

## THE POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE OF TIME IN PETER ACKROYD'S *HAWKSMOOR*

UDC 821.111 – 311.2.09 *Akrojd P.*

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**Abstract.** *This paper deals with the chronotope of the postmodern novel, such as Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, in which non-linear time and temporal displacement problematise the reality by questioning scientific laws that govern the time perspective of the modern world, and by questioning social and cultural constructions of time in Western society. The author problematises the linear time perspective in two ways: by reversing the supposed direction of time, i.e. traveling backwards in time, and by using two historically discontinuous time frames. This paper will show how the novel successfully challenges modern assumptions about linear time and history, because at the ending the readers have to accept that the lines between past and present are becoming blurred and that the two main characters may have been one identity, partly in the present and partly in the past.*

**Key words:** *chronotope, postmodern novel, time, present, past*

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

Peter Ackroyd, *Hawksmoor* (9)

### THE CONCEPT OF TIME IN POSTMODERN FICTION

One of the features of postmodern novels is to organise narrative time in non-linear fashion and to present the story line as fragmented and disrupted. This has been a feature of modernist fiction as well. But while in modernist fiction non-linear time is used as a matter of form only, distanced from reality, in the postmodern novel 'non-linear time and temporal displacement problematise the real by calling into question scientific laws that

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Received November 30, 2008

The paper was presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial EASA Conference: "Translating Cultures: Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific", Roskilde, 26 – 30. 9. 2007.

govern the temporality of the modern world, and by questioning social and cultural constructions of time that underpin western versions of reality...In postmodern novels such as Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, there are no rational explanations for the time slips that occur between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and, in some respects, the novel is a problematisation of that rational thinking that seeks causality and linearity.<sup>1</sup> Non-linear time is incorporated in the fabric of the real, not distanced from it, so the reader has to accept this concept of time in order to understand the novel.

'In the chronotopes of postmodern novels, non-linear time and temporal displacement are often integral to the thematic structure and *content* of the novel: they are not just stylistic elements. . . they are designed to problematise scientific, social and cultural constructions of time, constructions that are associated with western concepts of reality.<sup>2</sup> In fact, people in modern societies generally have only one concept of time: time as linear, unidirectional, with a beginning and an end, continually progressing from the past into the future, divided into equal parts. This future-directed, linear time perspective is associated with modern western societies and so has become their **social time**. However, Paul Smethurst defines no less than nine different forms of time used in postmodern fiction<sup>3</sup>; the most interesting are:

- **'Ecological time** – cyclical and continuous, and corresponding to natural cycles, rhythms and pulses; the time of nature
- **Historical time** – as chronology, elapsed and completed time, and records of the past, but chronological data are often reordered and reformed to suit demands of present-day society; as narrative, no longer the time of history, but of *writing* history – historiographic time
- **Cosmological time** – the time created by the universe expanding, and so inextricably linked to space; space and time are interchangeable here<sup>4</sup>

By studying pre-modern societies, sociologists have discovered that their time perspective is very different: their social time is closely linked to ecological time, to the cycles and rhythms of nature, and to some extent to cosmological time. Time is not divided strictly into past, present and future; it is experienced in a less quantitative way. 'In modern societies, social life has become severed from nature and the cosmos. . . . As a result, modern man searches for alternative systems of belief, such as science and historical materialism, so that he might master history, rationalise it and bring it to a conclusion. . . . It seems reasonable to assume that in modernity it has been an attempt to rationalise the past and predict the future that gives rise to a linear time perspective.<sup>5</sup> Some critics, such as John Hassard, claim that a linear time perspective has been established at the time of the evolution of industrial capitalism and that it has been crucial to modern ideas of progress. In the industrial age, progress has become the ultimate value. Time was seen as objective and measurable, always moving from the past into the future, and thus related to progress and development.<sup>6</sup>

Although the linear time perspective of industrial capitalism is still predominant in western society, other perspectives of time have emerged in postmodernity, under the in-

<sup>1</sup> Smethurst, Paul, *The Postmodern Chronotope*, (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p.174

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p.175

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p.175-7

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p.175-6

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p.177-8

<sup>6</sup> Hassard, John, and Martin Parker, ed., *Postmodernism and Organizations*, (London: Sage Publications Ltd.,1993)

fluence of new scientific, cultural and anthropological studies. For example, Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* questions the assumption that time has a particular direction. This theory has had a great influence on postmodern fiction – the readers are required to conceive of time which is not predisposed to travel in any particular direction.' The nature and direction of time is a major theme in [postmodern] novels, and this is not only to look back to pre-modern concepts of cyclical time, whether magical, mythological or 'natural', but also to look to the present, especially to models of space – time developed in physics and cosmology.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE CONCEPT OF TIME IN *HAWKSMOOR*

In *Hawksmoor*, the author problematises the linear time perspective in two ways: by reversing the supposed direction of time, i.e. traveling backwards in time, and by using two historically discontinuous time frames. One narrative strand is set in early eighteenth century London, the time of the Enlightenment, when modern thought, and with it the new consciousness of time, replace the earlier beliefs and pre-modern concepts of time and space. The other strand, set in London in the 1970s, shows the decline of modern science and rational thinking. 'In other words, the novel as a whole seems to depend on pre-modern concepts of time and space for it to work. At the same time, the modern science available to the detective, *Hawksmoor*, is never going to solve the mystery. It is a trick then, because the postmodern reader's desire to bring the mystery to a conclusion, to close the text, is only to be satisfied by entertaining the non-linear time of a mysticism that was driven underground in the eighteenth century by modern science and rational thinking.'<sup>8</sup>

The novel alternates between chapters set in early eighteenth century London and those set in the twentieth century. The former concerns the architect, Nicholas Dyer, who was charged by Parliament with building seven new churches, churches historically built by Nicholas Hawksmoor, the exemplar of English Baroque architecture. These chapters, which make up half of the novel, are related by Dyer himself, in the years 1711-1715. In those years, London is in the process of being rebuilt after the Plague and the Great Fire of 1666. Sir Christopher Wren is the chief architect and the Surveyor to Her Majesty's Works, while Dyer is the Assistant Surveyor. Dyer is also "of that older Faith" (H: 20), a faith which is a strange mixture of Old Testament, Druid and Satanist rituals. His mystical belief in the pervasive power of evil stands opposed to the more established Sir Christopher Wren's belief in the empirical, scientific and rational ethos of the Royal Society. From the very beginning Dyer declares his opposition to the spirit of the Enlightenment and his belief in the powers of darkness ("He who made the World is also author of Death, nor can we but by doing evil avoid the rage of evil Spirits" (H: 20)), by secretly sacrificing to the demonic powers a virgin boy in the foundations of each of his new churches.

The other half of the novel concerns Nicholas Hawksmoor, a Detective Chief Inspector investigating a strange series of strangulations of boys and child-like tramps that occur on the sites of Dyer's churches. Hawksmoor is Sir Christopher Wren's modern counterpart whose belief in the power of reason fails to solve the murders.

The two narratives are divided by three centuries of historical time, but they are skillfully connected by repeating phrases, images and motifs. They share a common locale –

<sup>7</sup> Smethurst, Paul, *The Postmodern Chronotope*, (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p.179

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p.181

the same area of London: Dyer works in Her Majesty's Office of Works in Scotland Yard, Hawksmoor's office is in New Scotland Yard; both live around Seven Dials; the murders are being committed on the sites of the same seven churches. Each chapter begins with the same phrase or image which the previous one ends with. A multitude of the same words, names, images, rhymes, songs appear in both narratives, so the readers have a sense of two parallel worlds touching one another at times. 'The reader is asked to find connections, partly for the pleasure of making a whole and partly to confront conflicting ideologies and concepts of space and time within and between the two worlds.'<sup>9</sup>

The author uses a double time frame to present a conflict between different concepts of time and the ideologies that underlie these concepts. The conflict is also presented doubly: through the relationship of Dyer and Wren and Dyer and Hawksmoor.

#### DYER AND WREN: A CONFLICT OF IDEAS

'*Hawksmoor* depicts an early eighteenth century London society constituting a form of time that would come to dominate other forms of time. The importance of the constitution of this particular social time cannot be underestimated because it underlies many of the major faiths of modern society (such as rational science and causality) and although *Hawksmoor* makes no direct reference to it as such, this form of time was a prerequisite for industrial capitalism.'<sup>10</sup> The presence of this new concept of time is evident in the new rational science of the Royal Society, of which Sir Christopher Wren is the leading figure. But the novel also portrays the resistance to rational science and attachment to the older faith and metaphysical thinking in the character of Nicholas Dyer.

In the older faith, the fallen world is essentially evil and people are full of sin, but in time man can redeem himself:

"And thus we pray: What is Sorrow? The Nourishment of the World. What is Man? An unchangeable Evil. What is the Body? The Web of Ignorance, the foundation of all Mischief, the bond of Corrupcion, the dark Coverture, the living Death, the Sepulture carried about with us. What is Time? The Deliverance of Man. These are the ancient Teachings and I will not Trouble my self with a multiplicity of Commentators upon this place, since it is now in my Churches that I will bring them once more into the Memory of this and future Ages. For when I became acquainted with Mirabilis and his Assembly I was uncovering the trew Musick of Time which, like the rowling of a Drum, can be heard from far off by those whose Ears are prickt."

(H: 21).

Dyer believes in a 'natural' time which unites the past, present and future. 'Enduring time must be inscribed in the design and fabric of his buildings, so that all time can be perceived, like the harmony of the spheres, echoing across a bounded cosmos in which all time is already completed and contained...From a postmodern perspective, it is in a sense true that the (expanding) universe does contain the traces of events from billions of years ago as they travel in light waves across the ether. And these waves are perceived as

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, p.180

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p.183

'sounds' picked up by radio telescopes, so we do indeed listen to the past as it travels across space.<sup>11</sup>

Dyer's plan is to use ancient patterns, such as pyramids, in the layout of his churches, to use materials, such as stone, with time already inscribed in them, and to follow the ancient rituals and ceremonies in the construction, such as making a human sacrifice and burying the body in the foundations.

"This Mirabilis once describ'd to me, *viz* a Corn when it dies and rots in the Ground, it springs again and lives, so, *said he*, when there are many Persons dead, only being buried and laid in the Earth, there is an Assembling of Powers. If I put my Ear to the Ground I hear them lie promiscuously one with another, and their small Voices echo in my Church: they are my Pillars and my Foundation."

(H: 24).

At the very beginning, Dyer relates to his apprentice one of his principles: "Architecture aims at Eternity and must contain the Eternal Powers: not only our Altars and Sacrifices, but the Forms of our Temples, must be mysticall." (H: 9). But this is not the fashion of the Time: Sir Christopher Wren, Dyer's superior, believes that architecture should reflect "Harmony" and "Rational Beauty" of the world. He is, as Dyer snidely comments, "all for Light and Easinesse and will sink in dismay if ever Mortality or Darknesse shall touch his Edifices. It is not reasonable, he will say, it is not natural." (H: 7). On the other hand, Dyer declares; "I am not a slave of Geometricall Beauty, I must build what is most Sollemn and Awefull." (H: 7). Clearly, this is a conflict of old and new aesthetics, as well as of old and new concepts of space and time.

In the novel Wren is supposed to control and approve Dyer's work, but in most cases he just signs Dyer's designs without even looking them over. He is only interested in appearances, in the surfaces of things, in the phenomenal world. He believes only in the doctrine of Enlightenment, in reason and science, and despises the imagination and the irrational. Therefore, he fails to see who Dyer really is and what he does: even in their debate at the end of the novel, when Dyer reveals his most secret beliefs ("There is no Mathematicall Beauty or Geometrical order here – nothing but Mortality and Contagion on this Ordure Earth. . . . There is a Hell, sir, there are Gods and Daemons and Prodigies: your Reason is but a Toy, your Fortitude downright madness against such Terrours" (H: 147)), Wren takes it as an expression of his melancholy temperament.

Wren's character in the novel represents the faith in the new rational science which comes to dominate eighteenth century thinking and which tries to destroy earlier belief systems. But this faith is, through Wren, often proved wrong or exposed to ridicule, as in Dyer's comment on the building of St. Paul's Cathedral:

"He liked to destroy Antient things: sad and wreched Stuff, he called it, and he us'd to say that Men are weary of the Reliques of Antiquity. He spoke in their stead of Sensible Knowledge, of the Experimentall Learning and of real Truths: but I took these for nothing but Fopperies. This is our Time, *said he*,

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid*, p.185-6

and we must lay its Foundations with our own Hands; but when he used such Words I was seiz'd with this Reflection: and how do we conclude what Time is our own?. . . As it turned out, Sir Chris.his own Perswasions were hurled against him, when it came to his Notice that he was building St Pauls Church upon an ancient Ruine."

(H: 55).

An important episode in the relationship of Wren and Dyer is their trip to Stonehenge. Dyer cannot rest until he has seen "this bowing place, this High Place of worship" (H: 57), because "the true God is to be venerated in obscure and fearful Places, with Horror in their Approaches, and thus did our Ancestors worship the Daemon in the form of great Stones." (H: 57). However, Wren only sees geometrical beauty in the layout of the stones ("Geometry, *he called out*, is the Key to this Majesty" (H: 61)), which reflects the natural order of things:

"And you see, Nick, there is an Exactness of Placing them in regard to the Heavens, for they are so arranged to estimate the position of the Planets and the fixed Starres. From which I believe they had magneticall compass boxes."

(H: 61).

While Wren assumes that the Druids too were concerned with geometry and that Stonehenge represents their knowledge of the world, Dyer believes that the Druids built Stonehenge to communicate with their ancestors and future generations.

"And when I lean'd my Back against that Stone I felt in the Fabrick the Labour and Agonie of those who erected it, the power of Him who enthrall'd them, and the marks of Eternity which had been placed there. I could hear the Cryes and Voices of those long since gone."

(H: 61).

And it seems that he is right, for the episode ends with Wren's strange vision. All of a sudden a storm rises, and a strong wind is swirling around the stones ("the Banks where wild Time blows", Dyer thinks), and the whole atmosphere of terror and magnificence seems to affect Wren:

"[He] sat leaning his Head back upon the Stone, pale as a Cloth and disconsolate to a strange Degree. I lay no Stress upon the Thing called a Dream, *he said*, but I just now had a Vision of my Son dead. . . . I shall subjoyn as a Corollary to the foregoing Remarks that Sir Chris.his son died of a Convulsive Fitt in a foreign Land, the which News we did not receive until several Months after the Events here related."

(H: 61-2).

Wren and Dyer stand for beliefs that have fundamentally different concepts of time. The novel questions the society which is marking out its own time and trying to take charge of its own destiny in isolation from all the mysteries that surround it, so that in the end it becomes abstracted from the real world. "Our Age can...lay the Foundations: that

is why we must study the principles of nature, for they are our best Draught.", says Wren, but Dyer warns him: "You cannot master or manage Nature. . . . The things of the Earth must be understood by the sentient Faculties, not by the Understanding." (H: 144).

Dyer's severest criticism is reserved for the Royal Society. They talk about Science, Reason, Progress and the Public Good in the Age of the Enlightenment, but are not interested in the actual experience of life for ordinary people of the eighteenth century, which is still dark and sordid.

"This mundus tenebrosus, this shaddowy world of Mankind, is sunk into Night; there is not a Field without its Spirits, nor a City without its Daemons, and the Lunaticks speak Propheesies while the Wise men fall into the Pitte. We are all in the Dark, one with another. . . . 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 . . . . The Mysteries must become easy and familiar, it is said, and it has now reached such a Pitch that there are those who wish to bring their mathematicall calculations into Morality, viz. the Quantity of Publick Good produced by an Agent is a compound Ratio of his Benevolence and Abilities. . . . They build Edifices which they call Systems by laying their Foundacions in the Air and, when they think they are come to sollid Ground, the Building dissapears and the Architects tumble down from the Clouds."

(H: 101).

Wren's words that "This is our time . . . and we must lay its Foundacions with our own Hands" (H: 55) are also criticised in Dyer's record of London:

"London grows more Monstruous, Stragglng out of all Shape: in this Hive of Noise and Ignorance, Nat, we are tyed to the World as to a sensible Carcasse and as we cross the stinking Body we call out *What News?* or *What's a clock?*"

(H: 48).

Instead of a new city based on rational thought and science, Dyer sees a monstrous bee-hive, expanding too fast and obsessed with time and news. This darker vision of life in London is surely due in part to the emergence of trade capitalism. A shift in the form of time is crucial to this, and Dyer's reference to the clock is a small but significant pointer to a major societal shift. The growth of trade capitalism in the seventeenth century is coincident with a huge change in the consciousness of space and time. The map, the compass and the clock were essential tools in navigation and so crucial to world trade. . . . Behind all of this is capitalism that quickly establishes its own dynamics of quantitative time and money. . . . Dyer's criticism of quantitative time implies a failure in this emerging modern, scientific and capitalist society to pay heed to the corruption, misery and deprivation among the London poor.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>*ibid.*, p.189-190

## DYER AND HAWKSMOOR: DOUBLE PERSONA?

At the level of ideas, Dyer and Hawksmoor begin as opposed to each other's belief in the irrational/mysticism and rationality/science respectively and are drawn together by the end of the book. Dyer's belief that his churches can reach across historical time is confirmed when it turns out that a series of sacrifices on the sites of the churches in the eighteenth century is connected with a series of murders in the twentieth century. The victims bear the same names and are being murdered at exactly the same places as their precursors. It seems that we are faced with the simultaneity of experiences centuries apart, and we are instantly aware of the great difficulty for the detective assigned to the case: he does not know that the murders are being repeated.

The detective, Hawksmoor, is at first presented as a modern counterpart to Wren. He depends on the same time consciousness, linearity and faith in causality. He relies on modern scientific methodology, backed up by computers and other twentieth century technology, to reconstruct the crime scene. We first meet him when he arrives on the crime scene of the third murder, and we are immediately given a hint that the modern science and technology will not be able to solve the case. It is almost impossible, the pathologist says to Hawksmoor, to determine the time of death:

"I don't know about the time. Even if I allow for a rise of temperature of six degrees at death, and even if the rate of cooling was only two degrees an hour, his present body heat would mean that he was killed only six hours ago. . . . And yet the extent of the lividity is such that the bruises were made at least twenty-four hours ago – normally they can take two or three days to come out like this.' Hawksmoor said nothing, but stared in the man's face. 'You say the timing is crucial, superintendent, but I have to say that in this case I don't understand the timing at all. . . . And there's another thing. There are no impressions, no prints. A strangler's fingers pressed into the neck will leave a curved nail impression, but there are only bruises here.'"

(H: 113)

Hawksmoor's rational methodology is, like Wren's, exposed to ridicule. The evidence in the phenomenal world, the footprints and fingerprints he is trying to find, have long since disappeared.

"On an occasion such as this, he liked to consider himself as a scientist, or even a scholar, since it was by close observation and rational deduction that he came to a proper understanding of each case; he prided himself on his acquaintance with chemistry, anatomy and even mathematics since it was these disciplines which helped him to resolve situations at which others trembled. For he knew that even during extreme events the laws of cause and effect still operated; he could fathom the mind of the murderer, for example, from a close study of the footprints which he left behind – not, it would seem, by any act of sympathy but rather from the principles of reason and method."

(H: 152-3)



The irony is that Hawksmoor can only solve the mystery by some kind of 'sympathy' or irrational psychic communication. 'Hawksmoor's rational methodology is undermined here because there appears to be no beginning from which to start plotting the events and so solve the mystery. Hawksmoor gradually breaks down as his investigations seem to lead nowhere, and more murders come to light. . . . Occasionally, Hawksmoor articulates the problem; for example, when his assistant finds it 'difficult to know where to begin', Hawksmoor replies 'perhaps there is no beginning, perhaps we can't look that far back' (H: 126). There is an obvious irony here as this postmodern detective fails to see what the reader can see all along.<sup>13</sup> By relying on science, modern technology, cause and effect, material evidence, Hawksmoor remains trapped in the present, unable to imagine the past or predict the future. 'He is presented as a parody of a modern detective, all method and reason, but no insight or intuition.'<sup>14</sup>

However, gradually, Hawksmoor becomes aware, through a series of strange events, of something from the past reaching out for him. '[He] comes to the conclusion that there is a pattern too large for him to resolve. . . . As the pattern of events expands, . . .Hawksmoor considers inventing, rather than constructing, the past: a shift from reason and method to imagination and fiction. . . . As a character in a postmodern novel, he is never far from admitting that he is himself an invention, being pulled this way and that by the author. But within the text, the detective also becomes conscious that something or someone from the past is manipulating him.'<sup>15</sup>

As the story progresses, Hawksmoor gradually becomes Dyer's counterpart, his other half. The episode when Wren and Dyer visit Bedlam to see a 'Demoniack' illustrates the connection of Dyer and Hawksmoor across centuries. Dyer hears a strange prophesy:

"And in his Madness he called out to me again: Hark ye, you boy! I'll tell you somewhat, one Hawksmoor will this day terribly shake you!"

(H: 100)

When Hawksmoor visits his father in an old people's home, the old man speaks a message apparently meant for Dyer:

" 'Nick,' he said, 'Nick, is there still more to come? What happened to that letter? Did they found you out?'"

(H: 121)

Dyer is building 'an everlasting Order' in the design and position of his seven churches which represent

"...the seven Planets in the lower Orbs of Heaven, the seven Circles of the Heavens, the seven Starres in Ursa Minor and the seven Starres in the Pleiades. Little St.Hugh was flung in the Pitte with the seven Marks upon his Hands, Feet, Sides and Breast which thus exhibit the seven Demons..."

(H: 186)

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid*, p.191-2

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.192

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p.193

Finally, in Little St.Hugh (the only imaginary church of the seven) Dyer has hidden a plot that will eventually draw Hawksmoor into this church to discover his secret:

"Nor shall I leave this Place once it is completed: Hermes Trismegistus built a Temple to the Sunne, and he knew how to conceal himself so that none could see him tho' he was still withinne it. This shall now suffice for a present Account, for my own History is a Patern which others may follow in the far Side of Time. And I hugg my Arms around my self and laugh, for as if in a Vi-sion I see some one from the dark Mazes of an unknown Futurity who enters Black Step Lane and discovers what is hidden in Silence and Secresy."

(H: 205)

Dyer has a vision of Hawksmoor coming to his church; then some time later he first meets his own 'Apparition', his double, and then encounters "a species of such a Body as my own, but in a strange Habit cut like an Under-garment and the Creature had no Wigg." (H: 206). Hawksmoor also sees his double in a reflection in a shop window. It seems that the two worlds are becoming to merge.

At the conclusion of the novel a mystical transformation occurs as the spiritually exhausted Hawksmoor finally connects Dyer's pattern with the pattern of the present day murders. 'He imagines, or dreams, or actually does (this is deliberately ambiguous in the narrative) meet with Dyer in his church at Black Step Lane. Before the meeting, Hawksmoor has seen an image on a TV screen, an indistinct figure, like a shadow, speaking from within one of Dyer's churches. The trap begins to close, as Hawksmoor goes to the library and reads about the architect Dyer. He senses that the pattern is not yet complete, and he is impelled to go to the church at Black Step Lane where he meets with Hawksmoor, merges with the fictional Dyer to produce the 'real' architect Hawksmoor.'<sup>16</sup>

"And his own Image was sitting beside him . . . and when he put out his hand and touched him he shuddered. . . . They were face to face, and yet they looked past one another at the pattern which they cast upon the stone . . . and who could say where one had ended and the other had begun?"

(H: 217)

#### CONCLUSION

Peter Ackroyd is well-known by the way he blends past and present, fact and fiction in his writing. Hawksmoor is written half in the language of the early 18th century, half in contemporary dialogue; it is 'a pastiche of eighteenth century writing strangely connected to a modern detective story'<sup>17</sup>. Before beginning *Hawksmoor*, Peter Ackroyd spent four months in the library of the British Museum, poring over tracts and treatises written 250 years ago, wanting to assimilate the voice of the time, to train himself so he could write in that style without self-consciousness.<sup>18</sup> And he has succeeded marvelously. For

<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*, p.194

<sup>17</sup>*ibid.*, p.194

<sup>18</sup> Neagu, Adrianna and Sean Matthews, 'Peter Ackroyd: A Critical Perspective', [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org), 2002

the reader, the past in the novel is more real than the present. It is presented realistically and convincingly, through the use of eighteenth century dialect and writing style. The use of the real Hawksmoor churches works particularly well because these churches are still present and still remarkable in their design.<sup>19</sup>

This also works on the level of ideas. Although the postmodern reader would be more familiar with a detective story than with an eighteenth century manuscript, Dyer's voice is far more powerful and convincing. The first person narrative technique, and the sense that Dyer occasionally, while discussing his ideas and plans, addresses the readers, adds to the persuasiveness of the historical reconstruction of the eighteenth century. This part of the novel becomes so 'real' for the readers that the narrative set in the 'present' seems detached and 'unreal'. The luckless Detective Hawksmoor is not only unable to solve the mystery, but he also comes across as only a pawn in Dyer's plots. The twentieth century narrative with its events and characters becomes to the readers only a part of a larger pattern set by Dyer himself.

'Dyer's is the voice of the most despairing (and exulting) anti-intellectualism, a throwback to medieval notions of the necessary primacy of the irrational; Wren's is the civilized voice in which we should like to believe. As for ... Hawksmoor, whose voice is perhaps meant to be our own - he not only fails to solve his case but appears, on the novel's final page, to have fallen victim to the malevolent Dyer himself.'<sup>20</sup>

The novel challenges modern assumptions about linear time and history, and successfully, because at the ending the readers have to accept that the lines between past and present are becoming blurred and that the two characters may have been one identity, partly in the present and partly in the past. With the image of Dyer's ominous shadow stretching over the world, we close the book, wondering if the concepts of space and time are indeed as simple and universal as we were taught.

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<sup>19</sup> Smethurst, Paul, *The Postmodern Chronotope*, (Amsterdam & Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p.183

<sup>20</sup> Oates, Joyce Carol, 'The Highest Passion is Terror', [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), 1986

## POSTMODERNISTIČKA PERSPEKTIVA VREMENA U *HOKSMURU* PITERA AKROJDA

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*Rad se bavi hronotopom u jednom postmodernističkom romanu, kao što je Akrojdiv Hoksmur, u kome se realnost problematizuje tako što se dovode u pitanje naučni zakoni koji upravljaju protokom vremena, kao i poimanje vremena u zapadnom društvu. Autor problematizuje moderno poimanje vremena na dva načina: tako što preusmerava tok vremena, tj. vraća se u prošlost, i tako što u strukturi romana upotrebljava dva vremenska okvira koji su istorijski diskontinualni. Rad pokazuje kako se roman uspešno poigrava modernim shvatanjima o linearnom toku vremena i istorije jer na kraju romana čitaoci moraju da prihvate da su granice između prošlosti i sadašnjosti postale nejasne i da su možda dva glavna junaka zapravo jedna te ista ličnost.*

Ključne reči: *hronotop, postmodernistički roman, vreme, sadašnjost, prošlost*