Ackroyd'un romanlarında Londra manevi bir merkez olarak hizmet eder ve zaman kavramı bu ruhani özellik yüzünden karmaşık bir hal alır. Ackroyd'un Londra'sında zaman sabit olmak yerine, sürekli kendini tekrar eden, ilerlemek yerine genelde dairesel hareket eden ve Londra'yı ölümsüzleştiren bir kavramdır. Londra'da zaman, aynı Thames nehri gibi akışkandır, sabit duramaz ve Londra'nın geçmişi, modern şehir ile birlikte yaşamaya devam etmektedir. Aynı şey şehirde yaşayanlar için de geçerlidir. Ackroyd'un romanlarında tarihsel açıdan birbirinden ayrı iki karakteri romanın sonunda birleştirmesinin sebebi, Londra'da geçen zamanın, aynı Londra gibi tanımlanmasının imkansız olduğunu göstermektir. Ancak, günümüzde yaşayan Londralılar araştırmaya devam ettiği sürece (romanlardaki 20. yüzyıl dedektifleri gibi) ve şehri

daha önce tanımlamaya çabalamış yazarları okudukları sürece kendi yorumlarını getirmeleri mümkündür.

APPENDIX B

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Degree	**Institution**	**Year of Graduation**
MA	Başkent, AMER	2002
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Year	**Place**	**Enrollment**
2002- Present	Başkent, AMER	Lecturer
2000-2002	Başkent, AMER	Research Assistant

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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PUBLICATIONS

1. Gürenci, Berkem. "Representations of Women and Writing in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and Peride Celal's *Üç Kadının Romanı*." *Kadın/Woman 2000: Journal for Woman Studies*. 4.2 (2003): 101-114.