I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Foreword on Peter Ackroyd and His Works

Born in 1949, in London, Peter Ackroyd is one of the leading figures in contemporary British fiction who began his writing career with poetry in Cambridge. After the publication of his first volume of poetry titled *Ouch*, in 1971, he gained immense recognition from the literary circles and he published two more volumes in 1973 *London Lickpenny* and 1978 *Country Life*. After graduating from Cambridge, Ackroyd continued his studies at Oxford, where he wrote *Notes for a New Culture,* in which he "recommended the major forces in postmodernism Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, as essential reading and polemically attacked the English tradition for being excessively grounded in the 'related values of humanism and subjectivity" (Higdon, 217). Although Ackroyd is known as a postmodernist writer, he often denies being put in such a category. As Higdon states, "Ackroyd rejects being called an historical novelist or a postmodernist, preferring to identify with what he calls 'English music' and the Cockney visionary traditions, a stance which marks him as both" (217). In an interview with Susan Onega, Ackroyd has pointed out that his style is deeply rooted in the "English tradition" and that it is "...This combination of high and low, farce and tragedy, is something which is innate in the English tradition...just part of the inheritance that goes back as far as a thousand years" ("Interview with Peter Ackroyd", 1). Ackroyd argues that the earlier English writers have a great impact on his style, as he is particularly under the influence of Dickens and Eliot (Smethurst). Wells explains the English tradition saying that, "This unapologetic rehashing of past texts and ideas exemplifies a peculiarly British attachment to the literary tradition..." (14). Ackroyd's use of intertextuality then does not only serve as an element of the postmodernist style, but also as a method of clinging to earlier works and styles that belong to English literature, almost as a homage to those writers whom Ackroyd unquestioningly admires.

In an interview, when asked to describe what the English tradition is, Ackroyd replies:

> The only way I can describe it is the way it's described in the books. There is a distinction between the English and the London tradition. The London sensibility has also been characterized by a sort of fierceness and gaiety in the old-fashioned sense, sort of heterogeneity. So you have tragedy and romance follows next, so Pantomime is connected with Popular Theatre. It is connected with narratives of low life in the Elizabethan period. It is very difficult to incapsulate it in a phrase, but I do know that it is something of which I feel a part and postmodernism to me is just an abstraction to which I don't feel very much attached. (Quoted in Gottingen)

Ackroyd makes it quite clear that what he calls "Englishness" involves the literary genres that arose in the earlier periods. As Neagu suggests, "Ackroyd's greater importance lies in the dialogue that he orchestrates between individual and collective memory, cultural identity and difference, discovery and invention of tradition, or else constructed and 'received' modes of Englishness" (3). In Ackroyd's novel *English Music*, one of the characters refers to the idea of Englishness:

> We are all detectives, looking for the pattern…It is perfectly clear to me that English music rarely changes. The instruments may alter and the form may vary, but the spirit seems always to remain the same. The spirit survives. (128)

Using one of the characters as a mouth-piece, Ackroyd argues that what he calls the English Tradition/Music has an everlasting quality, which survives time. Jeffrey Roessner calls it "immortal" and indicates that this quality exists in a "multiple, shifting impressions of a world in constant flux" (113). Barry Lewis, similar to other comments made about Ackroyd and the connection between London and the sense of Englishness, says that "As the capital of England, London distills the essence of that

nation and has always been its focus of literary and cultural development" (184). Therefore, for Ackroyd London is immersed with the knowledge of the past traditions which have made England the country it is, giving a writer such as Ackroyd the perfect ground to build his novels on. Lewis adds that "The lineage of Cockney visionaries, then, has wider repercussions concerning what Ackroyd sees as broader patterns within the culture as a whole" (184). Ackroyd himself defines the Cockney visionary tradition as "A certain kind of London Cockney tradition which combines farce, pathos and melodrama. It is like the Pantomime tradition. It is the old London tradition of the more popular theatre" (quoted in Gottıngen).

What makes Ackroyd different from the other writers in terms of Englishness is that "in his model, the archetypical site of identification is not the English countryside, but a protean, 'illimitable' London represented as a matrix of the universal, the very centre of gravity itself (Neagu, 5). London as a setting is an inescapable part of many of Ackroyd's novels, because as a city it captures all the modes and styles which belong to the English literary tradition. In his work *London: A Biography*, Ackroyd has portrayed London as a living being and appropriately has titled it a 'biography' for this particular reason. Employing the styles of his predecessors allows Ackroyd to write in a manner through which he feels "symbolically contemporary with his past masters..." (Neagu, 9).

The writers, whom Ackroyd believes to be a part of the English tradition, such as Dickens, Eliot and Hardy had one common passion: London. According to Ackroyd, his predecessors understood the city and in a way they were able to see through the mystery of the city and were aware of certain aspects which other people were not able to comprehend. In his work *Possessions*, Byatt comments that "It seems that much formal innovation in recent English fiction has concerned itself, morally and aesthetically, with its forebears, and in a way for which I know no parallel in other countries" (149). In fact, Ackroyd has continued a 'tradition' which was emphasized by T. S. Eliot in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" makes use of intertextuality that refers back to the earlier writers of the tradition.

Ackroyd refers to the importance of London and his attachment to the city thus:

> London has always provided the landscape for my imagination, if that does not sound too pretentious, and I suppose becomes a character--a living being--within each of my books. Perhaps I am writing its history, or biography, by indirection--certainly I think, all of my books, biography and fiction alike, are single chapters in the book which will only be completed at the time of my death. Then I hope the city itself will be seen as a metaphor for the nature of time and the presence of the past in human affairs.. (quoted in "An Interview with Peter Ackroyd")

Therefore, London, which he calls the "landscape of his imagination," is the starting point and the ending point in almost all of his novels. For Ackroyd, London is a "territory" which represents the elements that form the present through past time. As Adriana Neagu points out, London "as a haven of mystical ideas, religious movements, occult groups and practices...is the heartbeat of Ackroyd's chronicles of Cockney visionarism" (228). Ackroyd has so far, with the exception of *First Light*, has based all of his novels' setting in London as the city which is the representative of a world that involves

> ...the supernatural, featuring sorcerers, golems and black magic, and the text at the origin of all English texts. The cradle of a 'lost', pre-restoration 'civilisation' that he sets out to revive, the city is for Ackroyd a site of perennial inspiration, a mystical source of empowerment, constantly fostering creativity, self-awareness and reflexivity. Catholic and Londoner, Ackroyd has celebrated the Unreal City, throughout his career, representing its heterogeneity, complexity and energy in what have been in turn termed 'neo-Gothic', (post)-modern epic, metaphysical-detective, and historiographic metafictional modes. (Matthews and Neagu)

The idea that London is in fact 'the text at the origin of all English texts' further supports the ground on which Ackroyd writes; that is, London is the perfect setting

to delve into the world of postmodernism. London with its multiple levels of meaning provides a strong base to build a novel of the same characteristics. Ansgar Nunning suggests in his essay, "Crossing Borders and Blurring Genres: Towards a Typology and Poetics of Postmodernist Historical Fiction in England Since the 1960s" that, Peter Ackroyd's historiographic metafictions reflect the two main characteristics attributed to this genre. Nunning calls the first one "semantization of the past" and the other "dense intertextual networks" (224). In terms of setting, it is commented that Ackroyd's choice of London as the setting in almost all of his novels displays the idea that Ackroyd views setting as an aspect that is indicative of more than "just the physical location" (Nunning, 224) on which the plot is built. For Ackroyd, the setting, especially London, contains the feeling of Englishness that he wishes to convey. Ackroyd has stated at an interview with Martin Evans that, the representatives of Cockney Visionaries, William Blake and Charles Dickens in particular, "see in London the outlines of Eternity or at least see London as a symbol of human hopes and expectations whether it is in the mystic form of Blake or in the more romantic form of Dickens"[1] (1). The same thing is true about the intertextual references that Ackroyd places within the context of his novels. While the setting displays the characteristics of Englishness through various elements from "architectural art" to "houses, streets, sites associated with local legends, place names" (Nunniıng, 224), intertextuality provides a ground which continuously "remind[s] the reader of how literature, works of art, and music have contributed in significant ways to defining an Englishman's sense of his cultural nationality" (Nunning, 225). The other visionary that is highly significant for Ackroyd is T. S. Eliot, as in his search for the Englishness that he so persistently wishes to cling to. In his essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" Eliot states, "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists" (quoted in Lodge, 72). This

[1] Ackroyd's usage of the word 'eternity' is a reference to Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" in which Blake, through the Devil states that, "Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy" and "Energy is eternal delight" in Plate 4. In this work, one of the aims that Blake wanted to put forward was the "spiritual meaning of imitation and to position himself as authentic visionary whose readings of the Word revealed its original poetic sense" (Viscomi).

is the same point of view which Ackroyd places in his pursuit and application of Englishness. Eliot's idea of 'timelessness' is yet another concept Ackroyd adopts; in his novels, Ackroyd frequently plays upon the the idea of non-linear time, as if devotedly following Eliot's lines from "Burnt Norton": "Time past and time future, Allow but a little consciousness. To be conscious is not to be in time." In the article titled "Body: Time, Eternity and Immortality in T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets" the following remark has been stated by Terry Fairchild:

> Time Eliot understands not only can be located within the field of time, it ultimately cannot be distinguished from it. And this is where he and the postmodernists part company. Time is the expression of the timeless in the phenomenal world, and the resolution of this paradox takes place in individual consciousness. If the consciousness of an individual remains time-bound, the fragmented world of the postmoderns is the reality; for the individual who knows Transcendental Consciousness, eternity pervades every changing element of temporal existence.

The idea of timelessness, or the past, present and the future being fixed to a simultaneous plane of existence, is a theme Ackroyd fervently employs in his metafictions. In the three historiographic metafictions that are the object of study in this paper, the same theme is evident. In *Hawksmoor, The Great Fire of London* and *First Light*, the accepted understanding of time, that is, linear time, is subverted and questioned in different ways. While in *Hawksmoor* there are two different time periods converging into each other and existing simultaneously, in *The Great Fire of London*, there is an attempt to recreate the past in the present. As for *First Light*, the novel could be read as a return to the mythical understanding of time, at which the humanity found existence.

As one of the leading contemporary historiographic metafiction writers, Peter Ackroyd successfully draws attention to the fictionality of history. This being his priority, there is a constant blurring of the line between what is reality/history and what is fiction/text in his novels. Aleid Fokkema quotes Alan Thiter on Ackroyd saying that "I believe, rather, that Ackroyd is one of those postmodernists who,

confronting history, has "a desire to show the real." (170). In her article "The Mythical Impulse in British Historiographic Metafiction," Susana Onega points out that there are various points of view defining the trends in postmodernist literature. She states that, Hans Bertens suggests that there are three types: "avant-gardist postmodernism", "poststructuralist postmodernism" and the third, "architectural historicism" (quoted in Onega, 185). The third type, 'architectural historicism" is defined by Onega as being "neo-conservative, aesthetic postmodernism" (185). Although these definitions provide a refreshing perspective in terms of postmodernist writing, Peter Ackroyd's novels rather reflect Linda Hutcheon's definition of historiographical metafiction, according to which are "fundamentally contradictory, resolutely historical and inescapably political" (203). Susana Onega's article sheds light to a tendency shared by most British historiographic metafiction writers as well: mythical thinking. She explains that

> Through the application of a dualistic logic that recalls the findings of the New Physics, Jungian psychology and the mythical tension between chaos and cosmos, these novelists use parody, pastiche and the metafictional undermining of realism-enhancing mechanisms to suggest the fragmentation and isolation of the self, while simultaneously attempting to transcend this isolation and fragmentation in mythical and archetypal terms. (187)

As Onega places Ackroyd among those writers who "tried to find their own alternative ways out of the 'prison house of language', by attempting to recover the transcendental or mythical dimension of writing" (189), it is possible to see that Ackroyd's historiographic metafictions studied herewith are built on "a dualistic logic" (199). *Hawksmoor* reflects this 'dualistic logic' in the way Ackroyd joins two different plots, one based on diabolicism (which contains a kind of dualism in itself, since the diabolic thinking of the first plot belongs to the period of The Age of Reason) and the second plot on reason. *The Great Fire of London*, presents the attempt to recreate Dickens's *Little Dorrit* in the present time, while *The First Light* portrays the modern man's quest to understand the mystery behind creation.

One of the most impressive qualities Ackroyd has is his keen interest in doing research before writing his novels. As research seems a natural process in most type of writing, considering issues of pastiche and plagiarism in relation to Ackroyd's writing, the amount of time he spends in doing research is highly justifiable. Suzanne Keen comments on how doing such extensive research contributes to Ackroyd's works as thus:

> This experience pertains to his romances of the archive in two possible ways. On the one hand, his familiarity with research makes Ackroyd a very experienced informant, whose representations of archival quests can be expected to be accurate about the mechanisms and practices of scholarship. On the other hand, the lists of activities in Ackroyd's daily planners demonstrate the monotonous truth of what he often tells interviewers about his boring life; almost every day he adheres to the same routine of writing, reading in the library, and going to the gym. (121)

Keen adds that "Ackroyd's treatment of archival research intersects in productive ways with his belief in the cyclical repetitions of time and his imaginative boundary crossing from the present world to its layered pasts" (121). Pastiche being an important element in most of his novels is a skill which Ackroyd partly owes to his extensive research that he exerts into his works. Keen argues that

> Ackroyd's historical pastiche at its best evokes the life and consciousness of past periods by speaking its lines again. Though he claims that he hopes to recapture a sense of English history for benighted present-day readers who have, in the past thirty years, lost a sense of the past, Ackroyd plays fast and loose with known details about his historical characters. He has commented with frankness that historical distance makes melodramatic plot elements seem less incredible, and that his juxtaposition of the present day with earlier periods is aimed at revealing the unknowability of the *present*. 36 (126)

In the essay titled “Abandoning the Postmodern? The Case of Peter Ackroyd” Aleid Fokkema states that “A biographer of Eliot and Dickens, Ackroyd has created novels that reverberate with echoes from their work. They are also full of references to other texts, including his own” (169). While Ackroyd’s greatest influences such as Eliot and Dickens have an enourmous influence on his novels, this does not mean that Ackroyd writes exacly in the same manners as these writers that he holds dear. For instance, Fokkema emphasizes the fact that Ackroyd’s works lack “the straightforward moral commitment of Dickens” (169) and instead “his fiction has a strong impact in its display of fear, anguish, and displacement” (169).

1.2 What is Metafiction?

The term metafiction was first coined by William H. Gass in one of his essays titled “Philosophy and the Form of Fiction”, which may be explained as a kind of fiction that is “self-referential” (Hawthorn, 104). To further simplify this definition, it may be said that, metafictional works are self-reflexive and they point out to their being works of fiction. This quality can be achieved through either the narrative technique used in these works or through certain motifs that reappear throughout. According to Patricia Waugh, “Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). Indeed, what metafiction attempts to achieve is not to portray any kind of reality or metanarrative, but rather to pose questions about accepted notions of truth, while in no way it attempts to deny them. However, it does not seek to answer these questions about truths or to present some kind of closure about them. As a method of achieving this, intertextuality is used in metafictional works and as Hutcheon states, “textuality is inserted into history and into the social and political conditions of the discursive act itself” (81). Basically, what a metafiction attempts to do is not to convey the real world to the reader. Hutcheon asserts that, in metafictional works, “reading and writing belong to the processes of 'life' as much as they do to those of 'art'" (5), indicating that textuality is an inevitable part of metafiction. Grant Stirling interprets

Hutcheon's words, saying that, "readers of metafiction are invited, though not compelled, to question how their own worlds are similar textually" (1). In explaining what metafiction is, one other important term is 'fabulation.' According to Scholes, fabulation is a method of reaching reality through fictional writings. He defines the term as, "not a turning away from reality, but an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality" (*FM*, 8). In metafictional works, narration and language are distorted or problematized, contrary to realistic fiction. In novels that employ the elements of metafiction, the reliability on narration is constantly subverted, through multiple points of view, which in turn question the discourse being presented through the narrative style. Metafictional works turn discourse, narration and the history that they present into problematic issues and question their reliability. According to Waugh,

> The metafictionist is highly conscious of a basic dilemma: if he or she sets out to 'represent' the world, he or she realizes fairly soon that the world, as such, cannot be 'represented.' In literary fiction it is, in fact, possible only to represent the discourses of that world. Yet, if one attempts to analyze a set of linguistic relationships using those same relationships as the instruments of analysis, language soon becomes a 'prisonhouse' from which the possibility of escape is remote. Metafiction seeks to explore this dilemma. (3-4)

Scholes states that, "metafiction assimilates all the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself" and that "It may emphasize structural, formal, behavioral or philosophical qualities" (114). Going back to Waugh's suggestion that 'language becomes a prisonhouse', metafiction attempts to avoid closure of any kind through the various kinds of 'criticism' that Scholes puts forward. He explains that, metafiction attacks fiction "from within fictional form" (114).

As all metafictional works do not always contain the same techniques, Patricia Waugh has categorised them into three different kinds: firstly, those which subvert or question an element of the realistic novel mode; secondly, works which parody a particular genre or work and thirdly, works that "attempt to create

alternative linguistic structures or to merely imply old forms by encouraging the reader to draw on his or her knowledge of traditional literary conventions" (Waugh quoted in Spivak). In his essay titled "Why Hamlet Delays: Reflexivity in Literature and Criticism," Stephan Mussil gives place to Roman Jacobson's idea of reflexivity, saying that "a text is literary if it is reflexive" since Jacobson contended that "reflexivity defines a literary text in the first place" (1). More recent critics, such as, Grant Stirling in his study titled "Neurotic Narrative Metafiction and Object-Relations Theory" which is about the relationship between narcissism and metafictional works, argues that various psychoanalytic interpretations of narcissism may give valuable insight into the elements of the metafiction genre. Stirling's main focus revolves around the idea that "the libidinal economies of narcissistic personalities provide models for the consideration of metafictional texts" (1). He explains that, by

> developing these models in conjunction with some tools of narratology, and by exploring the implications that arise when these models are placed in conjunction with a handful contemporary American metafictional works, this discussion will not only examine the textual economies of metafictional texts in the light of psychoanalytical theories, but it will also refract some of the thematic concerns of metafiction through that same psychoanalytical and narratological lens. (1)

Compared to metafictional works, in realist novels, elements such as, character and plot are presented within a view point of "common-sense, rational[ity]" and placed in a "hierarchical social structure" (8).

1.3 New Historicism and Historiographic Metafiction

The interest to reevaluate the past and thus, history and historical writings, reemerged in the 1970's in the form of New Historicism. Indeed, this interest in and the preoccupation with the question of what humanity has accepted as historical truth was not a new issue in literature. However, there are certain factors as to the

reemergence of this issue, especially in the aforementioned decade. The 1970's especially marked an attitude towards the concept of originality and objectivity; the problem was, whether any work of literature, be this work a historical document or else, could genuinely be original or not. The idea that, all written works or texts contain subjectivity was widely believed by the critics and the writers at that time. Hutcheon states that, "what the postmodern writing of both history and literature has taught us is that both history and fiction are discourses, that both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past" (89). Taking history as a discourse then inevitably brings to the fore the idea that the writing of history is a subjective process, during which the historian relies on his creativity to fill in the missing aspects of the historical information he is depositing as truth. From this point of view, historiographic metafiction takes its stand as the postmodern mode of looking back at history and historical documents or texts and restyling them. To expand Hutcheon's suggestion of history as a discourse, what historiographic metafiction does is to try to bring to the light the suppressed and secondary elements of binary oppositions of history and fiction. According to historiographic metafiction writers, since history holds the position of the strong and primary element in this binary opposition, it should not remain as the ultimate truth without being questioned or being broken down as a discourse. The search for truth in fiction writing has one main purpose; that is, to reach or attain "new forms that are capable of tapping once again the sources of fictional vitality," as Scholes explains (107).

In suggesting a definition for historiography, Pomeroy argues that the fusion of history and fiction takes place with possible variations on narration:

> By questioning dominant discourse, modern historiography undermines the unconvincing claim of objective representation and enables the construction of alternative narratives. The indeterminacy which alternative or multiple histories represent helps to create the site upon which the cross-pollination between history and fiction (historiographic metafiction) occurs.(23)

As Linda Hutcheon argues, “What historiographic metafiction explicitly does, though is to cast doubt on the very possibility of any firm “guarantee of meaning” (55). Thus, this particular genre attempts to question grand or metanarratives, formed through certain signifying systems and discourses, while it should not be overlooked that fiction itself is also a signifying system. Amy J. Elias states that, “...this desire for History, for the “secular sacred” sublime—for awe, certainty, and belief in the absence of the Word— leads postmodern narrative fiction to new representations of the historical past” (18). Through historiographic metafiction, history is not denied, but presented in alternative ways. The fusion of history and fiction without any attempt to separate them as two different concepts and the idea that the representation of history does not present a new history is the starting point of historiographic metafiction genre. History is taken as mere “text” (Hutcheon, 142) onto which fiction is built. One of the basic aims of postmodern writing is to present history to the present time and to avoid closure, thus abling edless interpretations of the past to be possible. Therefore, there are two main concerns in historiographic metafiction, the fist one being the attempt to bring to the fore “the truth and lies of the historical record” (Currie, 81) and secondly “to give a feeling of verifiability” (Currie, 81) through historical information, without the attempt to reach a conclusive decision about what the past was all about. As Wells states, historiographical metafiction “...concentrates on elements of the works (narrative voice and style, subject matter, etc.) that openly address the permeable boundary between the "real,” or historical, and fictional discourse (2).

This paper is a study of the metafictional techniques employed by Peter Ackroyd in terms of plot and narration, character, time and setting, and language in his historiographical metafictions, which contribute to the postmodern depiction of fiction, reality and time. According to Andrew Anthony, “Ackroyd has always maintained that the fiction emerges from the historical research he puts into the non-fiction” (1). In the three metafictions that will be studied in this thesis dissertation, the overlapping element is that the idea of truth is not something shared by all people or rather, there is not a single great truth accepted by all; what is understood by the term truth changes from one person to the other and that the representation of truth is

inevitably fictional. Ackroyd's unique understanding of time lurks behind most of his novels and as David Porter states, "the intimate interconnection between past and present is central to Ackroyd, and is a large element of his non-fiction" (1). Brian McHale explains that,

> Post-modernist fiction, by contrast, seeks to foreground this seam [between historical reality and fiction] by making the transition from one realm to the other as jarring as possible. This it does by violating the constraints on "classic" historical fiction: by visibly contradicting the public record of "official" history; by flaunting anachronisms; and by integrating history and the fantastic. Apocryphal history, creative anachronism, historical fantasy - these are the typical strategies of the post-modernist revisionist historical novel. (90)

As for the historical development of New Historicism, it began with Stephen Greenblatt and Louise Montrose's essays in the late 1970's, which took as their basis Michelle Foucault's theory on history being a discourse. Their initial essays that marked the beginnings of this new kind of analysis and view continued to develop overtime. New Historicists argued that, texts produced within a given era are written under the influence of the cultural, social and political atmosphere and values of that particular time. Therefore, it is not possible for a text to be interpreted free from all these external factors and that historians cannot possibly be free from the influences of their time in writing historical documents. This suggestion leads to the understanding that, texts reveal the aspects and the discourses of the period of the time they are written in and do not produce a meaning by themselves alone. In distinguishing between what a historian and a fiction writer does, Collingwood makes this comment:

> Each of them makes it his [her] business to construct a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibition of motives, analysis of characters. Each aims at making his [her] picture a coherent whole, where every character and

> every situation is so bound up with the rest that this character in this situation cannot but act this way, and we cannot imagine him [her] as acting otherwise. The novel and the history must make sense; nothing is admissible in either except what is necessary and the judge of this necessity is in both cases the imagination. Both the novel and history are self-explanatory, self-justïfying, the product of an autonomous or self-authorizing activity; and in both cases this activity is the *a priori* imagination. (Quoted in Pomeroy, 16)

As Klaus Brax puts it, "In the philosophy of history the role of constructing a narrative out of empirical data currently occupies a central role...The new understanding of history as textual also gave rise to a particular literary theory, *new historicism*" (49).

In terms of narration, historiographical metafictions "appear to privilege two modes of narration, both of which problematizes the entire notion of subjectivity, multiple points of view...or an overtly controlling narrator" (Hutcheon, 117). Ansgar in his essay "Where Historiographic Metafiction and Narratology Meet" outlines five main categories which define the types of narration evident in fiction about history. The first of these narratological techniques involves "The structure of thematic selection, the incorporation of facts into fiction, and the relations between the different directions of reference" for which he indicates the various types of reference points such as "intratextual reference, self-reference, intertextual reference, textualized extratextual reference." He places the types of "narrative communication" in the second group, as he identifies the different types of related levels, such as, "the diegetic level of the story, the extradiegetic level of narrative transmission, hypo- of metatextual levels, the paratextual level" which allow for a thematic and structured base for history to be built upon. The next three groups are explained by Ansgar as follows:

> * The narratological categories describing the time structure, the various narrative modes, and the structure of narrative transmission that different kinds of historical fiction typically display.

> * The relationship(s) between the fictive historical worlds projected in historical novels and the "official" historical record that historiography has established.
>
> * The different kinds of available historical fiction, defined on the basis of the question of whether and to what degree the fictional illusion is maintained and fostered or undermined and destroyed, and on the basis of the various functions that different variants of historical fiction typically fulfill.

At the time the 'New Novelists,' as they are referred to, started writing metafictional novels, their main aim was "both to transform the novel and to transform critical vocabulary about the novel" (Landa). According to Robbe-Grillet, the required elements of the novel genre, such as, character and plot, as viewed by this new line of novelists were "outdated notions" (Quoted in Landa). Thus, the act of writing, interpreting and criticizing novels was rejected by them (Landa). George Lukacs's comparison between the historical novel and historiographic metafiction identifies the characteristics of these two different genres. Firstly, the main difference is to be found in the protagonists as in the historical novel the protagonists are types, whereas in the latter they are not. Second difference could be found in the usage of historical information; the historical novel makes use of information to validify itself, but historiographical metafiction presents the two sides of historical information. The last point made about the differences is that, historical, real life personalities are not given primary roles in historical novels "as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand," whereas in the case of historiographical metafictions, the line between fiction and history is problematised, rather than to avoid it (Lukacs quoted in Wei). Another aspect of historiographic metafictions is "the many ways [it] introduces and represents otherness, the neglected and forgotten in history" as suggested by Brax (58). In terms of characterisation, historiographic metafictions depict the outsiders. This depiction of the "marginalised" or "atypical" is due to the subjective point of view that is evident in all historical writings; that is, as Brax points out Michel Foucault's suggestion that "history is always written from a perspective, from someone's perspective" (58).

Historiographic metafictions or "revisionist historical novels" (Nunning, 222) as they are sometimes referred to, aim to emphasize the 'other's' point of view and present history from a non-traditional perspective, which falls outside the borders of the strong element of the binary oppositions in metanarratives. Referring back to Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, the main point of concentration is fixed on "the marginalized, the peripheral figures of fictional history" (114); thus, the subjective experiences of the characters in historiographical metafictions reflect history within the boundaries of their own point of view. As Ansgar Nunning comments, "Metahistorical novels do not portray the past as a selfcontained and complete world, but as liable to the distortions that subjective reconstructions and recollections entail" (224). The main issue in historiographical metafictions is, then, who is narrating history, from which perspective this narration is taking place and what kind of a selection is being made by the narrator as to which points to include or exclude in the narration process. Julian Barnes, in his work, *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*, states that, "History isn't what happened. History is just what historians tell us" (50). Thus, what has come to the present as historical documents have all been written down as the personal utterences of historians. One of the most acclaimed works written on the fictionality of historiography has been Hayden White's "Historical Text as Literary Artifact." White suggests that, "There is something in a historical masterpiece that cannot be negated, and this non-negatable element is its form, the form which is its fiction" (43). He refers to Levi- Strauss's example about what the consequences would be if an alien were to visit earth and came across various historical documents about a specific subject, all written from different points of view. White, continues his argument saying that

> Our explanations of historical structures and processes are thus determined more by what we leave out of our representations than by what we put in. For it is in this brutal capacity to exclude certain facts in the interest of constituting others as components of comprehensible stories that the historian displays his tact as well as his understanding. The "overall coherence" of any given "series" of historical facts is the coherence of story,

> but this coherence is achieved only by tailoring of the "facts" to the requirements of the story form. (44-45)

What White suggests in conclusion is that the details excluded in the writing of history carry more of a significance compared to the inclusive parts. The included parts that make up a historical document are shaped by historians, or in other words, narrated as a 'story' to present those parts in a meaningful way. The excluded pieces of information or facts in turn give rise to the questioning of history. Barry S. Pomeroy gives place to Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction explaining that

> Hutcheon distinguishes historiographic metafiction from uninformed historiography and unproblematized historical fiction by situating this postmodern genre as a writing of history which foregrounds the constructedness of its own enterprise. This kind of novel, she reminds us, "forces us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time (ibid. *286).* (2-3)

Peter Ackroyd's novels *Hawksmoor, The Great Fıre of London* and *First Light* all fit into Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction. In each of these three novels, the questioning of history is accompanied with the reflexive attitude of the novels.

II. ANALYSES OF *HAWKSMOOR, THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON* AND *FIRST LIGHT*

A. HAWKSMOOR

2.1 Introduction to *Hawksmoor*

"I cannot change this Thing call'd Time, but I I can alter its Posture and, as Boys do turn a looking-glass against the Sunne, so I will dazzle you all."(Ackroyd, 11)

"Time is a vast Denful of Horrour, round about which a Serpent winds and in the winding bites itself by the Tail." (Ackroyd, 62).

Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* is a kind of novel that powerfully challenges historical knowledge about The Age of Reason and breaks down the binary opposition of reason vs. irrationality. What is suggested in the novel is that, although 18th century is known as the Age of Reason or Enlightment, there was another practice that existed side by side with it: that is, "repressed occult practices" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 44). *Hawksmoor* reflects the idea that, while a great effort was being spent to achieve advancement in science (which inevitably involves the use of logic, reason, and empiricism), a strong tendency to pursue diabolical beliefs was also a part of the Enlightenment Period.

In the novel's 'Acknowledgments' part, Ackroyd explains that, "this version of history is my own invention" and before the novel starts, there is a section which is written in italics that gives historical information on how an act was passed to rebuild the devastated churches in London and Westminster and how an architect called Nicholas Dyer was working on this project. Actually, this section is a mixture of accurate historical information and fiction, because the fictious character Nicholas Dyer is presented as a real life personality. In fact, the 18th century real life architect

who had built the churches was named Nicholas Hawksmoor[2], who is presented in the novel as a fictional character. Ackroyd comments,

> I'm not sure whether it's a historical novel set in the present or a contemporary novel set in the past. That's one of the puzzles the book sets for itself….I see the book more as an intellectual puzzle. I became interested in two different styles and how they commented on the nature of fiction. Everything is slightly more ambivalent seen from two different perspectives. (Ackroyd quoted in Oates).

2.2 Narration and Plot

As with most of his metafictions, Ackroyd places this novel within the setting of London and its plot covers two different time periods; one being the 18th century, the other being the 20th century. Therefore, accordingly, there are two types of narration existing in the novel: the one which belongs to the 18th century is told through first person, by the character Nicholas Dyer, while the 20th century narration is given in the third person, which is about a detective called Nicholas Hawksmoor. Strangely enough, diabolicism is represented through Dyer, who belongs to the 18th century and believes that, "Satan has authority over this world" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 50). The following words of Dyer clearly explain the nature of his beliefs that are very much against the rationality or empiricism of his time:

> And yet in the way of that Philosophie much cryed up in London and elsewhere, there are those like Sir Chris, who speak only of what is Rational and what is Demonstrated, of Propriety and Plainness. Religion Not Mysterious is their Motto, but if they would wish the Godhead to be Reasonable why was it that when Adam heard that Voice in the Garden he was afraid unto Death? (101)

[2] Nicholas Hawksmoor, the famous architect who had built six churches after the Great Fire of London (1666), was given the task of building a total of 50 churches in London. It was Ian Sinclair who first drew attention to the idea that the design of the churches built by Nicholas Hawksmoor were thematically related to occultism in his work *Lud Heat*, whom Ackroyd refers to in *Hawksmoor*.

According to Susanne Onega, the two plots of the novel – which are presented in odd and even chapters "are structurally and thematically interrelated" (56). Dyer's first person narration, then, is represented as the other point of view, contrary to the accepted notions of his age. The narration is deliberately done in first person, as Dyer relates a history much peculiar to his own; therefore, there is no concern to reflect his history or his-story in an objective manner. Although his narration stays true to certain historical facts, it is still quite subjective. Hawksmoor, on the other hand, tries to solve a series of murders in London in the 20th century through the use of logic or reason and his story is narrated in third person, reflecting the accepted mode of narration in realistic detective fiction. He expresses this belief while talking to his assistant Walter at one point in the novel: "There are no ghosts Walter...We live in a rational society" (158). Ackroyd's method of tying down the two plots or centuries lies in certain similarities between the two time periods and the characters and events which inhabit them. To start with, although in nature they are quite different personalities, certain similarities become apparent between Dyer and Hawksmoor, their assistants (both named Walter), the murders that take place in both centuries, and the tramps that have a major role in both of the plots. The similarities go as far as the repetition of certain "songs, ballads and poems" (Onega, *MMNPA,* 45). However, the most visible synthesizing aspect Ackroyd uses to bring together the two plots is to start every chapter with the ending of the previous one; thus, the reader immediately is transformed to the other century through a smooth flow of words, that is, with those he has just read at the end of the chapter he has finished. The novel's first chapter starts with the plot of Nicholas Dyer, a member of the team of architect Sir Christopher Wren, who has undertaken the task of rebuilding the churches in London which were ruined by two great fires in the past. Ackroyd, starting with the first chapter, assigns the 18th century plot, odd numbers, which are then tied down to the 20th century plot by their ending phrases or sentences, occupying the even numbered chapters. For instance, the first chapter ends with the sentence, "I am in the Pitte, but I have gone so deep that I can see the brightness of the Starres at Noon" (25), the second chapter begins with, "At Noon they were

approaching the church in Spitalfields" (26) and the novel proceeds into the 20th century plot. The same technique continues until the end of the novel. As Amy Elias suggests,

> In the most self-reflexive or avant-gardist metahistorical romances, such as …Peter Ackroyd's Chatterton or Hawksmoor, the border of history is figured as the uncanny in characters who return from the past to the present; the centuries echo one another, without any explanation, until they merge in the last sections of the novels in an uncanny meeting between twentieth-century characters and characters from the past, without any explanation (96).

This technique also alludes to the circularity of time. One thing ends in the 18th century and it is immediately repeated in the 20th, merging the characters and events of the two centuries. However, the narrative styles are not consistent with their respective genres: Dyer's diary entry, which is actually the first person narration of the 18th century plot and the third person narration of a presumably 20th century detective novel, which involves the story of Detective Hawksmoor, disable the novel to "be read as being stable even within a particular time-frame or narrative" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 93). Adrian M. de Lange relates the numbering of the two plots to the structure of the novel which he terms as postmodern. He contends that having two different plots which are presented to the reader in alternation reflect the importance given to "the problem of continuity versus discontinuity which has particular significance for the epistemological status of the varoius endings, and the "final" ending" (150).

Hawksmoor totally rejects the understanding of linear time in both its plot structure and the narrative style. Novels that are written with a linear structure portray events that follow each other, as there is a continuum in both plot and narration which are conventional. In *Hawksmoor,* however, this style is totally denied, as the narration shifts from Dyer in the 18th century to a third person narration in Hawksmoor's time. Paul Smethurst states that "The narrative of the detective in the twentieth century, the present, is the time which has a ghostly quality

about it" (183). The reason he explains is that "There is a pervasive vagueness and sense of indeterminacy here, of being *lost in time*, compared with the opposing certainties in the narrative of the eighteenth century world – mystical and an emergent modern" (183). At the end of the novel, as Dyer and Hawksmoor become one, "the text itself echoes their reunification: what they say is physically separated by a wide blank on the page, indicating metalepsis or change of narrative level" (Onega, PA, 46-47). Therefore, the narrative at the end of the novel neither belongs to Dyer nor Hawksmoor alone.

In terms of plot, the events take place in a simultaneous manner in the 18th century and in the 20th, which share similarities in their subject matter as well. Whatever has happened in Dyer's time repeats itself in the 20th century, where detective Hawksmoor is responsible for solving through the use of reason or logic. In the first chapter of the novel, Nicholas Dyer starts narrating his own version of history in the form of a diary. Going back to the notion of subjective history, Ackroyd through Dyer shows that, the way history is presented depends solely on who is narrating it. Like many other postmodernist writers, Ackroyd suggests that any writer of history is bound to exclude or include whatever he wishes. In this respect, history comes close to being fiction and there is no definite line to separate the two. Dyer says that,

> If I were to now inscribe my own History with its unparalleled Sufferings and surprising Adventures…..I know that the World would not believe the Passages there related, by reason of the strangeness of them, but I cannot help their Unbelief, and if the Reader considers them to be but dark Conceits, then let him bethink himself that Humane life is quite out of the Light and that we are all Creatures of Darknesse. (11)

At this point, Dyer simply states that it is of no concern to him whether the readers of his history find it plausible or not, because it is his own version of the past. In the same chapter, Dyer tells the reader that, while he is narrating his history, he will be doing it in the manner of true historians who have to support what they are stating as

true history with certain "Causes as well as the Matter of Facts" (13). Therefore, he is aware of the fact that, in order for a historical writing to be plausible, it has to contain certain aspects, which the reader should be able to relate his/her own knowledge to. The fictive quality of the novel is emphasized more overtly towards the end in the 18th century plot. Dyer talks about the completion of the building of seven churches, which he likens to the writing of a book. Dyer further comments that, "There is also a Narrative which is hidden so that none may see it, and in a retired Place have I put the effigy of Friar Bacon who made the brazen head that spake Time is" (205). Therefore, Dyer implies that in his book (the seven churches), there is a kind of story or design that is not obvious to the ordinary person. The following quotation justifies this point of view as well:

> What Ackroyd may be saying is that time present and time past are both present in time future, and that the essence of Dyer's possession of Hawksmoor is the simultaneity of experiences centuries apart, to which Dyer's churches are perversely capable of granting access--as all great art may be thought to transcend time. (Hollinghurst quoted in Finney).

Therefore, through the seven churches – only one of them fictional - Dyer tries to achieve some kind of immortality by leaving behind works of art that would survive his death. Dyer reflects his thoughts on architecture saying that it "aims at Eternity and must contain the Eternal powers: not only our Altars and Sacrifices, but the forms of our Temples, must be mysticall" (9).

In short, what Ackroyd reflects through the plot and narration he employs in *Hawksmoor* is the nontraditional concept of time and narrative style that is inherent in metafictional novels. The self-reflexivity that is put forward throughout the novel reminds the readers that it is a fictional work that they are reading. As Dyer attempts to achieve a state of transcendence through the building of his churches and by keeping a diary, the reader may as well achieve this state by the act of reading the text and "by analogically interpreting the book s/he is reading as the verbal

construction reproducing Nicholas Dyer's cosmogonic pattern" (Onega, PA, 48). The deliberate structuring of the novel into twelve different chapters as pointed out by Onega in *Peter Ackroyd* indicate that the whole text is by itself a process whose end is transcendence with reference to "the twelve days in Epiphany, and the twelve months of the year" (48). The novel then allows the reader to transcend into "eternity" (Onega, PA, 48), the same exact end Dyer has been trying to attain.

2.3 Characters

In most of his metafictions, as well as in *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd imbues his texts with the presence of tramps. In the novel, the tramps which seem to inhabit the city of London play a major role in the course of the events in both of the plots. Firstly, what tramps mean for Ackroyd should be taken into consideration, as tramps appear in many of his novels and not only in *Hawksmoor*. Tramps, representing the isolated, fragmented personalities of the society stand as outcasts and appear as if they are a natural part of the city. They are everywhere and seem to be living in perfect harmony with the rest of the society. The main message Ackroyd wishes to give by the inclusion of tramps in his texts is to argue that London has lost its roots with the ancient wisdom and original culture it once represented and now is a sort of 'Wasteland.' In the third chapter of the novel, Dyer defines tramps in a peculiar way saying that they "looked like nothing so much as ancient Britons" (66). In *Hawksmoor*, however, the tramps also have a childlike, almost innocent quality attributed to them. For instance, most of the murders involve tramps or children, which signify that Ackroyd holds both on the same level, as both are unprotected dwellers of the city. This is also evident in the conversation that takes place between the tramp Ned in the 20th century and the shadow of Dyer, as Dyer says, "You are like a child, I see" (78). The tramps also act as a chorus at certain points in the novel, as in the same chapter the circular time concept is implied by a song the tramps sing: "A Wheel that turns, a Wheel that turned ever, A Wheel that turns, and will leave turning never" (66). The similarity between Dyer and Hawksmoor also shows itself in their shared quality for being like tramps themselves. At certain points, both

characters feel that they are singled out by their respective societies and that they do not fit in. There are instances when either Dyer or Hawksmoor identifies himself with the tramps who have become victims of murders that take place in both of the centuries. Onega states that, “Like Beckett’s tramps, they are disgusted by sex, wear heavy dark overcoats even in summer and undergo a process of progressive physical decay” (3). This is a condition experienced by all the other tramps of the city and Ackroyd points out to this state through other characters and not only with Dyer and Hawksmoor. For instance, the tramp Ned (20^{th} century plot) feels that he has “grown older in the city…fatigue and listlessness now held him” (83). Basically, the dominated state of the city with tramps presents an image of disintegrating London and inhabitants of the city. Dyer’s affection for the tramps is indicated at the end of the third chapter where he tells a group of tramps, “Do you remember me, I will never, never leave thee. I will never, never leave thee.” (67). As Dyer says, "Time is a vast Denful of Horrour, round about which a Serpent winds and in the winding bites itself by the Tail" (62), what he alludes to is the circular time concept, but “...it may also represent--as it does here and throughout for Dyer--a sterile, self-centered sexuality, an imprisonment in time, an inability to rise above the fallen world” (Ahearn, 453). The symbolism of the snake biting its own tail has its roots in Egyptian mythology. Following the tradition of Eliot in merging myths with his fiction, Ackroyd skillfully inserts the snake symbolism into the novel to convey the idea of life renewing, as well as, destroying energy. It also “...represents the unending cycle of nature between destruction, and new creation, life and death” (the Serpent).

Dyer and Hawksmoor’s seeing each other in shadow form reflects a cleverly hidden symbolism behind the novel. There are many instances where the two characters see each other’s presence in the shape of a shadow and cannot quite figure out who the shadow might be. Ackroyd, being highly interested in myths, implicitly designs his text/novel with shadow symbolism. As Fraim indicates, the shadow is indicative of “the negative double" of the body, or the image of its evil and base side. In some primitive tribes, J.C. Cooper observes that the shadow can represent the soul of the person” (“Symbolism of Popular Culture”). Accordingly, both Dyer and

Hawksmoor see each other's most primitive aspect, which is reflected in the novel in shadow form. Dyer and Hawksmoor may be said to be reflections of each other in different centuries. Onega argues that:

> …detective and architect share a striking complementarily, so striking that, from a Jungian point of view they can be seen as split facets of a single individual, the conscious and unconscious aspects of the flesh and blood Augustan architect, Nicholas Hawksmoor, who worked for Sir Christopher Wren in the historical past. (PA, 99)

These similarities between the characters most obviously reflect the idea that, time as we know does not exist. The novel is set to argue that time is circular; that is, there is not a definite concept of past, present and future and that everything exists at the same time. Therefore, Ackroyd forms a connection between the portrayal of the novel's characters and the circular time concept. There are many instances in the novel where either Dyer or Hawksmoor feel that they are not themselves. Dyer, for instance, tries to explain this condition as follows: "my Eyes meet my Eyes but they are not my Eyes[3] and I see my Mouth opening as if to make a screaming Sound" (92). This is one of the moments he sees or experiences Hawksmoor who exists in the 20th century. Thus, Dyer and Hawksmoor as characters may be interpreted as shadow existences of each other in different time periods; however, since the novel argues for a circular time concept, they actually exist simultaneously in time and at many instances echo each other. Dyer and Hawksmoor both look at their reflections

[3] This sentence spoken by Dyer in the novel, "my Eyes meet my Eyes but they are not my Eyes", is another instance of intertextual reference among the many that Ackroyd makes in the novel. Dyer's words are an allusion to one of Rumi's poems "You Are Not Your Eyes" in Masnavi (VI, 84 ff). Coleman Barks, in his book, *The Soul of Rumi* points out that, this particular poem depicts the idea that "the life of the soul is felt as an apple orchard; language, a thick morning fog covering it. Gradually, as the sun comes up and burns of the mist, we see through to the taste, unsayable beauty" (151). Rumi, at the end of the poem says, "You're an artist who paints both with existence and non. Shams could help you see who you are, but remember, you are not your eyes" (quoted in Barks, 152). Barks has titled this section of his book "Apple Orchards in Mist: Being in Between Language and the Soul's Truth." When the poem is analyzed line by line, it is possible to see to which end Ackroyd has made use of it in the novel. The line, "You say *Illa,* "only God", then your hungry eyes see you're in "nothing"" reflects Dyer's condition, in which he is searching for the ultimate truth to transcend time into the Cosmic state. In fact, both Dyer and Hawksmoor are trying to understand who they are by looking on the mirror from time to time in the novel and see each other's reflections in return. Therefore, the eyes that they see in their reflection belong to one another and not to themselves.

in the mirror, as if trying to figure out who they really are. Subconsciously, both of the characters suspect that they are not who they are or who they seem to be. The act of looking on the mirror shows both Dyer's and Hawksmoor's search for meaning into their existence. Some other characters in the novel, such as the mentally disturbed man Dyer meets in Bedlam, also indicate this state of simultaneous existence. In Bedlam, the man speaks of Nicholas Hawksmoor as if he exists in 18th century and warns Dyer: "I'll tell you somewhat, one Hawksmoor will this day terribly shake you" (100). In the 20th century plot, Hakwsmoor's father speaks of a letter which was written in the 18th century by one of Dyer's colleagues Hayes who gives Dyer away. Hawksmoor's father thinks that the letter is supposed to give away Hawksmoor.

Another similarity between Dyer and Hawksmoor is that, Hawksmoor uses architectural methods to solve the murders in the 20th century; therefore, Dyer's profession is reflected upon Hawksmoor as well. It is stated that, "Hawksmoor liked to measure these discrete phases, which he considered as an architect might consider the plan of a building" (113), in trying to figure out how a murder takes place. Hawksmoor tries to solve the murders by using logic; however, as the murders increase in number, he realizes that the methods used in these murders are identical to the ones of 18th century. This knowledge confuses him, because in a way he comes to the realization that the methods used in these murders belong to some other time. Instead of proceeding towards a solution, he finds himself going backwards in time. Hawksmoor also realizes that he is a fictional character as the murders proceed: "He was playing a part: he knew this, and believed it to be his strength. Others did not realize that their parts had been written for them" (118). When he is analyzing the murders, he tells his assistant Walter that, "We have to assume there is a story, otherwise we won't him, will we" (125), referring to the fictionality of the events that are taking place. As the events proceed in the 20th century plot and Walter betrays Hawksmoor, Hawksmoor is not surprised about this at all, because he knows that there is a story to be followed and Walter's betrayal is simply a part of that particular story; he comments, "It had to happen" (202). Since Hawksmoor is a man of reason just like Sir Chris in the 18th century plot, he is trying to figure out the

murders through logic and this situation is an element of realistic detective genre. Thus, Ackroyd through Hawksmoor is parodying this genre since reason alone does not solve the murders in *Hawksmoor*. Through the portrayal of Hawksmoor, Ackroyd reflects what is called postmodern detective fiction. Hawksmoor goes on telling Walter that, to be able to logically understand the murders, they should view it as"…a story; even if the beginning has not been understood, we have to go on reading it. Just to see what happens next" (126). This is what Dyer does as well, since he dramatizes people as if they are characters in a play. Thus, both characters reveal the fictionality of the text they are a part of. In the incident where Hawksmoor kills a fly on a book – the fly being another significant motif in Ackroyd's many novels - points out to "Hawksmoor's coming to consciousness through the materiality of writing" (Ahearn, 453). Later on in the novel, Dyer experiences an event which tells us that, once again he is experiencing what Hawksmoor goes through in 20th century. After an experiment performed by Sir Chris, Dyer comments, "I have seen this before but I do not know in what Place" (142). At the end of the novel, the shadow existence of Dyer and Hawksmoor become even more apparent as Dyer sees Hawksmoor, whom he identifies very much with himself. Interestingly enough, his helper Ned also sees Hawksmoor's image, almost as a proof of their shadow existence. Dyer's last experience that is related in the novel is his seeing Hawksmoor and retreating to the church of Little St Hugh. Likewise, Hawksmoor sees Dyer passing him by on the street and he realizes that there is a pattern to the murders after all. When Hawksmoor goes to Spitalfields Church, he comes across Dyer's name for the first time. This event also shows that, although Hawksmoor tried to solve the murders through logic, it was by chance that he could find out the truth about the murders. It is stated that "He had come to the end by chance, not knowing that it was not the end..." (215). Ivan Janik states that, "Hawksmoor becomes aware of the coincidence of the modern murders and Dyer's churches, but instead of fashioning a theory, some sort of historical construct that might explain it, he is drawn into and taken over by the mystery" (160). Therefore, Hawksmoor gives in to what he had been against from the start: mystery. In a way, as he loses his sense of logic, what Dyer had been arguing in favor of takes a hold of

him. The coexistence of Dyer and Hawksmoor is further indicated in a poem inscribed in Dyer's diary, which Hawksmoor reads:

> I saw a door which opened on a fire
> I saw a pit which rose up even higher
> I saw a child who danced round and round
> I saw a house which stood beneath the ground
> I saw a man who is not, nor ever could he be,
> Hold up your hand and look, for you are he.
> (213)

In the last lines of the novel, Dyer and Hawksmoor are trying to do the same thing, that is to touch each other and their voices become one. As Ahearn suggests, "taken out of time by depression, sickness, and death, in the last two chapters of the novel Dyer and Hawksmoor go to a place that does not exist, to lose, recognize, and merge their separate selves" (453). What is interesting at this point is that, another voice joins the narration: "Their words were my own but not my own, and I found myself on a winding path of smooth stones" (217). As Onega suggests, Dyer had wanted to end his desperation on earth by trying to reach the state of 'Cosmic man' through the teachings of his master Mirabilis. This narrator who joins at the end of the novel is commented to be "the reunified Self, the Cosmic Man, the addition of Dyer and Hawksmoor" (Onega, *PMH*, 42), who finishes off the novel saying that he is in "rags" and that he "is a child again" (217). Therefore, the circular nature of time is indicated once again at the end of the novel, since after achieving the state of 'reunified self,' there is a return to the theme of starting all over again. For some critics, such as Amy Elias, this narrator who appears all of a sudden at the end of the novel "could be Ackroyd himself" (96), who is the creator of the text. In metafictions which problematize history, it is stated that, "the producer's position is one of both novel writer and narrative historian…" (Hutcheon, 148). Therefore, the appearance of Ackroyd and assuming the position of a tramp and child at the end would fit in with this definition as the final speaker of the novel and also as a self-reflexive utterance. Philip Tew in his *The Contemporary British Novel* states that

> This ongoing life of the dead and quest for rebirth is a basis of the mythological existence. Ackroyd's detective is named Hawksmoor as if to identify him with the malevolent or mythic spirit of the novel's architect, Nicholas Dyer, who is based on the genuine historical figure of the detective's name. (132)

Tew interprets the fusion of the two characters in the same time level at the end of the novel as reflecting a "sense of a Manichean struggle between good and evil, a meta-historical, elemental force, and by the novel's end the image of the dead child is conjoined with the character, Hawksmoor, speaking enigmatically and yet in unison" (132). This "unison" indicates the realization of the transcendence that Dyer has been seeking for since he is no longer himself, but actually a synthesis of his own being, Hawksmoor and a child/tramp all at once.

Besides Dyer and Hawksmoor, there are similarities between the other characters of the novel as well and these similarities appear for a specific purpose. As Janik states,

> The confluence of names underlines the parallel: not only Dyer/Hawksmoor the architect and Hawksmoor the detective become nearly interchangeable, so do their assistants Walter Pyne and Walter Payne, their neighbors Mrs. Best and Mrs. West, and the murder victims themselves. (116)

The first resemblance that could be mentioned is between Dyer and Thomas Hill. The second chapter of the novel moves ahead in time to the 20th century and relates the story of a boy named Thomas Hill who is also interested in esoteric subjects and reads Dr. Faustus, just like Dyer has done in his own childhood. Tommy's interest in the church nearby worries his mother, because of the tunnel it contains. Tommy again like Dyer is an outcast and he gains strength in his own solitary world, mystified by the church of Spitalfields. He also sees the vision of a man with "a dark coat looking up at him" (36), who could be both Dyer and

Hawksmoor. Another resemblance between Dyer and Thomas is that Thomas also draws sketches of churches. Growing restless with his thoughts, Thomas decides to go into the tunnel of the church one day and going up to the tower, he lets himself go as he sees a vision of people who urge him to jump. Before he does so, he again sees the same man with the dark coat in shadow form. The third chapter proceeds into 18 century and Dyer dreams of the exact moment of Thomas's fall from the tower of Spitalfalls Church. Besides being the shadow reflection of Dyer, Hawksmoor is also "Sir Christopher Wren's modern counterpart whose belief in the power of reason fails to solve the murders" (Finney, 1). The striking resemblance between the murders, which take place in both centuries, can be seen in the murdered victims' names and the location of the murders, the churches built by Dyer. The first murder takes place in the Christ Church in Spitalfields and the victim is named Thomas Hill in both centuries; the second in Limehouse, St. Anne Church and the victim is a tramp called Ned again in both centuries; the third in St. George Church with the victim named Dan (18^{th} century) or Dan Dee (20^{th} century); the fourth in St. Mary Woolnoth witnessing the murder of Yorick (18^{th} century) and Mathew (20^{th} century) Hayes; the fifth in St. George Church where a man named Thomas Robinson is killed in 18^{th} century and the victim remains nameless in 20^{th} century and finally, the sixth murder takes place in St. Alfege where the victims remain nameless in both centuries. In the novel, there is a very complex net of associations between different characters, which requires a careful reading. For instance, Hawksmoor, although he is the shadow existence of Dyer, may also be associated with Sir Christopher Wren because of his reasoning.

2.4 Time and Setting: Quantum Time

The city in Ackroyd's novels is given a multi-voiced and palimpsest history in which the voices of the past appear to speak through the present, and the present speaks to the past. Such exchanges between past and present are often charged with this camp repartee as if history might reveal itself through its catch-phrases (Smethurst)

In *Hawksmoor,* Peter Ackroyd converges two time periods and two plots: Nicholas Dyer's rebuilding of the churches in London after the Great Fire of 1666 in the 18th century and Detective Hawksmoor's trying to solve murder cases in the 20th century. London as usual is the setting Ackroyd has chosen to build the novel's two plots on. One of the main aspects which connects the two time periods is the similarities of the murders which take place when Dyer is building the churches and the ones which take place in the 20th century:

> The crimes in *Hawksmoor* are part of a cycle, not specific acts pertaining to and resolvable at a particular time, but part of an endless repetition, and the investigator is himself constituted by the past, not detached from it. (Horsley)

Therefore, in the novel, there is not a progress towards the future. This is also indicated in the vain attempts Hawksmoor makes to solve the murders, as it is only through coincidence that he is able to do so. Chance being the factor that helps Hawksmoor to understand everything about the murders, he is also put out of the context of the realist detective character, since he is unable to bring any explanation to the murders through logic. Through his investigation, Hawksmoor thinks that he is making progress, however he is only to uncover what has happened in the past. Smethurst states that Hawksmoor is

> ...a postmodern detective equipped with the latest techniques for a series of murders. The particular period of time he needs to return to is significant because it marks the beginning of modern science and an end to seventeenth century mysticism. (179)

In *Hawksmoor*, what Nicholas Dyer attempts to do and in fact is capable of doing is to "negate time by provoking eternity" (Elias, *SD*, 134). His belief in the Mirabulus cult, against the empiricism of his time represented by chief architect Sir Christopher Wren, urges him to stand against the notion of linear time and to follow quantum time instead. That is, he tries to achieve a state of immortality by leaving

behind the churches that he is supposed to rebuild, which all carry symbolic messages of the cult of Mirabilis and of Dyer's presence. For this cause, Dyer sacrifices tramps and children, who represent the purest form of man, in the churches and the churches are supposed to form a pentagram when they are viewed from above. These churches are then seen as sites of murders that Hawksmoor is responsible for solving; therefore, Dyer's churches "transcend historical time and spatialize history….become figures of Dyer's rebellion against the Englightenment positivism of his superior, Christopher Wren" (Elias, *SD*, 167). Indeed, by the convergence of Dyer and Hawksmoor in the 20th century, Dyer is able to achieve the immortality that he has sought for. A third person joining the two at the end of the novel could be the author, Peter Ackroyd, or a new form made up of the two personalities. Smethurst comments on this new persona to be "the 'real' architect Hakwsmoor" (194).

Like most metafictions that make use of "parataxis[4]" (Elias, *SD*, 136), *Hawksmoor* also displays such a quality, with the suggestion that what we know as history does not merely consist of written documents, but of remembering the past too. Therefore, in the novel, there is a constant moving back and forth through time. In short, metahistorical romances suggest that the present time cannot be lived alone without the remembrance of the past. In other words, the past cannot be left behind just because it is time past/history. What makes up the present time then is the experience lived in the past. Another term related with the circular time concept is 'antihistoricism,' which argues that, "time and history-are invariably unidirectional: one can move forward into the future, but not back into the past" (Ford).

Although the questioning of linear time is not an invention of postmodernist literature, in metafictional works, non-linear time has another purpose. Paul Smethurst explains that

> ...in the chronotopes of the postmodern novel, non-linear time and temporal displacement cannot be simply accounted for as literary device, here they

[4] Amy Elias states that, parataxis is "a shuttling back and forth' between the intertwined times of past and present" (136).

> seem to shake the very corners of reality – linear time and extensive, contiguous space. Non-linear time and temporal displacement in postmodern novels problematise the real by calling into question scientific laws that govern the temporality of the modern world, and by questioning social and cultural constructions of time that underpin western versions of reality. (173)

Accordingly, the questioning of linear time is an attempt to break down the discourses established by the Western world and problematize further the metanarratives built around science and empiricism. In *Hawksmoor*, Dyer takes on the role of the questioning 'other', who, in an age of empiricism, attains to reach knowledge through diabolicism, constantly undermining the experiments conducted by Sir Christopher Wren. Considering that "postmodern conceptions of history move from the general to the particular, from the linear to the planar, from "depth" to "depthlessness," and "from metanarratives to fragments" (Elias, SD, 109), it is possible to see the same line of thought in *Hawksmoor* as well, both in the depiction of history and the concept of time, which allow for fact and fiction to be blurred. Smethurst argues that

> The shape of the *Hawksmoor* chronotope is the most complex we have come to yet, as it brings together conflicting forms of time. Hakwmoor is forced to question linear time when events from the past seem to catch up with him, and Dyer proposes a trans-historical time that the novel as a whole seems to confirm. (194)

Michel Foucault in his The *Archaeology of Knowledge* makes use of the term 'archaeological method,' through which he provides an "alternative to Englightenment-birthed Western history on a linear model" (quoted in Elias, *SD*, 109). Amy Elias comments on Foucault's idea of multiple layered history as thus:

> Not only history is layered in this way; because they are the output of human activity, these historical

> layers also backtrack, intersect, and repeat themselves. In other words, to imagine history as an ocean current does not replace the chronologies of history but multiplies them; in a way, it increases rather than decreases linearity. (111)

In addition, the snake symbolism used in the novel can be traced back to many ancient cultures. It is a part of many cultures' myths and as McCoy explains,

> The Serpent biting its own tail is first seen as early as 1600 years BC in Egypt. From there it moved to the Phonecians and then to the Greeks, who called it the Ouroboros, which means *devouring its tail*. The serpent biting its tail is found in other mythoi as well, including Norse myth, where the serpent's name is Jörmungandr, and in Hindu, where the dragon circles the tortoise which supports the four elephants that carry the world.

The circular nature of time, contrary to the concept of linear time, argues that, "past and future are integral aspects of the present, and the mind's tendency to discriminate between them is illusory" (Ford). Another term related with the circular time concept is 'antihistoricism,' which argues that, "time and history--are invariably unidirectional: one can move forward into the future, but not backward into the past" (Ford). As it can be understood from the notion of multiple layered history, *Hawksmoor* embodies all of these components. The novel "...questions the concept of quantitative and linear time arising out of Enlightenment thinking" (Smethurst, 181). London, then, as the setting becomes even more logical as "it marks a time and a place when the ascendency of modern thought, as it emerges from Enlightenment thinking, displaces earlier belief systems, marginalising and even criminalizing them" (Smethurst, 181). In addition, Dyer is building a pattern through the reconstruction of churches which in reality exists in London and this makes the 18th century plot the more convincing. Therefore, the churches also serve for the purpose of converging the two characters as they exist in both time periods. London as the

setting of the present time (20th century plot) signifies "the decline of that modern rationalist thinking championed by the Royal Society" (Smethurst, 181).

Keen explains that "As in gothic, for Ackroyd the present is the meeting place of all our pasts" (128). In relation to *Hawksmoor*, she further states that

> Some of the success of Ackroyd's formula lies in the combination of love and dread, of sensations that blend déja vu and the frisson of horror. The terrors and discomforts of the past enhance key heritage themes, such as marvelling that our ancestors could have lived through dark, unpoliced, dangerous, and nasty times, at least long enough to reproduce or to create the objects and traditions they have left to us. (128)

The present time plot of the novel makes use of these elements containing "terrors and discomforts of the past" as "The historical traumas of plague and Great Fire then erupt into the late twentieth century..." (Keen, 128). Indeed, the other explanation for the convergence of the two centuries in the novel can be based on the need for Hawksmoor to understand the relationship between the murders belonging to the 18th century and the ones in his own time period. When logic does not suffice, he has to resort to information about the 18th century murders, which means that he has to "travel back to the eighteenth century" because "Events seem to resonate across historical time of voices, echoes, rhymes and symbolic designs in space" (Smethurst, 182). Adrian M. de Lange, in his essay titled "The Complex Arhitectonics of Postmodern Fiction: Hawksmoor – A Case Study", points out to the use of tenses in the two plots. He suggests that

> The tense in which the various chapter are presented already indicate the relativity of time. Those chapters set in the 18th century are in the present tense whereas those set in the 20th century are in the past tense. One notable exception is the first chapter which is presented in the past tense and relates the basic history of Nicholas Dyer. However, the last sentence is in the present tense, and thus suggests that the past can live on in the present. The change of

> tense also indicates that the reader can expect Dyer to exert some kind of inluence on the present. (151)

Thus, Ackroyd presents a text in which the past is almost exerted onto the present time. This exersion displays one of the main ideas that Ackroyd gives in his novels; that is, to connect the past with the present time through the use of two interconnected plots, which eventually converge.

2.5 Language: Intertextuality, Self-reflexivity, Repetition and Pastiche

It is the beginning of the novel which draws attention to the vague line between fiction and history. De Lange states that this line is "further enhanced by Ackroyd's acknowledgement at the beginning of the novel" (148) where Ackroyd purposely says that "Any relation to real people, either living or dead, is entirely coincidental" and that "this version of history is my own invention" (i). In *Hawksmoor*, language is used to direct attention to the circular nature of characters, events and time. There are words, phrases, poems and songs repeated throughout the novel to erase the time gap between the two centuries, to introduce a new idea of time and to familiarize the reader with certain significant aspects that produce an overall meaning for the novel. For instance, an 18th century character's lines are simply uttered by a 20th century character, allowing the reader to think that "nothing progresses in time" (Onega, *PA*, 45).

One of the repeated words in both time periods is dust "on practically every page of the novel" (Onega, *PMH,* 5). The reference to dust starts in the first two chapters of the novel, as it is Dyer in the first chapter, who asks where the dust comes from to his assistant Walter, which is then followed by Thomas in the second chapter (one of the victims in the 20th century plot), who asks his mother the same question. There are possible explanations as to what dust alludes to: firstly, dust alludes to the Biblical story of how man will become dust, signifying death; secondly, there is a reference to T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* and both of the meanings employed to the word 'dust' produce once again a city that has become a

nonproductive, barren land with decaying inhabitants. In chapter 4, the tramp called Ned hears two other tramps talking about dust: "'Dust, just look at the dust,'…and you know where it comes from, don't you. Yes, you know.'" (69). At the end of the novel, Dyer makes a comment that refers to death through the word dust once again; however, his words also signify that written texts do not die, but on the contrary survive time to give way to other written texts. Dyer says, "All this shall pass, and all these Things shall fall and crumble into the Dust, but my Churches shall survive" (208). The repetition of the word 'dust' of course alludes to and echoes T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland*. In the first part of Eliot's poem, the thirtieth line says, "I will show you fear in a handful of Dust," which in turn refers to Evelyn Waugh's novel *A Handful of Dust* (quoted in Bartleby.com). In *Hakwsmoor,* the city of London is literally covered with dust as there are many references made to it by different characters, which brings to the mind an image of a city forgotten, decaying and ageing. The dust that covers the city is also indicative of the fact that there is more than what seems to the eye; that is, behind all the reason and logic of the Age, there lurks occult sciences, hidden as a mysterious side of the period. According to de Lange, the repetition of the word dust also alludes to the theme of "immortality" (152). The example he gives from the novel is the line spoken by Dyer, in which he refers to it as "blowing through centuries (7). Therefore, dust is used as an element, which all centuries/times have in common; it is a binding element which appears and reappears in the two centuries presented in *Hawksmoor.*

The style of language that is most evident in the novel involves the 18th century and the 20th century; however, it could be said that *Hawksmoor* also covers the intrusion of other styles as well, as "Ackroyd has himself described Nicholas Dyer as a 'patchwork', echoing with hundreds of voices – including those of Sir Christopher Wren – and texts of the eighteenth century" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 93). Ackroyd in an interview held by Jeremy Gibson explains that

> On a larger scale, what I was concerned with, in some of the fiction at least, is with the possibility that the past is penetrating the present, and it has a determining effect on the present. That's why I use

> several pastiches, like in *Hawksmoor*. It wasn't really pastiche, it was just a way of showing how the language of the past and the present are the same. (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 229)

As Smethurst contends "Both times are presented realistically and convincingly in the novel through the use of eighteenth century dialect and writing style..." (183).

Ackroyd mentions in a future interview that what led to his writing of *Hawksmoor* was Ian Sinclair's *Lud Heat* (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 250). In the same interview, Ackroyd shares his views on intertextuality and pastiche thus:

> ...There's no such thing as an original idea. The idea of originality is quite a modern heresy. In the pre-Restoration period, the best poet was the one who used the found material and rearranged it most adeptly...In my books I 'steal' people's writings, there are whole passages which I just rework. I find that immensely liberating, it's not imprisoning at all...With Hawksmoor, for example, when I was imitating early eighteenth-century speech, I found it was the one sure way in which I entered the period fully, it came alive, I think for readers it made that period live in a way in which it would not have been by any other method. The speech was real, I had taken it from original sources, and that for me is writing. This absurd supersitition anout not using other plots, not using other characters, other stories, is just simply a modern heresy, it never occurred to people in the eighteenth century not to do it. (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 260)

With the task of presenting the 18th century in a plausible way, Ackroyd presents an interchangeable play within the languages of two periods of time. Going back and forth between the two time periods, language becomes a tool by which Ackroyd playfully converges them: "Indeed, the haunting movement of the past in present language disturbs the identity of language as the novel oscillates between contemporary and early eighteenth-century written styles" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 96). Another quality concerning language is that it distorts chronicism right from the beginning of the novel, which is written in the 18th century style. The novel begins

with Dyer talking to his assistant Walter Paine, but it could also be interpreted as the writer speaking to the reader therefore, the reader is unsure at this point who is addressing who: "...the immediate doubleness of the remark is itself significant. Or, to put it another way, the uncertainty of address, and, by extension, the uncertainty inscribed in all literary language, is significant" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 100). Thus, it is this "uncertainty" in the language that Ackroyd uses, which tries to convince the reader that a speaker, who is definitely not a part of the present time, is guiding the reader with these assertive words: "So, let us beginne..." (5). It may be further commented that the novel is indeed

> ...a pastiche of eighteenth century writing strangely connected to a modern detective story. But the pastiche does contain a well-researched and persuasive historical reconstruction of part-historical and part-fictional events and meetings. (Smethurst, 182)

The building of the churches for Dyer is metaphorically likened to a written book. Therefore, there is a similarity that is formed between architecture and the act of writing, which point out to a self-reflexive attitude in the novel. Both are used for the same purpose by Dyer, as the act of constructing and writing are directed to find a point of timelessness:

> ...- the church and the text – are both attempts to produce spatial constructs outside time, to escape time or to merge with an enduring or cosmological form of time. They are attempts to transcend historical time by using these interstices in the matrix of the present almost as black holes – tears in the fabric of the universe through which time and space might slip. (Smethurst, 182)

The metafictional aspect of the novel is obvious when Hakwsmoor is no longer able to use logic in the solving of the murders. He becomes aware of his textual constructedness upon the helpless feeling he gets in the face of the task he is

given. The “metafictional asides” (153) of the novel indicate that “There is a self-conscious concern with the art of writing and with establishing parallels between that and architecture” (153). In Dyer’s narration, it is also possible to see that he is actually writing his diary which is intended to be read by a certain reader. De Lange comments that Dyer directly addresses to the readers, telling them about the conditions in which he is writing his-story (153).

B. THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

3.1 Introduction to *The Great Fire of London*

"Although it could not be described as a true story, certain events have certain consequences" (3)

The Great Fire of London begins very much in line with what Ackroyd generally does at the beginning of his metafictions; that is, with a true to fact description of what he is going to refer to, in this case to Charles Dickens' novel *Little Dorrit*. After he briefly summarizes the novel, Ackroyd ends this part called 'the story so far' by saying, "Although it could not be described as a true story, certain events have certain consequences" (3) and at the end of the novel, he uses a similar expression. Susana Onega states that, "The words can be interpreted simply as a warning that Dickens's writing of *Little Dorrit* was not a self-contained act, that, once created, the novel will condition the work of successive generations of writers" (*MMNPA*, 19). Indeed, as a postmodernist writer, Ackroyd's words indicate that, just as every written text gives way to the production of more texts that are in close relation with each other, Dickens's novel will also be leading to the production of other works. Actually, *The Great Fire of London* is one of those texts that came into existence from this point of view. The novel in a way recreates the characters of Dickens's *Little Dorrit* within the setting of contemporary London; only the city is much like T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, representing a modern day barrenness and futility with its people's aimless and solitary lives. The most obvious theme of the novel is that past time is not "recoverable" (Finney), as this is the main argument of Ackroyd which is agreed upon by other postmodernist metafiction writers.

3.2 Narration and Plot

The preface of the novel, which gives a summarized account of *Little Dorrit* is titled "the story so far" and thus, right from the beginning, Ackroyd is implying that, his novel has been preceded by Dickens's novel. Gibson and Wolfreys comment

in their preface, that it "[serves] as a connective fibre between texts, this novel begins before it begins, presenting itself as no beginning at all but stitching itself to that prior work with the performative phrase which exists out of time" (77). Accordingly, Ackroyd's novel attempts to produce a contemporary text that is supposed to take it from where Dickens had left off. Throughout the novel, there is considerable evidence of the great influence of Charles Dickens and T. S. Eliot on Ackroyd in various ways. Many critics agree that it is firstly in a Dickensian style. The novel's plot, which Susana Onega calls "characteristic multiplot structure of Victorian fiction" (*MMNPA*, 20), deals with the production of the novel *Little Dorrit* as a film by a character called Spenser Spender. In the process of realizing this however, Spender and certain characters get connected to each other in such ways that the outcome is not what is expected at all. At this point a brief summary would be helpful in understanding how the first few chapters of the novel proceed in introducing the main characters and then get interconnected from Chapter 5 on. The novel's first Chapter introduces the character of Little Arthur, a man of small stature due to a condition he acquired in his childhood. Right from the beginning, the isolation of the character from the outside world is presented to the reader, as the opening lines suggest: "Little Arthur is asleep, with the same expression he has had for forty years. No one has ever seen it" (5). When he is not permitted to own 'Fun City,' a section of the local amusement park, in his frustration he comments, "'There is going to be electricity'" (7) and although the narrator says Little Arthur is not aware of what he is saying, at the end of the novel what Arthur says becomes the reality. In Chapter 2, Audrey Skelton, Little Dorrit's contemporary representative in the novel is presented. She is described as a girl, who is lost between the imaginary things she wants to be one day and the reality. She has lots of allusions to how and what she wants to be, from "a Russian princess" to "an opera singer" (8), which clearly point out to a fragmentation in her personality. Audrey and Timothy Coleman, her friend, have a relationship that cannot be termed yet as a true male-female relationship. They are presented as two young people, trying to establish a relationship with each other as they seek a kind of safety. In this chapter, they go to the amusement park and have an encounter with Little Arthur. It is indicated that

they have known him for some time. Accordingly the first connection of the novel between different characters is established. In chapter 3, the characters Spenser Spender and his wife Laetitia, a married couple, with an indifferent relationship are introduced. Spender is a movie maker, who is inspired by Dickens's novel Little Dorrit to turn it into a film. Actually, Spender's wish to do so is the starting point of all to follow in the novel. Spender and Laetitia's marriage signifies their isolation, barrenness and fragmentation. It is expressed that, "Although they had been married for several years, neither of them could have accounted for the length of their relationship – not even to each other" (13). They are also the participants of a childless marriage, which brings to mind once again a fruitless relationship that has no support and continuation. Rowan Phillips is the next major character presented in the novel in chapter 4. Actually, Phillips is a reflection of Peter Ackroyd himself, as an academician and a homosexual, who leads a promiscuous lifestyle. Once again, the opening lines describing Rowan Phillips indicate a lonely personality with certain problems: "He had been drinking; he tried to hold on to his personality, which was trying to escape" (19). His frequent sexual encounters may be interpreted as an attempt to escape the reality of his personal life.

Starting from Chapter 5, these six major characters get connected to one another through Spender's project of turning *Little Dorrit* into a film. The established relationships between certain characters have disasterous outcomes for them. To start with, Spender's shooting the film destroys his already problematic marriage, as Laetitia starts to have an affair. Audrey Skelton's infatuation with Little Dorrit after a medium seanse leads her to behave strangely and to think of herself as the embodiment of the character Little Dorrit, which causes her boyfriend Timothy to find himself in a homosexual relationship with Rowan Phillips. Audrey's idea that the movie should not be shot, because it will meet the qualification of its original, leads her to start a fire at the film set of Spender, with the help of a group of tramps. Little Arthur's being put into prison for the murder of an eight year old girl creates the consequence of him letting the prisoners free, ironically by the use of some equipments left behind by Spender's film crew.

The idea behind the plot is to show that London with its inhabitants has turned into a barren, futile city, in other words, into a present day 'wasteland'. Perhaps one of the most effective ideas used by Ackroyd in creating this modern day 'wasteland' is through the tramps, flies and the fire (Onega, *MMNPA*, 28), which appear throughout the novel, conveying a disturbing presence, almost alien to the true nature of the city of London. It could be argued that there is a Joycean structure in Ackroyd's novel, when compared to Joyce's *Dubliners*. The different episodes of *The Great Fire of London*, with their presentation of the isolated, barren, futile and fragmented nature of the characters, all point out to a decayed city, London, just like Joyce's *Dubliners*, with its fifteen separate stories, that are designed to make sense in the end to point out to a decaying city, Dublin. This idea is never directly stated, but conveyed through certain images, portrayals of the characters and implicit expressions instead. Barry Lewis clearly identifies the similarities between Dickensian novels and *The Great Fire of London*, emphasizing especially how Ackroyd designs the plot structure: "Like Dickens, Ackroyd introduces his characters one by one at the beginning of his book, in isolation from each other, before their connections are made visible" (163). The three plots of the novel accordingly expose three different climactic events which actually happen at the same time. As Lewis explains, the first climax occurs with the fire that Audrey Skelton starts at the film set of Spender and the second occurs with the escape of the prisoners from Marshalsea Prison due to short circuit produced by Little Arthur; these two events then produce a third climax which produces an allusion to the Great Fire of London of 1666 (23).

In the narration of the novel, Ackroyd follows a technique similar to *Hawksmoor*; that is, there is repetition at the end of the novel which brings the novel back to the beginning. While a repetition of phrase, word or sentence can be found at the beginning of each new chapter in *Hawksmoor*, in *The Great Fire of London* the beginning and the end of the novel are tied to each other with a comment Ackroyd, as "an external author-narrator" (Onega, MMNPA, 30) makes. He explains that the story to be found in the novel is "not a true story" (3-168), although there is more to

come after the narration of this particular story. Onega contends that this repetition suggests

> ...the same effect at the narrative level. This suggested narrative circularity is in keeping with mythical reading and also with the realistic fiction. However, the narrator's insistence that "This is not a true story" works in the opposite direction, stirring a teasing doubt the realism-biased reader has been trying to suppress, namely, the question of the ontological status of the reincarnated or transhistorical characters. (MMNPA, 30)

The playful nature of Ackroyd's writing style can also be seen in the change he produces in the narration. For instance, the "tresspassing on narrative levels that works as a major frame break, shattering to its foundations the willing suspension of disbelief of the reader" is conveyed through the consequences of the medium seanse of Audrey Skelton (Onega, MMNPA, 30). Audrey's possession by Dickens's character Little Dorrit works as a tool through which "the reader instinctively assumes an ontological difference between the "real" world in which Audrey Skelton and Spenser Spender move and the "fictional" world of the characters in Little Dorrit" (MMNPA, 30); Onega suggests that "one reason being precisely the fact that Spender and the other "real" characters at the same narrative level are involved, in one way or another, in the production of a "unreal" film version of the novel" (MMNPA, 30).

3.3 Characters: Colour Symbolism, Parody And Intertextuality

One of the most significant aspects of the novel in terms of being a metafiction is the way Ackroyd very skillfully converges fiction and reality into each other. The characters he presents in the novel have symbolic names, which all allude to real life personalities. The names, Little Arthur, Audrey Skelton, Rowan Phillips and Spenser Spender can all be traced both back to history and to earlier works of literature. The real names that these fictional names all allude to establish a plausible

relation on the reader's mind between the reality of the past and the fictionality of the present time. The characters' names suggest a kind of "transhistorical" quality, to suggest that "the roots of their culture go back to the same source" (Onega, MMNPA, 23). Ackroyd does state at the end of the novel that, "This is not a true story, but certain things follow from other things" (169). This statement also suggests that a work of literature will lead to other works of literature and that intertextuality is an insepararable and inevitable mode of postmodernist writing.

Throughout the novel, the original text (Dickens's *Little Dorrit*) is subverted by so many characters that, *The Great Fire of London* becomes a patchwork of various interpretations and a parody of the 19th century novel, which is in fact an example of "19th century serial fiction" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 77). Ukko Hanninen states that, "...Ackroyd seeks to deconstruct the 'truth' of history primarily by the means of parody" (1). Not any of the interpretations presented in the novel comply with the original text and thus, create a kind of chaos for the characters of the novel, who are in one way or another connected with *Little Dorrit*. As the below quotation explains, a work of literature is subject to being interpreted in a variety of ways and this idea is an important aspect of postmodern understanding of fiction reality.

> Peter Ackroyd writes a sequel to Little Dorrit in which Rowan Phillips writes a script of Little Dorrit, for Spenser Spender's film version of Little Dorrit, to which Job Penstone and Sir Frederick Lustlambert would like to contribute their own versions of Little Dorrit, all of which are equally subjective and distorting misreadings of the original novel. (Onega, MMNPA, 31)

This possibility of endless interpretations produces the idea that Ackroyd's novel is a textual world in which the characters are trapped and can only escape through the fire they start on the film set of *Little Dorrit*. Spender's death in the fire may be interpreted as a punishment for his failure in filming the novel in accordance with its original, while the destruction of the film set may also be read as the destruction of Ackroyd's version of *Little Dorrit* which he reflects in his own personal style.

Ackroyd's text emphasizes the textual quality of the world he creates and London, as a modern day wasteland, loses its "mythical" quality (Onega, *MMNPA*, 32).

One of the recurring elements in the novel is tramps and other characters with red hair. As it is suggested, "On one hand, as the color of fire and blood, it is an energizing, aggressive and bold color. In direct contrast, red is used for "STOP" signs throughout the world today" (*Color Symbolism*). As in the following history of the negative interpretation of the color red, the red haired tramps often signal danger and evil in the novel:

> Advent of Christianity diminished the power of the two Germanic gods. They were transformed into the devil with his red hair and red beard. Red haired women were reputed to be witches and whores and the poppy became the devil's flower. Sexuality which was also associated with red was demonized in Christianity...Old sayings discriminated people with red hair or red beard: "*Red hair, evil hair*" and "*Red beard - devil's way*". Such prejudices still prevail in some rural areas of Europe.("Pigments Through the Ages")

The red haired characters in the novel are then portrayed as rioteers against their textually constructed nature. Therefore, the real danger that these characters bring in fact is to the novels that they are a part of, as fictionally constructed realities.

The first appearance of a red haired character is a tramp who asks for money from Rowan Phillips. Phillips is a bit intimidated by the tramp, since he "disliked confrontation of any kind" (Ackroyd, 22). The "carrot-haired" (22) tramp joins the other tramps who start talking among themselves after Phillips leaves, as if there is a kind of secret or conspiracy against the others. The appearance of the tramp just when Rowan is looking for Marshalsea Prison indicates to a negative event to take place in Rowan's life, because after Rowan leaves the tramps, he sees Tim for the first time. Upon seeing him, Rowan feels that he has to meet Tim, ironically being unaware of who Tim is and Audrey's connection to him. Later on in the novel, the same red haired tramp witnesses an intimate scene between Rowan Phillips and Tim. It is

indicated with emphasis that he “made no reaction. Such things were trifling to him” (72). The presence of the tramp acts as a foreshadowing of danger ahead for these two men; almost as a warning light for their relationship. In the scene that the tramp witnesses, Rowan attempts to kiss Tim on the cheek, taking the first step to show Tim that he likes him. Therefore, the red-haired tramp may be said to act as a negative or unlucky sign for what is to happen in their relationship. In fact, the sexual relationship which starts later between the two ruins Tim’s life. He finds himself in a homosexual relationship although he is not gay and still loves Audrey. After a while, what Rowan and Tim share together detoriates into boredom and embarrassment for Rowan and a loss of trust for Tim, when it turns out that Rowan is no more interested in him.

Audrey Skelton is a major character in the novel with red-hair, although she does not establish a connection with the tramps until the end of the novel. However, an unreliable quality is revealed about Audrey early on in the novel. In the passages describing her, she is attributed a distorted quality: “Audrey was a Russian princess, who had been forced to flee during the Revolution. She was a poetess who did not want her work to be discovered in her life-time. She was a mystery to those who knew, and loved, her best” (8). Audrey’s rich imagination as these words suggest gives her the possibility of a tendency for madness. It does not seem a coincidence then that Audrey is the only major character with red hair in the novel. After Audrey’s medium seanse results in her acting like Little Dorrit, she begins to feel that it is not possible to film or recreate Dickens’s novel truly in the present time. She is described as follows when she finds herself on the set of the movie: “...a red-haired woman leaning over the ropes, restrained by it against her will, It was Audrey” (109). Her visit to the set ends with her slapping the actress playing Little Dorrit’s part since she does not believe that the actress is plausible enough. As the novel proceeds, Audrey starts acting even more strangely because of her conviction that the Little Dorrit of Dickens’s novel was a real life personality, who after death took control of her body and mind:

> At certain times, when her paranoia reached the stage of panic, Audrey would become Little Dorrit. She would kneel on the floor, and pray for her father and

> herself, pray to God that they would reap their just reward and that it would not be taken from them. (113)

Ackroyd, however, gives an ironic twist to Audrey's infatuation with Little Dorrit to create a suspicion in the reader's mind when he mentions that "When she sang, her voice lost the shrillness which it often now had in conversation it became surprisingly deep and resonant, as though she had been joined by someone else" (114). When Audrey decides that the movie set has to be destroyed, one red-haired tramp – whether the same one Rowan encounters twice in the novel or not is not very clear- helps her along with the other tramps to start a fire: "Audrey beckoned him over, and he walked slowly, casually, towards her. They were an incongrous sight – both of them red-haired, shabbily dressed, like characters in a Pierrot extravaganza" (161).

Tramps appear not only in *The Great Fire of London*, but in most of Peter Ackroyd's metafictions. Just as in *Hawksmoor*, tramps represent 'the other' or the isolated part of the society. The main significance of the tramps in the novel, however, is to point out that London has turned into a 'wasteland' as mentioned earlier. In many instances in the novel, there are long descriptions of tramps and the major characters' encounters with them, along with the fact that at certain times some of the characters identify themselves with the tramps, as this is the case in *Hawksmoor*. Perhaps one of the best descriptions yielding to this end is the one belonging to an old female tramp seen on the early pages of the novel by Spenser Spender:

> As they walked out into the King's road, the old woman passed them at the corner, pushing one pram ahead of her and dragging one pram behind.....Her prams were filed with scraps of old clothes and newspapers, empty tins of Horlicks and old bottles stuffed with rags. She simply added material to her piles; the snuff at the bottom of her prams could not have been seen, or touched for many years. It represented the remnants of the Chelsea streets, perhaps the only history they had. (14)

The red-haired tramp that Rowan sees near the Tube Station approaches Rowan in such an easy going manner that, asking for money is like "no more than his due" (22).

Ackroyd uses this expression to suggest that the tramps are so accustomed to living their own way that there is no shame or embarrassment in their asking for money. It is almost as if the city of London is indebted to them for having turned them into tramps. The red-haired tramp is also the leader of other tramps who help Audrey to start the fire at the end of the novel. After Audrey's suggestion that they help her, he is the one who urges the others to take part in her plan. When Audrey arrives on the set, she sees the tramps from a distance and realizes that she needs their help. Audrey is one of the characters in the novel who feels a closeness towards the tramps: "She had grown used to them now; she even liked them; their plight seemed very similar to her own" (161). After she explains to them what they need to do, the tramps all agree that they can help her under the leadership of the red-haired tramp who acts as their leader. At this point, the tramps are described as the isolated, non-cared for members of the city:

> They had been neglected so universally and for so long that they no longer felt responsible for their actions. Whatever they did was of no consequence; what small bitterness or resentment they felt about their social destiny was generally directed against one another now, when they were drunk or cold. (161)

Usually, the tramps are portrayed as living in groups in the novel; that is, they are rarely alone on the streets. Ackroyd probably wishes to reflect that there is a group psychology evident within tramps and that they generally act on something together as a group. This is exactly what happens when the red-haired tramp leads the other tramps into helping Audrey with her plot.

As tramps point out to the decaying city of London, fragmentation is another recurring theme in the novel. At certain points of the novel, the isolation and the fragmentary lifestyles of the characters are reflected through their observations of different parts of London. One of the characters who identifies herself with the tramps and leads a fragmentary life is Spenser Spender's wife Laetitia, as her affair with Andrew Flint causes her to fall into depression. It is important to note that, Laetitia and Spenser's marriage was a childless one in the first place and that there was no real

communication between them. Through time, Laetitia acquires the habit of walking the streets of London by herself to get some peace of mind; however, she only feels more and more loneliness. It is indicated that "It was only when she, as it were, dropped out, and wandered without direction and purpose, that the fullness of the city presented itself to her" (116). During her married life to Spenser Spender and her affair with Andrew Flint, Laetitia exists as a woman, dependent on these two men. When her marriage and affair both fail, Laetitia realizes that she really is alone. As time passes by, she feels an unhappiness take over her and tries to figure out whether other people with the same kind of desperation exist in the city: "On one corner a young man – like a tramp, she thought, but so young to be one – played a tuba, its notes as wild and discorded as the life which passed by him" (116).

The people of London are portrayed without a purpose of hope in their lives, no matter what they do. Every person Laetitia observes on the streets makes her think that "The strength and the darkness of London had encompassed itself into these tiny, wandering forms" (135). Therefore, the inhabitants of London are said to be crushed under the negative and positive aspects of the city. London as the source of opposites turns its dwellers into "the evidence of some ugly disease" (135). Laetitia's observation of a family on the bus reflects how hopeless and isolated people have become. The child of the family is in constant attempt to bring her parents back to life with the questions she asks, but the parents are so wrapped up in their worries that they do not even give replies to the child: "They were trapped in some bewildered world of privation and disappointment" (135). Another instance of isolation and fragmentation is experienced by Tim when he visits Rowan at Cambridge. Tim gets very much disillusioned when he realizes that even Cambridge, the symbol of wisdom and prestige, has turned out to be quite barren, as Spenser had made the same kind of observation when he visited Rowan for the script of the movie. The sudden change in his relationship with Rowan is another aspect which makes Tim feel alone as he sees when he arrives at Rowan's place that "The whole place seemed dead, empty, no life to it" (126). Tim had expected to see a place which reflected a true academic lifestyle and a place which accomodated this; however, even Rowan's life as an academician seems dead to him. When Tim leaves Rowan's flat for a while, he understands that his

relationship with Rowan was indeed nothing fulfilling for him. He feels alone and comes to the realization that probably he had been that all his life. He likens his life to "white and expensive like clouds moving over an empty sky" (129). Meanwhile, Tim's visit to Rowan causes Rowan's two secret lives to intersect: his academic life and his homosexual affairs. Before Tim's appearance at Cambridge, Rowan had taken great care not to get involved with anybody for a long period. However, Tim's presence at Cambridge brings together the two worlds, which he had kept separate so far. In a way, two fragmented parts of his life "collided – an event he had in a sense wished upon himself but which now, at the moment of impact, seemed to threaten him in deep and unexpected ways" (128). In the novel, it is possible to see that fragmentation and isolation are two states which some characters have had ever since their childhood. For instance, Spenser Spender remembers his childhood when his wife Laetitia leaves him for Andrew Flint during which "his mother had abandoned him....it was the condition he most dreaded and yet was most sure would be inflicted upon him" (95).

3.4 Time and Setting

The title of the novel is interesting in the sense that it alludes to the time of the Great Fire of London that took place in 1666; however, it is misleading since the 'great fire' that names the novel is actually the fire started by Audrey Skelton at the end of the novel, which also signifies the breaking free of the novel's characters from the text/Ackroyd's novel. In a way, these characters come to the realisation that they are textual constructs and the only way to break free is to destroy the setting in which they are supposed to exist, one which confines them to a text. The fire taking place at a film set has a significance in the sense that, a set is "a place for the performance and technological re-invention of narrative illusion and illusory narrative" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 79). It is equally significant that it is Audrey Skelton who starts the fire. In the novel, she becomes possessed by the spirit of Dickens' *Little Dorrit* in a medium seance and gets highly interested in the making of *Little Dorrit* into film for this reason. When she watches a scene from the film being shot, she immediately becomes

upset over the fact that the actress playing Little Dorrit's part is not convincing enough. Therefore, by initiating the fire with the tramps, Audrey in a way destroys this imitation of reality or the reenactment of the past. Towards the end of the novel, after the fire starts, Spenser Spender comes to this exact realization, for the start of the fire signifies the end of the attempts to recreate *Little Dorrit* as a film: "Spenser, seeing how it was drawing closer to the heart of his film set, grew frantic. If all this were destroyed, it would mean the end of *Little Dorrit*" (163). As the growing fire makes Spender lose all hope for his production, his death is also brought on by the fire itself, suddenly terminating his life, before neither he nor the witnesses in the fire scene can do anything: "Spenser Spender lay dead in the ruins of Little Dorrit; he was the first victim of what came to be known as The Great Fire" (165). Thus, this Great Fire that takes place in the text serves for two main purposes; the first can be said to be to end the production of *Little Dorrit* in the contemporary setting of London, while at the end of the chapter related to the fire, Ackroyd states about the fire that

> It destroyed much that was false and ugly, and much that was splendid and beautiful. Some longed for it to burn everything, but for others a new and disquieting sense of impermanence entered their lives. Eventually, legends were to grow around it. It was popularly believed to have been a visitation, a prophecy of yet more terrible things to come. (165)

Tim upon observing the fire thinks that the flames "might burn for ever, taking the whole of London with them" (165). The fire can also be taken as a spiritual sign for a new time in London to start, even if this means some good aspects of the city are to be lost in the fire alongside the bad. Flies, along with tramps, are significant elements used by Ackroyd in many of his novels to indicate a decaying quality to the city of London. In the description of Little Arthur at the beginning of the novel, it is possible to see another isolated and fragmented life. What is significant is that, Little Arthur's description involves a fly, which Ackroyd identifies with the city's condition: "With infinite care he shepherds the fly out into the morning air. It is, however, a chilly London autumn and the fly will not last long outside. The fly knows

this, too, but still it wants to escape" (5). The mention of flies are repeated at certain times in the novel and turn into a recurring motif, as if to remind the reader constantly about the condition of the city of London. For instance, Audrey while getting ready to meet Tim and Rowan observes a fly in her flat, "as it buzzed idly around her sitting room. It was late, she thought for a fly, October....." (32). Audrey's thought indicates that there is a constant decaying atmosphere in London because of the untimely existence of flies in the month of October. The flies could be interpreted as an indication that even the cold weather of London is not able to cover the city's faults. The idea of fragmentation, solitariness and meaninglessness that were quite evidently being built up from the beginning of the novel and attributed to London and the need for a new start for the city and its inhabitants are finally quieted down with the fire. At last, London, to which Ackroyd assigns the quality of a "transhistorical mythical city" (Onega, PA, 30), fails to meet its definition as the novel ends. This particular quality is not implicit in the novel at all. It is Spenser Spender, who in a conversation he has with his wife Laetitia comments on it: "There's something strange about London, love..." (16). What puzzles Spender is that London that there must be something about London that the enlightened people like Dickens have successfully been able to figure out. He further comments, "No one knows how a city works...What has it done to me, or to you, Letty? What has it done to all the people in here?" (16-17). Going back to the idea of non-linear time, which is a recurring aspect of Ackroyd's historiographical metafictional novels, *The Great Fire of London* also nourishes the same idea about time. Considering this issue from the mythical perspective, Onega suggests that, the 20th century fire of London, along with the historical 1666 Great Fire of London and the same historical fire mentioned at the beginning of *Hawksmoor*

> are all reenactments of the same apocalyptic fire, signalling transition from one historical cycle to the next, each closing a darker and darker phase of decline, in the inexorable spiral movement toward the final stage of chaos and extinction of the Western civilization that will be reached by the end of the year 2000. (MMNPA, 26)

In this novel, Ackroyd uses "apocalyptictime", since it points out to a new time to come after the fire, which will allow the city and the inhabitants to move towards a new cycle of time. Indeed, this transition is being hinted at throughout the novel in various forms, such as the fires that break out in different parts of the city from time to time which foreshadow a greater fire.

In an interview conducted by Jeremy Gibson, in 1989, when asked why in particular Ackroyd had chosen Dickens's novel *Little Dorrit* as a frame of reference for *The Great Fire of London*, Ackroyd replies thus:

> I was looking for a novel which, to use at least in parts because it might be really inside my own preoccupations primarily, that's of course London and the London dispossessed, the poor. And of all Dickens's novels, [Little Dorrit] that's the one, for me, which most readily emcompasses all of these various realities. (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 222)

At this point in the interview, Ackroyd readily admits that London as a setting reflects different levels of reality and that these are the elements he wants to play upon in the novel. In the same interview, Ackroyd comments on Gibson's question on whether he is trying to place his novels into a historical perspective, saying that:

> ...one of the basic things that occurred to me after I'd written these books, although not at the time, is the extent to which all of them are concerned with the nature of history itself, the process of history or the nature of time. So, everything goes back to the larger question of what is time, what does this process of time amount to? Right? i.e. what is history?...So, to that extent, it is certainly the case that I am trying to take specific or various instances and relate them to larger processes. (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 225)

In a 1997 interview with Ackroyd, Julian Wolfreys directs a question related to the use of London as a setting, as the city is "of crucial importance to whatever [he] write[s]" and *The Great Fire of London* in particular reflects a city "that is very much

recognizable"(Gibson and Wolfreys, 249). Ackroyd states that the novel "provides a theatrical city" and further in the interview, he argues that, the characters that he creates in his novels also allow for various understandings of the city, because it is through these characters that the city is shaped with different perspectives (Gibson and Wolfreys, 249). Numerous examples could be given from the novel which support the above statement or view in which Ackroyd depicts how his characters see or shape London. For instance, in chapter seven of the novel, Spenser Spender sees the city as an all encompassing entity:

> Spenser Spender was filled with a sensation of lightness, as though his own body were moving out, too, across the water, implicated in the lives of these human beings who trudged slowly through the dark. And they, also, became part of him – as though he contained them all within himself at the same time as they directed him forward. The pattern was one, within and without. Each human figure seemed to emit its own brightness, so that the bridge itself resembled a line of energy, and one of irresistible momentum and sweetness. (37)

Another example is Laetitia's identification of herself with the streets of the city, after she realizes that her affair with Andrew Flint is not working out. The streets that she observes during her walk seem to her to have a lifeful quality:

> Reflections such as these occurred fitfully to her as she walked through London at the beginning of spring. She found herself attached to tall, dark streets where the new season had for some reason been refused entry. And yet the streets seemed to spawn life: she had never before realised quite how many people surrounded her in the course of her own daily activities. It was only when she, as it were, dropped out, and wandered without direction or purpose, that the fullness of the city represented itself to her. (116)

Ackroyd explains his inexhaustible interest in London saying that, through the creation of each character in his novels, he aims at creating a different London which

is formed and shaped according to each character's perception of the city. He states that the reason for London to be so subjectively changeable is that, "for the visionary, or a particular person, his or her London becomes the world" (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 251). Besides presenting endless possibilities for Ackroyd, ironically London as a setting is like a "prison" and it is with the character Little Dorrit (Amy) that he attributes this quality to the city. The reason, he states, is because Amy's is "archetypal" in the sense that "she is the lost girl" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 259).

3.5 Language: Intertextuality, Self-Reflexivity And Parody

The Great Fire of London is a kind of text which takes *Little Dorrit* as its referrent, its use of the past time could be taken as fictional and the present time as a fictionally constructed reality. Due to the intermingling of two texts, one being Dickens's novel and the other Ackroyd's, it is not possible for a "stable identity" to be formed; for the novel as a text cannot be put into a single "location" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 79). The impossibility of reestablishing the past in the present time becomes evident through words or phrases that indicate to an unreal condition in the filming of *Little Dorrit.*

The repetition of certain words and phrases is a technique Ackroyd often makes use of, as this is the case in *Hawksmoor.* Similar to the red-haired characters, the frequently repeated words, such as, electricity and fire constantly produce images of the color red and allude to the fire which breaks out at the end of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, in the passages describing the amusement place Little Arthur owns, called Fun City, there is a series of words that produce the image of fire and the color red:

> 'Fun City' is displayed in a series of *light bulbs* but, to Little Arthur's knowledge, they have never been *lit*; unless, he thinks, they turn them on when he is asleep.....At 8:15 Little Arthur unlocks his office, at the back of the arcade, to switch on the *electric current*. He lets his right hand, his arm stretched fully

> in order to reach the *red lever*, hover for a moment. [*]
> (6)

On the next page, when Little Arthur finds out that Fun City is going to be closed down, he murmurs "There's going to be electricity" (7). At that point, he is referring to the electricity which he hopes to be given to run Fun City again, however his words are a foreshadowing of his letting the prisoners out of Marshalsea Prison by producing an electric current to open the gates. In the next section of the book, 'two', Audrey and his boyfriend Tim's visit to Fun City display a kind of foreshadowing. Audrey is described as feeling "a slight shock, a jolt" when she gets into contact with one of the machines. She realizes Little Arthur's gaze upon her and thinks that "it might be her hair. Full of static" (10). After Audrey goes home, Audrey starts feeling strange and dreams about the Marshalsea Prison. Much later in the novel, when Little Arthur is in Marshalsea Prison, he mentions electricity once again after an electrical problem occurs during a shot of one the prison scenes of the movie: "It's coming to a head. There will be electricity. I told them so" (123). The electricity that Little Arthur keeps on mentioning and the fire which Audrey starts on the movie set are actually closely related in the sense that they both set people free: by the use of electricity Little Arthur is able to let the prisoners escape and Audrey, with the help of the tramps, destroys the constructed reality and thus, enabling textual characters to free themselves from the world of the novel/text. Audrey does not believe that the filming of Little Dorrit is right; before she decides to start the fire, she thinks, "It isn't right, it isn't natural. All those lights and cameras. It's a mockery" (159). As Onega points out, the novel presents

> the historical and literary ontologies as having the "the same status: real and fictional characters, and real and fictional authors exist at the same (textual) level, while the novel itself may be described as a parodic and self-conscious misreading of Dickens's *Little Dorrit*, containing en abyme the equally subjective and distorted versions of *Little Dorrit*

[*] Italics added by me to add emphasis to words which connote the color red or fire.

> made up by various characters involved in the project of filming Dickens's novel. (MMNPA, 182)

The en abyme that is most obviously present here is Ackroyd's placing of his text/novel within a certain frame of reference, which in this case is Dickens's *Little Dorrit*. This frame of reference that embodies the novel, disallows an escape from what is termed as "a Borgesian Library of Babel"[5] and indicates "a closed and autonomous linguistic universe" (Onega, MMNPA, 182). In chapter eighteen, one occurance of this prison like state is reflected by Amy Skelton, who thinks that she should stop the filming of *Little Dorrit*:

> At night now, after work, she would wander over the site of the old Marshalsea prison, looking for clues, some kind of marks. She asked in the local stationers if the Victorians used chalk or not, and she bought an old map of the area which she would study without, in fact, knowing what she was looking for. She noticed for the first time that there were a great many plaques on the pubs and houses near her – 'As Commemorated in Charles's Dickens's "Little Dorrit"' – and she would mark the spot with an 'X' on her map. When she got home, she drew lines between the 'X's, in case they formed a symbol, but all she got was a makeshift shape with five sides. (97)

The "makeshift shape with five sides" brings to the mind a distorted version of a pentagram with five pointed sides that symbolizes perfection or the circularity of time. Amy's attempt to reach the truth about the filming of the novel is symbolized by an imperfect shape, indicating a kind of subversion about the re-representation of *Little Dorrit* and the equally subverted thoughts of Amy who sees herself as Little Dorrit.

Ackroyd's writing when analyzed in terms of both textual and literary roles or devices, plays upon the idea of a fixed understanding of the present – real or fictional -

[5] The Library of Babel is one of the short stories of Jorge Luis Borges, who in this work claims that, the universe contains "a vast library containing all possible 410-page books that can be composed in a certain character set" ("The Library of Babel"). The relevance of the term which Onega uses in reference to Ackroyd's novel is that, *The Great Fire of London* becomes a kind of labyrinth in terms of language, our of which escape is impossible.

that is not possible to achieve. His resorting to the styles and language of the earlier writers places his own text/novel onto a shakeable foundation, where there are endless possibilities for reality. In *The Great Fire of London*, the idea of make believe or rather the attempt to recreate a fictional past in the fictionally created contemporary time is mostly indicated in the parts of the novel which depict the filming of *Little Dorrit*. The creation of a film set in which nothing complies with the fictional reality of the present time (except for the Marshalsea Prison where Dickens's novel takes place) is displayed in the expressions and wording of the characters that are involved in the filming process either directly or indirectly. The most evident examples that could be given from chapter nineteen, in which the film set is described so as to show the construction of a fictional reality: "The two members of the crew were *painting* the narrow road itself with a kind of black wash, black right up to the river's edge. The railings were *coated* in golden paint, which would *appear* as brass upon the screen" (106)[*]. In the same chapter, Spenser's thoughts reflect the same condition while he is shooting a scene for the film:

> Spenser Spender supervised the work, alternately looking through the camera which was now pointed away from the river and towards the warehouses. They rose in front of him like houses of darkness, oppressive and yet unreal. They had been transformed into replicas of warehouses. Reality itself had been suspended. (108)

The self-reflexive attitude of the novel can be grounded in this *dis*-suspension of belief which exists in the different layers of reality presented at various points. The same scene described above, for instance, shows how the film set is intended to achieve an effect of reality through make believe. It is only "A real building dressed up to appear to be a fictional structure" that becomes the "starting point of the fire" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 107); thus, " 'the great fire of London' becomes a performance, thereby foregrounding issues of in/authenticity" (Gibson and Wolfreys,

[*] The italics added by me to draw emphasis to words which especially indicate the fictional quality of the film set.

107). The title of the novel, as commented on by Barry Lewis, allows Ackroyd to form an allusion to the historical event of the Great Fire of London of 1666 (24):

> By titling his novel after this famous historical conflagration, Ackroyd plays with the reader's expectations and sets up unusual resonances between the present and the past. Ackroyd's text is clearly signaled as fictive. At the beginning, we are told that "it could not be described as a true story" (3) and, at the end, that "this is not a true story" (169). Yet by echoing so closely an actual historical event and transposing its events to several centuries later, the boundary between fact and fiction is blurred. This is fitting, as the actual seventeenth-century fire itself soon attained the status of myth and was endlessly represented in paitings and poems, comparing the destruction of London to similar ancient disasters in Carthage and Troy. (24)

C. FIRST LIGHT

4.1 Introduction to *First Light*

"Science is like fiction, you see. We make up stories, we sketch our narratives, we try to find some pattern beneath events.....Mathematics is like language. No one knows where it came from. No one really knows how it works. More horses and fishes. Horses and fishes trapped in signs." (159)

First Light has been chosen as the last novel to be included in this study, since it seemingly stands apart from the two previous novels for certain reasons. Firstly, the setting is surprisingly not London. Secondly, due to its content, it involves certain issues that fall under the category of sience fiction, which are not given a deep coverage in the first two novels. Lastly, it points out to a much larger issue (the first light itself) compared to *The Great Fire of London* and *Hawksmoor*.

The novel deals with the birth of humanity, which is put into the context of the novel through its relation with the star Aldebaran. However, these seemingly different issues brilliantly share the same exact themes Peter Ackroyd uses in the previous two novels of the study, especially in terms of the notion of time and the self-reflexive quality of the text.

4.2 Narration and Plot: Parody of Closed Endings and the Questioning of the Reliability of Narratives to Reach a Certain Meaning

In *First Light*, there is "the desire to create narratives, to construct a tradition from the narratives and to perform a narrative of tradition, where all makes sense and is given meaning from the ever-present moment of self-consciousness within the temporality of being" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 147). While in *Hawksmoor,* there are two main plots that are interconnected, in *First Light* there are three main "narrative lines" given in a "multiplot" structure (Onega, MMNPA, 74). The first "narrative line" (onega, MMNPA, 75) covers the excavation done in Pilgin Valley to expose a

long buried tumulus under the guidance of a character named Mark Clare, who has a crippled wife. The second of the plots involve an astronomer named Damian Fall, who has been given a task to observe the sky for a particular period of time near Pilgrin Valley. To the enlightened reader, the name of the character should be highly significant, as his first name alludes to Satan and his last name to the original sin, the fall of man. The third plot is about an ex-showman named Joey, who comes to Pilgin Valley with his wife Floey, to find out the truth about his biological parents, as he was adopted when he was five years old. Therefore, it may be suggested that, each of the main characters of the three separate plots are in search of some kind of origin, whether this be the search within the depths of the earth for Mark Clare to reach knowledge about pre-existing ancient cultures, a secret that lies upwards in the sky about the star Aldebaran[6] for Damian Fall, or historical knowledge about his ancestry for Joey Hanover. Susana Onega states that, these three characters are "equally obsessed with the myth of origins" (*PA*, 50).

The three different narratives are told through

> an external omniscient narrator [who] alternates the narration of these originally unrelated narrative lines, progressively knitting an intricate net of relationships that will eventually materialize in the establishment of their mutual connection and interdependence. Embedded within the first narrative level, there is also a series of tales and visions (as happened in *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*), told by several internal narrators-characters that function as overtly 'literary' variations on different episodes narrated in one of the main narrative lines or on the novel as a

[6] ALDEBARAN (Alpha Tauri). Aldebaran is by far the brightest, and therefore the Alpha, star of the constellation Taurus. The ancient name, from Arabic, means "the Follower," as the star seems to follow the Pleiades, or Seven Sisters star cluster, across the sky. Aldebaran, 60 light years away, is positioned in front of the sprawling Hyades star cluster (in mythology, half-sisters to the Pleiades) that make the face of Taurus the Bull, but is not a part of it, the cluster over twice as far away. In most renderings of the constellation, Aldebaran makes the celestial Bull's eye. As part of a constellation of the zodiac, Aldebaran is close to the Sun's path, the Sun passing to the north of it about June 1, the star also regularly covered, or occulted, by the Moon. This class K star, of first magnitude and 13th brightest in the sky, is a low- level irregular variable star that fluctuates erratically and to the eye unnoticeably by about two-tenths of a magnitude. Aldebaran's surface temperature of just under 4000 degrees Kelvin (compared to the Sun's 5800 degree temperature) gives it a distinct orangy color. (Jim Kaler)

> whole (like the tales in *The Last Testament*). (Onega, PA, 49)

What Ackroyd parodies in terms of narration is the "narrative closure" in the novel (which is displayed as an impossible act of writing) and "those who seek to read such a narrative" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 147). Through the circular nature of the plot, which is reflected in the way the novel starts and ends, there is a rebuttal for a closed ending. The urge for narrative and meaning which comes along with the narrative is denied because of the idea that a beginning and an end are merely the same notions, existing on the same level. There is a circular interaction between the two: "In the beginning there is an end. In the end there is a beginning" (220). Gibson and Wolfreys argue that

> Beginnings and ends are, themselves, narrated constructions, not absolute moments or framing devices outside narrative structure. Acknowledging this, we acknowledge that no narrative is ever fixed and can always be reinvented, against its supposedly 'original' meaning, its context or identity. Thus, to recall John Peck's argument, in *First Light* all meaning and identity constantly undergoes a process of formal and narrative destabilization. What is particularly precarious in this performance of Ackroyd's is that deconstruction in narrative is read in the very act of expressing the desire for narrative; narrative's end for the novelist is to frustrate the assumption of a final narrative form. Meaning is revealed as undecidable, precisely so that the play of narrative, and the concomitant desire to read, can survive. (153)

In an interview conducted by Jeremy Gibson in 1989, Ackroyd reinforces the idea that "History is a form of story-telling" as much as science is and emphasizes the notion that "everything is a story" and sees this as the "central narrative point of that book" (quoted in Gibson and Wolfreys, 226). In the novel's 'Horses and Fishes' chapter, a conversation between Mark Clare and Damian Fall reflect this idea:

> The silence which followed this lasted too long. "But there is science –" Mark began to say.
>
> "Ah, yes. Science. But who is to say that our science is any better than the science of the astronomer buried in Pilgrin Valley? You did tell me he was an astronomer?"
>
> "We think so. In fact, I've brought something—" He had brought an envelope containing the photographs of the tomb-markings which he wanted Damian to examine, and now he held it out.
>
> But Damian did not notice this. "Science is like fiction, you see. We make up stories, we sketch our narratives, we try to find some pattern beneath events. We are interested observers. And we like to go on with the story, we like to advance, we like to make progress. Even though they are stories told in the dark." (159)

At this point, Damian Fall is questioning the earlier narratives/sciences such as the ones that belong to the time of the Old Barren One, the wise pre-historic figure, also referred to as the Star Man, and the science of his time. Fall's interpretation of science as fiction, a narrative "told in the dark" further elaborates on the theme of displacement or the inevitability of non-closure, since there is no way of knowing which narrative is the true one. The novel is a self "undermining" text indicative of the fact that [there is an] impossibility of absolute beginnings or ends, and the possibility of other narratives to come" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 155).

4.3 Characters

Actually, the most common point that interconnects the three narratives of the novel is the quest of the three protagonists for their own personal "first light": for Mark Clare, it is to uncover what secret the tumulus might be hiding, whereas for Damian Fall, it is to record the movements of the Aldebaran through observation to contribute to science and for Joey Hannover, the 'first light' is to learn about his ancestral history. Just like *The Great Fire of London* and *Hawksmoor*, the characters of the novel have symbolic names. The protagonist of the first "narrative line" is Mark Clare (Onega, MMNPA, 75). Mark is a Biblical name and Clare which sounds

like the word ‘clear’ give an ironic meaning to the character. While it is expected from Mark Clare to make the greatest discovery with the exposure of the ancient tumulus, he is unable to see the meaning of the designs set on the tumulus which in fact reflect the position of the Pleiades. As an archaeologist, he is primarily concerned with what lies beneath the tumulus, as he feels that “the never-ending maze-like corridors of the tumulus might lead him to the very center of the earth, where “time stands still” “ (Onega, MMNPA, 80). Ironically, during his preoccupied search for what he calls the ‘centre’, Mark does not even realize that his wife Kathleen has decided to commit suicide, although she has been giving signs of her decision for a considerable amount of time. It is only after he and his team discover the “Old Barren One” in the tumulus that Kathleen’s words start making sense to him:

> He knelt down and shone his light against the side of the coffin and saw there, clearly marked, ‘Old Barren One’. He had no way of knowing how long these words had been inscribed there, but Mark knew at least that he had reached the centre – the origin – for which he had been searching. This was the body for which the tumulus had been built some four and half thousand years ago, the silhouette in red ochre representing the shape inside - if, indeed, any recognizable shape still remained. He knew that, encased like this, organic remains could be preserved for many, many centuries. But for precisely how long?...He had reached the end of his quest, but he could see neither backward nor forward…”Kathleen,” he said. He had entered another time where his wife continued to exist. (288-289)

As most postmodern novels depict, *First Light* also portrays isolated and barren characters. As it can be understood from Mark Clare’s relationship with his wife, Kathleen has always had a feeling of isolation mostly due to the defect in her leg. Besides, the couple has a fruitless marriage and even their application to adopt a child remains as an unsuccessful attempt. Similarly, the government official in charge of the excavation Evangeline Tupper is in a sort of fruitless relationship; she

is a lesbian character who has a long term relationship with a woman named Hermione. Joey and Floey Hannover do not have any children and Joey himself is adopted. These characters' barren state is in contrast with the recurring image of the old barren one who is found in the tumulus; if the tumulus is taken as the womb of a mother, then the old barren one is definitely the embryo child encompassing a kind of wisdom none of the characters are in realization of.

In *First Light*, Ackroyd is actually shaping his characters in such a way that they are "built on the accumulation of literary echoes" (Onega, MMNPA, 86). In the case of Mark Clare, it is possible to find many intertextual aspects related to his name:

> Mark Clare, for example, with his "long sideburns which covered half of his cheeks" (8) and his "green deerstalker hat" (6) may be described as a parodic crossbreed of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, while his deep suffering and his feeling of alienation and self-fragmentation makes him akin to detective Hawksmoor. But the personality of the archaeologist is further complicated by his allusive surname "Clare," which he owes to Thomas Hardy's character, Angel Clare, from *Tess of D'Urbervilles*. (86)

As Ackroyd parodies the realistic detective fiction through Mark Clare, he also makes an intertextual reference to his own earlier novel, *Hawksmoor*, since Mark Clare also shares certain similarities with Hawksmoor himself in his logical way of thinking and isolated nature. Mark Clare seems to be the type of character represented by Sir Christopher Wren in *Hawksmoor*, where his approach just like detective Hawksmoor is based on rationalism and empiricism. As rationalism and empiricism reject a further perspective of looking beyond things and expect results to be achieved directly from experiment and evidence, they limit the characters that represent this line of thought. As Onega suggests, "The archaeologist Mark Clare…is so specialized in his own narrow field that it is not until Damian Fall invites him to watch the stars from his observatory" (MMNPA, 75) through that he comes to a certain realization:

> "And it means," Mark said, "it means that the chamber grave was in alignment with the stars carved on its entrance. The tumulus points east, and from the crest of the valley you can see the horizon." He was now very excited, and his throat had become dry. He swallowed. (162)

Mark's coincidental understanding of what the designs on the tumulus signify is in parallel to the chance discovery in *Hawksmoor* of detective Hawksmoor about who the Architect is.

The concept of shadow existence in the novel is associated with the character Damian Fall. Just as in *Hawksmoor*, shadow symbolizes the darker side of human nature in *First Light* as well. There are many instances in the novel where he is likened to a shadow, as if there is much more to his character than what his external appearance reveals. Susana Onega states that there is "a black cat that scares the visitors" where Fall lives. Once again, it reminds one of the black cat which Dyer in *Hawksmoor* observes during an experiment that symbolizes empiricism. Therefore, the existence of the black cat in Fall's house is not a coincidental part of the story. It may be suggested that the black cat stands for empiricism, science and experimentation performed to reach truth. However, in both of the novels, reason or empiricism is shadowed by the existence of another kind of truth, which may be referred to as mysticism. Damian Fall, through his observations of the star Aldebaran, tries to reach the truth about the "first light" or the creation of the universe, doing all sorts of calculations and analysis that are all based on scientific processes or methods. What he or Mark Clare does not realize is the fact that what is written on the ancient tumulus is a replica of Aldebaran's position on the sky. Through his depiction in the novel, it is easily understood that Damian Fall is the 'other' in this case, in fact, bearing some resemblance to *Hawksmoor*'s character Nicholas Dyer, the 18th century architect. Fall suffers from a psychological condition (paranoia) that indicates his fragmented personality. In fact, physically, he looks like a shadow to passers by from the outside of the observatory. As a character, he is

"undergoing a gnostic process of self-fragmentation and alienation from society" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 76).

When Ackroyd's novels are studied in depth, it is possible to see that certain things repeat themselves in almost all. Flies are a symbol of decadence for Ackroyd and represent a lower kind of existence. At one point in the novel, Fall's pessimistic attitude towards life and vain attempt to reach truth is reflected by the flies that block the sunlight into his house. The existence of flies signify that Fall is far from reaching the truth through his observation of Aldebaran, as flies serve as a barrier for light or truth to enter from the outside. In other words, as long as Fall keeps himself busy with scientific work inside the observatory, it is not possible for him to attain complete truth. The truth that Fall is searching for, indeed, lies at Pilgrin Valley, in the tumulus. The designs on the tumulus that reflect the Pleiades to which Aldebaran belongs to had been made centuries ago, which tell Fall that, even in the past man had sufficient knowledge of astronomy. In the novel, Fall also undergoes a state of "despair" (129) which signifies an important aspect shared by the three novels studied herewith:

> The despair Fall senses, as well as the apparition of the black cat and also, eventually, of "swarms of large flies blocking the light outside the windows" (293), run parallel to the progress of the archaeological works, which are constantly delayed by a sequence of mysterious accidents that, like those that took place in the Peruvian rain forest – and also in *The Great Fire of London* – give Pilgrin Valley the reputation of an unlucky site. (Onega, MMNPA, 77)

As for analyzing the novel's characters in terms of its mythical structure, it may be useful to remember that man's expulsion from Paradise leads to his existence on earth in worldly terms; that is, he is left solely with "his human nature" (Onega, *PA*, 53) that he has to bear, having lost the means to reach higher levels of knowledge. In the novel, the character Damian Fall and Mark Clare reflect this state clearly. Damian Fall, quite similar to the character of detective Hawksmoor, tries to

reach truth through experimentation, observation and science, which are all aspects of empiricism. Fall, however, is unable to take into consideration the other "planes of existence" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 187). Just like Hawksmoor, he comes to an understanding of truth by chance, when he realizes that what he had been searching for is a mythical truth. Mark Clare, likewise, is so preoccupied with reaching reality by digging into the tumulus that he is not aware of other aspects of truth. For instance, he cannot truly grasp what his wife Kathleen is going through and what exactly leads her to commit suicide.

The protagonist of the third narrative is Joey Hannover, who together with Mark Clare and Damian Fall, is after a personal quest as well, forming the "three complementary ontological levels" (Onega, MMNPA, 75) in the novel. Joey Hannover's family background is eventually uncovered as the novel progresses and he turns out to be a descendant of the Mint family, who is the family responsible for protecting the site of the tumulus and hiding the Old Barren One. When the Old Barren One is discovered, however, Joey goes through an experience, which is referred to as "temporal disruption" (Onega, MMNPA, 83):

> When, incapable of protecting the "Old Barren One" from the archaeologists, the Mints eventually decide to set fire to the coffin, Joey Hannover has an experience of temporal disruption: "Time turning" (321). Watching the body, he is transported backward, to the time when the wise man died. And he has a vision of the star man "touch[ing] hands with the one before him, and also touch[ing] hands with the one who follows" (322), which echoes the vision of Chatterton, Meredith, and Wynchwood with joined hands at the end of Chatterton. (Onega, MMNPA, 83)

When the Old Barren One is burned by Joey in an attempt to save the long protected secret of the Mint family, he

> "sees in this face, too, the faces of all those who had come before him. And the faces of all those he had known. This is the human face he recognized in all those he has loved (323). Significantly, this scene is parallel to Fall's puzzled realization that the numbers

> in the computer recording the fall of Aldebaran from its sphere were "merging into one another so fast that they seemed like a series of faces entwined with one another" (296). (Onega, MMNPA, 83)

Joey Hannover's being a music hall artist and his wife Floey likewise being a retired music hall dancer indicate a parody of many earlier literary works. The Hannover couple could be taken as a sort of "Punch and Judy" (Onega, MMNPA, 89). It is especially Joey Hannover who represents the old music hall tradition; however, in a much parodied way, since he very often forgets the lyrics of the songs he sings. This forgetfulness on his part obviously shows his loss with the traditions Ackroyd favors. As a retired music hall comedian, Joey is in a way displaced from his roots, which is signified here by his inability to remember the songs. Besides, his wife Floey's "malapropisms" (Onega, MMNPA, 89) are the tools which Joey makes use of in his shows and owes his fame to. As a couple, the Hannovers represent a parodic version of many literary characters, which will be dealt with in detail under the language section of the chapter. One of the minor characters in the novel, Julian Hill, who is a member of Mark Clare's excavation team, gains significance through his non-traditional scientific views, which contradict with modern science/scientist. Paul Smethurst suggests that Julian Hill is a "postmodern archaeologist" as he is "less concerned with digging and the manual reconstruction of the past than with superficial probabilities" (204). Hill is described in the following way:

> Unlike the other 'detective' characters in Ackroyd's novels, Julian Hill revels in the theoretical, the virtual and the unreal. He dreams of never needing to see and touch the evidence of the past. He would create another world in virtual space-time and place himself there, unconnected to any 'real' place. Where science threatens the reason of Damian Fall, leaving him 'placeless', it seems to fulfill Julian Hill's dreams, providing an illuminated if illusionary and virtual place. Julian Hill is the postmodern scientist because he seems 'at home' in the placelessness and inauthenticity of postmodernity. (Smethurst, 204-205)

While Ackroyd parodies the realistic detective type in most of his novels, in *First Light* a character such as Julian Hill is presented outright as a postmodern personality. Considering the significance Ackroyd attaches to red-haired characters, it does not surprise the reader to find out that Julian Hill is one of them.

In summary, Barry Lewis explains the significance of the three major characters and their motives through this brief analysis:

> Mark, Joey and Damian are looking for a significant pattern, a relationship between cause and effect, and a motive or meaning. As Susana Onega observes, there is one character digging beneath the earth, another wandering on the surface of the valley, and a third looking up at the sky. By examining closely the quests of each character in turn, [it is possible to come to the conclusion that] they are all in pursuit of origins of one kind or another. Yet the beginnings are nowhere to be found. Each confronts the possibility that everything that is, just is: existence has no purpose. Such unremitting pessimism is associated with Thomas Hardy, the Dorsetshire author whose writings are echoed throughout *First Light*. Many of Hardy's writings deal with the issues of time, identity, and space that Ackroyd also explores. (54)

As a writer who is making use of postmodern techniques, Ackroyd indeed problematizes these subjects, rather than presenting them as they are.

4.4 Time and Setting

First Light is one of the few novels that Ackroyd has written in which London is not the setting. The underlying theme which dominates the novel may be said to be "the myth of origins" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 75). In this novel, London is not taken as a basis of the source of ancient wisdom; Ackroyd rather goes back to the roots of

civilization, through a made-up place called Pilgin Valley. In this respect, he creates a metafictional novel that elaborates on the theme of understanding how everything was first created and started to exist as implied by the title of the novel, which refers to the time of creation. In Ackroyd's novels, fires play a very important role, since they end a cycle, allowing a new one to start. Therefore, fires for Ackroyd may be said to symbolize endings and new beginnings. In *First Light*, the fire which reveals the site of the tumulus seems to be the starting point of the revelation of the ancient tumulus to the modern eye and for all the events to follow. In fact, the setting chosen by Ackroyd is highly significant, since the fictional Pilgrin Valley in the Dorset area contains a prehistoric burial ground. Considering the main characteristic of Dorset, it is easy to remember that it is an area which covers many prehistoric sites in reality. Ackroyd for *First Light* has chosen an area which could satisfy the need to reflect the idea of reversed time and Dorset is an excellent choice to build such a notion on. As Smethurst comments, such a setting brings to the mind the novels of Thomas Hardy who also made use of such settings "as a constant reminder of the long past impressing itself on the present..." (195)[7]. Historically, the burial mounds had one main purpose: to preserve or to maintain a kind of passage into the future. In *First Light*, the ancient tumulus serves for the same purpose. According to Smethurst, Ackroyd reflects this idea through the family of Mints who have been residing in the Pilgrin Valley area for ages (195); he states that "time endures (somewhat unconvicingly) through successive generations of the same family bypassing historical time" and that "these families have evaded historical time by remaining within the pre-historic, protected from history and yet projected into futurity" (195). In *First Light*, Mark Clare, almost echoing Spenser Spender's words about London being a puzzling place in *The Great Fire of London*, thinks that there is a mystery about the Dorset area: "When he lay upon the grass of Dorset it was as if he were being borne up by the hands of those who had come before him...Yes, this was a haunted place. It contained mysteries" (33). The site of the ancient tumulus gains even more

[7] Smethurst states that in Hardy's novels, such as, "*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and the *Return of the Native*…an enduring time of prehistory contained within visible features in the landscape impresses itself on the present. This long past is disconnected and yet connected; locals are not directly affected by the discovery of human remains from so long ago" (316).

significance as the novel proceeds: the site, besides representing the prehistoric times, also becomes a bridge between the ancient times and the present time, encompassing within itself a quality that transcends time. Ackroyd is using the same pattern in both *Hawksmoor* and *First Light*: in both, there is either an area or a symbolic structure/building which allows for the notion of transcendental time. It is almost like a pattern that Ackroyd chooses unique sites, structures and objects in his novels, which are all connected to the concept of time. In relation to the postmodern understanding of time, Smethurst explains that

> ...a desire to connect with the past and reach across history is often attempted without what the modern would call ' a sense of history'. So, sites, in which the past has been secreted as an underground time capsule, will thrust themselves into the present, without history. (223)

He gives an example of this from *First Light* saying that according to "Julian's vision of archaeology in *First Light*...the past reproduced alongside the present as simulacra" (223). Barry Lewis expresses that Pilgrin Valley which supposedly exists in Dorset area reflects a very significant aspect in terms of bein the setting for the novel:

> This hallowed region [Dorsetshire] has links to the primordial past through the numerous burial sites and stone circles scattered across its landscape. The most famous of these is Stonehenge, where the eponymous heroine of Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) is arrested after stabbing the dastardly Alec. The area bears multiple literary associations, particularly Lyme Regis, where many of the characters of First Light live...Both the geographical and the literary resonances of the region emphasize the patterns of continuity through time that Ackroyd relishes. (59)

Once again another similarity becomes apparent between *Hawksmoor* and *First Light* with the questioning of linear time. *First Light* explores the issue of non-linear or circular time, which is firstly reflected in the novel in the form of two replica

speeches made by Damian Fall: one at the beginning and one at the end; therefore, the novel ends the way it starts. The only difference between the two is that, Damian Fall is addressing his shadow in the end, instead of his assistant Alec. The most significant portrayal of the circularity of time in the novel, however, is related to the secret of the tumulus, the 'old barren one' and the star Aldebaran. The ancient civilizations that lived on Pilgrin Valley had been able to keep the secret of creation throughout the ages in the tumulus. The release of the old barren one's corpse from the tumulus causes the star Aldebaran to change its orbit and rush towards the earth. The result is obvious; the crash of Aldebaran to earth is expected to bring everything to an end and to start a new creation process, in other words, 'the first light' is bound to take place once again. The return to the beginning of time can best be explained by investigating further into the universe expansion theory. In the novel, there are "reversals of time based in the theory that an expanding universe that creates space-time cannot expand forever, and when it begins to contract, then time itself must go into reverse" (Smethurst, 174). This reversal and going back to the 'first light' then puts forward the question of whether it may be taken as an end, in fact the end to various aspects such as "end of history, end of modern progress, end of time, end of ideology, and the presence of apocalyptic thinking coincident with the millennium" (Smethurst, 198). Damian Fall's questioning of the expansion of the universe is evident in chapter 39 of the novel in which he contemplates on how exactly he fits into the pattern of the universe:

> Darkness. And I, too, am an aspect of that order, a relic of earliest creation which space and time have now woven together: nothing can happen to me without subtly altering the shape of the visible universe. I too am moving away through limitless space; I am part of that infinite expansion which seems to me to be an infinite horror. Yet I am not my self; I am as evanescent and as shifting as every other part of the cosmos, a fortuitous arrangement of particles, a small plateau in the endless decomposition of space and time, a stasis in the struggle of forces which has turned into matter. (156)

Damian Fall's thoughts form a similarity between himself and Nicholas Dyer in *Hawksmoor* as both of the characters view linear time as a negative concept. Both Dyer and Fall call time a "horror"; linear time in the instance of Dyer is a kind of progress towards the future, while for Fall, it is indicated as the expansion of the universe (again towards the future). Mark Clare also refers to linear time as having a 'dark' quality. When he is thinking about the excavation and what the tumulus holds as a mystery, he says that "The chaos which had descended on them was a reminder of that darkness" (93). What he refers to as "darkness" is what the tumulus and its contents signify, because he thinks that it is like a "story being told in the dark" (93), since he is still thinking in terms of linear time – uncovering the past being his profession as an archaeologist, Mark Clare is most naturally bound to think so.

So, why does the universe seize to expand? Paul Smethurst explains that it is no longer possible for the universe to tolerate this expansion (expansion producing the notions of "space and time of history and of life") (198). Smethurst suggests that there are different understandings of time and that the one which is related to *First Light* is "cosmological time" in which "the time created by the universe expanding, and so inextricably linked to space; space and time are interchangeable..." (176). One of the characters in the novel who becomes aware of this kind of time is Damian Fall. According to Smethurst

> Damian's conception of cosmological time ... is not that far removed from Nicholas Dyer's in *Hawksmoor*. Both recognise a connectivity of present moments and a simultaneity that promises to spread the past before us in a pattern, a set of signs – a writing tablet in space. When Damian thinks he has observed a moment at which the universe starts to contract, the stars no longer mark successive *past* moments, but become *future* moments. Time (as we know it) collapses in on itself when the star Damian has been observing, Aldebaran, ceases to travel away from the earth, and starts to move towards it. (199)

The other character puzzled by the discrepancy between empirical understanding of time and the new concept of time that is becoming evident as the novel progresses is

Mark Clare. He starts questioning linear time only when he is inside the tumulus and digging further into the depths upon sensing that the tumulus is a kind of passage in which time stands still; in other words, Mark Clare "senses four thousand years of time suddenly contracting within the central tomb" (Smethurst, 200). Mark Clare's discovery in the tumulus, marked especially by the "passage grave" fails to indicate a "new beginning" but rather "a return to a completed past and the end of all futures" (Smethurst, 206).

4.5 Language: Intertextuality and Self-reflexivity

First Light is indeed a novel/text which overtly makes use of intertextuality. As in *Hawksmoor* and *The Great Fire of London*, there are significant images in F*irst Light* as well. However, in *First Light*, these images are not repeated continuously so as to be called recurring. What is interesting is that, Ackroyd's most used images that are presented in *First Light* are important symbols. The color red appears in the novel with the character Julian Hill, one of the members of the excavation team, who has red hair and the star Aldebaran itself is known to be a red colored star. Ackroyd's usage of the color red produces different meanings in whatever context it appears. In *First Light*, Aldebaran symbolizes the origin of existence, while ironically enough, Mark Clare and his team search for this origin of existence deep below the earth in the remains of the ancient tumulus. The six parts of the novel, each of which are divided into a number of chapters, begin with a quotation from earlier writers of the realist mode, such as Kipling, Hardy and Wilde, with the exception of the two poets Blake and Frazer, who start off the last two parts of the novel. Frazer is a significant name to be assigned to the last part of the novel, since through the quotation taken from Frazer's work below reflects whatever message Ackroyd wishes to give:

> It is therefore a truism, almost a tautology, to say that all magic is necessarily false and barren for were it ever to become true and fruitful, it would no longer be magic but science. (Frazer quoted in Ackroyd, *FL*, 291)

In fact, Ackroyd totally contradicts this idea, because the characters of the novel, the different stories within and the various story-lines all reflect the textual world, as there is an overt intertextuality that can be seen in Ackroyd's works in general. In *First Light*, there are references to both earlier writers' novels and to Ackroyd's previous novels themselves. Especially the characters allude to the characters of the earlier works of the realist mode. As it is known, Ackroyd is highly influenced by Charles Dickens, along with other earlier writers, such as Thomas Hardy. In this respect, language wise, we may say that the novel resembles *The Great Fire of London*. There are indeed numerous intertextual references firstly indicated by the main characters' names, especially pointing to Thomas Hardy's characters from a variety of his novels. A very significant intertextual reference that can be given from the novel is concerned with Mark Clare's neighbor Fraicheur's putting T.S. Eliot's play *The Family Reunion* into production. The significance of Eliot's play is that it is a parody of "high-art" that is "lowered, the identity 'debased' in pursuit of the performative power" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 154). It is suggested that

> The carnivalesque production of *The Family Reunion* is disruptive and truthful because it is messy and uncoordinated. The costumes and make-up are badly done, the delivery of lines is poor, there is no suspension of disbelief, no assumption that the audience is watching anyone other than amateur actors caught in a pretence. The limit between 'reality' and the play is broken down because the abilities of the performers cannot enforce the rigid distinction between the two positions. (154)

The beginning and the end of the novel show certain differences upon close reading, although "the first paragraph of each passage is precisely the same" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 117). One of the differences is that while the first is taken from a conversation between Damian Fall and his assistant Alec, the latter is spoken by Fall alone. The significance of these two chapters – the beginning and the ending – display the self-reflexive attitude of Ackroyd's text, revealing some invaluable

information on the act of writing. Gibson and Wolfreys point out to this significance by commenting that

> …the passages are displacements of displacements, two moments of internal reflection from a potentially infinite series. They belong to a temporal movement between the past and the future moment of being. The passages are iterable instances of that 'perpetual movement of manifestation', of the exchange between sense and being, to recall Hyppolite once more. Moreover such displacement and movement enacts in writing the condition of writing reflexively while enacting also the inescapably written condition of being. The understanding on Damian Fall's part of the temporal nature of one's being, an awareness which through the doubling of the passages is an awareness of the displacement in writing of the self, is given slight, subtle formal performance through the insistent use of sentence fragments and the seven sentences beginning 'and'. (118)

To further analyze these passages, Gibson and Wolfreys state that "Ackroyd's writing grafts itself onto itself as its own imperfect and fragmented palimpsest", turning itself into a "mimicked parody of itself" (118). At a first glance the passages are quite misleading, since they appear to complete a sort of cycle or circularity; however, the slight changes inherent in both point towards a disclosure. Therefore, what is parodied in the seemingly similar passages is the frame of reference, which is the beginning chapter of the novel. Through the slight discrepancies of the two chapters, Ackroyd is "grafting his text onto itself in an altered form which in turn alienates the identity of the text" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 119). This in return signals to a question about the nature of the first light which is the object of the quests in the novel. Since the text is concerned with displacement and alienation, then the issue of first light is problematized and left open to interpretation. The following quotation is the last paragraph of the novel, which clearly evidences the issue of non-closure. It is Damian Fall speaking and the way he utters these last words of the novel can be interpreted in a variety of ways, leaving the question mark concerning the first light intact:

Yes, Aldebaran. Once this region was thought to form the outline of a face in the constellation of Taurus. He smiled at his shadow. But the Pleiades contains three hundred stars in no real pattern. Just burning, being destroyed, rushing forward. The last vestiges of cloud had now drifted away and the entire night sky had reappeared, so bright and so clear that Damian Fall put out his hand to it; then he turned his wrist, as if somehow he could turn the sky on a great wheel. And for a moment, as he moved his head, it did seem that the stars moved with him. Why is it that we think of a circular motion as the most perfect? Is it because it has no beginning and no end?

Time. Another time. He looks out of the window, from the confines of his bed. But he can see nothing now. Only the sky filled with light. (328)

III. CONCLUSION

*David Cowart would also argue (comparably to Lukacs' sense of authorial ethical responsibility), that the postmodern historical novel' s questioning of history arises out of a contemporaneous apocalyptic feeling: . . . only since 1945 have we known precisely the shape that apocalypse would take. We look to history now to provide dues for understanding gauging, addressing the more absolute instability of our nuclear present. . .. a number of these artists . . . define their enterprise as genuinely crucial to the continued viability of the present- (29-30). (*Pomeroy*, 32)*

The three historiographic metafictions that are the study of this thesis dissertation, namely *The Great Fire of London, Hawksmoor* and *First Light*, embody certain metafictional elements which reflect a postmodern understanding of fiction, reality and time. When the novels are studied in terms of plot and narration, characters, time and setting along with language, it can be observed that there are certain common points which have been used by Ackroyd as a means of problematising aspects such as the relationship between history and reality, and the concept of linear time. In addition to the usage of techniques such as intertextuality, parody and pastiche, the novels also obscure the line between history and fiction, hence bringing history to such a point that its reliability is posed as a question. The characters, fictionally constructed and at times as allusions of literary and real historical figures, all embody the metafictional twist and suffer from the postmodern affliction of being isolated, fragmented personalities that are frequently presented as the 'other'. The plot and narrative styles of the novels which are the object of this study represent a self-reflexive and non-conventional method of breaking away from the realistic mode, which allow Ackroyd to assert a questioning attitude in the matter of writing itself. While convincingly presenting fictionally constructed characters, Ackroyd is not concerned with a suspension of disbelief. On the contrary, most of the characters are aware of their own fictionality and their unique roles in the constructed world of their respective texts. The convergence of time periods, the attempt to recreate a fictional past in the fictional present and the quest for the beginning of time are the issues tackled in the novels time wise. London as the setting of two of the novels (as well as all of Ackroyd's novels with the exception of *First Light* which is the third novel of this study) has an immense significance as the choice of setting.

Ackroyd's obsession with London as a living being which embraces an ancient wisdom and the likeness of Cockney Visionaries is the single setting which embodies Ackroyd's emphasis of Englishness. Dorset, as the setting of the third novel, suits the needs of a setting that reflects a mythical search into time, as it may be the interpreted as the undertaking of a search for familial, archaeological and astronomical knowledge that could all be said to be a search for the roots. What the novels reflect in large is the amount of research Peter Ackroyd has put into the writing and developing of his novels, whether this research be about the 18th century history, writing and speech style, an immense identification with the novels of Charles Dickens (*Little Dorrit* in particular) or the quantum notion of time.

In *Hawksmoor*, the double time narratives allow the blurring of the past and the present; history and fiction and question linear time. The novel is stated to be "the detective genre with a parallel historical narrative" (Tew, 131) and it is this "parallel historical narrative" that places the novel apart from the realistic mode in the first place. As stated in Pomeroy's paper

> Historiographic metafiction violates the "dark areas" in order to give an alternative version which not only questions the original or accepted version but also causes a questioning of the official version. This "creative anachronism" is the insertion into the historical past of technological devices of our present which work to flout the ontological security of the realistic novel. Hïstoriographic metafiction's creative anachronism uses both technology and beliefs, knowledge and attitudes fiom the present in the novelistic past, in order to foreground for the reader their seduction into the narrative. By blatantly repudiating the official version the postmodern historical novel offers an apocryphal history that causes a sort of ontological flicker and, McHale claims, transgresses this boundary "between the real and the fictional" (90). (Pomeroy, 25)

In relation with what the above explanation clearly defines, *Hawksmoor* indeed questions the realiability of Western empiricism in the period of 18th century. The empiristic world view which is reflected in the novel mainly through Sir Christopher

Wren is subverted by the character Nicholas Dyer, whose main aim is to transcend time through the churches he is building and following the teachings of the Mirabilis cult. These two opposite belief systems exist side by side and actually tell us that what we know through historical documents about the 18th century may not be all that is presented about that time period. Therefore, "the official version" of the 18th century is subverted through a plot which is concerned with a man who follows a diabolical cult's teachings to form a kind of transport vehicle to reach eternity and to reach a state of cosmic man. The 18th century narration told by Dyer signifies the story told by the 'other.' As Braux states

> Historiographic metafiction uses the omniscient narrator, in the form of a suspect omniscient voice, to undermine the supposed objectivity of the traditional historical account by exposing the narrating voice's deliberately provisional nature. This calls attention to this voice's otherwise ungrounded veracity. (220)

One of the main tools used by Ackroyd to take the reader to grasp the understanding of the 18th century better is pastiche. Certainly, Dyer's narration which is done in the manner of speech and expression of the 18th century forms a state of plausibility in the reader. The metafictional overtness of the novel is expressed in many instances through the utterings of various characters, especially the 20th century detective Nicholas Hawksmoor who ironically carries the name of the real life 18th century architect. Ackroyd's "novels characteristically hesitate between pattern and randomness, unity and fragmentation, paradoxically managing to affirm and deny simultaneously the possibility of transcendence" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 19). Likewise, at the end of the novel, Dyer, Hawksmoor and a third narrator join; although this could be taken as the realization of Dyer's aim of reaching immortality, there remains a vague question as to whether he really does achieve transcendence. There is a question forwarded by Dyer at the end that leaves the reader in a state of indecision as to whether Dyer achieves transcendence or not. The concept of quantum time and the notion of simultaneous existence attribute to the novel a questioning attitude

regarding the issue of time and as a consequence to this, to history. Smethurst refers to the novel as thus:

> *Hawksmoor* has a self-conscious and playful approach to time and history, seeming to delight in its own trickery, allusions and word play. The sense is of lightly touching parallel worlds that the process of reading seems to connect. In some ways it is a ghost story, a chilling tale of existence outside the time-spaces of material worlds, and of irrational contingencies. But on another level it is a postmodern reworking of certain basic assumptions underlying modern thought, especially concerning the nature of space and time, and the emphasis in modernity on a material, phenomenal and quantifiable approach to existence. (181)

Hawksmoor contains quite a number of "postmodern textual characteristics" (154) among which is the idea of circular time, that indicates to randomness and the problematic ending (154).

The Great Fire of London involves parody, subversion, intertextuality and in Susana Onega's wording, reflects "Ackroyd's incapacity to find a way out of the modernist prison of language" (*MMNPA*, 182). In terms of narration, plot and language it involves various plots brought together only to connect to form a willful subversion of Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit*. The plot and the characters' representation eventually portray the city of London as a modern wasteland. The fragmented, isolated lifestyles and personalities of the characters along with the tramp and fly inhabited London clearly reflect the postmodern contradictions of contemporary life. The futile attempt to recreate a fictional past in the present time, which is fictional as well, displays the fruitless urge to stick with conventional mode. However, the way Ackroyd starts narrating the novel means one single thing: the inevitable influence of the predecessors in British literature, such as Dickens; hence pointing out to more works yet to come taking the earlier works as a base. The way Ackroyd expresses this idea is evident at the beginning and at the end of the novel, when he explicitly admits that "this is the story so far" (3). The aforementioned vain

attempt to film *Little Dorrit* in contemporary London only leads to the destruction of the film set and the film's director Spenser Spender who thinks that London has a puzzling quality. In terms of presenting a modern day wasteland, Ackroyd's characters presented in the novel possess those isolatory and fragmentary flaws in their personalities. Spenser Spender, for instance, "suffers from the egotism and fragmentation of the self characteristic of the postmodern hero" (Onega, MMNPA, 24). Everything in his life, including his childhood, his marriage and towards the end of the novel, his attempt to film *Little Dorrit* leaves him in a state of barrenness. He believes that he can identify with Dickens, as he thinks that he has the capability to accomplish a task such as creating a Dickensian novel in contemporary London. However, he is far from those "Dickens's deeply humane heroes" and can be more easily interpreted as the "aimless and spiritually barren descendants of Eliot's "hollow men" " (Onega, *MMNPA*, 24). Spender is not the only character who is the representative of the postmodern hero as all of the characters in the novel suffer from "acute purposelessness and loss of direction" (Onega, *MMNPA,* 26). The tramps' existence and their self-reflexive attitude in the novel add to the element, which depict a wasted city that has lost its ancient wisdom. The fictional present time characters and the fictional characters of the novel *Little Dorrit* are converged as to provide a ground for Ackroyd's blurring of history and fiction by presenting them at the same level of existence. The subversion of *Little Dorrit* throughout the novel opens not only Ackroyd's text but Dickens's text as well to endless possibilities and interpretations; thus, the result is a chaos which is ended by a fire that signals a time for a new beginning. The parodic presentation of *Little Dorrit* in Ackroyd's text brings forward the idea that the present time fictional characters in the novel are only fictional constructs and the only way Ackroyd can subvert his own text is the fire that ends the novel. Ackroyd's obsession with the color red is evident in the novel through the red haired tramps and other characters that are mostly portrayed as rioters against the recreation of the fictional past in their textual world. The novel at the end presents two simultaneous events which are of high significance: the fire that breaks out in the film set and the riot in the Marshalsea prison started by Little Arthur. The reason behind two significant and simultaneous events is that they both

add to the understanding of the "dual logic of myth" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 29). According to this line of thought:

> …the effect of the Great Fire and of the opening up of the opening up of the prison is double: for the Marshalsea inmates, the tramps, Audrey, Little Arthur, and Pally that is, for the outcasts and working class visionary Londoners with a mythical conception of life (the equivalent of the "folk" in Thomas Hardy's terms) it is a joyful event, signifying the possibility of a new start in life of some form of regeneration. However, for socially integrated and rationally educated middle-class people (Hardy's "individuals") the fire produces a new and disquieting sense of impermanence. The different reactions synthesize what Ackroyd considers to be two basic kinds of human beings: the visionaries and the rationalists, those who have an innate sense of transcendence and those who lack it. (Onega, *MMNPA*, 30)

As Onega further explains the characters that do not understand the transcendental side of life are the ones who represent characters that are afflicted by the postmodern condition of being "angst-ridden, alienated, and doomed to extinction" (30). However, the visionaries are not the advantageous side as "the endless cycles of reincarnation are a punishment from which they are desperately seeking to escape" (30). Thus, it may be said of the visionaries that their attempt to reach a state of transcendentalism is marked by a constantly repeating pattern of birth, death and rebirth, each signaling to a better state of existence. London as the setting on the other hand is an expected move on Ackroyd's part. For Ackroyd London in its present state reflects an "[accumulation] of the styles, voices, and echoes of his strong predecessors, Dickens and Eliot, postulating as an overall unifying metaphor a transcendental or mythical vision of the millenarian city" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 32). In *The Great Fire of London*, the setting serves for the purpose of asserting the metafictionality of Ackroyd's text as well, since it "destroys the painfully built illusion of transcendence, bringing to the fore the fictionality and constructedness of his created world" (Onega, *MMNPA*, 32). As for having chosen a novel of Charles

Dickens as a frame, there is no doubt that Dickens for Ackroyd has been once of the most valuable writers whom he sees as one of the Cockney visionaries. Ackroyd has been quoted as saying that "Dickens represented he one strand in the English novel which really interests me, which is what you might call the mythic quality in the English novel" (quoted in Lewis, 161).

In *First Light*, Ackroyd once again uses the technique of ending the novel as it starts. The ending is almost the same as the beginning chapter which introduces Damian Fall and his assistant Alex. In the same chapter, immeadiately the reader is imposed certain images related to time and the repetition of colour symbolism is evident in the description of basic scientific principles related to movement. The beginning and the ending of the novel which are the same with only slight alterations reflect a parody of novels with closed endings. Thus, the novel suggests that it is not possible for narratives to be "fixed" (Gibson and Wolfreys, 153). As the narrative is not stabilized, then the meaning that the reader is supposed to gather from the novel also remains vague, leaving the ending open to possible interpretations. Through the character Damian Fall, the novel questions science, especially Western empirical sciences, because Fall sees science yet as another form of fiction. The three main characters, Mark Clare, Damian Fall and Joey Hannover, along with the minor characters are cursed once again with the postmodern condition as they all reflect a kind of fragmentation and barrenness that is inherent in their lives. Clare's fruitless marriage, his wife Kathleen's suicide and his search for knowledge within the depths of the tumulus convey a life that lacks vitality in all aspcts. Likewise, Damian Fall is another fragmented personality, as he is rather presented as the 'other'. He is portrayed as being confined to the observatory and seems that there is nothing else in his life. There are symbolic images which point out to his isolated nature, such as the flies which pile up on the observatory's window, as well as the references to Fall's being perceived like a shadow by the other characters. Joey Hannover's cliché lines from the long gone days of his show career and his wife Floey's misuse of the language also point out to a character that is almost stuck to a particular point of history who has not been able to make any progress. The places which the three characters resort to find their own personal quests are not the correct ones. Their

quests are connected by the revelation of the old barren one within the tumulus. Meanwhile, Mark Clare, just like Nicholas Hawksmoor in Hawksmoor is a parody of the realist mode detective. Hawksmoor and Clare share one significant similarity in their resorting to logic to understand certain things and both are unable to reach an answer in doing so. Just like Hawksmoor, Clare also reaches an understanding when he goes back in time; only then is he able to see the whole picture or the reality. The star Aldebaran and the old barren one (also phonetically similar to each other) are connected with each other in a way Clare and Fall only understand at the end of the novel the interconnection between the two as it comes to light that the ancient people of the Pilgrin Valley already had knowledge about the skies. Dorset with the various burial mounds which have remained from the prehistoric times as the setting instead of London is a suitable choice to reflect the idea of reversed time. The tumulus serves as a passage that allows for the transcendence of time. The constant referral to light and dark reflect the fluctuating nature of the universe. Damian Fall and Nicholas Dyer in Hawksmoor share the realisation that time exists in a simultaneous manner and that there is really no progress towards the future on a linear level. Mark Clare, once inside the center point of the tumulus, comes to the same realisation that the tumulus contains within itself all times. At the end of the novel another realisation occurs:

> Mark's epiphany is echoed at the end of First Light when the second questing figure, Joey Hannoer, burns the body found in the tomb. During the cremation, Joey has a vision of the original burial from throusands of years ago. In the shriveled corpse he sees the faces of his parents and "the faces of all those who had come before him" (323). Thus, the novel ends with a "moment of communion" between the living and the dead (325), and Joey is finally in tune with his identity. (Lewis, 56)

The ending of the novel is significant in the sense that it points out to a notion that Ackroyd applies to all three of the novels studied herewith. If Ackroyd's Englishness and Cockney Visionaries traditions are taken into consideration, it is possible to see

that there is a recurring pattern. Through the merging of time periods, questioning of the linear time concept and merging history and fiction, and being in defense of clinging to the literary roots Ackroyd suggests that without the past traditions and earlier works, the present cannot be understood. In *Hawksmoor* and *First Light*, past time is almost forced onto the present time, posing questions about the reliability of history and it is only by going to the past that most characters come to certain realisations.

In conclusion, although Peter Ackroyd does not consider himself a postmodern writer, his use of postmodernist elements, self-reflexive style and problematisation of certain issues allow for a rethinking on how to categorise him. Ackroyd argues that his "techniques may accidentally look newfangled but [they] are actually part of a venerable English tradition" (Lewis, 169). Despite Ackroyd's contention, his novels contain the historiographic metafiction genre's characteristics, which question in large the relationship between fiction and reality, while presenting a non-traditional concept of time.