

PATTERN AND MAGIC IN *HAWKSMOOR*

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Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985) may be seen as a most interesting example of the new kind of postmodernist fiction that Linda Hutcheon (1981) has called «historiographic metafiction», in the line of Lawrence Durrell's *Avignon Quintet* (1978-1985); William Golding's *Rites of Passage* (1980); John Fowles *A Maggot* (1986); Rose Tremain's *Restoration* (1989), and A. S. Byatt's *The Passion* (1989).

Contemporary metafiction has been defined (Waugh, 1984) as a kind of self-conscious fiction that presents the real and the unreal, literature and the external world as complementary and equally artificial human constructions, enjoying a similar status. Moving a step further, the writer of historiographic metafiction finds that not only literature and the external world, but also history, so far considered to be the most «objective» human creation, are similarly subjective and provisional and, as such, are devoid of everlasting, overall meaning. Historiographic metafiction, then, differs from traditional historical novels in that they do not seek historical accuracy and realistic verisimilitude but, on the contrary, evince, in Linda Hutcheon's words, «a longing for the return to the traditional relish in story telling while simultaneously underlining the fact that this return is problematic» (1981: 124-5).

Peter Ackroyd himself is pretty ambiguous about the historical status of *Hawksmoor*. In a telephone interview from his home in London, Ackroyd told Joyce Carol Oates (1986: 3) that

I'm not sure whether it's a historical novel set in the present or a contemporary novel set in the past. That's one of the puzzles the book sets for itself [...] the sinister side of it never really occurred to me [...] I see the book more as an intellectual puzzle.

In *Hawksmoor* the historical events are based on the life of the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), who was commissioned to build fifty churches in London and Westminster after the Great Fire of London. In the novel, this historical personage is split into two characters: the architect Nicholas Dyer (1654-1715), and the detective Nicholas Hawksmoor who lives in the twentieth century. Therefore, the novel combines two different historical periods: Of the

twelve chapters into which it is divided; the even ones take place over a period of eight months, in a present time loosely describable as belonging to the twentieth century. These chapters are narrated by a third person, extra-heterodiegetic narrator, in accordance with the twentieth-century preference for «objective» rendering and are devoted to the story of Nicholas Hawksmoor, a detective commissioned by Scotland Yard to investigate seven recent murders committed at the churches built by Nicholas Dyer in the eighteenth century.

The odd chapters, situated in the eighteenth century, cover the span of Nicholas Dyer's life: 1654-1715, which he recreates in a first person narration he supposedly writes between 1711-1715, during the time he was employed to build the seven churches commissioned by an Act of Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne. These chapters appear as a kind of «confession» or «true account» of the events narrated and, in accordance with eighteenth-century narrative conventions, include very realistic accounts of the effects of the Plague (1665) and of the Great Fire of London (1666) as experienced by Dyer when he was a teenager, and also of Dyer's initiation and conversion to a Satanic faith.

The odd chapters are historically accurate in that they refer to specific times, places, events and even characters that really existed at the time, and the style, which for the layman appears to be a very effective pastiche of eighteenth-century style, works perfectly as a reality-enhancing mechanism, even if eighteenth-century specialists are ready to find fault with it, as happens, for example with Cedric D. Reverand II (1987: 104), who thinks that «Ackroyd's notion of the appropriate style seems at times idiosyncratic and more Jacobean-Mannerist than late seventeenth-early eighteenth century».

Indeed, although the overall effect of Dyer's diary is psychologically consistent and realistic, the more attention is paid either to the style or to the historical details and characters, the more wavering the reader's faith in its historical accuracy becomes: So, for example, Alan Hollinghurst (1985: 1049) finds that «Ackroyd has brought the date of the Commission [to build the churches] forward to 1708, two years before the Tories, whose triumph the fifty churches were to embody, came to power». Hollinghurst tries to find a logical reason for this change of dates. Comparing the historical facts with the fictional facts, he says: «Hawksmoor's interiors were obliged to conform to the liturgical requirements of the Tory High Church, with their stress on light and clear visibility. Perhaps [Ackroyd brought the date forward] to avoid this» (1985: 1049).

Unfortunately, however, rational explanations like the one proposed by Alan Hollinghurst above do not always appear satisfactory. We fail to find a convincing explanation, for example, for the splitting of the name of the historical architect Nicholas Hawksmoor into two fictional characters. And we soon find that there are quite a few other questions that cannot be logically answered. For example, how can a notebook lost in the eighteenth century reappear in the twentieth? Or why fictional characters existing in the eighteenth-century chapters reappear in those devoted to the twentieth century, as happens with the assistants of Dyer and Hawksmoor, respectively called Walter Pyne and Walter Payne, or also, to the victims murdered near the churches, whose names are, with slight variations, exactly the same?

Indeed, as we go on reading, we find more and more shocking reduplications of names, events, actions and even identical sentences uttered by characters who live two centuries apart, until we are forced to conclude that, in the novel, nothing progresses in time, that the same events repeat themselves endlessly, and that the same people live and die only in order to be born and to live the same events again and again, eternally caught in what appears to be the ever-revolving wheel of life and death. The same wheel Dyer recognises with a pang in Sir Christopher Wren's experiment of the Moving Picture:

indeed it looked as an ordinary Picture but then the ships moved and sailed upon the Sea till out of sight; a Coach came out of the Town, the motion of the Horses and Wheels being very distinct, and a Gentleman in the Coach seemed to salute the Company. I stood up and said in a loud voice to Sir Chris.: I have seen this before but I do not know in what Place (pp. 141-42).

Consequently with this, the twentieth-century detective, Nicholas Hawksmoor appears both the opposite and the complementary mirror image of the eighteenth-century architect, Nicholas Dyer: both lead solitary lives, have terrifying dreams, are aloof and reluctant to communicate and are interested in puzzles, both are dark haired and tall, both wear glasses which they accidentally break; both are betrayed by their assistants, and both have visions of themselves separate from their own bodies. Like Beckett's tramps, they are disgusted by sex, wear heavy dark overcoats even in summer and undergo a process of progressive physical decay. Moreover, they both feel a strong wish at a certain point to dress like tramps and to behave like them, and both are convinced that they are misfits.

Indeed, we can say that both Dyer and Hawksmoor are complementary figures like Molloy and Moran in Beckett's novel, and that, like them, they undergo a process of transformation involving their eventual alienation from society. From the beginning, there is a strange communion between Dyer and Hawksmoor and the victims and tramps they respectively pursue or investigate. So, when Dyer contemplates the face of the strangled woman found floating on the Thames, he instantaneously takes her place:

Well Madam, *says her murderer*, I was walking here as I generally do, will you not walk with me a little? and I saw the first Blow and suffer'd the first Agonie of her Pain. He has taken a white Cloath from his Breeches, looks at it, then throws it upon the ground and his Hand goes around my Throat: You need not be afraid, *he whispers*, for you will be sure to get what you Want. And now I feel the Torrents of my own Blood surging in my Head (pp. 97-8).

Likewise, after interviewing Brian Wilson, a neurotic young man who tried to convince the police that he had been the author of the murders, Hawksmoor thinks of himself as belonging to the same class of desperately lonely people: «I will be like them because I deserve to be like them, and only the smallest accident separates me from them now» (p. 164). Again, when he sees the crowd gathering around the corpse found at St. Alfege, Greenwich, «he wondered how he would look to the strangers who encircled his own corpse» (p. 188).

The names of Dyer's victims and the names of the corpses found by Hawksmoor in the first six churches are the following:

	18th. c.	20th. c.
1. Christ Church, Spitalfields:	Thomas Hill	Thomas Hill
2. St. Anne, Limehouse:	Ned	Ned (Edward Robinson)
3. St. George-in-the-East:	Dan	Dan Dee
4. St. Mary Woolnoth:	Yorick Hayes	Mathew Hayes
5. St. George, Bloomsbury:	Thomas Robinson	nameless boy
6. St. Alfege, Greenwich:	nameless boy	nameless boy

As we can see, with the exception of Yorick Hayes, all the victims are either virgin boys or tramps who have been reduced to a childlike state of innocence. Interestingly enough, the repetitions of names occur not only horizontally, but also vertically, for the real name of the second Ned is Edward Robinson, so that he is further related to the eighteenth-century tramp killed at Bloomsbury, Thomas Robinson, a child of twelve, whose first name, Thomas, is the same as that of the first victim, Thomas Hill. This strongly suggests the interchangeability of the victims, also suggested by the victims' association with the boy martyr Little St. Hugh, through the discarded book found by the second Thomas Hill and also by Ned, entitled *Some English Martyrs* (p. 33). At the same time, and parallel to Dyer's and Hawksmoor's psychological association with the victims, we find that the victims also associate themselves with Dyer. So, for example, whereas Dyer's favourite book as a child was *Dr. Faustus* (p. 18), Thomas Hill's was *Dr. Faustus and Queen Elizabeth* (p. 33), and this second Thomas likes to crouch behind the small pyramid of Spitalfields church (Dyer's favourite place, as a child) where he indulges in imagining «the building of his own church: he constructed in turn the porch, the nave, the altar, the tower but then always he lost his way in a fantastic sequence of rooms and stairs and chapels until he was obliged to begin again» (p. 28).

But not only victims, murderer and detective appear to share striking features in common: both Hawksmoor and the tramp called Ned are also associated with Sir Christopher Wren. So, the visit to Bedlam by Sir Chris and Dyer, which comes to a climax the «Demoniack», becomes in the twentieth-century version Hawksmoor's visit to the sanatorium to see his father. Again, Sir Christopher Wren's lecture on «Rational Experiment and the Observation of Cause and Effect», delivered at The Royal Society (p. 140), is echoed by Hawksmoor's lecturing of his subordinates at Scotland Yard on the behaviour of murderers. (p. 159).

Another interesting example of repetition-with-difference is Dyer's and Sir Christopher Wren's visit to Stonehenge, where Sir Chris has a premonition of his son's death induced by a crow call, preceded by the coach accident on the bridge where Sir Christopher loses his compass (pp. 61-62) and followed by Dyer's encounter with the tramp called Ned (pp. 64-66). This episode reappears in slightly different form in chapter 4. Here a second tramp called Ned, who, like the first, used to work as a printer in Bristol, makes the same journey, but in the opposite direction: from Bristol to London, via Stonehenge. Like Sir Chris., Ned had set out

from Bristol with an old spherical compass, which he throws away after he is nearly run over by a car on a bridge near Stonehenge. When he arrives there a crow calls and shortly after he hears the voice of his own father saying: «‘I had a vision of my son dead’» (p. 76). Finally, like his predecessor, this second Ned ends up in the crypt of the Limehouse Church.

This interchangeability of characters and circularity of the events narrated is also echoed at the structural and symbolic levels. Structurally, circularity is enhanced by the device of using the words to end and to begin adjacent chapters, so that, for instance, where chapter 1 ends «I am in the Pitte, but I have gone so deep that I can see the brightness of the Starres at Noon» (p. 25), the second chapter begins, «At noon they were approaching the church in Spitalfields» (p. 25), likewise, where chapter 2 ends, «And when he looked up he saw the face above him» (p. 42), chapter 3 begins, «The face above me then became a Voice» (p. 43) and so on until chapter 12. These semantic connections between the chapters devoted to the eighteenth-century and the twentieth-century stories may be said to function as temporal bridges, rendering the time gaps that logically exist between the two stories ineffectual.

At the symbolic level, circularity is expressed through the repetition of key words, like «pattern», «shadow», «time», «child», «tramp» and «dust», which recurrently point to the most complex layers of meaning underlying the surface message of the novel. The word «dust», for example, is obsessively repeated on practically every page of the novel: we find housekeepers dusting objects and rooms, timid or secretive men fixing their eyes upon the dust, public places reeking of dust. Dust is associated with the words in the Christian Funeral Service, and through them with T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*. So, dust seems to cover like a death shroud a London swarming with living dead. But the fact that dust was used in the eighteenth century as a euphemism for excrement, widens its field of connotations, adding to the Eliotean idea of the waste land, Nicholas Dyer's own concept of the fallen nature of man, as synthetically expressed in Tertulian's equation «exacramentum or excrement» (p. 221).

In examples like these the crisscrossing of references doesn't move, as one might expect, in a single direction, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, but rather works forwards and backwards at the same time, disrupting traditional notions of chronological linearity in favour of a circular pattern where past and present merge. Indeed, we could say that the whole novel seems to have been written to prove the validity of T. S. Eliot's well-known warning that:

Time present and time past
Are all perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable, [...]
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present
(*Four Quartets*, 1972, I: 13)

Or, in Dyer's much more disquieting terms:

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

For some of Ackroyd's reviewers, the historical inaccuracies and endless repetitions appear puzzling and teasing, and are difficult to account for. So, Christopher Porterfield, for example, complains that *Hawksmoor* «dissolves into a mystical blur without quite settling the question» (1986: 74), while for Francis King the last chapter of *Hawksmoor* leaves «the reader like a child begging for elucidation on the threshold of comprehension» (1985: 29-30).

However, as Cedric D. Reverand II (1987: 104) accurately remarks:

Readers trying to tie up those ends are in effect using the kind of rational procedure an Age of Reason character like Wren might have applied, and in so doing miss the whole point. Dyer represents all that the Age of Reason is not.

Reverand's words point to a most important aspect of the novel, insistently expressed in every imaginable form, and at every possible level: the novel's basic dualism. Set against the light of the Age of Reason, embodied in the ideas of Sir Christopher Wren, of Sir John Vannbrugge and in the Royal Society, appears Nicholas Dyer, champion of «all that the Age of Reason is not», that is, of the world of darkness and fear, or irrationality and magic that stood in complementary opposition to the rationalist belief in reason, logic and the law of «cause and effect».

Describing the appearance of Gothic fiction in eighteenth-century England, David Punter (1980: 26) refers to

a specific contradiction in the history of eighteenth-century ideas, a contradiction between 'official culture' and actual taste. On the official side, the eighteenth century was the great era of rationalism and Enlightenment [...] its most persistent claim was that man was potentially all-powerful, that there were no secrets of the universe which would remain unrevealed to him if he were only to pursue the paths of science and reason. The human reason was the only guide to truth; if there is a God, his only function had been to create the universe, and he had no further role to play.

Set against this official doctrine, however, a more traditional and widespread world-view still lingered on which saw rationalism not as progressive, but as a reductionist. According to this view, reliance on reason, while appearing to remove mystery, could only do so at the expense of outlawing large expanses of actual experience, the experience of the emotions and passions.

According to Punter «the noted irony of the eighteenth-century novelists appears to stem in large part from their awareness that the official account of human behaviour and motivation could not stand much scrutiny from the point of view of every day life» (1980: 27) and this is, of course, the same kind of awareness that motivates Nicholas Dyer's behaviour. Dyer rejects the rational experi-

ments of the Royal Society *en bloc* as «vain Scrutinies and Fruitless Labours [...], for they fondly beleve that they can search out the Beginning and Depths of Things. But Nature will not be so discover'd; it is better to essay to unwind the labyrinthine Thread than hope to puzzle out the Pattern of the World» (p. 139).

Sir Christopher Wren and the other members of the Royal Society speak, in Dyer's words, «only of what is Rational and what is Demonstrated, of Propriety and Plainness. *Religion Not Mysterious* is their Motto (p. 101), thus effectively stopping themselves from acknowledging the existence of a much more fearful reality, the «mundus tenebrous [...] sunk into night» (p. 101) of whose existence Dyer has not the least doubt for «there is not a Field without its Spirits, nor a City without its Daemons, and the Lunaticks speak Prophetesies while the Wise men fall into the Pitte» (p. 101).

The acknowledgement of the existence of this *mundus tenebrous* is the first step in the direction of true knowledge, one capable of unravelling the labyrinthine course of its occult mysteries, which are open only to those versed in the *Scientia Umbrarum*, the occult science developed out of Neolithic, Hermetic, Cabalistic and Gnostic elements.

In the «Fictional Preface by the Author» (in Dyer's terms), the heterodiegetic narrator presented Nicholas Dyer at work in his study, using «a small knife with a piece of frayed rope wrapped around its ivory handle [...] a short brass rule, his pair of compasses and the thick paper he used for his draughts», literally enveloped in the lights and shadows cast by the fire that burned in the room.

Although rule, compass and carving knife appear at first sight to be perfectly normal utensils for the construction of a wooden model of a church, the attentive reader cannot fail to realise that these are also tools used in magic, the rule and compass evoking the magician's astrologic and numerologic calculations, the sacrificial knife with «a piece of frayed rope» knotted to it evoking the rope knot, used in imitative magic as a powerful device for strangling at a distance, without touching the victim.

In the synthetic Preface, then, Nicholas Dyer is simultaneously presented as architect and as magus. Both architects and magicians are naturally interested in arithmetic and geometry. But while the architect has to master them for the simple purpose of building, the magician uses them in the hope that they will open up for him the true knowledge of the occult. This knowledge is based on the magician's basic beliefs, inherited from Cabalistic and Gnostic doctrine:

That the universe is a unity, that it has an underlying pattern connected with numbers and planets, that man is God and the universe in miniature, and that man can develop the divine spark within him until he masters the entire universe and himself becomes God. (Cavendish, 1984: 81).

The theory that man is a microcosm containing in himself the divine spark is also accepted by Christian orthodoxy, but whereas the Christian's way to God is through the rejection of evil and rational enquiry and argument about God's nature, the Gnostics and Cabalists alike believe that the knowledge of God comes directly through divine inspiration or through sacred traditions which are them-

selves divinely inspired. This knowledge transforms the man who acquires it by making him a sharer in the divine being, so that «to *know* God is to *be* God». The elect, therefore, are not those who lead good lives, but those who are enlightened, who possess the knowledge of the divine. The sin that cuts man off from God is not evil, but ignorance (Cavendish, 1984: 82).

This theory of gnosis is one of the root-ideas of all occultism and indeed provides the explanation for Nicholas Dyer's rejection of rationality, which he considers utterly reductionist, and for his contempt for the conventional morality of Christianity, as defended in the novel by the vicar of St. Mary Woolnoth, the benevolist Mr. Priddon.

According to Hermetic, Gnostic and Cabalistic theory and to occultism in general the true God is defined as The One, the totality of everything, containing all good and evil, and reconciling all opposites. So that, in Nicholas Dyer's own words:

demon [comes] from *daimon*, which is us'd promiscuously with *theos* as the word for Deity; the Persians call the Devill *Div*, somewhat close to *Divus* or *Deus*, also, *ex sacramenti* is expounded in Tertulian as *exacramentum* or *excrement* (pp. 21-221).

Dyer's words echo W. B. Yeats' chosen name as member of the Order of the Golden Dawn: *Daemon est Deus inversus*. Both synthesise the core of Gnostic, Cabalistic and occultist faith, according to which God is both the source of good and evil. Some of the early Christian Fathers, including St. Augustine, rejected this interpretation of God, however, preferring to see the origin of evil in a revolt against God by a great archangel, rather than as an aspect of God himself. Their scriptural authority was the famous passage in Isaiah which foretells the approaching doom of the King of Babylon. This passage was the foundation of the Christian doctrine of the Devil's attempt to make himself the equal of God and his expulsion from heaven in punishment. As an explanation of the Satan's fall from grace it had the advantage of fitting the tendency of later Jewish and Christian writers to exalt Satan's status to almost the position of an independent god (Cavendish, 1988: 286).

A most important aspect of the Devil, then, is the belief that he has authority over this world. Even Jesus and his followers believed this, at least in the sense that he rules worldliness, luxury and pride. During the temptation in the wilderness, according to St. Matthew, the Devil showed Jesus «all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them» and said, in words which go to the heart of Satanism, «All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me». In St. Luke the Devil specifically says that power over all the kingdoms of this world has been granted to him, «for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it». Jesus called the Devil «the prince of this world» and St. Paul called him «the god of this world». Using these passages as evidence, the Gnostics went a step further towards pure dualism, maintaining that the Devil rules this world because he created it, and that God is far away (Cavendish, 1984: 288).

This gnostic belief in the evil nature of the earth, and of the power of the devil over it suffuses Nicholas Dyer's dualist thought and explains his state of

unmitigated terror. Following the doctrines contained in his «own Scriptures» (p. 8), he believes «That it was Cain who built the first City» [...] and he has «a full Conception of Degenerate Nature», concluding that «the miseries of the present Life, and the Barbarities of Mankind, the fatal 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» (p. 9).

Dyer appears to be literally crushed by the weight of his awful knowledge about the world's real nature. He has dreadful nightmares, is in constant fear of «falling into the Pitte» (p. 101), ghosts and spirits assail him with their murmurs and sighs, he dreads visitors and strangers and imagines everybody to be plotting his murder. He also believes with Mirabilis and the members of the Black Step Lane occult society that the only way to escape the desperate destiny of mankind is to attempt to delve in the kind of occult knowledge capable of bringing about his essential transformation into the *Anthropos*, the Cosmic Man. As Cavendish explains (1984: 338), this transformation amounts to becoming God, and can only take place after accomplishing a Great Work:

To the magician 'good and evil go round in a wheel that is one thing and not many'. They are two sides of one coin, apparently separate and opposed, but really two aspects of a greater whole. In his attempt to become the whole man, who is God, the magician tries to experience and master all things, whatever their conventional labels. Until he has achieved this by completing the Great Work, it is presumptuous for the magician to speculate on the truth behind the labels, for, as the serpent pointed out in Eden, the knowledge of good and evil belongs to the divine.

Although the magician's occult knowledge rejects the limits of rationality and logic, it paradoxically involves a thorough knowledge of numerology and gematria, the occult sciences of numbers and names, for

In the early centuries after Christ the idea spread through the Mediterranean world that the soul comes originally from God and descends through the nine spheres to earth, where it is imprisoned in a human body. The soul longs for reunion with God and can achieve it by climbing back through the spheres of heaven. But each sphere is guarded by angels and the space between the earth and the moon is crowded with legions of devils. Even when the soul has successfully negotiated the devils, the guardians of the spheres will try to turn it back. Only those initiated into the secret traditions know the passwords which will make the guardians yield and open their gates for the soul to continue on its way to God (Cavendish, 1984: 84).

From classical times to the Copernican revolution, the Western world has had a notion of the universe according to which it is made of nine spheres, arranged like the skins of an onion. The outer skin is the sphere of God as Prime Mover. Inside this is the sphere of the stars and inside this again are the seven spheres of the seven planets. The innermost sphere belongs to the moon and the earth hangs inside it.

The belief in this structure of the spheres explains Dyer's obsession with creating a geometric pattern with his churches, capable of reflecting the «Proportion

of the Seven Orders» through calculation of «the positions and influences of the Celestial bodies and the Heavenly Orbs» (p. 5).

But Dyer's reference to the seven orders and his insistence that everything constructed on the earth should take into account the positions and influence of the stars, has to be understood in the light of the second of the seven Hermetic Principles contained in the *Kybalion*, the Principle of Correspondence, synthetically expressed in the dictum «as below, so above». This principle is crucial for the occultist as it makes imitative magic possible. According to this, when a magus musters the full power of his will and acts in a certain way, he causes the forces of the universe outside of him to act in the same way» (Cavendish, 1984: 17).

By projecting a certain pattern with his seven churches, therefore, capable of reflecting the «Proportion of the seven Orders», Nicholas Dyer is not only creating a labyrinthine pattern where evil power is concentrated, he is doing much more, he is submitting to his will the seven planetary gods who control the intermediate spheres between god and the world or, as the beautiful and exotic names of his seven demons suggest, the equivalents of the seven terrible *maskim* of Babylonian theory, who are the devilish counterparts of the planetary gods of more benign doctrines:

Let him that has Understanding count the Number: the seven Churches are built in conjunction with the seven Planets in the lower Orbs of Heaven, the seven Circles of the Heavens, the seven Starres in Ursa Minor and the seven Starres in the Pleiades. Little St. Hugh was flung in the Pitte with the seven Marks upon his Hands, Feet, Sides and Breast which thus exhibit the seven Demons —Beydelus, Metucgayn, Adulec, Demeymes, Gadix, Uquizuz and Sol. *I have built an everlasting Order, which I may run through laughing: no one can catch me now* (emphasis added, p. 186).

Here is clearly stated the real purpose of all Dyer's awful and painful endeavours: to build an everlasting order which would permit his return to heaven, by crossing the seven planetary orbs that separate the world from God. Following the principles of imitative magic, Dyer reproduces in the Septilateral Figure of the churches the pattern of the seven planetary orders, trapping within his pattern the seven demons that guard them. This done, he can now safely conjure up the seven demons by pronouncing their secret names for, as imitative magic teaches, pronouncing the true name of either demons or mortals amounts to controlling them. According to the Hermetic principle of «as below, so above» the pattern created on earth is instantly reflected in heaven, and so Dyer can now perfectly «run through» the seven orbs and enter heaven directly, as «no one can catch me now». Consistently with this, when his «Time comes to an end» he goes to the Church of Little St. Hugh, where he subsequently disappears without a trace:

Nor shall I leave this Place once it is completed: Hermes Trismegistus built a Temple to the Sunne, and he knew how to conceal himself so that none could see him tho' he was still withinne it. This shall now suffice for a present Account, for my own History is a Patern which others may follow in the far Side of Time. And I hugg my Arms around my self and laugh, for as if in a Vision I see some

one from the dark Mazes of an unknown Futurity who enters Black Step Lane and discovers what is hidden in Silence and Secresy (p. 205).

In Gnostic and occultist theory transmigration from body to body was necessary unless in one life the adept could do «all those things which we dare not either speak nor hear of, nay which we must not even conceive in our thoughts» (Irenaeus, 1884, I: 25). As can be guessed from the above-quoted paragraph, the sacrificial victim buried at the foundations of Little Saint Hugh is the architect Nicholas Dyer himself. By creating the pattern for his burial place and by delving into the mysteries and horrors of his occult practices, Dyer is, then, trying to escape from the ever-revolving wheel of life and death, the chain of endless reincarnations, in order to negotiate his essential transformation, or in his own words his «approaching Change» (p. 206).

It is in the light of this theory of reincarnation that the duplication of characters and the repetitions of situation and actions acquire overall meaning, as it helps explain the otherwise baffling existence of Hawksmoor: Dyer, who must experience all kinds of human situations in order to achieve his long sought-for essential transformation, has to be both murderer and victim, but also criminal and criminal hunter. This he achieves by the suggested reincarnations in the tramps and children and by his identification with the person who, according to the Demoniack's warning, «will this day terribly shake you» (p. 100).

Since Dyer's disappearance in the crypt of Little St. Hugh in 1715 until Detective Hawksmoor enters the church, then, Dyer may be said to have undergone progressive reincarnations in two simultaneous ways: as scapegoat and as murderer: each time he is reborn as child or tramp, the new child or tramp is subsequently murdered. This murderer, finally identified by detective Hawksmoor as «the tramp called the Architect» (p. 192), is a dark, tall man with flashing eyes, and a heavy dark coat, like the Devil himself. So, as devil and as tramp, he reconciles in himself the condition of victim and killer, of scapegoat and murderer. But we should not forget that the children also contain in themselves the potentialities for good and evil: set against the lonely, aloof and dejected individual child, predestined to be a victim, the novel recurrently presents the gang of children capable of terrorising Thomas Hill (pp. 30-1), of tormenting a cat to death (p. 81), and even of setting fire to a vagrant in his drunken sleep (p. 198).

Dyer, then, has undergone a series of reincarnations, experiencing all kinds of lives as a murderer and as the murdered man, as a criminal and as a detective, each time refining his potentialities a stage further. In his last reincarnation his evil or irrational side has been embodied by the tramp called «The Architect», his good or rational side, by Nicholas Hawksmoor. So, now, the only thing that remains is to reconcile these two opposed potentialities, the «light» and the «dark» emanations or, in Jungian terms, (1980) the split ego's conscious and unconscious facets, which must be brought into harmony in order to achieve the new totality of the Self.

In the light of this theory of reincarnation, the otherwise baffling ending of the novel, when Nicholas Dyer and Nicholas Hawksmoor come face to face inside Little St Hugh and, «looking past one another», contemplate the pattern their lives has formed, acquires overall significance:

for when there was a shape there was a reflection, and when there was a light there was a shadow, and when there was a sound there was an echo, and who could say where one had ended and the other had begun? and when they spoke they spoke with one voice:

and I must have slept, for all these figures greeted me as if they were in a dream. The light behind them effaced their features and I could see only the way they turned their heads, both to left and to right. The dust covered their feet and I could see only the direction of their dance, both backwards and forwards. And when I went among them, they touched fingers and formed a circe around me; and, as we came closer, all the while we moved further apart. Their words were my own but not my own, and I found myself on a winding path of smooth stones. And when I looked back, they were watching one another silently.

And then in my dream I looked down at myself and saw in what rags I stood, and I am a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity (p. 217).

This ending of the novel, apparently baffling and obscure, contains, however, interesting information about how and in what terms this reconciliation of opposites was carried out by Dyer/Hawksmoor. As they come face to face in the darkness of Little St. Hugh, the two fuse into each other, forming a unity in the shadow their two figures cast upon the stone. Then, they speak «with one voice». What they say is physically separated by a wide blank on the page, indicating a metalepsis, or change of narrative level. From the narrative point of view, then, the duality expressed in the alternation of narrative voices in the odd and the even chapters is finally overcome in a first person narration uttered by somebody who is neither Dyer nor Hawksmoor.

Who is this narrator, who contemplates Dyer and Hawksmoor as they move backwards and forwards in the eternal *dance macabré* of the dead, forming a circle around him? At the archetypal and mythical level there is no doubt that the one who speaks can only be the reunified Self, the Cosmic Man, the addition of Dyer and Hawksmoor, ascending at last to the sphere of the stars «on a winding path of smooth stones», the split, inferior selves, remaining behind like the discarded fleshy garments in Plato's theory, as the last sentence of the first paragraph implies: «And when *I looked back*, they were watching one another silently» (emphasis added, p. 217).

But the novel does not end at this point. On the contrary, it finishes with a last short paragraph that leaves the new creature still in rags, and «a child again, begging on the threshold of eternity». This reduces Cosmic Man to human shape again: the tramp and the child, the quintessence of Man, with their connotations of purity, innocence and undeserved suffering, but also of ugliness, violence and evil, used in the novel as recurrent symbols of Man's unavoidable fallen state, united at last in One, confirm our impression that an essential transformation has been achieved, but the fact that he is left «begging on the threshold of eternity» casts a shadow of doubt as to whether or not he has reached divine status. So, in accordance with the novel's unmitigated duality, the Anthropos is left waiting at the very gates of Heaven, a child in rags, reborn once more only perhaps to begin a new life, for ever caught in the spiralling gyres of the wheel.

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