

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Ackroyd and his Literary Features

Peter Ackroyd (b.1949), an English novelist, lived with his mother Audrey Whiteside Ackroyd and his maternal grandparents in a public housing project in West London as his father lived separately. The family was Roman Catholic, and Ackroyd's religious heritage influenced both his critical work and his fiction. Early in life he was determined to escape his working-class origins, and at the age of ten he received a scholarship to attend a Catholic school in Ealing, Saint Benedict's. In 1968 he matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge, from which he graduated in 1971 in English literature. He then spent two years as a Mellon fellow at Yale University, where he was influenced by the avant-garde poetry of John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch.

Ackroyd's early ambition was to be a poet, and his first published works, *Ouch* (1971) and *London Lickpenny* (1973), were volumes of poetry. While at Yale, Ackroyd produced *Notes for a New Culture: An Essay on Modernism* (1976), a literary manifesto that established him as an early proponent of postmodernism among his generation of writers. Upon his return to London, Ackroyd was hired as a literary editor for *Spectator* magazine. During this time, he produced *Ezra Pound and His World* (1980), the first of several large biographies of noted English authors. After eight years with *Spectator* Ackroyd resigned to devote himself to a full-time writing career.

He has received many honors for his work, including the Somerset Maugham award for *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983), the Heinemann award for nonfiction from the Royal Society of Literature for *T. S. Eliot: A Life*; and the Prix

Goncourt, the Whitbread award, and the fiction prize from the *Guardian*, all for *Hawksmoor*. In addition, *Chatterton* was short-listed for the prestigious Booker Prize. Ackroyd has since served as the chief book reviewer for the *London Times*, a position he has maintained while producing an extensive body of work, nearly one book a year since 1978.

Ackroyd acknowledged that his rigorous work schedule contributed to the massive heart attack he suffered in 1999. Most of Ackroyd's prodigious body of work "resides in the realm of historiographic metafiction—an experimental, postmodern technique that blurs distinctions between imagination and historical fact" (*Encarta*). In particular, Ackroyd's prose explores the convergence of past and present time, and human lives associated with a place—generally London—through successive centuries. In *The Great Fire of London* (1982) Ackroyd began the practice of merging fact and imagination and traversing time through characters and plot. A skilled mimic, Ackroyd identifies strongly with various literary figures. This is especially evident in *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, a novel purporting to be Wilde's autobiographical account of the last months of his life in exile in Paris. Ackroyd captures Wilde's voice, wit, and persona, offering insight into the author's psyche.

*Hawksmoor* is perhaps the most successful example of Ackroyd's literary approach. Bold and structurally innovative, the novel transcends time, place, and even characters themselves in a plot that moves between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Historically, Nicholas Hawksmoor designs several well-known churches in London and lived a comfortable, cultured life. In Ackroyd's book, however, the architect becomes Nicholas Dyer, a Satanist, and the character named Hawksmoor is a twentieth-

century detective attempting to solve a series of gruesome murders taking place in the very churches that the real-life architect Hawksmoor constructed two hundred years earlier. It is learned that the evil Dyer sacrificed an innocent young boy on the foundation of every church he created, and the modern murders appear to be connected to these earlier ones. The novel illustrates the similarities between the two protagonists and examines universal themes involving death and regeneration.

Ackroyd's *Chatterton* posits that Thomas Chatterton, the famed eighteenth-century faker of medieval texts, did not commit suicide at age seventeen; rather he fabricated his own death and survived to continue his fraudulent production of antique manuscripts. Ackroyd plays with the ideas of fraud and plagiarism, littering the plot with deceptions at every turn. In the course of the narration, Ackroyd exploits opportunities to examine themes important to him: the cyclical nature of history, the cross-genre aesthetic, and real and imagined people who both transform and are connected through time.

The novel *English Music* (1992) contains two distinct narratives: a straightforward story about the early life of protagonist Timothy Harcombe during the 1920s and a series of visions involving encounters with various literary and historical figures. Presented in alternating chapters, Timothy's childhood and psychic leaps serve to evoke the distinct legacy and grandeur of English culture. *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) mixes ghosts and images of a past historical figure with an imperfectly realized character in the present who stumbles back and forth in time. *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), published in the United States as *The Trial of Elizabeth Cree: A Novel of the Limehouse Murders* (1995), features multiple narratives set in Ackroyd's favored locale, a squalid area of London. The narrative threads include the text of the trial

of Cree, her own interior monologue, her husband's diary, and remarks by an omniscient observer. *Milton in America* places the revered poet in seventeenth-century Massachusetts, where he engages in various adventures with both settlers and Indians. A work of imagined history, *Milton in America* carries Ackroyd's tendency to mingle fact and fiction to an extreme.

Rather than staying in London following the restoration of the Stuart monarchy, as the real Milton did, Ackroyd's creation sails for Massachusetts Colony with a Sancho Panza-like figure named Goosequill. Seemingly more puritanical than the Puritans themselves, Milton changes subtly following a sojourn in the wilderness with Native Americans. Milton's blindness is briefly healed, but then returns when he is shamed by having sexual relations with an Indian maiden. He returns to the Puritan settlement and conspires to start a holy war against a neighboring Roman Catholic village. The Milton of the novel effectively destroys a paradise, echoing the work of the historical Milton, who wrote *Paradise Lost*.

In his biographies, Ackroyd approaches his subjects in unusual and sometimes controversial ways, which notably includes the insertion of fictional episodes, a radical departure from accepted academic practice. In *T. S. Eliot*, a biographical undertaking limited by the highly restrictive rules governing Eliot's estate, Ackroyd used papers held in various university archives to produce a work that reveals an understanding of the poet and his writings. Ackroyd's massive and unconventional biography of Charles Dickens approaches its formidable subject from the standpoint of a fellow creative spirit. Through the unusual practice of inserting imaginative interludes in the text, Ackroyd interweaves lucid critical commentary about Dickens's novels, evocations of Victorian London, and

speculation about Dickens's life with exposition on the meaning of biography itself. In the work Ackroyd presents scenes of Dickens walking the streets of London with various characters from his fiction, examining landmarks, and conversing about events of the day. A companion volume, *Introduction to Dickens* (1991), contains useful, authoritative introductions to Dickens's novels. In *Blake* (1995), Ackroyd attempts to elucidate the life of William Blake, the famed poet, engraver, and painter. Ackroyd has also produced the biography *The Life of Thomas More* (1998); *The Plato Papers: A Prophecy* (2000), a work of speculative fiction; and a "biography" of his beloved home city, *London: A Biography* (2000).

Considered a prolific, accomplished, and highly creative writer, Ackroyd's work is "both admired and maligned by critics—evidence of his reputation as a literary experimenter. Ackroyd's work is difficult to classify, perhaps because the author himself is reluctant to distinguish among genres" (*Encarta*). While many praise Ackroyd's postmodern fiction for its complex plotting, frequent temporal shifts, obscure allusions, and wide cast of historical characters, others find incoherence, contrivance, and epistemological evasions in these same attributes.

His best fiction, including works such as *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, *Hawksmoor*, *Chatterton*, and *Milton in America*, display his favorite themes—the convergence and interaction of past and present time, literary mimicry, and the tenuous relationship between historical reality and fiction. Ackroyd's finest work is considered on a par with that of Salman Rushdie and Rose Tremain, while its transitional nature has been compared to the work of Lawrence Durrell and John Fowles. Ackroyd's body of

work insists on the primacy of the English cultural tradition, which he defines as Catholic, visionary, and transhistorical, characteristics that echo throughout his writings.

However, Ackroyd's nostalgic view of English culture—in particular, his suggestion in the widely-panned novel *English Music* that Englishness is historically and racially inherited—has been criticized by reviewers. Many reviewers have taken issue with Ackroyd's loose, interpretative approach to biography.

His studies of Dickens, Blake, and More received mixed assessment, with most reviewers objecting to some aspect of Ackroyd's approach, typically his historical methodology or prose mannerisms. Yet, *T. S. Eliot* garnered acclaim for the inventive way Ackroyd handled the material and brought the poet to life, and *Dickens* was commended for its vivid, loving treatment of the great novelist. Even disdainful reviewers respect Ackroyd's wide knowledge, fertile imagination, and remarkable ability to evoke the settings and people of the past in convincing detail.

### **Peter Ackroyd as a Postmodernist Writer**

The prolific Peter Ackroyd combines in his work two qualities generally assumed to be "mutually exclusive mannerism and versatility. His style, or better still, his styles, are so distinct, and yet so diversifies, as even to suggest a whole community of writers: he should be known, perhaps, as Peter Ackroyd Associates" (*Encarta*). The range and prodigality of his writing challenge the reader to enter a vast body of works, following myriad connections, continuities, and recurrent concerns. Acclaimed today as a 'master of English fiction', and also considered as one of Britain's leading literary biographers.

Ackroyd is also a prolific reviewer, poet and critical theorist, having to date

authored over twenty published volumes of verse, criticism and drama. The abundant corpus of book, film, music and theater reviews, lectures, introductions, short prose and miscellaneous writings (almost a million words of text), speaks in itself of the varied nature of his achievements. To do justice to Ackroyd, therefore, one must address the dialogue across these variegated forms of writing. Central to his work is the notion of cultural inheritance as an active and evolving tradition, in the sense advocated by T.S. Eliot (the subject of one of Ackroyd's acclaimed biographies), in the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent". Again like Eliot, Ackroyd is peculiarly conscious of his own position in relation to this tradition, and his writing thus characteristically provides a rich, ambitious and suggestive interest for vast of anglophone literary and cultural history.

Ackroyd's introduction to postmodernist writing came:

when he won a Mellon Fellowship that enabled him to spend two years from 1971 to 1973 at Yale. At Yale he met John Ashbery and Kenneth Koch, both poets of the New York School. Ashbery had spent nine years in France and was well acquainted with contemporary currents in French thought. He was also a friend of a number of postmodern artists such as Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. After Cambridge this potent new brew went to Ackroyd's head like wine. He quickly absorbed these Americans' disruption of meaning and reference, their exploration of the self-reflexivity of language and art (*Encarta*).

Peter Ackroyd typically insists on the difference of his fiction from the entire contemporary scene: "Someone said the novels I write really have no connection with

the novels of my contemporaries, or even with the period itself. I think that's probably true " (qtd.in Smith 60). Ackroyd is a peculiar combination. He is of his time and outside it. Representative of a newer kind of fictional British and yet unique, in rebellion against the main stream English fictional tradition yet writing in an alternative British strain of his choosing. He concludes that England's separation from the mainstream of modernist developments has led to a difficulty in English creative writing. " Our own literature has revealed no formal sense of itself and continues no substantial language" ( qtd in Smith147).

As a biographer, Ackroyd is drawn to a writer like Eliot who hides behind invented literary personae. He sees Eliot as one of the great instances of the idea that literary creativity consists largely of his ability to absorb and rearticulate voices from the past." The character inhabited me," he claimed (qtd. in McGrath 54).He even wrote the biography " in a style that would re-create Eliot's presence" (qtd. in Lehman 80).Revealing he has confessed that in writing the biography he " wasn't concerned with the real Eliot, only with his 'creation of an Eliot ' towards whom his feelings were those of an author towards his character" (qtd. in McGrath 47).Writing about Eliot gave Ackroyd the confidence to employ imitation, quotation and pastiche in his subsequent fiction. The history of English literature, Ackroyd has said " is really the history of plagiarism. I discovered that when I was doing T.S. Eliot. He was a great plagiarist... I see nothing wrong with it" (qtd. in Smith 60).

The connection between the fiery young author of *Notes for a New Culture* and the biographer of T.S. Eliot surfaces in the latter book when Ackroyd defines biography there as a convenient fiction. Clearly a writer who believes that the subject is purely a



textual construct will be drawn to a poet like Eliot who speaks through an array of "characters " or personae. It was Eliot's latter subscription to extra-textual values that led Ackroyd to denounce his eventual betrayal of the modernist revolution. What is of most interest here is Ackroyd's refusal to distinguish between the genres of biography and fiction. Elsewhere, in an interview, he has echoed this conviction as such:

They're much the same process. He goes on provocatively to suggest that fiction's often more factual than biography and far more precise, because biography has to be an act of interpretation. No one ever knows what happened. Both employ the same technical skills in their writing. There's no reason even, he argues, why you shouldn't use pastiche or parody of the subject's style within the biography (qtd. in Smith 59).

Ackroyd's attitude to the past, is one he shares with postmodern artists and thinkers at large. The past is unrecoverable, being constantly amalgamated into contemporary experience. Ackroyd's lack of interest in historical fact, his acceptance of history as a discourse subject to linguistic play just as are other more overtly imaginative discourses, has led Denis Donoghue to argue that Ackroyd's novels are not historical novels at all. They are historical romances, because they refuse to discriminate between the life a character apparently lived and the other lives he or she performed. He goes on to argue that Ackroyd "seems to reject the implication, in the historical novel, that people coincide with themselves and settle for the one life which the decorum of historical narration gives them" (qtd. in Denis 40). Certainly Ackroyd's novels refuse to differentiate between historical fact and imagined fact, between Chatterton the poet who wrote the Rowley poems and Chatterton the poet who wrote some of Blake's poems.

Each Chatterton lives and writes as vividly. There is no narrative bias favoring the historical over the invented poet.

Well-known in Britain, less generally known in the United States, Peter Ackroyd is representative of a new breed of British novelists who can loosely be termed postmodernist. But, unlike their counterparts in the U.S., these British postmodernists do not necessarily cultivate radical experimentation nor do they confine their appeal to an elite, mainly academic coterie. They are capable of producing best sellers such as *Martin Amis's Money*. They produce works of fiction that are turned into movies, such as Angela Carter's story, "The Company of Wolves", a rewriting of the traditional fairy story of *Little Red Riding Hood*. They have absorbed the triumphs (and absurdities) of poststructuralism and can utilize those aspects of recent theory that suit their purposes without becoming enslaved by them. They have never lost touch with their readership. But they are clearly distinguishable (and distinguish themselves) from the mainstream of British realist novelists typified by writers like Angus Wilson, Alan Sillitoe, or Margaret Drabble.

## Chapter Two: Concept of Postmodernism

It is very difficult to define the term "postmodernism". It is an ambiguous term because it has been used to characterize the wide range of social, aesthetic, economic and political phenomena. It aims to produce a useful conversation among these areas of everyday life. Postmodernism, therefore, is the mixture of social and literary aspects. It questions the concept of truth and celebrates with having nothing. The term postmodernism is often applied to the literature and art after World War II (1939-45).

The postmodern intellectual situation is profoundly complex and ambiguous. This is because the idea of postmodernism varies considerably according to context. But in its general and widespread form, the postmodern mind may be viewed as an open-ended, indeterminate set of attitudes. The essence of postmodernism lies in the principle based on indeterminacy. Indeterminacy suggests us that "all human understanding is interpretation and no interpretation is final" (Tarnas 138). This means that uncertainty of knowledge is the crux of postmodernism.

Postmodernism is applied to a cultural condition which prevails in the advanced capitalist societies since the 1970s. It is characterized by a superabundance of disconnected images and styles. They can be mostly noticed in television, advertisement, commercial designs and pop videos. In this sense postmodernity is said to be a culture of fragmentary sensations and superficiality. The traditionally valued qualities of depth, coherence, meaning, originality and authenticity are given no regard in this state of living. In literature, postmodernism may be seen as a continuation of modernism's alienated mood and disorienting techniques. At the same time it can be

seen as an abandonment of its determined quest for artistic coherence in a fragmented world. The term "Postmodernism" is widely used in reference to fiction, notably to the novels and stories of Thomas Pynchon, Kurt Vonnegut, Vladimir Nabokov and Angela Carter. Some of their works like Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* and Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* employ devices reminiscent of science fiction. They play with contradictory orders of reality or the irruption of the fabulous into the secular world.

### **Postmodernism and Humanism**

Because of the fast development in science and technology, man has become the machine. The sense of humanity and morality has gradually been declined. In the situation where humanity has been struggling for the existence, some new humanists have argued strongly for a return to a primarily humanistic education and for a conservative view of moral, political and literary values based largely on classical literature. The recent structuralists and post-structuralists intend to dissolve or eliminate the traditional concept of humanity. They are not ready to regard man as one of the most important elements of this universe. They "tend to reduce the human subject to an illusion; or effect engendered by the differential play of language" (Abrams 80).

It is notable that a number of structuralist and poststructuralist philosophical and critical theories were expressively antihumanistic. This is not because they undervalue the dignity of man but they shift their study on the scientific, cultural and literary aspects of society.

In literature or literary field, there is no specific time to declare the appearance of Postmodernism. But it was when the modernist way of writing started getting out

of control and no one bothered about it. This is because the boundary between elitism and marginalization remained no more. It was the starting phase of Postmodernism.

It was the moderns who brought forth the themes of fragmentation, alienation and failure of the society and everyday life, but they still have the hope to overcome such chaotic situation. But now in postmodernism, there is no certainty that if they can overcome the situation or not; even the hope itself is the circle of skepticism. In this way postmodernism is not a complete break from modernism nor is it the continuity. Rather, "postmodern literature is a revolutionary one using language in such a way as to defamiliarize the ordinary and thus to fight against the automatization of individual existences" (Abrams 95).

Though the postmodern literature during 1965-1975 is highly influenced by modern writers and so, it trivializes the political issues (like modernists trivialize the social realism); it is different from modern literature because it is characterized by intellectual skepticism. The early phase of postmodernism was the most politically volatile period due to the movements like Civil Rights, Women Rights and the Vietnam War.

However, those experimental writers did not deal the issues too seriously. They wrote about marginalized groups but in a highly-toned down manner and thus, trivialized the issues. One of the reasons to trivialize the political issue was that the mass media was growing influential and it was exposing the dark side of the Vietnam War, which was leading the American people against their own system.

So, to avoid such consequences, they were skeptical about marginalized groups – on the one hand, they showed sympathy to such marginalized groups, and

brought out their bad aspects on the other. This intellectual skepticism, another feature of postmodernism brought forward the feature of irony. The postmodernists use irony not merely as a device, but as a symbol to represent the uncertainty.

In 1924, two years after the publication of *The Waste Land*, Virginia Woolf suggests that "modernism had seen the light of the day on or about December 1910" (qtd. in Lyotard 184). In 1977, Charles Jencks mockingly suggested that "modernism had ended on July 1972 at 03:32 p.m." (qtd. in Lyotard 185) The term "Postmodernism," which had its inception and widespread circulation in architecture, made inroads into literature and social sciences with such a momentum that it soon got designated as an aesthetic style, a cultural situation and a critical practice, an economic condition and a political attitude.

The postmodernism establishes the doctrine of uncertainty, insecurity and doubt. Accustomed to the logocentricism and rationality of modernism, postmodernism, with its self-proclaimed elements of postmodern culture seemed unsettling in the beginning. In a nutshell, postmodernism appeared of a cultural decline from modernist perspective, as encouraging rolling about on the surface and promoting recognition of the contingent and constructed aspects of cultural practice.

The essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" by Jean – Francois Lyotard argues that "the postmodernism condition is based on paradox. It marks a moment in the very constitution of modernity. In this context, its tense is the future perfect because, instead of depending on pre-existent rules, it favors strategies that "formulate the rules of what will have been done " (311) .It represents not a stage but a recurring moment in the rhythm of contemporary life. Thus comprehended,

"postmodernism is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (312).

The postmodern condition is also characterized by a sense of crisis due to the loss of faith in all the dialectical, hermeneutic, and scientific discourses that have heretofore served to validate knowledge and to explain the human condition. At a time when power is that capital, the human has become so much mechanized and marketable. Human tendencies are stored in data banks and human needs are fulfilled to the extent that these "tendencies and needs have purchasing power - that has led to the absence of aesthetic criteria, which means that it is possible and useful to assess the value of works of art according to the profits they yield" (308). This state of postmodernity generates an idea that postmodernity is basically related with chaos and undecidability.

The term Postmodernism has become a popular label for the things referring to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, this term is full of ambiguity. So, it is a mistake to seek for a single meaning applicable to all. However, it is viewed as a global phenomenon.

Hence, as mentioned earlier the modern writers though they focused on the individual's fragmentation of personality and the alienation the individual, have hope to get control of the chaos. But the postmoderns are void of the hope as well. Rather, they show uncertainty and support that the individual can never redeem.

Humanism is a philosophical system centered to human being. It concerns about human beings, their place and position in relation to the world. It studies about the present and future of human beings. It raises voice for the common

interest and betterment of human being. It seeks respect for human dignity. Its aim is to free human being from all types of injustice and atrocities. It strives to create beautiful world based on justice, love and fraternity. It does not believe any supernatural and omnipotent power like God and Goddess. It believes in the capability of human being. Man is the centre of its study. So, it gives a supreme value and responsibility to man. Humanism assumes that if there is something that can make human life worth and livable that is nothing other than human being. It keeps a firm belief that the present world can be changed with the effort of human being. It attempts to maintain right relation between man and man based on love, co-operation and fraternity. For this it appeals for the unity and good understanding among human beings. The term "Humanism" is defined in the *Columbia Encyclopedia* as follows:

A philosophical and literary movement in which man and his capabilities are the central concern. The term was originally restricted to a point of view prevalent among thinkers in the Renaissance. The distinctive characteristics of Renaissance humanism were its emphasis on classical studies or the humanities and a conscious return to classical ideals and forms. The movement led to a restudy of the Scriptures and gave impetus to the reformation. Modern usage of the term has had diverse meaning but some contemporary emphases are on lasting human values, cultivation of the classics and respect for scientific knowledge. (Chernow and Vallasi 1123)



Humanism and postmodernism are contradictory with one another. This is because humanism seeks centrality whereas postmodernism challenges any kind of centrality. It raises its voice for the importance of diversified view points. Unity in diversity is the basic doctrine of postmodernism. Decentering of the center is an ethos of postmodernism. Humanism can be defined as the integrated system of human meaning, goal, values and harmonious program of human fulfillment, assures the dignity and the central position of man in the universe. On the other hand it is a system of belief that emphasizes on common human needs and seeks ways of solving human problems. Its interest in defending the values and freedom of man drew it from the traditional problems of God and providence and of the soul, its immorality, and its freedom. Humanism seeks to clarify man's goal, values and ideals and to achieve his full human thought bringing him in ever deeper and more intimate kinship and harmony with the surrounding life and society.

Humanists always sacrifice their life for the betterment of human being. Humanism has always emerged as a reaction to the threat to mankind, and humanism's central principle is man is the measure of all things. Humanist like Rousseau imagined a state of society where people lived free of any control of the state. According to him, man is born good and all evils are created by social institutions. He taught against the class domination of the few and exposed that art and culture is guided by vanity and self interest.

Postmodernists are not ready to regard man as one of the most important element of this universe. They "tend to reduce the human subject to an illusion;

or effect engendered by the differential play of language" (Abrams 80). But the people with the humanistic feelings try to analyze the condition of human being in order to offer beauty, freedom, liberty and happiness, which are essential for the development of human understanding. It is always a victory for total human understanding, feelings and values rather than for the mere intellect and reason. In *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, humanism is defined as "Especially in the English speaking world, humanism has since the nineteenth century come to designate a non-religious or anti-religious world view, usually based on a belief in man's capacity for self-cultivation and self-improvement and in the progress of mankind" (194).

Humanism teaches us that it is immoral to wait for God to act for us. We must act to stop the wars and the crimes and the brutality of this and future ages. We have powers of a remarkable kind. We have a high degree of freedom in choosing what we will do. Humanism tells us that whatever our philosophy of the universe may be, ultimately the responsibility for the kind of world in which we live rests with us. Humanism is a philosophy focused upon human means for comprehending reality. Humanists reject arbitrary faith, authority, revelation and altered states of consciousness. It is a philosophy of compassion and concerned with meeting human needs and answering human problems—for both the individual and society - and devotes no attention to the satisfaction of the desires of supposed theological entities. Furthermore, in *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory* Hawthorn asserts, "Humanism typically situates the human essence in individual human beings rather than in social structures or

CULTURAL formations: humanism is thus idealistic, ahistorical, and individualistic" (156).

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic changes have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions, the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism.

Humanism is a broad category of active ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity and worth of all people, based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appeal to universal human qualities-particularly rationalism. Humanism is a component of a variety of more specific philosophical systems, and is also incorporated into some religious schools of thought. In *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* the meaning of humanism has been presented to reflect the basic essence of humanism:

Humanism entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests. In focusing on the capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects transcendental justifications, such as a dependence on faith, the supernatural or divinely revealed texts. Humanist endorses universal morality based on the commonality of human nature,

suggesting that solutions to our social and cultural problems cannot be parochial. (103)

Humanism is considered as a system of thought which considers that solving human problem with the help of reason is more important than religious belief. It emphasizes the fact that the basic, nature of human being is good but at its most basic humanism involves any concern with humanity (including human needs, human desires, and human experiences) first and foremost. Often this is also giving human being a special place in the universe on account of their abilities and faculties.

Humanism, in sum, is not a particular philosophical system or a set of doctrines, or even a more specific system of belief. Instead, humanism is better described as an attitude or perspective on life and humanity which in turn serves to influence actual philosophies and systems of beliefs. It is characteristically human, not supernatural; it is that which belongs to man and not to external nature, that which raises man to the greatest satisfactions. It may be the responsible balance of life that the early humanists discovered in the Greeks; it may be merely the study of humanities; it may be the freedom from religiosity and vivid interest in all sides of life; it may be the responsiveness to all human passions; or it may be a philosophy of which man is the centre and sanction.

### **Undecidability, Alienation and Unsympathy**

At the heart of postmodernism lies the idea of undecidability. This is a tendency of thought in which an individual is in the state of dilemma. A person is unable to justify his correct ways because he is guided by the principle of

uncertainty. A person in the postmodern existence is always in a state of chaos, futility, unsympathetic attitude towards his fellow beings. As a result of this living he is sure to invite hostility, anarchy, carelessness, frustration etc. Undecidability, Estrangement and Unsympathy are the guiding doctrines of the postmodernists.

The originator of the idea of undecidability was Jacques Derrida. He opines that the play of linguistic meanings is undecidable. Unlike Derrida, Saussure expresses that in a sign- system, both the signifiers and the signified have their identification. This means that they have definable parameters. For the same idea, Derrida insists that there is no limitation and definable meaning of any word. The signifiers and the signified are in a continuous state of flux. He further expresses that "we can never, in any instance of speech or writing, have a demonstrably fixed and decidable present meaning" (qtd. in Abrams 57).

Derrida outlines that " the differential play of language may produce the effects of decidable meanings in an utterance or text, but asserts that these are merely effects and lack a ground that would justify an assured interpretation" (qtd. in Abrams 58). The underlying idea of this is that the final interpretation of any text is not possible. It is always in a state of differences depending on the view of the onlookers.

Sympathy denotes a state of feeling towards others- whether they are humans or non- humans. Unlike sympathy, unsympathy is a state of indifference and disregard for the others. Unsympathy is at the heart of postmodernism because in postmodern dwelling everything has a commercial value. Humanism

has no place in postmodern setting. Meaninglessness, decentrality, futility surround the sphere of human relationship. There is a lack of cordiality in human exchanges. People think about happiness, success, cut-throat competition at the cost of enmity with their fellow beings. They are unaware about their hatred, greed, disorder, the internal state mind but they only think about momentary happiness and success. They cannot elevate their horizon of thought. So, these are all the scenarios of postmodern living. These are the true picture of unsympathy.

Alienation means estrangement from other people, society, or work. The term is widely used in sometimes contradictory ways. Psychiatrists consider alienation a blocking or dissociation of a person's feelings, causing the individual to become less effective. The focus here is on the person's problems in adjusting to society. However, some philosophers believe that "alienation is inevitably produced by a shallow and depersonalized society. In popular concern, alienation reached its peak with the generation gap of the 1960s and has been employed to account for activities from aggressive violence to total inactivity" (Abrams 5).

Alienation is the principal feature of the postmodern literature. The fragmented relationship among the human beings in the postmodern living justifies its features. Self-centred viewpoint, focused on subjectivity rather than objectivity is the crux of alienation.

### **Postmodernist Literature Versus Humanistic Literature**

Postmodern writers in the late 1960s and early 1970s insisted on the special qualities of literary language to defamiliarize the ordinary. They wanted to create the literary domain of their own. They achieved their objectives by strengthening the failures

of the modern writers. For this purpose they took the help of language to demonstrate the distinctive approaches brought forward by them. Experimental postmodernism aims at providing an extensive critical understanding of our social situation. Postmodernism exposes repressed history. Some of the aspects of history are ignored by professional historians. These neglected aspects of history are brought into light by experimental postmodernist. Novel was given literary obligation to fulfill this task.

The birth of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach has become distinctive feature of experiment postmodernism. We have known that the knowledge of language leads us to doubt social standpoints intellectually. In harboring intellectual doubt irony has become a major device.

Another feature of postmodernism can better be understood in contrast to modernist standpoint towards individualism. Individualism can be used as a means to draw the dividing line between modernism and postmodernism. Modernism defended individualism. Unlike modernists, postmodernists didn't see protective power in individualism. Rather in postmodernist discourse subject became simply a verbal or semiotic fiction. Acculturation, language and its specific use in concrete situation are responsible for the creation of postmodern subject, a literary character.

We know that postmodernism came into prominence because of the pervasive influence of deconstruction. Post structuralism promoted the practices of literature. In the name of promoting literary practices, it drew the sharp traditional boundaries between literary production and literary reception and understanding. By literary reception and understanding, we comprehend reading and interpretation. By that dual work of promoting literary creativity and reading deconstruction appeared to be a philosophy and

critical approach.

Postmodernist writings as such seek novelty of experimentation, rewriting the history with the present aspects of difficulties, uncertainty, undecidability, alienation and overall themes of present dwellings.

But humanist focuses on the importance of the study of classical imaginative and philosophical, literature, but with emphasis on its moral and practical rather than aesthetic values. Humanist seeks to clarify man's goal, values and ideals and to achieve his full human thought bringing him in ever deeper and more intimate kinship and harmony with the surrounding life and society. The humanists always struggle with human sufferings in order to achieve peace and order; Samuel Johnson, the eighteenth century humanist writes:

The truth is that the knowledge of external nature and the science which that knowledge requires or includes are not the frequent business of human mind . . . we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance. . . Socrates was rather of opinion that what we had to learn was: how to do good and avoid evil. (qtd. in Abrams 79)

Humanists always sacrifice their life for the betterment of human being. Humanism has always emerged as a reaction to the threat to mankind, and humanism's central principle is man is the measure of all things. Humanist like Rousseau imagined a state of society where people lived free of any control of the state. According to him, man is born good and all evils are created by social



institutions. He taught against the class domination of the few and exposed that art and culture is guided by vanity and self interest.

Mostly, the postmodernist literature consists of chaotic situation which creates confusion in its necessary meaning. The twentieth century literature is still relatively susceptible of neat summary and category owes chiefly to the hold of tradition; the ferment was only beginning, artist had but a glimmering awareness of what was happening. We face today an extraordinary purpose, way of life-diversity less between than within classes. The intellectual as well as industrial world becomes daily specialized; new points of view multiply as rapidly as mechanical gadgets. These things do not speak our language which represents profound dilemma of postmodern literature.

In much postmodernist literature, one finds a bitter impatient with the whole apparatus of cognition and the limiting assumption of rationality. The mind comes to be seen as an enemy of vital human powers. Culture becomes disenchanted with itself, sick over its endless refinements. But if a major impulse in postmodernist literature is a choking Nausea before the idea of culture, there is another in which the writer takes upon himself the enormous ambition not to remake to world but to reinvent the terms of reality.

In postmodern literature, the postmodern artist seems thrown back upon his own resources. He has at once the privilege and the burden of almost complete freedom in choice of materials and methods. The result has been an immense and daring experimentation that makes this one of the most exciting of literary periods. Postmodern literature is no longer an art of fixed forms or contents or appropriate

imitation, but an endless, ever changing scripture and revelation, the scripture and revelation of the life of man.

Everyday sees another refinement of the technique of communicating experience and intensifying consciousness. Everyday another banner is raised, another company goes whooping into battle. New materials are unearthed, new devices tried out, and the old art forms are constantly wrenched into new shapes freighted with new meaning, shanghaied under new flags. Therefore, postmodern literature is as fluid and intricate as life itself.

The rise of the avant-garde becomes a special caste which attributes postmodernism, forming a kind of permanent if unacknowledged and disorganized opposition. The postmodernist writers and artists constitute a special caste within or at the margin of society, and avant-garde marked by aggressive defensiveness, extreme self consciousness, pathetic inclination and the stigma of alienation. The avant-garde, therefore, abandons the useful pieties towards received esthetic assumptions. The postmodernist literature apprehended with an unrivaled power the collapse of traditional liberalism, its lapse into formalism ignoring both the possibilities of both the possibilities of human grandeur and the needs of human survival is not to be questioned.

Postmodernist writing shows that twentieth century man has lost a meaningful world and a self which lives in meanings out of spiritual center. It exposes that man has sacrificed himself to his own productions. But man is still aware of what he has lost or continuously losing. He reacts with the courage of despair. Art and literature can show their ambiguous structure: the meaninglessness which drives to despair.

They reject as meaningless the meaningful attempt to reveal the meaninglessness of our situation. The anxiety of doubt and meaninglessness is, as we have seen, the anxiety of our period. The feeling of meaninglessness became despairing and self destructive.

In postmodernist literature, nature ceases to be a central subject and setting of literature. Nature ceases to be natural. The most part of natural scenes and places are as a token of deprivation and sometimes as a mere willed sign of nostalgia. They are elsewhere, not our home. Postmodernists are not ready to regard man as one of the most important element of this universe. They "tend to reduce the human subject to an illusion; or effect engendered by the differential play of language"(Abrams, 80).

But in spite of the crises, the ebb and flow in the sense of humanism, it can be said that the humanists are worried for the classical concept of humanism. The humanistic feelings try to analyze the condition of human being in order to offer beauty, freedom, liberty and happiness, which are essential for the development of human understanding. It is always a victory for total human understanding, feelings and values rather than for the mere intellect and reason. *In A Dictionary of Philosophy*, humanism is defined as "Especially in the English speaking world, humanism has since the nineteenth century come to designate a non- religious or anti- religious world view, usually based on a belief in man's capacity for self-cultivation and self improvement and in the progress of mankind" (194).

The postmodernist writings deal with the fragmentariness, coolness and meaninglessness of life. They take life as problematic but unlike modernists, they

do not lament the brokenness of experience as a sign of decline of Western civilization. Instead they accept dislocation and displacement as ways of dealing with human situation. Hardship, competition and aggression are some of the predominant themes of postmodernist writings. All these things come because on the one hand, there is the presence of rampant violence and on the other the writers want to escape from the violence which is not possible. As a result some kinds of ambivalence also occur.

Experimentalism is one of the important features of postmodernist writings. So experimental fictions serve the purpose of postmodernist writings. The atrocities brought by the two great wars in the life of human beings are successfully reflected in the postwar experimental fictions. They deal with the violence and rigidity of life. Experimental fiction uses standard literary devices to achieve unconventional effect.

The origin of the idea of humanism is very long. D.R. Jatava writes, "A vague idea of humanism was known to the most primitive men in the form of natural sex attraction and group of life among the individual" (1). In the beginning of human civilization, the idea of humanism was not systematic and wide spread. It was confined within the members of family or just between the opposite sexes. It was not developed fully and systematically like of today. About the origin and development of humanism M. Petrosyan observes "even in the days when most men were slaves, when society was built on a system of slave-ownership, humanist ideas were characteristic of the ideology of the toiling masses"(16). This shows that the origin of the idea humanism is very long.

The study of history shows that the term "Humanism" originated from Italian word "Umanista" in the mid sixteenth century, which refers to the teacher, scholar or student engaged in that branch of studies known as Studia Humanitatis or humanities generally speaking of the general arts. It was indebted to a secular and anthropocentric cultural and educational program connected with the celebration and cultivation of human achievements for its origins.

Though the word "Humanism" came to be applied in nineteenth century but the birth of this concept had already taken place in the city states of ancient Greek about sixth century B.C. Greek philosopher Cicero (106-43 B.C.) is the first person who brought the concept of humanism. Greek humanism focuses on rationality and integrity. Rationality is the ability of reason to yoke and put to creative and benevolent use of primal emotional energies and animalistic nature of human beings. Integrity is the courage to make word and action coincide. These terms bring certain clarity and set of standards to human existence and make an individual an individual. Indicating Cicero, Jostein Gaarder in his *Sophie's World* writes, "It was he who formed the very concept of "humanism"- that is, a view of life that has the individual at its central focus" (132). After some years, the stoic Seneca also said that mankind is holy which became a slogan for humanism ever since. According to stoics sickness and death are unbreakable natural laws. So that man must learn to accept his destiny. Every thing happens through necessity and nothing happens accidentally.

When we come to the medieval period humanism developed quite differently than that of ancient period. In medieval time, the concept of

humanism was broadly used during the Renaissance period. In Renaissance period, Humanism was associated with imaginative subjects learned and taught differently from less imaginative ones like mathematics, science, natural philosophy and theology. M.H. Abrams mentions about Renaissance Humanism:

Renaissance humanism assumed the dignity and central position of human beings in the universe emphasized the importance of the study of classical imaginative and philosophical literature although with emphasis on its moral and practical rather than its aesthetic values; and insisted on the primacy, in ordering human life, of reason (considered the distinctively human faculty) as opposed to the instinctual appetites and the animal passions. (83)

Renaissance humanism brought a new belief in man and his worth in striking contrast to the biased medieval concept on the sinful nature of man. They began to think on the rational ground. De Lamar Jensen in the book *Renaissance Europe* observes, "There was an implied acceptance of the worth of earthly existence for its own sake and a deep-rooted revolt against the 'other-worldliness' associated with medieval Christianity" (103). Renaissance humanism was characterized by individualism to a greater extent. It made an individual an individual and not a bee in the hive or an ant in the hill- that is, we are not only human beings but unique individuals. In this way Renaissance humanism became a popular pastime to dig up the knowledge of Greek humanism.

In modern period humanism shifts from the earlier interpretation.

Humanism has taken diverse forms in modern period. In this regard, M. H.

Abrams writes, " In our time, 'humanist' often connotes a person who bases truth on human experience and bases values on human nature and culture, as distinct from people who regards religious revelation as the guarantor of all truth and values" (83). The humanist outlook of modern period differs from the ancient and medieval period. Science and its impact has widely effected change in the outlook of modern humanistic tradition. In modern times, the idea of humanism is exercised in different field like politics, literature, religion etc.

Till now humanism seems to be limited only in the theory not in the ground of practicality. The Western liberal humanism focuses upon centre but not in margin. In the later half of the twentieth century structuralism and poststructuralist philosophical have come as an opposition to traditional humanism Michel Foucault has rejected the hitherto western humanism. For him humanism is entirely different. It is a theme or rather a set of themes that have reappeared on several occasions over time in European societies. In the history of humanism since the seventeenth century, humanism has been obliged to learn certain conception of man borrowed from religion, science and politics. The value of humanism is preserved in their own judgment. But anti-humanist thinkers like Foucault have de-centered the traditional concept of humanism. They believe that old concept of humanism is not applicable in modern times. With the change of time, the concept of humanism is also changed but we are not able to define the change.

There are many people who consider themselves humanists, and much variety in the exact kinds of humanism to which they subscribe. There is some

disagreement over terminology and definitions, with some people using narrower or broader interpretations. Not all people who call themselves humanists hold beliefs that are genuinely humanistic and not all people who hold humanistic beliefs apply the label of humanism to themselves. As humanism has been divided into different kinds, some of them are listed below.

During the Renaissance, the period in cultural history which called itself the "humanistic period", classical learning and the study of antique work of art were put in the foreground, in contrast to the ecclesiastical studies of the Middle Ages. This tendency, as well as similar attitudes in later periods is called historical humanism.

In a nutshell, we can say that postmodernist writings centre on the theme of meaninglessness of contemporary world and humanistic writings talk about the dignity of human being. As such humanistic writings try to glorify the human endeavours, aspirations, perspirations and the constant fight for human rights in the true spirits of humanism.



### Chapter Three: Loss of Humanism in *Hawksmoor*

#### Story in Brief

Nicholas Dyer is a fictitious alternative to Nicholas Hawksmoor, the eighteenth-century architect who designed several London churches after the Great Fire. Dyer is an employee employed by Sir Christopher Wren. He is responsible for building churches in different parts of London. The great city of London is troubled by the Great Fire and The Plague. These two difficulties take away the lives of a large number of people. Both father and mother of Dyer pass away because of these atrocities. The death of his parents leaves him alone and he is restless. In this undetermined state, he comes in contact with a cult whose doctrine of life is Christ is not suitable for worship. Rather, Satan is fit to be worshipped as they think, Satan is the sole redeemer of difficulties of life. He is taken in by a strange man named Mirabilis who guides his destiny toward architecture. He practices the Dark Arts and wants to introduce his religion into the bodies of the churches that he is building. This means he is forced to lead a double life and when someone gets in his way, he gets rid of them as only he can. Dyer is a secret Satanist at war with Enlightenment.

Dyer is an active employee. In his guidance he has kept Walter Payne to help him in his mission. He always instructs Walter to work out the figure of the churches very sincerely. Dyer is commissioned to build seven churches in different parts of London. And as the mission of church construction is getting late, Sir Christopher Wren instructs Dyer to speed up his work. Now they are busy at constructing the church in the Spittle-Fields. The church construction at the West End is completed. He is in dire need of putting a bell in the constructed church. The construction at Limehouse is going on. They

have to enclose the premises of the church with the wall so that no act of mischief is possible inside it.

Dyer works into the design, construction and location of his churches. He uses a secret occult code and dedicates each church with the sacrifice of a virgin boy. The premises of the churches are drenched with the blood of the innocent human beings. The churches are built upon the sacrificial of human beings. Walter Pyne, the apprentice of Dyer is continuously assisting Dyer in his mission of church-construction. Pyne is honest and sincere in his duty. In course of building, they have visited several places of London and collect a large amount of information.

Dyer reminiscences about his childhood days. According to him he was born in the year 1654. He was born in Black Eagle- Street in the Parish of Stepney. He attended school in St. Catherine's near the Tower. He was a boy of shy nature. He loved solitude. He used to study staying alone in his room. He was fascinated by a book entitled Dr. Faustus. He read it curiously. He was given the book by Elias Biscow. After reading the books, he used to exchange them with his friends. So, he admitted that he wanted pens, ink, paper and other necessaries but not books. The churches where they are standing now were the grass fields the cattle used to graze on. He is enchanted by a fast growing city of London.

Nicholas Hawksmoor is another protagonist of this novel. He is a renowned police inspector. His principal job is to find out the murderers. The detection of murder taken place at several Churches built by Dyer is his chief mission. Walter Payne, his assistant, is helping him in his mission of finding the culprit. Both of them are very sincere and scientific-minded. Hawksmoor takes the help of his intuition and the modern

equipment such as computer to work out his action. The murder of a son of a mason of church keeps them busy to work out. But they are not able to find out any traces of the murderer. Similarly the killing of Mr. Hayes, the co-worker of Dyer, makes them active but also their mission is not fruitful. As such the more genuinely they accelerate their investigation, the less they are successful in their mission. They are challenged by the cleverer techniques applied by the murderers. With the advent of modern technology the act of murdering is also done very skillfully. So, the application of technology to meet the target of murder is really a threat to the famous detective- Nicholas Hawksmoor.

### **Dyer's Ambitious Church Construction**

Peter Ackroyd fictively reconstructs the life of Nicholas Dyer, an authentic figure in history, and depicts him as a monster who is both fascinated with, and repulsed, by death. Three hundred years later, Dyer is reincarnated as the detective Hawksmoor, and the narrative, like the city is transformed into a space where histories meet in order to resolve unfinished issues. So, reading the novel based on contemporary (postmodern) theories about the city is difficult.

*Hawksmoor* recreates the life of eighteenth-century English architect, Nicholas Dyer and his work on the churches which now grace East London. During Dyer's lifetime, London is powerfully characterized by death (after having endured the Plague [1665] and the Great Fire of London [1666]; the architect even calls the city a "Nest of Death and Contagion", the Capital city of the World of Affliction... the Capitol of Darkness...The Dungeon of Man's desires ... a Wilderness of dirty rotten shed" (47). He tells his valet, Nat: "Thus London grows more Monstrous, Stragglng and out of all Shape: in the 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?"(48)

It is not uncommon to use the body as the metaphor for the city. Dyer's London is represented as a diseased body marked by filth, death, contagion and affliction. Within this body are desires will never be fulfilled because of its ravaged condition. But unlike a human body which dies as a result of affliction, the body of this city, inversely, actually grows larger, spreading sorrow and disease even further. Here, the familiar image of the body is mutated all 'out of space', heralding the monstrous in its stead. It is precisely the powerful presence of death that turns Dyer's London into a monstrous city. As Jeffrey Cohen has deliberated, monstrosity is the product of a culture in crisis. Dyer's London is at a crossroad where fear, death and corruption are daily encountered. In Dyer's view, it is a "World of Tricking and Bartering, Buying and Selling, Borrowing and Lending, Paying and Receiving..... Money makes the old wife trod, Money makes the Mare to go" (48). If the city is motivated by its commerce, then bodies too will invariably become part of the commerce, becoming commodified. Dyer regards the prostitute as the prime image of the commodified body: "What is their God but shining Dirt and to sing its Devotions come the Westminster-Hall whores, the Charing-cross whores, the Whitehall whores, the Channel-row whores, the Temple-bar whores..." (48). The prostitute confuses the boundary 'between the dangerously asocial world of commercial exchange and the healthy social world of married love', for while the latter breeds life, the former is sterile, and therefore figuratively engenders only death.

When Dyer is commissioned to rebuild several churches to replace the ones destroyed by the Great Fire, he sees this as his opportunity to escape not just London, but

death itself. He belongs to an occult group which follows a rather Gnostic belief of God as the reconciliation of good and evil. Dyer builds his churches on or near graveyards, which is, on one hand, consistent with orthodox religious belief; but on the other hand, and more sinisterly, it is in accordance with his occult notions (called *Scientia Umbrarum*) which posit that darkness and evil can be prevented through the committing of evil itself. Conflating his architectural principles and occult beliefs, he contemplates:

1) That it was Cain who built the first City, 2) That here is a true Science in the world called *Scientia Umbrarum* which, as to the publick teaching of it, has been suppressed but which the proper Artificer must comprehend, 3) That Architecture aims at the Eternity and must contain the Eternal powers: not only Altars and Sacrifices, but the Forms of our Temples, must be mysticall, 4) That the miseries of the present Life, and the Barbarities of Mankind, the fatall disadvantages we are all under and the Hazard we run of being eternally Undone, lead the True Architect not to Harmony or to Rationall Beauty but to quite another Game (9).

Cain, the first murderer, is also the first Architect, and for Dyer, the two acts – killing and building – are coterminous. And if architecture points to Eternity as well as 'contain[s] the Eternal Powers', these two complementary rituals of Dyer's religion must be performed, which is why he engineers a death for each of his churches. Dyer submits to the belief that he is already damned, as all infants are, and resting upon this knowledge, he builds his churches on the foundation of degeneracy (9).

Dyer's aversion to death and his imputing of death onto the prostitute's body can

be traced to his childhood experience with his mother's demise. His mother contracts the dreaded bubonic plague and her body becomes a display of the grotesque. When Dyer describes the initial marks of his mother's illness, he employs a commercial simile. He views his mother's diseased body as marked by 'tokens of contagion' (14) which resemble little pennies. Thus, it metonymically locates disease and commerce onto his mother's body. The word "swelling" (14) recalls Dyer's view of London quoted earlier (the city "Staggering all out of shape" (48), grafting the monstrous image of London onto his mother's body. Similarly the word 'stink' is used both to describe London and his dying mother. At the last stage of her illness, Dyer no longer sees his mother as human, but a "Thing" an "object of Loathing" (14), two suggestive pronouncements that also align his mother with monstrosity. Dyer tells Nat that "we are tyed to this world as to a sensible Carcasse" (14). Here, Dyer remembers the image of his mother tied to her bed. Dyer's view of London is inseparable from the powerful image of his mother's death. He deliberately uses almost the same words to describe both London and his mother's body as something loathsome and monstrous like the way London is to him now.

Dyer believes that "when there are many Persons dead, only being buryed and laid in the Earth, there is an Assembling of Powers" (24). It is the many deaths then, as Dyer goes on to say that "are my Pillars and Foundation" (24). The churches are but as encasing to house and harness this power. For example, the church at Limehouse built near a great Fen or Morass which has been a burying-place of Saxon times, Dyer sees it as "a massive Necropolis that has power still withinne it, for the ancient Dead emit a certain Material Vertue that will come to inhere the Fabrick of this new Edifice"

(62). Stonehenge is another significant church site. Dyer considers Stonehenge a "huge and monstrous work" and the "Architecture of the Devil" (60). This view confirms his own architectural principle and repels it. Away from the city, Dyer is confronted by the excessive significance which architecture accumulates over time. His desire to escape death is also in a way, a desire to escape time. He plans to house death in his architecture to arrest time. Time for Dyer, is also a "Thing" - the word which he also uses to describe his mother's carcass- which he acknowledges he cannot change but can "alter its Posture" (11). Space and time are correspondent and by seeking to modify space, Dyer is also attempting to manipulate the posture of time. And if body is to city is to death, then time would necessarily be implicated in this equation and must be arrested and escaped. Back in the city, Dyer actually makes a connection between time and architecture (Stonehenge) when he states that:

Time is a vast Denful of Horror, round about which a Serpent winds  
And in the winding bites itself by the Tail. Now, now is the Hour, every  
Hour, every part of an Hour, every Moment, which in its end does  
begin again and never ceases to end: a beginning continuing, always  
ending. (62)

*Hawksmoor* cleverly suggests a sort of cyclic time sequence in which history is repeated. Key words and characters with only a slight change in names and functions are repeated to show the profound affinity between past and present. In fact both Dyer and Hawksmoor share a similar first name and there is evidence that Dyer is also known as Hawksmoor. This is the familiar Gothic motif of the double and not unfamiliar in Ackroyd's fiction. But the double motif in *Hawksmoor* is more extreme

predominantly because the self and his other are separated by almost three hundred years.

In a city as old as London, the present is continuously haunted by the past and consciousness is persistently motivated by repressed histories. Songs, superstitious beliefs and old wives' tales expressed hundreds of years ago are still articulated in the present. They become permanent fixtures in a city which is otherwise changing in its landscape. But in *Hawksmoor* –and this is again in line with London's violent history – even the songs and rhymes express brutality, suggesting that the darker histories of London, although repressed or forgotten by official records, continue to endure in marginal forms of narratives.

Dyer is especially attracted to tramps because he sees in them the perfect victims – individuals who actually live out death, and individuals who would serve his purpose of gathering death into his architectures to control it. As Dyer declares, 'thus their place is by my church ... they acknowledge that the beginning and the end of all Flesh is but Torment and Shaddowe. They are in the Pitte also, where they see the true face of God which is like unto their own'(63). It must be recalled that Dyer's God which is also the devil and the tramps in their daily acquaintance with misery and poverty are symbolically dead and already in the torments of hell. It is no surprise that his first victim is a tramp named Ned.

Dyer is of the conviction that "It is only the Darkness that can give trew formed to our work and trew perspective to our Fabrick, for there is no Light without darkness and no substance without Shaddowe" (3). Yet in another context, he expresses that "Humane life is quite out of the light and that we are all Creatures of Darkness" (7). Dyer



has overcome miseries, sorrows and poverty. However, he is of the opinion that human life is a pack of lies and the relationship among the fellow human beings is a web of futility. He goes on to remark that " The intire World was one vast Bill of Mortality and that Daemons might walk through the Streets even as Men (on point of Death, many of them) debauch themselves : I saw the Flies on this Dunghil Earth and then considered who their Lord might be" (12).

The cult which schooled Dyer ingrained in his thought that " 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 Corruption, the Dark Coverture, the Living Death, the Sepulture carried about with us. What is Time? The Deliverance of Man" (15). Dyer favours the ancient architects and the artifacts. So, he expresses that " I kept to my study of the antient Architects, for the greatness of the Antients is infinitely superior to the Moderns" (42).

Dyer reminisces his childhood memories and asserts that " When I was a Street-boy and slept in Holes and Corners I became acquainted with the miserable Shifts of this life: in our great city there are whole Fraternities of them living together, for even the forlorn Wretches subsist with a sort of Order and Government among themselves " (48).

In *Hawksmoor*, the vastness of London is imagined as both vertically – the 'Pyrammide' (61), and horizontally – ' the Labyrinth' (24), by Dyer. He conceives his city as both a confusing labyrinth as well as a 'Pyrammide that rises above the stinking streets of London'(61). His re-imagined London enables him to tower above all that the labyrinth stands for: confusion, entrapment and ultimately, death. But his is a selfish

strategy because Dyer intends to reshape London as a labyrinth with only himself holding the key out of it. Here is an instance of this diabolical intent. For the church in Spittle-fields:

I [Dyer] have used the manner of building the Sepulture as it in the Fourth century in the purest time of Christianity, as you may see from the Draught inclose. And then upon the Ground I have formed a white Pyrammeide, in the manner of Glastonbury church but little and framed of rough stone without the Lime, this also in the manner of Early Christians... . (24)

It is this city of death with which the detective, Nicholas Hawksmoor, is associated. Where he lives- near the Red Gates Pub – was also where Dyer, three hundred years earlier, pursued his diabolical devices . Hawksmoor is investigating the mysterious deaths of several Londoners which have all occurred near the churches which Dyer built. But his investigation seems to be obstructed by the city itself. On one account, on his way to a murder site, Hawksmoor suddenly finds himself in a rather dark and claustrophobic atmosphere: there is very little light and the shops seem to hem him within a confined space, confusing him. The maze-like quality of the area prevents him from getting to where he wants to go.

The replay of deaths in the twentieth –century emphasizes the close intimacy shared between Dyer and his victims, this time, as Hawksmoor. The victims whom Dyer kills resurface again to be killed for Hawksmoor to investigate. This repetition in history finally brings together the two Hawksmoors. Interestingly, it is a tramp known as the Architect who points Hawksmoor to a lead in his investigation. When Dyer seeks

out and kills a tramp, he becomes identified with the tramp. Centuries later, it is a tramp who seeks out Hawksmoor and leads him to a final meeting with Dyer in one of the churches. Hawksmoor too finds himself suddenly identifying with tramps (198), once again suggesting not only a parallel between the two men but the inevitability of murder in binding the victim and the killer through time. The irony that Hawksmoor is a policeman is not lost. In the end, the killer Hawksmoor seeks is actually himself three centuries ago. Hawksmoor's feeling of the killer being 'closer to him than ever' (198) is frighteningly prophetic.

In a sense, it can be said that both men are trying to control death by discerning its pattern and halting it. The two men are working on a plan for the city, trying to see a relationship between death and space in the hope of being able to overcome both. Hawksmoor does not believe in unsolvable murders, and actually sees his job 'as that of rubbing away the grease and detritus which obscured the real picture of the world, in the way that a blackened church must be cleaned before the true texture of the stone can be seen' (126). Hence, although Dyer and Hawksmoor are separated in time and purpose, they share this one affinity: both men want to master death-to understand it, and to solve its mystery. But both will fail. The two men are indeed parallel figures, but they are parallel in a paradoxical way. Both are pursuing a similar aim, but are doing it in precisely opposite ways. Dyer's attempt to escape only traps him more and Hawksmoor's accumulation of data only sets him further from solving the case.

Dyer and Hawksmoor have much more in common. Each is also wracked by doubt and a feeling of mental disintegration. Events in their lives as well as in their minds seem to echo each other across the centuries. As the novel progresses by telling

their respective stories in alternate chapters and alternatively in eighteenth century and contemporary prose- the two protagonists become virtual mirror images and eventually seem to merge in identity. A profound study on archaeology is undertaken in both centuries. Dyer a religious eclectic, is also a passionate amateur archaeologist, able to name the gods of ancient Syrian, Ammonite, Phoenician Druidic and Hebrew civilizations – and to him they are all the same god. Nicholas Dyer the constructor of the churches opines, " I do not fear Death for the pain of it, being perswaded that I have endured as great pains in this life as I should find in Death; and yet it may also be that I cannot die " (158). These verbal expressions clarifies that Dyer's continual struggle in his life has not yet achieved the pinnacle of glory. He is enduring pain and suffering to achieve a glorious state through his creations. Further he expresses his agony as such: " I saw a church Tower twelve yards deep I saw Dust made of Men's teares that weep I saw a Stone all in a flame of fire I saw a stairway big as Moon higher I saw the Sunne red even at midnight , I saw the Man who saw this dreadful Sight"(159).

To sum up, Dyer was very ambitious about the construction of the churches but in course of his connections of different human beings, he gets frustrated with his mission. However, he undertakes his duties sincerely and honestly.

### **Hawksmoor's Unfruitful Detection of Murderers**

Hawksmoor, one the central characters of the novel, is the police officer of the highest dignity and caliber. His mission is to detect the murderers. The detection of death of the innocent people at the premises of the churches constructed by Dyer is the greatest goal of his life. He is good at observing the atmosphere and the environment related with the murders. Hawksmoor makes a detailed record of his findings. He

studies each and every thing which is related with his undertakings. In this connection he comes to a public library where he takes an encyclopedia and turns to the entry for Nicholas Dyer. And this is what he reads: 1654-c.1715. English architect; was the most important pupil of Sir Christopher Wren, and a colleague both of Wren and Sir John Vannbrughe in the Office of Works at Scotland Yard. Dyer was born in London in 1654; although his parentage is obscure, it seems that he was first apprenticed as a mason before becoming Wren's personal clerk; he later held several official posts under Wren including that of surveyor at St Paul's. His most important independent work was completed as a result of his becoming the principal architect to the 1711 Commission for New London Churches; his was the only work to be completed for that Commission, and Dyer was able to realize seven of his own designs: Christ Church Spitalfields, St George's –in- the – East Wapping, St Anne's Limehouse, St Alfege's in Greenwich, St Mary Woolnoth in Lombard Street, St George's Bloomsbury and, finest of all the church of Little St Hugh beside Moorfields. These edifices show most clearly his ability to handle large abstract shapes and his sensitive (most romantic) lines of mass and shadow. He died in London in the winter of 1715, it is thought of the gout, although the records of his death and burial have been lost .

Hawksmoor stared at the page, trying to imagine the past which these words represented, but he saw nothing in front of him except darkness. The very information about Dyer and the churches constructed by him gives Hawksmoor a detailed subject matter for his study of the past. He, while examining any cases, considers himself "as a scientist, or even as a scholar, 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"(116).

Hawksmoor knew that even during extreme events, the laws of cause and effect still operated. He could fathom the mind of a murderer. The close study of the footprints which the murderers left behind, Hawksmoor could acknowledge it with the help of the principles of reason and judgement. Given that the normal male tread is twenty eight inches, Hawksmoor had calculated that a hurried step was some thirty six inches and a running gait some forty inches.

On these objective grounds, he was able to deduce panic, flight, horror or shame; and by understanding them, he could control them. All of these matters occupied his attention, as he drove towards St Woolnoth, so that he might conceal from himself his rising excitement at the thought of viewing the body and for the first time entering the crime. At the premises of the church, Hawksmoor saw the corpse of a small boy. The corpse lay along the fourth of eight steps of St Mary Woolnoth. On this occasion Hawksmoor thought:

The boy looked as if he had opened his eyes wide in mock terror, perhaps trying to frighten some other children during a party game but at the same time his mouth was gaping open in what might have been a yawn. The eyes were still bright, before the muscles relaxed into the dull and fixed stare of eternal repose. And the gaze of the child disconcerted him (117).

The murder of the innocent human being at the premise of the church is really a matter of astonishment. Hawksmoor tries his level best to unravel the mystery of this murder. He is in his mission of an investigation. Regarding this issue he inquires with a

police officer. He asks him, "Have you made a note of the weather conditions?" The officer replies, "It's raining, sir." (117) Hawksmoor says, " I know it's raining. But I want the precise temperature. I want to see how the body cools " (117).He has a conversation with a police officer related with the environment when the murder has taken place.

Yet in another occasion, Hawksmoor tries to figure out the culprit behind the murder of Hayes, the fellow worker of Nicholas Dyer. In fact the murder of Hayes is done by Dyer himself. This is because Dyer is in constant agony with him and he is looking for a suitable time to finish him. Dyer, in a very secret manner kills him and puts his dead body under the pipes and covers it with mud and dust. The hostility developed between the fellow workers results to a loss of a human being. The insensitivity and the narrow-mindedness of a human being invites his untimely death. This death of an innocent human being represents the whole scenario of the killing of human beings as a whole. The selfishness and the vested interest of a human being speaks about the fact of the loss of humanism in the postmodern dwelling.

Hawksmoor continuously seeks the murderers. He takes the help of Walter to find out the killer. He attempts to solve the mystery surrounding a series of murders that take place in or around Dyer's churches. Hawksmoor, the detective, employs modern, rational, and scientific methods in an attempt to understand the crimes. His experience of space and time- his chronotopic experience –becomes severely disrupted. It soon becomes clear that he has an uncanny relationship with Dyer. Indeed, the two characters double each other to an increasing extent throughout the novel.

In the first chapter the stonemason's son, Thomas Hill, is invited to lay the highest and last stone of Church Christ. But before he can do so he mysteriously falls from the

steeple to his death. In the second chapter, set in contemporary London, another boy named Thomas Hill becomes trapped and dies in labyrinthine tunnels under the church. Over the course of the novel it becomes clear that the murder victims found in or around the contemporary narrative come to double Dyer's sacrificial males. By lending the character of the detective the name of the real architect of the churches (Nicholas Hawksmoor), Ackroyd effectively writes an uncanny 'double history' of London. Hawksmoor relates locations to historical occurrences. He speculates how vagrants, prostitutes and murderers appear to be drawn, over and over again, to the same places.

Each night Hawksmoor came home from his wanderings and held the white notebook in his hands, first bringing it close to his nose in order to savour the slight odour of wax which still lingered upon its stiff covers. He read again each phrase, and then stared intently at the drawings as if it might yield some clue. But they offered nothing and one night, in his anger, he tore the pages from the book and threw them across the floor. When he rose in panic the next morning, he looked down at the scattered sheets and said out loud, "What rage is this? What fury? Of what kind?" (152). Then he took the pages, smoothed them with the palm of his hand and fixed them with pins to the walls.

As such Hawksmoor attempts to observe and makes a thorough study of each and every details available. Sometimes Hawksmoor thinks about the attitude of his fellow workers towards him. He realizes, " They had not wanted me to succeed, they had tricked me, they had betrayed me, and now they had triumphed over me "( 161). This state of thinking makes him restless and :

He could not breathe and in alarm he crossed over to the window and



opened it: it was a cold December day and , as he leaned out, he could feel the heat leaving his body like an exhalation until he became calm again. From this height, the movements of those in the street seemed to him to be marked by a peculiar fatality, as though they were being drawn by a thread which they would never see ; and as he stared down at their faces he wondered what a face was, and from what original it had sprung. (162)

When Hawksmoor and Walter roam around the church to find out something new about murder of the innocent human beings, they meet a woman in the church. She is wearing rubber boots and a bright red sweater. "Hello love!" Walter shouted at her, "We're police officers. What are you up to?" (122).His voice had no echo as he passed over the freshly dug earth. "Come on down and see!" she called back. "But there is nothing here! Nothing has been touched overnight!" (122). In conformation of this, she kicked a piece of plastic sheeting which remained firmly in place. "Come on, I'll show you!" (122).In course of conversation with the old woman, Hawksmoor and Walter know that she knows the details regarding the construction of the churches. Not only this, she tells them about the recently found human skeleton. Hawksmoor and Walter are interested about the findings and they come to know that she has found the skeleton next to the church where the pipes are being laid. But they are not well informed about the murderer. Every now and then they come to a notice of the killing of innocent human beings but their attempt to find out the culprit behind the murder is of no value and importance. Their fruitless attempt makes themselves shame. The settings and the sites of the churches are the common grounds for the murderers to commit the act of murder. They are always looking

for the safe haven to work out their intention and they find the religious sites the suitable place to act upon their plan. They are highly successful in their mission because they are able to surprise the most renowned detective-Hawksmoor.

Hawksmoor in course of his investigation and the experience knows that in many occasions it was generally the innocent who confessed the crimes which they have not committed. This makes the case very difficult to handle because the real killer is hard to find out as a result of the confession of an innocent person. However, Hawksmoor is able to make a psychological study of the person involved in a conversation with him. But the murders committed in churches and near the churches are beyond the acknowledgement and comprehension of Hawksmoor. The loss of humanism in the premises of the churches and the issue beyond the reach of the well-known detective is really a matter of shame. However, Hawksmoor alone is not responsible for the loss of humanism. The lack of compassion and sympathy for the fellow human beings in the postmodern setting is the sole factor responsible for the loss of humanism.

## Chapter Four: Conclusion

### **Insensitivity of Human: Cause of Loss of Humanism**

*Hawksmoor* by Peter Ackroyd is a work of imagination. It concerns with mankind's fallen nature. It is a story of degradation of human values. It is a novel blended with history and the present day inhabitation of the city of London. It presents a story of continuous fight with the fellow human beings. The story of the novel centres around the two principal characters. They are Nicholas Dyer and Nicholas Hawksmoor. Nicholas Dyer is the constructor of seven churches in different parts of London.

London city is ravaged by a great fire and the plague. A large population loses its life in this dreadful incident. The glorious height of churches, houses, hotels etc. in a few moments falls on the ground forever. In this connection, Dyer, the protagonist of this novel also loses his dear parents. The death of parents leaves him alone. Now the difficulty and the struggle for a better future is starting in his life. Because of this he is restless. However, in this state of his aimlessness he gets accompanied by members of a cult whose philosophy is: *Christ is a Satan*. He is not fit to be worshipped. They think Christ is not the sole redeemer of human suffering. His bringing up with the members of this cult totally changes his attitude towards life.

Nicholas Dyer has spent many sleepless nights on the road, near churches, near rivers as a tramp, vagrant and as a poor fellow. So, he has a deep respect for these marginalized people of the society. He is accompanied by these peripheral members of the society. He has come across the difficulties of his life very easily because these groups of people embalm his suffering, pain and misery. The attitude of the society towards the marginalized people is always negative. The affluent members of the society

never treat them as a human being. The poor, diseased, handicapped people are always looked upon as the burden of the society. The society does not think about the intellectual potentiality of these people. The rich members of the society think that the poor have no responsibility in the making of a beautiful society. They are of the opinion that the poor are a nuisance who always create difficulty in the society. The story of *Hawksmoor* centres around these themes.

The churches are constructed to glorify the human civilization. But a living soul nearby is ravaged by poverty, hunger and diseases. A large sum of money is invested to build churches. The intention behind the construction is to show that rulers are wise and civilized. They have a greed for name and fame. They are preoccupied by a thought of bright and glorious future. But they are neglecting the living present where common people are suffering from malice. They do not get affection and love and a dignity of human being. They are forced to live a life of disrespect. They have no dignity in the social sphere. The insensitivity of affluent human beings is the root cause of loss of humanism. The murder of innocent human beings is one of the ugliest scenes for this beautiful city of London. This is really an irony for its beauty. This shows that in the face of beauty many unwanted acts are incessantly done. The prevalent ill-effects of the city suggests that external beauty is ephemeral. Unless the intellectual beauty is inculcated in the members of the society, the long lasting charm of the city is impossible.

Nicholas Hawksmoor, the other central character of this novel, is a detective. He is a rational, practical, scientific minded police inspector. He is always ready to discharge his duty sincerely and honestly. He has an assistant named Walter to help him in his mission. His main objective is to find out the culprit behind the murder of the innocent

human beings. The lives of ordinary human beings are always challenged by the atrocities of social norms and values. Hawksmoor takes the help of modern scientific equipments such as computers. His intention behind using these modern tools is to give authenticity to his work. These tools to a large extent help him to unravel the mystery. His constant search for the murderer makes the people feel relieved. This is because they are assured by the working methodology of Hawksmoor. He also makes a long journey to collect the relevant information regarding the murder. But unfortunately despite his intelligence, he is not able to find out any traces of the murderer so far. The techniques and the intelligence used by the murderer make Hawksmoor himself astonished.

Why does any person do the act of murder? Probably there may be some hidden motifs. The postmodern scenario to a large extent reveals that money is the main motif behind the killing. There is a lack of compassion and sympathy towards the fellow beings. The conflict of interests is another motif responsible for this sort of heinous act. Dyer himself has killed his fellow worker Hayes. This is because a sense of hostility has developed between them in course of working in the same place. Dyer is looking for a conducive environment to end the life of Hayes. As soon as he is getting it, he finishes the life of Hayes. The lack of clarity in their relationship finally brings this sort of outcome. Although Hayes has certain shortcomings, Dyer has really committed a great unpardonable mistake. This is a burning example of a great loss of humanism.

But Hawksmoor is unable to find out the murderer of Hayes. This is because it is really difficult to believe how a constructor of churches and a generous worker can kill another fellow worker near the churches.

*Hawksmoor* as such tries to raise the issue of the loss of humanism. The glorious

height of the churches cannot embalm the suffering of human beings. The common people are confronted with the problems such as hunger, poverty and diseases. The erection of churches at the site of the humans' death, murder and tramp evokes a sense of loss of humanism.

The ambitious church builder Nicholas Dyer cannot fathom the depth of human suffering. The foundation of his churches is drenched with human blood. The sacrificial site has become his glorious church site. The suffering of humanity at the church site generates an idea that postmodern age, at large, is facing a situation of chaos, loss of humanism and a sense of estrangement.

To sum up, a feeling of disregard for the fellow being and the vanity of the earthly greatness are the root causes of the loss of humanism.

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