

# **Mobility/Immobility of Gothic Architectural Images in Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor***

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## **1. Introduction**

Mobility as conditioned by locality, immobile material world and such notions as place, boundaries, orientation, time, movement and a person who experiences them is directly or indirectly linked to the architectural loci.

A great part of life and experiences of contemporary mankind are connected with an urban terrain where people are born, get education, form their system of values, where they work and die. Influence of architecture as the second nature on the human mind, body, perception, psychology and activities form the scope of interest of different sciences and arts. In contemporary English literature architectural images with their unique aesthetics are popular forms of the fictional material world which in most cases remains immobile thus creating conditions for various kinds of mobilities, particularly presented via a human body as a vehicle through which people sense space and movement related to it.

## **2. Architectural Images in Peter Ackroyd's Novel *Hawksmoor***

P. Ackroyd's novel *Hawksmoor* was chosen to illustrate the correlation between architectural images and various kinds of mobilities for a significant role of architecture in the text imagery, semantics and

narrative. P. Ackroyd reveals architecture as a sacred narrative that reflects human understanding of universal order and comprehension of the world. *Hawksmoor* features a macabre Gothic image of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and that of present-day London. Elements of real and fictional architectural buildings, different architectural styles and epochs are intricately interwoven in the texture and semantics of Ackroyd's urban ambiance. All spatial images, starting with churches, pyramids, underground labyrinths and crypts to common flats in modern multi-storeyed buildings, jointly work to create Gothic atmosphere prevailing in the novel (Ganteau, 2002: 26-27; Schütze, 1995: 177), focusing on its basic constituents: fascination with nostalgia of the past, mysticism, mystery, terror, the sublime, excess, obscurity, infinity, uncertainty (Snodgrass, 2005: 151-153, 158-59; Hogle, 2006: xiii-xiv). Gothic aesthetics is implied in *Hawksmoor* via Master architect Dyer's artistic principles:

**Terrour** [sic], I said softly, is **the lodestone of our Art** (Ackroyd, 2010: 177). I have imparted to you **the Principles of Terrour** [sic] **and Magnificence**, for **these you must represent in the due placing of Parts and Ornaments** as well as **in the Proportion of the several Orders**. [...] And now we come to **the Heart of our Designe** [sic]: **the art of Shaddowes** [sic] you must know well, Walter, and you must be instructed **how to Cast them with due Care** (Ackroyd, 2010: 1). **That Architecture** aims at **Eternity** and must contain **the Eternal Powers**: not only our **Altars and Sacrifices**, but **the Forms of our Temples**, must be **mystical** (Ackroyd, 2010: 6).

Main constituents of Gothic artistic canon ('Terrour', 'the Principles of Terrour and Magnificence', 'the art of Shaddowes', 'how to Cast them [shadows] with due Care', 'Eternity', 'the Eternal Powers', 'mystical') are essential for the sacred architecture concept verbalized in the example ('the lodestone of our Art', 'these you must represent in the due placing of Parts and Ornaments', 'the Proportion of the several Orders', 'the Heart of our Designe', 'Architecture', 'Altars and Sacrifices', 'the Forms of our Temples').

### 3. Psychogeography

Another specific feature of Ackroyd's architectural images is their remarkable psychogeographic dimension (Self, 2010: viii). In the 50s a member of the avant-garde movement *The Letterist International* G. Debord coined the term 'psychogeography' to define 'the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals' (Debord, 1955).

Important aspect of psychogeography related to mobility/immobility is highlighted by J. Hart who explores psychogeography in terms of 'inventive strategies for exploring cities' and 'revealing factors which take pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolt them into a new awareness of the urban landscape' (Hart, 2004).

The psychogeographic concepts of 'flâneur' and 'dérives' (literally 'drifts' across the city) which show various historical, psychic, and physical layers of a place, combined with Gothic motifs of wandering (Botting, 1996: 106-112) and search for secret knowledge (Snodgrass, 2005: 245-246) are cornerstones of Ackroyd's novel. *Hawksmoor* reveals London's nature and history through the alembic of city architecture:

Here [Spittle-Fields area] I **rambled** as a Boy, and yet also was often **walking abroad into that great and monstrous Pile of London:** and as I felt the **City under my Feet I had a habit of rowling [sic] Phrases around my head,** such as **Prophesie [sic] Now, Devowring [sic] Fire, Violent Hands** (11).

The image of London is metaphorically presented as 'a great and monstrous Pile'. The word 'pile' provides a multiperspective interpretation of the image of London: 1) as a large building or a huge conglomeration of buildings; 2) as a multilayered collection of objects laid on top of one another, which figuratively denotes a rich historical and cultural

background of the city; 3) as a high solid column that serves the foundation for a vertical structure, which figuratively represents the city as a pivot that holds everything and everyone together. All these senses are evolved in the novel where London serves as a narrative pile. The motif of wandering, i.e. literal mobility within the city area, is evoked by the words: 'rambled', 'walking abroad into' and the idiom 'felt the City under my Feet'. Not common capitalizing of the words 'City' and 'Feet' draws associations with old-fashioned style of writing and also highlights that abstract entity 'city' is understood via sensorimotor experience 'walking'. The metaphorical mobility verbalised in the expression 'a habit of rowling Phrases around my head', themes of revelation and foretelling caused by divine inspiration ('Prophesie Now'), consumption, passion, torment and ardour of imagination and thought ('Devowring Fire'), intense physical, mental or emotional force ('Violent Hands') give way to the conceptual metaphor WALKING IN THE CITY IS GETTING SECRET KNOWLEDGE.

#### **4. Gothic Architectural Images and Image Schemas**

Human basic experiences in space constitute the foundation to build up spatial concepts and schemas that form the way people percept, move, think and speak in and about space (Johnson, 2002: 141; Van Peer, Graf, 2002: 126). Thus the relevance of human body, spatial orientations and parameters in the artistic construing of fictional Gothic architectural objects, manifested through a corpus of lexical units and tropes while provoking Gothic atmosphere, emphasized sensuality, pervasive human physiological and psychological reactions, is grounded in and appeals to the reader's embodied mind (Johnson, 1987; Johnson, 2002; Turner, 1996; Morgan, 2002: 5-7). Due to the associations with related Gothic scenarios

and motifs Gothic spatial images with their physical parameters, their genius loci form a system of interactions with the fictional environment and typical mobilities (Snodgrass, 2005: 147-150, 152-154, 158-160). Specific features, form and shape of particular architectural objects organize, limit and regulate literal and metaphorical movement within and, therefore, highlight such basic perspectives as verticality, horizontality and concentricity. Thus, according to basic image schemas (Johnson, 1987: xiv; Johnson, 2002: 21) mobilities represented by Gothic architectural images in P. Ackroyd's *Hawkmoor* fall into three main groups:

MOTION ALONG A PATH (Johnson, 1987: 28, 113-117; Turner, 1996: 16), related to the consecutive onward movement along a fixed axis (forward :: backward, right :: left, close :: distant) and implemented in the images of corridor, passage, labyrinth, tunnel:

**the tunnel led to a maze of passages which burrowed miles into the earth (2);**

that Figure so impresse'd it self [sic] upon my Mind that I have been in a manner **walking towards it** all my life (61);

Thus my **Fear crept through the Passages of my Senses** [...] And then this became the **Thread of my Thoughts which led me through a Labyrinth of Fear** (127-128);

MOTION UP AND DOWN A VERTICALITY SCALE (Johnson, 1987: xiv, 121-123), related to climbing, different verticality levels, evaluation of heights (up :: down), while manifested via the images of tower, spire, stairs:

**I climb the Stairs of Eternity to my Chamber** (159);

And then later he **went downstairs to stoke up the fire** (43);

Thus **under** where the **Cathedral Church of Bath** now stands there was a **Temple erected to Moloch, or the Straw Man; Astarte's Temple stood** where **Paul's** is now, and the Britains [sic] held it in great **Veneration**; and where the

**Abbey of Westminster** now **stands** there was **erected** the **Temple of Anubis**.  
And in time my own **Churches will rise** to join them (23);

MOTION WITHIN A CYCLE OR A CONTAINER (Johnson, 1987: 21-22, 124-125; Turner, 1996: 16), related to circular internal motion with returning to the original state, associated with enclosure, limitation, intent to get inside or outside of a container (inner :: outer, centre :: periphery, open :: close, inside :: outside). All this is shown by the images of asylum, church, prison, house, and room:

Hawkmoor bowed his head before **entering the body of the church** (270);

the **house and neighbourhood in** which she felt herself **to be trapped** (38);

his **mind wavered and fell away into the shadows of the unseen church** of Little St Hugh (268).

These kinds of literal and metaphorical mobilities could be interwoven within one fictional Gothic architectural object and/or completed with consequential schemas and orientations to give the effect of image's synaesthetic sensory presence:

at last my **Church was rising above** me: like **the Noise of Thunder it struck** even my own Spirit with an air of **Greatnesse** [sic] **beyond** any thing I **had seen** before. [...] so **rapt was I in** the **sight** of the **vast Stone**; and all **the Cryes** [sic] **died away** as I **mounted the Steps** and **approached the Porch** of Little St Hugh. The **Church was above** me now and, tho' [sic] I was **plunged into Shaddowe** [sic], I **did not move but waited** until my **Eyes had cleared** a little. Then I **opened the Door** and **crossed the Threshold**. I **walked forward saying**, From my first Years **Thy Honours** have I endured with a **troubled Mind**, and I **stood in the Aisle looking upwards** till I could **look on more**: I had **run to the end** of my **Time** and I **was at Peace**. I **knelt down in front** of the **Light**, and my **Shaddowe** [sic] **stretched over the World** (261).

The image of church appeals to auditory ('Noise of Thunder', 'the Cryes died away', 'saying'), kinaesthetic ('rising', 'struck', 'rapt', 'mounted', 'approached', 'plunged', 'opened', 'did not move but waited', 'crossed', 'walked', 'stood', 'run', 'was at Peace', 'knelt down in front',

‘stretched over’), and visual (‘vast Stone’, ‘Greatnesse’, ‘had seen’, ‘the sight’, ‘Shaddowe’, ‘Eyes had cleared’, ‘look on more’, ‘Light’, ‘Shaddowe’) senses. This architectural image implies mobilities associated with MOTION ALONG A PATH (‘approached’, ‘walked forward’, ‘look on more’, ‘run to the end’, ‘in front’, ‘stretched over’), MOTION UP AND DOWN A VERTICALITY SCALE (‘was rising above’, ‘I mounted the Steps’, ‘was above’, ‘knelt down’), MOTION WITHIN A CYCLE OR A CONTAINER (‘rapt was I in’, ‘died away’, ‘the Porch’, ‘plunged into’, ‘opened the Door’, ‘crossed the Threshold’, ‘was at’).

In the novel's narrative image schemas manifested via Gothic architectural images are also related to abstract conceptualization and metaphorical representation of complicated concepts and key Gothic motifs such as: search for secret knowledge, universal order, life within a big city, wandering, making sacrifice, overcoming impediments on the way to progress, art and artist, master and apprentice, the perpetual presence of the past, doppelganger and others. Within the church image literal mobilities ‘I opened the Door and crossed the Threshold. I walked forward’ are interrelated with metaphorical movement to sacred knowledge: ‘From my first Years Thy Honours have I endured with a troubled Mind’, ‘I had run to the end of my Time and I was at Peace, I knelt down in front of the Light, and my Shaddowe stretched over the World’.

## **5. London as the narrative matrix**

*Hawksmoor* is a double narrative novel in which story unfolds at different time. Two storylines linked together with the image of London as the narrative matrix which integrates cultural and textual senses, serves as the main location of events and characters (Ganteau, 2002: 26-27). One storyline focuses on a sacrilegious architect Nicholas Dyer who in the early

18<sup>th</sup> century designs seven London churches on the city spots marked by grief, plague, murder, fire and supplies a corpse of victim for each structure. The other storyline is connected with London of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the detective, Nicholas Hawksmoor, is searching for a serial killer while investigating a string of murders committed in or close to Dyer's churches. Six of the depicted edifices have the same name and similar locations as the real buildings designed by British architect Nicholas Hawksmoor (c.a. 1661 – 25 March, 1736). The final Dyer's church, Little St Hugh, is fictional.

The two storylines that depict different centuries are connected by the narrative mobility being linked to the same locations, i.e. churches, related to similar events, i.e. men slaughters, and involving similar doppelganger characters. Schematically this mobility can be represented via the image schema MOTION ALONG A PATH and the conceptual metaphor GETTING KNOWLEDGE IS WALKING ALONG A PATH.

Within the 18<sup>th</sup> century storyline this metaphor is connected with the architect Dyer's church design and his occult practises:

**look upon my Churches in the Spittle-fields, in Limehouse, and now in the Parish of Wapping Stepney, and do you not wonder why they lead you into a darker World which on Reflection you know to be your own? Every Patch of Ground by them has its Hypochondriack [sic] Distemper and Disorder; every Stone of them bears the marks of Scorching by which you may follow the true Path of God (125).**

Mobility here is displayed through the change of the viewer's perspective of different churches ('look upon my Churches in the Spittle-fields, in Limehouse, and now in the Parish of Wapping Stepney', 'on Reflection'), associations with progressive literal and metaphorical movement ('they lead you into', 'Every Patch of Ground', 'marks', 'by

which you may follow the true Path’), and the motif of sacred knowledge (‘Churches’, ‘Parish’, ‘wonder’, ‘a darker World’, ‘know’, ‘Disorder’, ‘every Stone of them bears the marks of Scorching’, ‘true Path of God’).

Within the 20<sup>th</sup> century storyline the image schema MOTION ALONG A PATH as well as the conceptual metaphor GETTING KNOWLEDGE IS WALKING ALONG A PATH are embodied in the motif of victims’ paths to a predetermined death:

He started **walking towards the church** itself [...] He had **come to the flight of steps which led down to the door of the crypt** and, as he sensed **the coldness** which rose from them like a vapour, he heard a whisper which might have been ‘I’ or ‘me’. And then **the shadow fell**’ (104).

Approaching of a predetermined death is depicted in the text in terms of literal voluntary movement of a man towards the place of his physical death.

The image schema MOTION ALONG A PATH and the conceptual metaphor GETTING KNOWLEDGE IS WALKING ALONG A PATH are also embodied in the novel via investigation held by detective Hawksmoor and his assistant Walter:

‘And so **we’re stuck**’ [...] ‘where do **we go from here?**’ ‘**We go on. Where else should we go? We can’t turn back. No one can turn back**’ (235-236).

The crime investigation is depicted in terms of progressive movement: difficulties in the inquest are compared to impediments on the road and success to walking forward.

On the narrative level, directly and figuratively, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century architect Dyer creates a path by designing his churches and committing human sacrifices and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century detective Hawksmoor tries to follow this path by holding the inquest.

The starting point of the path is Spitalfields Christ Church. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dyer works on its project and building. Architect observes how the first victim, Thomas Hill, under strange circumstances falls down from the church tower. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a boy, Thomas Hill, is strangled by a mysterious killer in the Spitalfields Christ Church tunnel.

The path follows to St Anne, Limehouse. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dyer pushes to committing a suicide a new victim and finally stubs a former printer vagrant, Ned. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century vagrant, Ned (former worker, Edward Robinson), is strangled by a mysterious killer in St Anne, Limehouse.

The path runs to St George in the East, Wapping. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century while building the church Dyer kills another victim, a little pretty boy beggar, Dan. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century a small boy, Dan Dee, is found strangled by a mysterious killer at St George in the East, Wapping and detective Hawksmoor holds the investigation of the crime.

The path proceeds to St Mary Woolnoth. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dyer strangles and pushes his next victim, Mr. Hayes, down from the church's scaffolding. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a boy strangled by a mysterious killer is found on the 4<sup>th</sup> step at the entrance of St Mary Woolnoth Church.

The path leads to St George, Bloomsbury. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dyer kills a 12 year-old boy, Thomas Robinson. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the victim strangled by a mysterious killer is found at St. George, Bloomsbury.

The path goes to St Alfege Church, Greenwich. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Dyer makes the Sacrifice due. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new victim strangled by a mysterious killer is found at St Alfege Church, Greenwich.

The destination point of the path is Little St Hugh Church which is an allusion to the 'blood libel' and the story of a Christian boy Hugh whose death was interpreted by people as a sacrifice committed by a Jew, who

was accused and executed. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century storyline the alleged victim, Dyer's assistant, Walter Pyne, hangs himself after a nervous disorder caused by revealing his master's dark practises. Dying Dyer finishes Little St Hugh project, sees a phantom image and, as a ghost, visits Little St Hugh Church. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century storyline Hawksmoor proceeds in the case but is taking off. Driven by an unknown force, the detective goes to Little St Hugh Church where he experiences an alter-idem phantom:

**his own Image was sitting beside him [...] And when they looked at the space between them, they wept.** The church trembled as the sun rose and fell, and the half-light was strewn across the floor like rushes. **They were face to face, and yet they looked past one another at the pattern which they cast upon the stone; 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** (270-271).

The doppelgänger motif is represented in the text by a similar appearance of two characters ('his own Image was sitting beside him') and their similar activities the description of which was accentuated by the use and repetition of personal pronouns ('they', 'them') and parallelism ('when they looked [...] they wept', 'they cast', 'when they spoke they spoke with one voice'), underlining that the two characters are still not completely identical ('sitting beside him', 'the space between them', 'They were face to face', 'and yet they looked past one another'). Parallelism in the figurative explanation of the mysterious phantom ('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?**') highlights the all-pervasive novel's themes of the perpetual present of the past (Schütze, 1995: 176) and universal order verbalized in parallelism at the very

beginning of the novel: ‘for **there is no Light without Darknesse** [sic] and **no Substance without Shaddowe** [sic]’ (2).

Motif of universal order is interrelated with the image schema MOTION ALONG A PATH, which within novel’s narrative finally unites the two storylines through identical time and place (Little St Hugh Church). Universal order is also figuratively represented by the doppelgangers’ ability to cast a shadowy pattern upon the church stone, which provokes associations with Dyer’s church scheme and Masonic symbols:

And **across** these mean **Dwellings of Black Step Lane**, where as a boy I **dwel’d** [sic] for a while, **the Shaddowe** [sic] **of my last Church will fall**: what the Mobb [sic] has **torn down** I will **build again in Splendour**. And thus will I **compleet** [sic] **the Figure: Spital-Fields, Wapping and Limehouse** have **made the Triangle; Bloomsbury and St Mary Woolnoth** have next **created** the major **Pentacle-starre** [sic]; and, with **Greenwich**, all these will **form the Sextuple** [...] Then, with **the church of Little St Hugh, the Septilateral** [sic] **Figure will rise** [...] I **have built an everlasting Order**, which I **may run through** laughing: **no one can catch me** now (232).

Linguistic markers of mobility (‘across’, ‘torn down’, ‘complete’, ‘next’, ‘rise’, ‘run through’, ‘no one can catch’) linked to architectural ambience (‘dwellings’, ‘step’, ‘lane’, ‘dwel’d’, ‘the Shaddowe of my last Church will fall’, ‘Spital-Fields’, ‘Wapping’, ‘Limehouse’, ‘Bloomsbury’, ‘St Mary Woolnoth’, ‘Greenwich’, ‘the church of Little St Hugh’) as well as the lexis denoting a creative process (‘build again’, ‘made’, ‘created’, ‘form’, ‘have built an everlasting Order’) bring up the conceptual metaphors EDIFICE IS UNIVERSE and ARCHITECT IS A CREATOR. Dyer is a man who, due to his practices, acquires sacred knowledge and supernatural abilities to cross time and space (‘I have built an everlasting Order, which I may run through laughing: no one can catch me now’). The figures and the pattern (‘compleet the Figure’, ‘made the Triangle’, ‘created the major Pentacle-starre’, ‘all these will form the Sextuple’, ‘the Septilateral Figure

will rise’) created by Dyer’s churches drew associations with themes of universal architect (‘built an everlasting Order’) and sacred knowledge that unfolds further:

there is **a true Science** in the World called **Scientia Umbrarum** [sic] which, as to the publick [sic] teaching of it, has been suppressed but which the proper **Artificer** must comprehend. That **Architecture aims at Eternity** and must contain **the Eternal Powers** (6).

These highlight the key conceptual metaphor of the novel: ART IS IMMORTALITY, which is interrelated with the themes of sacred knowledge (‘a true Science’, ‘Scientia Umbrarum’, ‘proper Artificer must comprehend’, ‘Architecture’) and eternal order (‘an everlasting Order, which I may run through’, ‘aims at Eternity’, ‘the Eternal Powers’).

## 6. Conclusion

In the novel *Hawksmoor* by P. Ackroyd Gothic architectural images highlight such basic perspectives as verticality, horizontality and concentricity and, create conditions for mobilities connected with such image schemas as: MOTION ALONG A PATH, implemented in the images of corridor, passage, labyrinth, tunnel, MOTION UP AND DOWN A VERTICALITY SCALE, manifested via the images of tower, spire, stairs, MOTION WITHIN A CYCLE OR A CONTAINER, realized in the images of asylum, church, prison, house, and room.

The novel’s narrative mobility can be schematically represented via the image schema MOTION ALONG A PATH and the conceptual metaphor GETTING KNOWLEDGE IS WALKING ALONG A PATH. In the two storylines that depict London of the 18<sup>th</sup> and of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the path guides doppelganger characters to similar points i.e. seven churches created by Dyer and unfolds similar events, i.e. men slaughters.

Intricately interwoven literal and metaphorical dimensions of mobilities within Gothic architectural loci are related to abstract conceptualization and metaphorical representation of Gothic motifs: search for secret knowledge, universal order, wandering, overcoming impediments on the way to progress, making sacrifice, art and eternity and the perpetual presence of the past. These complicated concepts are depicted in the novel in terms of physical movement of a man within architectural ambiance.

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