

## **Peter Ackroyd's Distorted Psychogeography**

Khanim Garayeva

University of Szeged, Hungary

*This paper focuses on Peter Ackroyd's unique type of psychogeographical writing. Therefore, apart from an overall elaboration on his works about London, it addresses his historiographic metafictional novels *Hawksmoor* (1985) and *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993). These esoteric novels provide insight into Ackroyd's writing about the city in different time periods and make it possible to delve deeper into what this paper argues is his distinctive manner of implementing the notions of psychogeography. At the same time, it draws parallels from classical and contemporary psychogeography where appropriate and highlight his utilisation of it. The main aim of this paper is to reveal the ways in which Peter Ackroyd uses walking in the city to reflect its manipulative power over his characters which results in the transformation of their identities.*

### **Keywords**

Psychogeography; Peter Ackroyd; city writing; metamorphosis; occultism; city walking

### **Peter Ackroyd's London writing**

For London writers (Dickens, Huxley, Orwell, Morrison, etc.), the city's history is in opposition to the real past and resembles a place with a symbolic essence that is linked to class and power. The city is a constructed environment, and its existence depends on the culture's understanding of time and space, which is based on the "interlocking relations between place, identity and cognition" (Hayes 9). Authors compose London and London composes its individuals through its landscape. The transhistorical value of a *genius loci* (a Latin term meaning "the spirit of the place", Oxford Reference) that serves to undermine the layers of time is essential for this style. The past has not disappeared, it is present and manifests repeatedly. In this regard, Hugill equates Peter Ackroyd's time to "a lava flow from some unknown source of fire" rather

than a continuous “stream moving in one direction” (Hugill, *The Observer*). “There are parts of London”, he says in *The Observer*, “where time has actually hardened and come to an end” (ibid.). And as Will Self puts it:

some see psychogeography as concerned with the personality of place itself. Thus, in his novels and biographies, Peter Ackroyd practises a ‘phrenology’ of London. He feels up the bumps of the city and so defines its character and proclivities. To read Ackroyd is to become aware that while the physical and political structure of London may have mutated down the ages, as torrents of men and women coursed through its streets, yet their individuality is as nothing, set beside the city’s own enduring personification. (Self 9)

Peter Ackroyd’s concept of psychogeography shows its context in a manner that is totally different from both the disciples of classical psychogeography, such as Guy Debord, Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, and Michel de Certeau, as well as from his own contemporaries such as James Graham Ballard and his “death of affect”, Ian Sinclair’s reshaped psychogeography, Patrick Keiller’s “return of Robinson”, Nick Papadimitriou’s deep topography or conscious walks, Phil Smith’s mythogeography, Will Self’s passion to explore, etc. Despite the fact that all of these authors are followers of Guy Debord, “there are still profound differences between [them]. While [they] all want to unpick this conundrum, the mode in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place, the ways in which [they] go about the task, are various” (Self 9). Barry Hugill calls Ackroyd “a writ” and “sane” as opposed to other London psychogeographers, yet treats his “merging of time past with time present [as resonating] with the crazies” (*The Observer*).

In order to understand Peter Ackroyd’s writing on the city properly, Barry Lewis proposes “to reverse the metaphor of the city-as-human and to consider this English writer as if he were a city. He has his landmarks, his suburbs, and his neglected boroughs” (Lewis 2) that are manifested in his novels through his own physical walking through the London streets. Ackroyd himself is a passionate enthusiast of “investigative sorties” into locations rich with intriguing stories, “strange, brutal and perplexing tales,” “thieves, con-men, pimps, prostitutes and murderers” (Rule 10). Such shabby and incongruous locations are particularly appealing destinations for Ackroyd’s London strolls because they are also hard to comprehend, much like Ackroyd’s maze-like writing about the city. They are the outcome of years of wandering through a London that has no end, as the city’s streets “provide a wealth of treasure

and their exploration can take a lifetime” (Rule 11). In the foreword to Fiona Rule’s *The Worst Street in London*, Ackroyd notes that he found Dorset Street, which appears as the subject of the book, “by accident” while following a path from one place to another in the hopes of finding defunct remnants of “a London that has long since vanished” (ibid.). The city that Ackroyd reports on discovering is not contemporary London, but one that has long been lost. This oblivious London is precisely where Ackroyd’s characters stroll. While this constitutes the original concept of psychogeography, Ackroyd’s technique of twisting its traditional conventions relies mostly on his fictional construction of the topography of London and the atmosphere he imposes on it, his own interpretation of historical places, and the irrational events occurring in the city of his own creation. At first glance, his characters wander aimlessly with no particular logic as genuine pedestrians, however, as the narration progresses, they turn out to be a part of a challenge with an important mission that turns them into the bearers of a duty. This very haphazard and random character of quest-like serpentine walks detaches Peter Ackroyd from true psychogeography. However, the intertextuality of his overall literary activity may serve as a clue to the significance of certain places. The novels to be analysed do not reveal the powers originating from the places depicted in them at first glance, since they present normal places that have existed for centuries. However, the review of Ackroyd’s *London: The Biography* could provide additional information on these places that have “chronological resonance with earlier events, activities and inhabitants”, which has shaped the depicted parts of the city “moved by or swayed by some unknown source of power” (Coverley, *Psychogeography* 124). However, it is far from being a “dry chronological study” of London but is instead rhapsodically portrayed feelings infused with “its history, its traditions, its pulses and its pauses” (Lewis 1). Consequently, it placed Ackroyd in the centre of the period when psychogeography became a prominent literary style in the 2000s.

Peter Ackroyd’s psychogeography is specific in the sense that his “own highly contentious and idiosyncratic theory of temporal and spatial correspondences within London” (Coverley, *Psychogeography* 124) is absolutely in harmony with the emotional inheritance of certain locations and makes them a “psycho-spatial-temporal-fictional construct” (Chalupský 155). This inheritance is not a coalition of autobiographical, historical or some kind of literary eclecticism, nor is it politically subversive, rather it is about the “intricate, subtle and contradictory relationships between personal and literary histories within the city” (160). Almost all of the author’s London novels are accompanied

by *genii locorum*, the “spirit of the place,” that has a transcendental presence and an impact on the lives and psyches of its denizens resulting in diverse attitudes towards the city or vice versa. In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) and *The Casebook of Victor Frankenstein* (2008), the place is Limehouse, a location that has had the exotic diversions of romantic marine stories and oriental trickery since Charles Dickens, Oscar Wilde, Thomas Burke, and Sax Rohmer’s depictions. Its community gained popularity for being gamblers and opium-smokers and made the place a dark spot in the history of London, thus is of a great significance among the sites of such character. In *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003), it is Clerkenwell, in *The Lambs of London* (2004) it is Central London, in *Three Brothers* (2013) it is Camden, etc. These are the “less salubrious places” that Ackroyd has been interested in since his childhood (*The Collection* 128). Such places can also be interpreted as having a “quintessential literary quality” (Tso v) characteristic to the London of Ackroyd’s perceptions. Thus, to reflect the literary nature of the ambiguous atmosphere infusing these places, Ackroyd employs a place and space that transcends the limits of rational understanding. The city’s power penetrates into its inhabitants’ minds and affects their mental states, thus transforming individuals into specific kinds of media for the reflection of their own actions on themselves.

The psychogeography of Ackroyd’s London presents the city as “an organic being” (qtd. in Lewis 1) that has not only a “mystical body,” the head of which is represented by Jesus and other body parts by citizens, but also “the form of a young man with his arms outstretched in a gesture of liberation; the figure [...] embodies the energy and exultation of a city continually expanding in great waves of progress and of confidence (*London: The Biography* 30). Here might be found the ‘heart of London beating warm’” (ibid.). The capital with the emotional climate of its terrain reflects the re-enchanted, uncanny and dark settings of the local histories, transforming them into gothic or rather neo-gothic environs. In Peter Ackroyd’s gothic psychogeography, the city mirrors what its inhabitants experience in its hidden and malevolent corners. London is a literary city that is being born every time someone writes in it or about it. This writing is not a formal documentation, but rather “fictionalising, mythologising and parodying” its occurrences with “self-reflective” comments about the narrated events and intimations over imitations “in the process of their creation” (Chalupský 239).

While speaking about the diverse nature of Peter Ackroyd’s use of psychogeography, Petr Chalupský uses the term “psychogeographic antiquarianism” (159), where psychogeography serves as an indicator of

a signified concept of antiquarianism. Chalupský's main argument in doing so is the fact that the cyclical pattern of the events in the city not only affects the behaviours of its inhabitants but also their personalities. Due to this very quality his *modus operandi* is the implementation of "a psychogeographic approach with a kind of historico-mystical antiquarianism" (162) that is more engaged with the "character of the city, which involves and by far surpasses that of its dwellers" (*ibid.*).

Needless to say, antiquarianism is the study of a historical past that also includes a special focus on historic sites with an emphasis on factual evidence rather than theories. However, while elucidating on the historicity of antiquarianism, Rebecca Gould ascribes it to activities engaging "with the ancient than with the recent past" (217). John Cunnally in his "Antiquarianism and the origins of flatbed matrix" also associates antiquarianism with "the lost world of the ancients" (9). Indicative of the essence of historiography in Peter Ackroyd's novels is the fact that it is confined to rather the recent past than the ancient. Thus, the historical value of the psychogeography in 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>-century London does not imbricate with Gould's definition of antiquarianism. In Ackroyd's case, the characters are walking in the city which is significant because of the figures like Dr Dee, Hawksmoor, Dyer, etc. who happen to live in the London of those particular centuries. No-one strolls in certain places to reveal, or due to, their worth, but instead the locations paying homage to the mentioned personages attract their subconscious and dictate the manifestation of their altered psyches. Thus, the main emphasis is on the nature of psychogeography itself in relation to the denizens of the city rather than its historical authenticity.

German scholar Andreas Mahler's study of literary cities helps to identify Ackroyd's city writing more precisely. Mahler notes that in order to put a city on a textual urban map, there is a need for "city scripts" (the material city) which later give way to "cityscapes" (the semantic city) (Mahler 2020). London has always been one of the central figures among world metropolises mediated through different forms of literary and visual textualisations such as paintings, films, novels, history books, etc. Peter Ackroyd's access to these city scripts has been granted by his physical strolls through the London streets, the result of which is his imaginary city projecting his subjective experiences and accommodating his characters. Ackroyd's cityscape resembles the Textstadt that Mahler proposes in opposition to the Stadttext in his anthology *Stadt-Bilder* (1999). While Stadttext is a text "in which urban space is a dominant theme" apart from being a mere setting, Textstadts constitute "the fictional

cities that create their own intra-textual reality” with references to cities existing outside the given text. In Peter Ackroyd’s example, the *genii locorum* of his novels are these specific places linking the fictional urban spaces of London with their worldly equivalents. On the basis of Mahler’s conceptualisation and the aforementioned interrelation, Ackroyd’s literary psychogeography can be clearly observed in his two London novels – *Hawksmoor* and *The House of Doctor Dee*. Both novels represent literary psychogeography through their characters’ strolls through phantasmic and spectral London streets.

### ***Hawksmoor***

The focal point of *Hawksmoor* is the ley lines theory that was introduced by Alfred Watkins in the 1920s. The concept of ley lines is based on the mapping of a landscape aligned by straight lines linking landmarks and historically prominent locations (Thurgill 2015). Thus, it was a new way of reading the city that was first applied to the landscapes on the outskirts of London. However, some urban leys were also identified by Watkins, and they later inspired Iain Sinclair to align Nicholas Hawksmoor’s churches in his poem *Lud Heat* (1975). This exact idea is presented in Peter Ackroyd’s *Hawksmoor* as well.

Among Peter Ackroyd’s London novels, *Hawksmoor* is the one with the richest psychogeographical features thanks to its playful mapping of London churches so that they absorb the evil that “transcends the limitations of space and time” (Lewis 44). The novel has two parallel narratives, with first one illuminating the construction of churches by Christopher Wren’s brilliant student Nicholas Dyer in the 18th century, and the second, contemporary storyline tells of police detective Nicholas Hawksmoor’s attempts to solve cases of murder in the churches in the 20th century. Nicholas Dyer was a gifted architect who spent his childhood strolling around the textstadt, reading the city as a palimpsest, and noting his version of the history of the streets in his sketchbook using his eighteenth-century English:

Brick Lane, which is now a long well-paved Street, was a deep dirty Road, frequented by Carts fetching Bricks that way into White-chappel from Brick-kilns in the Fields... Here I rambled as a Boy... and as I felt the City under my Feet I had a habit of rowling Phrases around my Head... which I would then inscribe in my Alphabeticall Pocket-Book... Thus would I wander, but as like as not I would take my self to a little Plot of Ground

close by Angell Alley and along the New Key... I never had any faculty in telling of a Story, and one such as mine is will be contemned by others as a meer Winter Tale rather than that they should be brought to be afraid of another World and subjected to common Terrours which they despised before; for thus, to cut short a long Preamble, I have come to the most grievous story of the Plague. (17)

It can be assessed from the excerpt that this young boy is an urban walker of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. His brilliant knowledge of London streets is the result of his daily walks. He has advanced his creative imagination to the level of making up self-composed stories. Dyer is not an ordinary boy, but sensible and bizarre in equal measure. Thus, this child, who is unique and enthralling at the same time, is a perfect vehicle to convey London's apotropaic order. For this reason, the novel features *Mirabilis*, an evil figure who saves Dyer from a fire and channels London's desire for sacrifices into his consciousness. Therefore, this child with an unusual, imaginative mind grows into a devilish creation of chaos and confusion who strives for salvation by building and locating his churches in an occult pattern and burying human sacrifices in their foundations. These actions presage the events of the twentieth-century city. Each killing that took place in the 18<sup>th</sup> century has an exact counterpart in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that is the same not only in the style and location of the murder, but also according to the names of the people involved. From this perspective, the London of *Hawksmoor* is a timeless and everlasting city where events recur in cyclical patterns. It is bloated, unrestrained, uncontrollable, and mirrors the incarnation of the devil as the killings of the 18<sup>th</sup> century take place again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The composition and repetition of words at the ends and the beginnings of the chapters are constructed in such a way that the two centuries seem to be a continuation of one another without the gap of two hundred years between them. This is characteristic of all the chapters throughout the book.

... Then, with the television still on, [Hawksmoor] walked into the next room, lay down upon his bed, and did not wake up when the morning light lay in a band across his face.

...

THE RAYES of the Morning did not rouse me, and when I woke I scarce knew in what House or Place or Year I found my self. (195)

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Detective Hawksmoor's mind is the reflection of his London, a place of doom and insanity where human bodies are found in innocent and peaceful places like churches throughout the city. Hawksmoor's historical counterpart, as was mentioned, is well acquainted with London's topography and is exceptionally aware of the city, including its less obvious and covert mechanisms and phenomena. Thus, the sacrifice of boys in the construction of the churches built by Dyer in the 18<sup>th</sup> century resonate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and manifest themselves in Spitalfields, Limehouse, Wapping, St George-in-the-East, St Anne's, and St Mary Woolnoth, the same churches that still exist in the modern period. In reality, these sacred places are in the shape of a constellation, as Iain Sinclair notes, "to form an Egyptian hieroglyph that might have been intended by the architect to work some spell across the city it encompassed" (Sinclair, *The Bohemian Blog*). To add more occult ideas to the novel's psychogeography and draw more attention to the enticing walks, Ackroyd implements the idea in *Hawksmoor* that churches are in "a triangular relation to each other and with the fourth slightly apart so that the whole device resembled an arrow" (166). The realisation of this alignment, which Nicholas Hawksmoor spent a great deal of time uncovering, was made possible by his walks through these places. When he starts to see a pattern among these murders, and then with the trilateral alignment of the churches set by Dyer in the outskirts of the city, he stops strolling in the city centres and crowded streets and instead turns to the places of isolation and solitude like "down Brick Lane to Christ Church, Spitalfields, passing Monmouth Street and turning down Eagle Street where the east wall of the old church rose among the ruined houses" (188), experiencing the cursed city's oppressive power. Each of these areas is well-known for its "sensibility of disorientation, excess, laughter, and, not infrequently, violence and darkness, which no reading can domesticate or rationalize" (Wolfreys 128).

The choice of locations, where Hawksmoor is in constant psychogeographical movement, is not random. The spirit and energy of these genii locorum enchant him to do so, and as a result, they influence the detective's thinking and help him succeed in his quest to find the architect, or rather his reincarnation. These locations coincide with the exact places that mirror Dyer's mindset, and then invade Hawksmoor's consciousness as well. Therefore, he starts to follow a tramp called "The Architect", who seems to be the murderer, or Dyer's reincarnation, or Hawksmoor's own subconscious. As the novel progresses, blind walks in the outskirts of London affect the detective's reason,



confusing him and making him think he “should dress as a tramp” (198) as well. His psyche becomes altered, he experiences “sudden rages”, “abrupt retreats into silence”, starts consuming alcohol to be able to talk freely and seems to lose “all his connection to the world” (168). These changes emerge after Hawksmoor’s walks into the dark corners of London. As a living being, London activates its forces, communicates them to Hawksmoor’s mind through its streets and buildings, and radically leads this intellectual character to become a wanderer.

### ***The House of Doctor Dee***

*The House of Doctor Dee* also consists of two narratives alternating with one another in consequent chapters featuring two main characters – Matthew Palmer from the 20<sup>th</sup> century and John Dee from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The genius loci of this novel is Clerkenwell, where Matthew inherited a house from his father and where four centuries ago Dr Dee lived. Dee was an intelligencer, which is an Elizabethan term describing “a seeker of hidden knowledge, philosophical and scientific, as well as a spy” (Coverley, *Occult London* 20). However, in the novel John Dee is introduced by the librarian as a “black magician” (93).

To match the city’s ambiance, Ackroyd relocates Dee’s house to Clerkenwell from Mortlake where he actually lived. Clerkenwell is the area of the city where the Knights Templar were once situated. “It was the site of the priory of St. John . . . It has been a home to many dissident groups including the Lollards, the Jesuits, and the Chartists. It has often harbored revolutionary thinkers such as John Wilkes and Karl Marx . . . Clerkenwell is the home of many watchmakers and repairers, so it is ‘emblematic of time and the divisions of time’ (Lewis 75). With devices such as this, Ackroyd creates his own private London in the novel.

Matthew starts his wanderings in streets that are “both more open and more desolate, as if at some point the area had been laid waste” (2):

I approached Clerkenwell Green, carefully skirting the grounds of the church, and looked about me. Once more the area seemed empty, somehow bereft, and as I walked down Jerusalem Passage towards the Clerkenwell Road I could see only boarded-up buildings, closed offices and tattered

advertisement hoardings that no doubt concealed patches of waste ground. There was no evidence of a supermarket, or even a grocery, and it was as if the whole district had been separated from the rest of the city. (10)

The condition of the accurately described streets mirrors the desperate state of Matthew's existence. His life is as deserted as this district. He has a lack of love, family, or friendships. Therefore, his moving into the new house and strolls around it start to add new colour to his life. Yet, the main issue is the problem of Matthew's personal identity, and undoubtedly, the city's as well. This contributes immensely to Matthew's walks through the city and the author's writing about it. Matthew sees himself as "a space out of which a few words emerge from time to time" (81). Even though he thinks he knows the neighbourhood to some degree, he finds unknown streets at every other corner as if they had been deliberately hidden away from him. For Matthew "[t]hat is the nature of [this] city, after all" (265). Nevertheless, during the time when Matthew starts to look for some information about the place where he is living, the feeling of being connected not only to the house itself but also to Clerkenwell as the place of his origin is being established. Alexandra Lember in her comparison of *The House of Doctor Dee* to Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem*, gives a Jungian interpretation of Matthew's self-formation as a result of the contribution of unconscious factors into his consciousness throughout the novel. Needless to say, these unconscious factors are the city's contributions to Matthew's identity through his strolls on the London streets. As to the house, according to Lember, "with its architecture and interior" it is a "metaphor for [Matthew's] psyche – both individual and collective," where the perception of time is not linear and the boundaries separating past from present are indistinct (Lember 2002).

The house can be interpreted in quite many ways, however, the significant one addressing the scope of this paper is it being a gateway to the underworld through its basement, while being a temporal layering of a place upon another that accommodates this duo from different centuries. Matthew also senses this from the "peculiar ... ground floor: it ranged beyond the area of the other storeys" (7) with its basement covering an expansive area. It is also worth mentioning that the house in itself is not a true architectural structure or concrete location but an imaginary figural space or an "architextural" (Gibson and Wolfreys 190) site to be read. Throughout the entire text, there is not a single real building unless it is a site with a story to be told.

As the novel progresses, Matthew's strolls increase greatly. Each time he notices "so many watchmakers and watch-repairers on Clerkenwell Road, so many small printers in the lanes leading down to Smithfield and Little Britain" and asks whether "they [had] chosen this place, or had the place somehow chosen them" (17). These are the questions that apply to Matthew's own situation. He is unable to ask them of himself as he is in an indefinite state of mind. His identity has not been formed sufficiently to take part in this debate with himself. Yet, it is clear that he has not chosen the house in Clerkenwell, it is instead the location that has chosen Matthew, channelling its spirits through the house to his identity and transforming it anew.

The unshaped nature of Matthew's identity can also be detected in the names of the chapters dedicated to him. Gibson and Wolfreys point out that the chapters narrated by Dr Dee are named after a "formal architectural structure" (Gibson and Wolfreys 189) like a library, hospital, abbey, garden, etc., as a sign of wholeness with an arranged design, whereas Matthew's chapters are simply numbered, lacking any aligned composition. The final chapter featuring Matthew's union with Dr Dee is titled "The Vision" where Matthew's life acquires a defined orderliness as an aftereffect of his gaining insights into Dr Dee and the house throughout the novel via walking in the London streets. One essential moment from such walks that contributes to Matthew's maturing process is precisely prominent in this sense when nearby his house Matthew comes across an unusual street setting "where a medieval brothel has been marked, just beyond the nunnery" (60). Since this moment, Matthew's mind is in constant engagement with this view in the form of flashbacks during his studies or even other strolls. This placement of the house at the "crossroads of good and evil" (Onega 122) educates Matthew on the double nature of the deeds and their co-existence in life. His continual thinking about this occurrence, which he experienced as the result of his walk near the house, indicates the ongoing advancement of his character. Thus, Dr Dee is London's embodiment of the architect for Matthew's self-transformation with his house serving as a workshop for this *modus operandi*.

As a cartographer, the historical John Dee (1527–1609) could also be seen as one of the pioneers of contemporary psychogeography. During his lifetime, Dee pursued clues for "a complete understanding of the divinely ordained universe" (Szónyi 2002). Thus, he used every possible way of discovering unknown places not only throughout London, but also in the undisclosed waters surrounding the British Isles. Before turning into a great Elizabethan

magus, Dee was a scientist with exceptional knowledge, “a highly valued scholarly adviser, especially on matters of British history and the advancement of English sea-power” (Sherman 1998). He is also associated with the creation of three maps between 1580 and 1583, where his visions of the maritime endeavours conducted by Britain’s imperial navy from Western Europe to the Far East of Asia, in the Northern Hemisphere, and from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean are illustrated (Taylor 1955, Sherman 1998). His interest in locations that were entirely obscure was born from his desire to seek unfamiliar occurrences. This is the point where the intentions of the real Dee and of Matthew Palmer meet in their psychogeographical wanderings. It is worth mentioning that Dee was the creator of the “expansionist program which he called ‘British discovery and recovery enterprise’” from the 1550s to the 1590s (Sherman 149). This is also considered to be connected to his blind searching for hidden knowledge in the East, since it was “one of the great repositories of occult knowledge” (French 237). However, this detail does not change the fact that he was the central figure of Tudor geography and the development of Elizabethan cartography (Taylor qtd. in Sherman 148). Due to this, his residence in Mortlake has also become one of the stops for the psychogeographical tracks of present-day London (Coverley, *Occult London* 24).

In *The House of Doctor Dee*, Peter Ackroyd uses Matthew’s concealed visions as a “holy place” for Cloak Lane, the “water of life” for the stream of water piped underneath the house (16), or “a bridge of light” (17) for London Bridge, so as to make indirect spatial connections to the location of the house. He utilises this as a tool for the readers’ subjective perceptions of the topography or for the creation of their own virtual maps where Matthew wanders continuously. However, when trying to find the house’s history in the British Library’s National Archive Centre, Matthew is not able to track it, since the house “isn’t marked as a separate dwelling” (16) in any real geographical map. Nevertheless, this is a literary trick of the author to create a labyrinth-like profile for the house. At the end of the novel, the temporal structures and spatial platforms overlay one another in a place where Matthew’s present self, the texts of the others, i.e., the author’s self and the texts of the past and John Dee’s self, blend together within a mystical self.

## Conclusion

Ackroyd's characters are always a crucial part of London and a key to revealing his technique of utilising their strolls to disclose the city's multifaceted authority. *The House of Doctor Dee* is a quest for Matthew's self-realisation and spiritual transformation from a heartless, empty human being into a person who has gained love and his true self by walking in London and undergoing its indirect influence through the media of the streets and Dr Dee. In contrast, the hunt for the truth in *Hawksmoor* concludes with Dyer's metamorphosis into a figure with a destroyed mind and a loss of rational thought. Regardless of the city's destructive involvement in Detective Hawksmoor's psyche and/or its hostile and reconstructive attitude towards Matthew Palmer's identity, they always identify with the city and connect their states of mind with it both literally and metaphorically. Therefore, Peter Ackroyd's psychogeography does not bear a clear mono-semantic definition of this term and has been employed as a perfect vehicle for the expression of heterogeneous viewpoints, both fictitious and factitious. By blending occult practices with the city's governing powers, Ackroyd promoted psychogeographical writings to a fictional level to address a wider audience. The vibrant and unique method of mixing psychogeography with pseudo-biographical city writing featuring John Dee and Nicholas Hawksmoor's constructed biographies, thus distorting the real essence of psychogeography, has placed the author among the forerunners of this style in contemporary British literature.

Ackroyd's London, despite being "a young man refreshed and risen from sleep" or "a deformed giant" (*London: The Biography* 31), is an infinite city of gloom and chaos where he "as an architect creates ... human relations by creating their environment and décor" (Lefebvre 98), where his characters "resound with voices from the past and the present" (Lewis 151), where no clear boundary exists between time and place, and where everything is abstract. London is the only designer of its wanderers' destiny. Regardless of the city's destructive involvement in Detective Hawksmoor's psyche and/or its hostile and reconstructive attitude towards Matthew Palmer's identity, they always identify with the city and connect their states of mind with it both literally and metaphorically. This intertwining nature of Ackroyd's London streets makes his psychogeography idiosyncratic.

### Works Cited

- Ackroyd, Peter. *Hawksmoor*. London: Penguin Books, 1993.
- . *London: The Biography*. New York: Anchor Books, 2003.
- . *The House of Doctor Dee*, London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- . *The Collection: Journalism, Reviews, Essays, Short Stories, Lectures*, ed. Thomas Wright, London: Random House, 2002.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *Paris Spleen, and La Fanfarlo*. Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The arcades project*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Bohemian Blog, The. An Occult Psychogeography of Hawksmoor's London Churches*, Thursday 22 October 2015. [www.thebohemianblog.com/2015/10/an-occult-psychogeography-of-hawksmoors-london-churches.html](http://www.thebohemianblog.com/2015/10/an-occult-psychogeography-of-hawksmoors-london-churches.html), Accessed 19 Mar. 2020
- Certeau, Michel Jean Emmanuel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Chalupský, Petr. *A Horror and a Beauty: The World of Peter Ackroyd's London Novels*. Praha: Karolinum, 2016.
- Coverley, Merlin. *Occult London*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2008.
- . *Psychogeography*. Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2006.
- Cunnally, John. "Antiquarianism and the Origins of the Flatbed Matrix." *Source: Notes in the History of Art*, vol. 31/32, no.4/1, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Summer/ Fall 2012, pp. 6–12.
- Debord, Guy. "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography." Translated by Ken Knabb. *Les Lèvres Nues*, no. 6, Paris, September 1955.
- Gibson, Jeremy, and Julian Wolfreys. *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000.
- Gould, Rebecca. "Antiquarianism as genealogy: Arnaldo Momigliano's method." *History and Theory*, vol. 53, no. 2, Wiley for Wesleyan University, May 2014, pp. 212–233.
- Hayes, M. Hunter. *Understanding Will Self*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007.
- Hugill, Barry. "Cultists go round in circles" in *The Observer*, (London, Greater London, England), Sun, Aug 28, 1994, p. 3. <https://theguardian.newspapers.com/image/258469511> Accessed 15 Mar. 2020.
- Lefebvre, Henri, Eleonore Kofman, and Elizabeth Lebas. *Writings on cities*, vol. 63. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.

- Lembert, Alexandra. "The eternal return of the same? A comparison between Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* and Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem and Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster*". *The golden egg: alchemy in art and literature*. eds. Lembert, Alexandra, and Elmar Schenkel, vol. 4. Berlin/Cambridge, MA: Galda + Wilch Verlag, 2002.
- Lewis, Barry. *My words echo thus: Possessing the past in Peter Ackroyd*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007.
- Löffler, Catharina. *Walking in the City: Urban Experience and Literary Psychogeography in Eighteenth-Century London*. Wiesbaden: Springer Nature, 2017.
- Mahler, Andreas. "City Scripts/City Scapes: On the Intertextuality of Urban Experience." *Exploring the Spatiality of the City across Cultural Texts*. pp. 25–43. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Onega, Susana. *Metafiction and Myth in the novels of Peter Ackroyd*. Columbia: Camden House, 1999.
- Oxford Reference. "genius loci." Date of access 27 July 2020, [www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095847893](http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095847893)
- Self, Will. *Psychogeography*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007.
- Sherman, William H. "Putting the British seas on the map: John Dee's Imperial cartography." *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, vol. 35, no. 3–4, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, October 1998, pp. 1–10.
- . *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
- Sinclair, Iain. *Iain Sinclair at The Copper Grill*. Iain Sinclair Blog: Guardian, April 24, 2004. [www.classiccafes.co.uk/isinclair.htm](http://www.classiccafes.co.uk/isinclair.htm). Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.
- . *Lights Out for the Territory*. London: Penguin, 2003.
- Szönyi, György E. "John Dee and Early Modern Occult Philosophy." *Aries*. vol. 2, no.1, Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002.
- Taylor, Eva. *Tudor Geography, 1485-1583*. London: Methuen and Co, 1930.
- Thurgill, James. "A Strange Cartography: Leylines, Landscape and "Deep Mapping" in the Works of Alfred Watkins." *Humanities* 2015, 4, 637–652; doi:10.3390/h4040637.
- Tso, Ann. "Peter Ackroyd's Sensuous Detective Method in *Hawksmoor*." *The Literary Psychogeography of London*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020.

KHANIM GARAYEVA

**KHANIM GARAYEVA** is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Szeged, Hungary. She received her Master's degree with distinction from the Faculty of Philology, Azerbaijan University of Languages in 2011. Her academic research lies in traditional and digital studies of various approaches to esotericism and patterns of its usage in modern English fiction, namely in the novels of Peter Ackroyd and Dan Brown.

*garayevak@gmail.com*