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## **No Place Like Home: The Chronotope of the Haunted House in Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee***

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article seeks to explore the trope of haunting in contemporary English author Peter Ackroyd's seventh novel *The House of Doctor Dee*, published in 1993. It will propose that Ackroyd's novel is a Gothic narrative of uncanny returns, in which the spectres of the past are returned to the present through the temporal dislocation of space in the classical tradition of the ghost story, by the haunting of a house. The majority of the novel's action is set in the house of its title, which is possessed by a mysterious history, ambiguous construction, and uncanny atmosphere. It provides the spatial medium through which the parallel narratives of the novel's two narrators, the famous Elizabethan Doctor John Dee and the contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer, can transhistorically haunt one another in an uncanny act that brings the dark history of the house and its inhabitants to light. This article will first consider whether the trope of the haunted house can be effectively read as a new kind of Bakhtinian literary chronotope inspired by that of the Gothic castle. It will then explore the significance of the chronotope of the haunted house in Ackroyd's novel by employing the theory of the uncanny's "return of the repressed", and conclude by addressing how a chronotopic reading of the haunted house in *The House of Doctor Dee* reveals a ghost story that is both a modern Gothic narrative of the return of repressed trauma and a historical narrative of the visionary Gothic tradition.*

Whilst much has been written on the trope or motif of the haunted house in Gothic literature, particularly its uses in American fiction, there appears to be a gap in research regarding the significance it can have when read specifically as a literary chronotope in the Bakhtinian tradition.<sup>1</sup> This article seeks to fill that gap by exploring the trope of haunting in contemporary English author Peter Ackroyd's seventh novel *The House of Doctor Dee*; a Gothic narrative of uncanny returns in which the spectres of the past are returned to the present through the temporal dislocation of space in the classical tradition of the ghost story, by the haunting of a house. The majority of the novel's action is set within the house of its title, which is possessed by a mysterious history, ambiguous construction, and uncanny atmosphere. The house further provides the spatial medium through which the temporally distanced parallel narratives of the novel's two narrators, the famous Elizabethan magus Doctor John Dee and the contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer, can transhistorically haunt one another in an uncanny act that brings the dark history of the house and its inhabitants to light. Since previous scholarship has predominantly explored the significance of the hermetic or the postmodern, historiographic, and metafictional aspects of *The House of Doctor Dee*, this article's textual analysis will exclusively focus on a close examination of the haunted house of the novel's title by considering its function as a chronotopic spatio-temporal conduit for what I argue to be the narrative's dominant interpretative frame, a ghost story in the Gothic tradition.<sup>2</sup>

As such, this article will first consider whether the trope of the haunted house can be effectively read as a new kind of Bakhtinian literary chronotope for Gothic fiction, one that could perhaps be best understood as the (post)modern evolution of the traditional Gothic castle. It will then explore the significance of the chronotope of the haunted house with specific reference to Ackroyd's novel by employing the theory of the uncanny's "return of the repressed" in light of Freud's writings on the subject. To conclude, the article will address how a chronotopic reading of the haunted house in *The House of Doctor Dee* successfully reveals a ghost story that functions simultaneously as both a modern Gothic narrative of the return of repressed trauma, and a historical

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Janicker's *The Literary Haunted House: Lovecraft, Matheson, King and the Horror in Between* (2015) and Dale Bailey's *American Nightmares: The Haunted House Formula in American Popular Fiction* (1999) are exemplary representatives of scholarship already in existence on the popular trope or motif of the haunted house in American literature.

<sup>2</sup> Susana Onega presents very compelling analyses of the hermetic in the novel in *Peter Ackroyd* (1998) and *Metafiction and Myth in the Novels of Peter Ackroyd* (1999). Julian Wolfreys has astutely explored the significance of its metafictional and intertextual elements in "Peter Ackroyd and the 'endless variety' of the 'eternal city': receiving 'London's haunted past'" in *Writing London Volume 2* (2004), an argument developed from an earlier work with Jeremy Gibson, *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text* (2000). More recently, Buell Wisner (2014) employs the novel as a case study of the antinomial anxieties of postmodern historical fiction; while Jean-Michel Ganteau (2012) uses trauma studies to explore the poetics of (post)modern ruins referring to the novel's temporal fragmentation; which Jakob Winnberg (2013) has also addressed in Ganteau's latest edited collection with Susana Onega, by using trauma studies to read the novel as a postmodern Gothic romance of traumatic realism seeking therapeutic resolution.

narrative that evokes the visionary origins of the Gothic tradition and its ghosts. For, as Julia Briggs reminds us, “Ghost stories represent the return of the repressed in its most literal and paradigmatic form” (Briggs 2012, 178).

When discussing the depiction of space and time in literature, I have chosen to begin (like many scholars before me) with Mikhail Bakhtin’s definitive essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics” (1981), in order to address the effectiveness these concepts can have for the literary analysis of Ackroyd’s work when viewed together as a singular narrative construct. The chronotope, a term Bakhtin borrows from Einstein’s theory of relativity, is translated from the Greek *chronos* and *topos* literally as ‘time-space’ and defined as the “interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (Bakhtin 1981, 84). The representational capacity of the literary chronotope, Bakhtin argues, lies in its ability to fuse the “spatial and temporal indicators” of a narrative equally into “one carefully thought-out, concrete whole” (ibid: 84). Through the chronotope, then, time “thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically viable” and space becomes “charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (ibid: 84). In the essay, Bakhtin famously explores examples of major chronotopes beginning with the ancient literary tradition of the Greek Romance and moving forward in time to show how they have endured as types to determine the formation of the “most important generic variations” of the European novel from its earliest developments (ibid: 243). He thus goes on to claim that such chronotopes function as “organising centres” for generic classification because they form an aesthetic representation of “the place in which the knots of narrative are tied and untied [...] to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative” (ibid: 250).

In the majority of Ackroyd’s works, this place is undoubtedly the city of London, for in both his narratives of fiction and non-fiction alike he consistently depicts moments of historical time in the city to be inseparable from their spatial topography. The city of London’s manifestation as a haunted site of uncanny transhistorical continuity has been the central ‘chronotopic’ preoccupation of much of Ackroyd’s writing (Prosser 2014). However, I propose it further provides his *oeuvre* with an overarching chronotope, wherein specific architectural sites return their repressed histories to the contemporary through characters’ engagement with their often Gothic psychogeography, as Matthew Palmer experiences when he inherits Doctor Dee’s home in *The House of Doctor Dee*, and which Detective Hawksmoor similarly encounters in Ackroyd’s third novel *Hawksmoor* (first published in 1985) when investigating sacrificial murders within seven churches built by Nicholas Dyer. The dual narrative structure of *The House of Doctor Dee* parallels that of *Hawksmoor*, which is similarly concerned with the sinister influence architecture can have over its inhabitants and also ends in the transcendental convergence of its contemporary and historical parallel narratives; however, further discussion of the similarities between the two novels is beyond the scope of this article. The “Gothic psychogeography” Ackroyd creates throughout his works, as Merlin Coverley argues, therefore explores “the more extreme forms of

behavioural response provoked by the city”, in which London as “a place of dark imaginings” is aligned with an “antiquarianism that views the present through the prism of the past” by contrasting a “horizontal movement across the topography of the city with a vertical descent through its past” to reveal what lies beneath the ‘secret’ sites of London’s repressed ‘unofficial’ history (Coverley 2012, 81, 14).

One can thus conclude that in Ackroyd’s collection of works, London’s city-space repeatedly functions chronotopically as a temporal conduit for its history. The overarching chronotope of Ackroyd’s works is to be found, then, in his belief in the existence of “a Gothic *genius loci* of London fighting against the spirit of the classic” (Ackroyd 2001, 580), through which London’s history is uncannily brought to bear on the city’s present by the spatio-temporal hauntings contained within its Gothic psychogeography. As Bakhtin attests, it is not unusual for multiple chronotopes to interact within a single text, genre, or more broadly within a certain author’s writing but “it is common moreover for one of these chronotopes to envelope or dominate the others” because of its status as a powerful conceptual tool (Bakhtin 1981, 252). It is my proposition, therefore, that this occurs in Ackroyd’s *oeuvre* precisely because it is his overarching chronotope of London’s Gothic *genius loci* that defines the nature of each narrative, the characters’ haunting experiences of space and time within them, and the purpose and function of individual chronotopes like that of the haunted house in *The House of Doctor Dee*, as the analysis of this article seeks to show.

Ackroyd actively reflects on how the relationship between space and time functions within his own writing in the 1999 essay “All the Time in the World (Writers and the Nature of Time)”, claiming that in all his works, regardless of whether they are what scholars consider to be postmodern historiographic metafiction, biographies, or narrative histories, his sole concern is with (re)creating London as a “spectral and labyrinthine world where the past and present cannot necessarily be distinguished” (Ackroyd 2002b, 368). Ackroyd’s (re)creation of the city in these “multiple-world fantasies”, to quote Alan Robinson, is achieved through the pervasive use of elements of “fabulation or Gothic repetition, involving paranormal happenings, uncanny historical echoes or rhymes of earlier events, and apparent transhistorical identities of characters separated by centuries,” that effectively function to “destabilise historical reality” (Robinson 2011, 31). In Ackroyd’s essay, he offers further insight into his method, elaborating on exactly how this depiction of the city-space functions in his novels by employing the rather pertinent metaphor of a house with many rooms: “In some it is a question of introducing the past to the present, and in others of introducing the present to the past. If they get on with each other, then we may introduce them to the future” (Ackroyd 2002b, 368). One can conclude then, throughout Ackroyd’s writing, time clearly exists, to quote Bakhtin, as “the fourth dimension of space” (Bakhtin 1981, 84).

Paul Smethurst argues that this kind of approach to time-space in narrative is representative of a new postmodern form of literary chronotope which engages in previously unprecedented narrative complexity by enabling “a multiplicity of forms, as

well as space-times into the novel [...] consistent with a postmodernist strategy to assert plurality, indeterminacy, and positionality over the ordering structuring and generalising chronotopes of realist fiction" (Smethurst 2000, 125). The spatial, or topographical, separation that occurs within postmodern chronotopic works, he claims, can "substitute for the temporal contingency in which past, present and future exist as a network within the present" (ibid: 110). Smethurst actually makes reference to how such principles of "non-directional time" in the postmodern chronotope are used in the parallel narratives of Ackroyd's third novel *Hawksmoor* to exemplify through the spaces of the historic London churches that "time appears to become flattened, to shift from a vertical degree of separation to a horizontal contingency based on complex time-altering symbolisms" (ibid: 110). Smethurst does not discuss *The House of Doctor Dee*, but the parallel narratives the novel contains could be employed just as effectively to support his classification of it as a postmodern chronotopic work within which "spatial proximity alone connects narratives that are separated by historical time" (ibid: 110). However, this article seeks to expand on Smethurst's proposition that it is "spatial proximity alone" that forges these connections between the narratives, by proposing they can be further understood through the trope of haunting in the Gothic tradition, an approach that I believe such spatio-temporal relationships often seem to necessitate in Ackroyd's works.

In Dale Townshend's introduction to *The Gothic World* (2014), a recently published academic collection co-edited with Glennis Byron, the idea of a "poetics of Gothic space" (xxxix) is briefly discussed in order to show how "a chronotopic approach to the challenge of defining the Gothic aesthetic" (xlili) can prove useful for current methods of literary interpretation. For as Townshend so astutely states, the spaces within which the Gothic is most symptomatically dealt with are "the spaces in which we have been hurt and wounded, but to which we obsessively return, the sites we remember in painful and horrific recollection, the spaces that return unwittingly to us in moments of lurid, traumatic recall" (ibid: xxxix). Therefore, before we proceed to examine the haunting presence of this 'Gothic aesthetic' in Ackroyd's novel in line with Townshend's suggestion, it is necessary to first succinctly address some of the scholarship that has already been published on the Gothic and the uncanny in relation to chronotopes of the urban and the postmodern more broadly, and with reference to Ackroyd's writing.

Petra Eckhard's monograph *Chronotopes of the Uncanny: Time and Space in Postmodern New York Novels: Paul Auster's City of Glass and Toni Morrison's Jazz* (2011) unites all of the aforementioned concepts by examining how the uncanny, as defined by Freud and later Tzvetan Todorov, functions chronotopically in the postmodern New York cityscapes of the two eponymous American writers. Linking Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to the Gothic through the trauma of the 'return of the repressed', Eckhard claims chronotopes of the uncanny function as "materializations of repressed memories and histories" which, through postmodern narrative, can "provide access to both subjective and collective terrors apparent at the end of the twentieth century"

(Eckhard 2011, 186). Like Smethurst, Eckhard puts forward an argument for a new understanding of the postmodern chronotope, in this circumstance one that is defined by its spatio-temporal relations to the urban in postmodernity and the uncanny effects she believes it produces in the New York of the texts she analyses. Marta Komsta, in a published version of her doctoral thesis, similarly pursues the idea of a postmodern urban chronotope, however the focus of her analysis is placed squarely on its semiotic function in a selection of novels by Peter Ackroyd (Komsta 2015). Through the metaphorical representation of the city as a kind of 'Chemical Theatre', Komsta argues Ackroyd's urban chronotope is a "palimpsestic literary structure capable of sustaining the pattern of collective cultural continuity" she finds to be staged within his work (ibid: 10). For Komsta, the urban chronotope of Ackroyd's 'Chemical Theatre' presents the 'city-as-stage' as a *semiosphere* (according to Yuri Lotman's theorisation) and a "carnavalesque construct" (in the Bakhtinian tradition), through which she reads Ackroyd's characters to either be "forever trapped in the confines of a text or break free into cultural unity, symbolized in the metaphor of English Music [sic]" (ibid: 200). When brought into discussion together, the work of Smethurst, Eckhard, and Komsta, provide the critical context from which this article may now proceed. By using Ackroyd's own metaphor of the house that 'houses' time as a starting point, this article seeks to propose that, like the chronotopic motif of the Gothic castle, the haunted house of *The House of Doctor Dee* can also function as a new kind of Gothic literary chronotope that reveals the spatial embodiment of historical time to similarly uncanny effects.

### **Uncanny Chronotopes: the Gothic Castle and the Haunted House**

Popularized in eighteenth-century Gothic fiction, perhaps most famously by Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the Gothic castle is a chronotopic space because it is, in Bakhtin's words, "saturated through and through with a time that is historical in the narrow sense of the world, that is, the time of the historical past" (Bakhtin 1981, 245-246). The Gothic castle functions as an antiquated space that can materially 'house' time because "the traces of centuries and generations are arranged in it in visible form as various parts of its architecture, [...] and in the particular human relationships involving dynasty primacy and the transfer of hereditary rights" (ibid: 246). Antiquarian settings and those that are seemingly so, like the haunted house, are a widely-acknowledged feature of the Gothic, but what is of most importance to note here is that they spatially manifest temporal returns, of a secret family history for example, through the physical or psychological hauntings that occur within them. As David Punter explains, the attitude to the past that pervades the Gothic is a "compound of repulsion and attraction, fear of both the violence of the past and its power over the present, and at the same time longing for many of the qualities which that past possessed" (Punter 2014, 198). One can conclude then, that the signifying power of the space of the Gothic castle is chronotopic precisely because it lies in its ability to act as a physical conduit for the paradoxical return of these troubled pasts to an often equally troubled present. Gothic narratives characteristically combine, therefore, "a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space" which,

Chris Baldick argues, work by “reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration” (Baldick 2009, xix). What Baldick is so astutely describing here is exactly what I believe to be the chronotopic relationship that one can find at work within both the Gothic castle and the haunted house, wherein space and time are ruptured by the often supernatural presence(s) of the past in the present, by what could effectively be considered to be the Freudian ‘return of the repressed’.

In Sigmund Freud’s seminal essay “*Das Unheimliche* (The Uncanny)” published in 1919, Freud famously attempts to define this “particular species of the frightening” (Freud 2003, 125) by comparing various dictionary definitions of the term, observing that its etymological origins in *heimlich* (meaning ‘homely’) become “increasingly ambivalent” until it ultimately merges with its antonym *unheimlich* (meaning ‘un-homely’) thus demonstrating that the uncanny is always a “species of the familiar” (ibid: 134). The uncanny, therefore, can be said to begin, quite literally, from *within the home*. Consequently, Freud develops the argument that an uncanny experience, such as the feeling of *déjà vu* or meeting a *doppelgänger*, can be attributed to a personal psychological encounter with the “return of the repressed”; either as the return of “repressed childhood complexes” from family life, or rather, from *within the home*, or as confirmation of the apparent return of “primitive beliefs” from pre-modern society, such as the belief in occult powers like the ‘Evil Eye’ (ibid: 155). These experiences have supposedly been surmounted by repression during our entrance into adulthood, by the advancements of the Enlightenment and the rise of modernity respectively, but in the uncanny moment seemingly return with powerfully unsettling effects.

In his discussion, Freud also makes specific reference to the special kind of uncanny one experiences in a haunted house:

To many people the acme of the uncanny is represented by anything to do with death, dead bodies, revenants, spirits and ghosts. Indeed, we have heard that in some modern languages the German phrase *ein unheimlich Haus* [‘an uncanny house’] can be rendered only by the periphrasis ‘a haunted house’. We might in fact have begun our investigation with this example of the uncanny – perhaps the most potent – but we did not do so because here the uncanny is too much mixed up with the gruesome and partly overlaid by it (ibid: 148).

The haunted house is, therefore, by its own definition *unheimlich*; it is an *un-home-like home*. However, Freud aptly notes that the haunted house is often a contested space for the uncanny because its common usage in traditional Gothic literature was often to provoke fright by “gruesome” effect rather than from the unease evoked by an experience of the return of the repressed. Nonetheless, one could argue that in contemporary Gothic literature, it is the latter that has become the privileged uncanny effect of the haunted house, particularly when the writer uses realism to make us feel ‘at home’ within the text before he “betrays us to a superstition we thought we had

'surmounted'; he tricks us by promising everyday reality and then going beyond it" (ibid: 157).

Since the nineteenth century, the concept of the Freudian uncanny has found its metaphorical home in architecture, as Anthony Vidler has argued in his highly influential text *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (1992), particularly within the house "haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror," and the industrialized city "where what was once walled and intimate, the confirmation of community [...] has been rendered strange by the spatial incursions of modernity" (Vidler 1992, 11). In the contemporary world of the (post)modern metropolis, the decaying medieval castle and untamed rural landscapes of eighteenth-century Gothic works have been transposed into the "emblematic Gothic house, the haunted repository of our historical imaginings" (Punter 2014, 171-172), and the dark labyrinthine streets of a city-space populated by an increasingly unknowable urban mob, within which traditional supernatural hauntings have often become metaphors for the haunting of the self by a traumatised psyche. The uncanny, therefore, continues to persist in the (post)modern urban context of the contemporary Gothic "through tropes of enclosure or isolation [...] and the emergence of paralyzed and alienated characters" (Eckhard 2011, 181).

The uncanny can thus be further understood, as Nicholas Royle proposes, as a "crisis of the 'proper'", derived from the Latin *proprius* meaning 'own', because it entails a "disturbance of the very idea of personal or private property including the properness of proper names"; that is, it is a crisis of what we call 'home' both physically and psychologically (Royle 2003, 1). It makes what was once intimately familiar unknown, or something unfamiliar suddenly and terrifyingly known, through a slippage that blurs what should be identifiable as reality with occult fantasies of supernaturalism, by obfuscating what is 'proper' within our very selves, in Freudian terms, through a confrontation with the *doppelgänger* and death. As such, Royle rather eloquently describes the experience of the uncanny as "a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of the hearth and home" (ibid: 1). Viewed chronotopically, Ackroyd's haunted house of *The House of Doctor Dee* overwhelmingly reveals this sense of "homeliness uprooted" by creating a 'crisis of the proper (self)' for its inhabitants, as the rest of this article seeks to demonstrate through a close examination of the text.

### ***The (Haunted) House of Doctor Dee***

"I inherited the house from my father. That was how it all began" begins *The House of Doctor Dee*, immediately invoking the tradition of the Gothic castle and its questions of ancestry and inheritance (Ackroyd 1994, 1). In the alternating chapters that follow, two parallel narratives unfold. The numbered chapters of the first strand are narrated by twenty-nine year old contemporary Londoner Matthew Palmer in 1993 (the year of his thirtieth birthday and the novel's publication). After his father's death, Matthew moves



into his mysterious house in Clerkenwell, which is eventually revealed to have once belonged to Elizabethan magus Doctor John Dee, a discovery that leads him to the dark secrets of his own past. While the second set of chapters, mostly named after architectural spaces within the home such as 'The Library' or 'The Closet', are narrated in the sixteenth century by Doctor Dee himself. In this timeline, Dee endeavours in relative secrecy to create immortal artificial life in the form of a homunculus; a 'little man' formed by dark alchemy through whom "I, who made him, will live within him for ever. He, who owes his life to me, will return to me" (ibid: 226).

Like Doctor Dee, Matthew is also a professional researcher, whose work has led him to view "the past as [his] present, so in turn the present moment became part of the past" (ibid: 13). When he discovers his father has left him all of his estate including a secret house, he quickly becomes obsessed with learning its history, seemingly compelled by the strangeness of the house itself. When the connection to Doctor Dee is finally revealed, Matthew is overwhelmed by an urge to know more about the life of the man whose presence still seems to inhabit his home, since he feels "he was everywhere at once and, as I walked about his old house, I had the sense that somehow he had conquered time" (ibid: 132-133). A strong desire to possess the past dictates both Matthew and Dee's lives and narratives. As Matthew states, with reference to befriending fellow researcher Daniel Moore: "There is a camaraderie that grows up among those who work with old books and old papers, largely, I suspect, because we understand that we are at odds with the rest of the world: we are travelling backwards, while all those around us are still moving forward" (ibid: 12-13). For Dee, it is driven by his quest to (re)discover the mythical lost city of ancient London, aided by his (fraudulent) apprentice Edward Kelley, in order to harness the spiritual power of its godlike creators (ibid: 190-191), but it is also made evident by his wish to create "new life without the help of any womb" through the homunculus; a double of himself within an "everlasting creature" whose cyclical thirty-year existence grants it the power to possess the past, present, and future (ibid: 104, 124-125). These two temporally distanced yet intimately interwoven narratives are brought together in the final chapter, titled 'The Vision', in a transcendental space outside of time within which Matthew Palmer, Doctor Dee, and Peter Ackroyd (as author) commune in what I interpret to be a kind of textual *séance*.

The palimpsestic construction of narrative in the novel is also reproduced in the structure of its titular haunted house. In a reflection of the novel's alternating parallel plots and their passage through history to uncover what has been buried by time, it "was not of any one period" rather "the house became younger as it grew higher, [...] and must have been rebuilt or restored in several different periods" (ibid: 2) because what is now the basement was once the ground floor as "the old house is descending into the ground" (ibid: 15). Matthew's friend and fellow researcher Daniel Moore accurately notes it is "very unusual to find a house of this age in London" (ibid: 14) as the 1666 Great Fire of London brought many historic buildings to ruin, just as the bulldozers of capitalist redevelopment have done in recent years. Matthew even

explains the house's patchwork construction out of the materials of its various past forms prompts the sensation "that somehow this house, and myself within it, had no connection with the world which surrounded us" (ibid: 4). It thus provides the house with the appearance of an architectural palimpsest, of being constructed out of the very fabric of history itself, confirming its function as a spatial conduit for the novel's temporal hauntings. Susana Onega even proposes that, in accordance with the philosophical works of the 'real' Doctor Dee, the structure of the house may also be read as representative of a "huge transdimensional door" (Onega 1999, 121). She suggests this reading is conveyed in Matthew's vision of first entering the house by opening four coloured doors of black, white, green, and red which correspond with alchemy's constitutive elements of earth, air, water, and fire (Ackroyd 1994, 9-10), and in its three floors that represent the "cosmic levels and their human equivalents, body, soul and spirit", which together reveal that "the house, shaped like a human body [...] is a striking example of the *monas hieroglyphica*, the materialization of Doctor Dee as Cosmic Man or *anthropos*" (Onega 1999, 121). Onega compellingly extends this hermetic analysis further to the structure of the novel itself and the relationship between its chapters, arguing that it can also be read as a representation of "the monad's constitutive elements" (ibid: 130). When the house's physical construction out of the different spaces of various time periods is read chronotopically, Onega's implication that Dee's home is an alchemical representation of his cosmic self is given further significance for, as I argue in this article, it can be read as an embodiment of the haunted house chronotope, in which its original owner haunts it by transcending space and time to become (in)corporealised within its structure.

Moreover, Ackroyd's house of Doctor Dee is not located at its original site in Mortlake, but on the seemingly fictitious Cloak Lane, "difficult to find [...] some thirty yards north-west of the Green" (Ackroyd 1994, 2) at the historic heart of Clerkenwell. There are two significant points to be made about this relocation to a more central area of London. The first is that it allows Ackroyd to physically place Dee within his "private mythology of London" (Lewis 2007, 75), in an area to which he ascribes a specifically haunting *genius loci* in his historical works. As he writes in *London: The Biography*, "the secret life of Clerkenwell, like its well, goes very deep" because it has long been home to the city's radical, spiritualist, and occult movements (Ackroyd 2001, 469). In the novel, the house becomes a physical repository for this history, giving the impression that "all the time has flowed here, into this house, and there is none left outside" (Ackroyd 1994, 82). Amongst the papers his father left him after his death, Matthew even finds an envelope titled "The Documents in the Case" which is filled with "passages in several different hands, scrawled across various types of paper" ranging in date from 1662 to 1924, that reveal a carefully compiled historical record of past incidents of haunting in the house (ibid: 219-224). Therefore, it is my suggestion that the house can be read to function chronotopically like "a sealed room" (ibid: 3) for all of London's lost time, within which these repressed 'unofficial' narratives of the city's esoteric past can be literally and figuratively preserved, because in Ackroyd's 'mythology' of London, to quote Julian Wolfreys, "a house or a library, or an area such as Clerkenwell [...], is

formed through a structural resonance which is both temporal and spatial, and which therefore serves in an emblematic manner [...] as a figure for the secret history and the spectral revenance of London as a whole" (Wolfreys 2004, 139-140).

The relocation to an area rich with what Ackroyd suggests is a mystical kind of historical continuity further positions Doctor Dee to be a part of Ackroyd's "Cockney visionary" tradition (see Ackroyd 2002a). In his non-fiction, Ackroyd has explained his belief in a collection of "London luminaries"; writers and artists, scholars and performers throughout history who have uniquely understood the city's spirit of place because they are able "to hear the music of the stones, to glimpse the spiritual in the local and the actual, to render tangible things the material of intangible allegory, all these are the centre of the London vision" Ackroyd finds within their lives and works (Ackroyd 2004, 319). However, it is important to note that the house of Ackroyd's novel is not the historical Doctor Dee's home, nor is it a historically accurate Dee who lives there. As Matthew tellingly suggests "every book has a different Doctor Dee [...] The past is difficult, you see. You think you understand a person or an event, but then you turn a corner and everything is difference once again [...] It's like this house" (Ackroyd 1994, 136). This leads us to our second point of significance; that the house of Doctor Dee is endowed with a spatio-temporal function that is clearly much more than just the novel's setting. As Laura Colombino reminds us, "houses and other enclosed spaces are often conceived as sensitive membranes, where exchanges take place between the inside and the city outside, but they can also work as metaphors of the body itself or, alternatively, as microcosmic projections of the larger metropolis" (Colombino 2013, 8). The house of Doctor Dee thus functions as a chronotopic representation of the uncanny relationship Ackroyd believes space and time to share within the city of London, and its haunting is what I argue allows for it to be positioned as both an embodied character and a symbolic metaphor in the tradition of the (in this circumstance, British) ghost story.<sup>3</sup>

Manuel Aguirre has argued that in modern Gothic works, the haunted house is "a *haunting* house [...] it does not happen to be sheltering a numinous presence, it *is* the numinous presence, an otherworldly living space that craves birth, sustenance, growth, reproduction in the human world" (Aguirre 1990, 192). I believe Ackroyd's novel exemplifies Aguirre's argument to a nicety for the characters' narratives are explicitly shaped by their uncanny experiences of haunting for which the house 'itself' frequently appears to be responsible. At various moments throughout the story, Dee and Matthew feel the presence of one another as the house carries their voices and images like ghostly echoes across time. Dee and Kelley can hear Matthew and Daniel talking in his chamber of demonstration (Ackroyd 1994, 188), just as Matthew can hear their conversation through the sealed door of the basement laboratory (ibid: 229). But as the novel

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<sup>3</sup> Julia Briggs' *Night Visitors: The Rise and Fall of the English Ghost Story* (1977) provides the first comprehensive study of the traditions of the genre, but for an excellent contemporary resource that explores the history of the British ghost story to date see Simon Hay's *A History of the Modern British Ghost Story* (2011).

progresses, Matthew is overcome by the uncanny feeling of not being in control of himself when in the house; his kitchen and bedroom are mysteriously cleaned (ibid: 127), he is overcome by a surprising urge to defecate in the garden (ibid: 131), and ravenously eats food he has found conveniently left out for him (ibid: 136). He becomes particularly disturbed by the feeling that there is “someone, or something” living in his house (ibid: 128). The presence Matthew feels emanating from some sinister force within the house is repeatedly suggested to be his *doppelgänger* Dee’s homunculus. Matthew’s gardener digs up a circle of small bones surrounded by broken pieces from a tube of glass (ibid: 122), the same glass tube Matthew had earlier found whole in a drawer in the house (ibid: 15), which he later opens again to find a secret compartment filled with his father’s papers that include “Doctor Dee’s Recipe” for the creation of a homunculus and a document recording the history of the “Passages in Its Life” thus far (ibid: 123). The escalation of Matthew’s unbalanced behaviour is thus implied to have been caused by his strange connection to the presence within the house, insinuating this is because perhaps he is “the homunculus [who] remembers nothing about its past or future until it returns home at the end of its thirty years, but it always does return home” (ibid: 125).

Furthermore, the reader is also invited to experience the house’s uncanny acts of haunting through their echoes *between* the parallel narratives. When Dee employs the services of a prostitute named Marion on the day his father dies (ibid: 120), Matthew hires a prostitute named Mary shortly after his father’s death (ibid: 173). Dee witnesses the ghostly apparition of their intercourse in his basement laboratory (ibid: 217-218), which is in turn the same place where Matthew’s father and Daniel Moore performed their rituals of sexual magic (ibid: 172). When Matthew breaks a pigeon’s wing in a psychotic fury by throwing a book on Doctor Dee at it, stamping on the bird until it dies (ibid: 136), mere pages later a dead pigeon with “a single wing” appears in the mouth of Dee’s cat (ibid: 159). Matthew even finds in his father’s documents the story of a previous inhabitant of the house, a 1920s writer overcome with fear that he unknowingly plagiarized his novel about eighteenth-century London radicalism (the action of which he relocated to Clerkenwell), a fear that is eventually confirmed, but it is also the period on which Daniel is writing his monograph (ibid: 222-224). The scene is undeniably an intratextual reference to Ackroyd’s own metafictional work, which further foreshadows the entry of the voice of the author in the final chapter’s transcendental vision:

*The House of Doctor Dee* itself leads me to that conclusion: no doubt you expected it to be written by the author whose name appears on the cover and the title-page, but in fact many of the words and phrases are taken from John Dee himself. Just as he took a number of mechanical parts and out of them constructed a beetle that could fly, so I have taken a number of obscure texts and have fashioned a novel from their rearrangement (ibid: 275).

The alternating parallel narratives on the surface appear, then, to be juxtaposed by their differing temporalities, but they are actually very carefully connected by a kind of textual haunting that is echoed spatially through the chronotope of the haunted house. To further illustrate, throughout the novel, the final sentence of each chapter is rewritten as the beginning of the next and these textual echoes continue until the end of chapter five, after which the ending of each narrator's chapters begins their next one until the final chapter in which the past and present narrative strands merge together within a space outside of time. For example, at the end of chapter one, Matthew "seemed to see the dark shape of a man soaring upward above Cloak Lane" (ibid: 19) and the next chapter 'The Spectacle' begins with Dee exclaiming, "What became of the flying man?" (ibid: 20), and ends with "It was a clear night, and the fixed stars were all I needed to light my path to Clerkenwell" (ibid: 38) which begins chapter two when Matthew decides to walk through the night (ibid: 39). In the concluding chapter 'The Vision', the simultaneity of the past within the present (and *vice versa*) hauntingly reoccurs and is represented as a kind of transcendental awakening for the characters, within which, Wolfreys argues, "a free flowing play between distinct temporal locations [...] overlaid on one another in the same area of London" actually allows for "movement outside the times of Palmer's and Dee's narratives, when someone masquerading as the author steps forward to [...] present his vision of London" (Wolfreys 2004, 138). This vision could be considered to be the overarching chronotope of Ackroyd's *oeuvre*, which is conveyed in this novel through the spatio-temporal hauntings that create the chronotope of the haunted house. However, it is an experience that could equally be understood to be the symptom of a mental breakdown in Matthew after his father's death, triggered, in psychoanalytic terms, by the inheritance of 'the sins of the father' in the form of his mysterious house and the monstrous secrets contained within it, that in turn returns the repressed trauma of Matthew's lost childhood.

It is my proposition that Matthew's experience of haunting within (or rather, by) the house therefore conveys the uncanny's 'crisis of the proper self' via the Freudian return of the repressed in the modern tradition of a psychological ghost story, which Julia Briggs defines as "a story in which one explanation of apparently supernatural occurrences is to be found in the mental instability of the witness" (Briggs 1977, 142). Matthew remembers "very little" of his childhood, sometimes finding it "hard to believe that [he] had one at all", and often feels as if he "had come into being, and passed away, within one night" (Ackroyd 1994, 80). He plainly states "I really don't believe that there's anything there, just a space out of which a few words emerge from time to time" (ibid: 81), but he struggles with this psychological lack with an increasing intensity as the novel progresses for the "old house disturbed me, or provoked me" (ibid: 80). The cause for such a deep level of repressive disassociation is exposed towards the novel's conclusion when his mother reveals he was 'found' as a baby and secretly adopted by his father, while also accidentally revealing that his father sexually abused him, an act that is implied to have been an attempt to raise spirits in Dee's house through sexual magic (ibid: 176-177):

That was the secret, after all. I had grown up in a world without love – a world of magic, of money, of possession – and so I had none for myself or for others. That was why I had seen ghosts rather than real people. That was why I was haunted by voices from the past and not from my own time. That was why I had dreamed of being imprisoned in glass, cold and apart. The myth of the homunculus was just another aspect of my father’s loveless existence – such an image of sterility and false innocence could have come from no other source (ibid: 178).

One could argue, therefore, that Matthew’s mental instability, conveyed through his experiences of haunting in his father’s house, is in fact a representation of the uncanny’s crisis of the proper self. What Matthew has violently repressed is an incestuous betrayal of the proper; his hidden adoption means he does not know his own ‘proper’ name, while the childhood abuse he experienced at the hands of his father violated the ‘proper’ conduct of the family home and denied him ‘proper’ ownership over his own body. In an episode not long after this realization, when Matthew hears the voices of Kelley and Dee in the basement laboratory, he cries out questioning the presence of the ghosts in his house, asking whether “they reflect sexual unease [...] And if ghosts are a sign of frustration, what about all the other elements – the locked door, the disordered bed, the weeping child? [...] Do you have anything to do with my father?” (ibid: 229). It is an uncanny moment of realisation for Matthew, that the inheritance of his father’s unhomey home and his attempt to make it his own is what has triggered in him the return of his repressed childhood trauma. It is thus what has caused the spirits of the house to be raised, both metaphorically and literally, because as Jakob Winnberg astutely states, it is the “doubling of trauma [...] that makes possible the acknowledgment of it and [...] finds its metaphorical expression in haunting, ghostly echoes, *Doppengängern*, and the like” (Winnberg 2013, 233).

In light of this interpretation of the house’s spatio-temporal hauntings, I propose the presence of Matthew’s *doppelgänger* the homunculus within it can be further read as the monstrous projection of his traumatised unconscious. The home and other kinds of “lived space” can, as Andrew Hock-Soon Ng argues, “assume monstrous proportions when it becomes a repository for the subject's unconscious; the home becomes the locus of the subject's projected anxieties, bringing into relief the repressed other and (possibly) transforming the subject into a monster” (Ng 2004, 16). When Matthew first encounters the house he feels as if he were “about to enter a human body” because it “resembled the torso of a man rearing up, while his arms still lay spread upon the ground” (Ackroyd 1994, 3), and over the course of the narrative’s events soon begins to feel like he too is “becoming part of the old house” (ibid: 44). Towards the end of the novel, Matthew discovers his father bought the house from a Mr. Abraham Crowley on the 27th of September 1963, a date which “aroused fresh speculation” for it had always been celebrated as his own birthday, revealing a critical connection between the apparent beginning of his own life and the life of the house (ibid: 219). The haunted house can be read, then, as Matthew’s abhuman architectural double; a monstrous extension of himself that embodies and is embodied by the homunculus because it is, in

Susana Onega's words, "the microcosmic evil emanation of Dr Dee's house" that haunts its home and thus him too (Onega 1998, 68). For, as Manuel Aguirre reminds us, "the first thing we learn about the modern Haunted House is that it is *alive* [...] the force that lurks in it is part of the house itself" (Aguirre 1990, 190). One can thus conclude that Matthew's narrative represents the contemporary Gothic chronotope of the haunted house with its psychologically motivated ghosts, in that it is a literal reflection of Freud's concept of the self as a 'house' haunted by a troubled past, by a narrative of personal trauma that is not, or cannot, necessarily be resolved. Matthew is convinced a "madman" haunts his house and arguably, that madman is himself (Ackroyd 1994, 36).

How, then, are we to read the historical narrative of Doctor Dee and the significance of its unhomey hauntings? The parallel narratives of Dee and Matthew's lives within the same haunted house appear as uncanny reflections, for they are both tales of trauma and loss, of betrayal and regret. Dee, like Matthew, has a troubled relationship with his ailing father, and the final visits they each make before their fathers' deaths are echoes of one another; both are repulsed by their closeness to such physical and mental deterioration, they recoil in disgust at their fathers' attempts to grasp their hands, and abandon them moments before their death (ibid: 94-99). Dee is betrayed by his charlatan apprentice Edward Kelley, who, in allegiance with his old assistant John Overbury, murders his wife Katherine and sets fire to the house after his efforts to steal Dee's alchemical secrets are discovered (see 'The Closet'), just as Matthew is betrayed by his best friend Daniel who secretly practised cross-dressing and sexual magic with his father, and was instructed by him to befriend and "watch over" Matthew because he was "special" (ibid: 140-141). However, the hauntings depicted in Dee's narrative further recall traditional ghost stories in which ghosts return to resolve unfinished business by offering the haunted visions of change, as Dee's father and wife do for him in the chapters 'The City' and 'The Garden' by showing his future in "the world without love" (ibid: 204) if he pursues his occult experiments, or if he were to abandon them and "see the world with love" (ibid: 246).

It is possible, therefore, to argue that the ghostly encounters of Dee's narrative further function to illuminate the dichotomy between Enlightenment rationality and the metaphysical spiritualism of times past brought into conflict during the Renaissance period in England. Jakob Winnberg has proposed that as such, the novel "does not simply deal with individual trauma, but also with a more collective, shared trauma of modernity" through which he reads Doctor Dee himself to function as a representation of this "traumatic cultural rift" (Winnberg 2013, 234-35). Moreover, it is a dichotomy that I find is also inherent to the experience of the uncanny in the Gothic. The development of the Gothic and its ghost stories, to quote Julia Briggs, "was itself part of a wider reaction against the rationalism and growing secularization of the Enlightenment" (Briggs 2012, 179). The Gothic, throughout its history of literary resurrection and resurgence, has always been a medium through which the uncanny is able to return within apparent everyday life and rupture it, for it refuses to allow the ghosts of the past to be laid to rest; they are the essential experiential and psychological

fragments of reflection upon which our complex understandings of modernity are based. What we find uncanny is that which we once feared returning, it is a disturbance of what we thought we already knew to be (un)real, and it is from this threat of the disintegration of our concept of reality that the premise of the Gothic proceeds. The “disturbing ambivalence” that is generated by the uncanny’s presence(s) in the Gothic can thus be read, according to Fred Botting, as an attempt to “explain what the Enlightenment left unexplained, [...] to reconstruct the divine mysteries that reason had begun to dismantle, to recuperate pasts and histories that offered permanence and unity in excess of the limits of rational and moral order” (Botting 1996, 23).

By merging a modern ghost story and its Gothic traditions with a nevertheless equally haunted historical narrative, the chronotopic space of the haunted house is used in Ackroyd’s novel to intertwine the two and make them both strange, invoking Freud’s definition of the uncanny. We are presented, then, with two possible lines of interpretation: one is a ‘traditional’ Gothic reading that privileges the supernatural, the occult, and the visionary, while the other is a contemporary psychoanalytic reading of the Gothic wherein the supernatural becomes a metaphor for trauma and loss, and a symptom of subject’s psychic disintegration. The modern British ghost story is renowned for playing these potential interpretations off one another, perhaps best exemplified by Henry James’ *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) and the unanswered question of whether the children’s Governess is truly haunted by the ghosts of her predecessors or by her own madness. David Punter believes the prowess of the contemporary author of the Gothic is thus determined by the skill with which they are able to “continually throw the supernatural into doubt, and in doing so they also serve the important function of removing the illusory halo of certainty from the so called ‘natural’ world” (Punter 2014, 183). The depiction of the chronotope of the haunted house in Ackroyd’s novel is, in my opinion, a testament to this great Gothic literary tradition. *The (haunted) House of Doctor Dee* is possessed by an ambiguity as to what exactly happens to the characters, what was ‘real’ and what was merely ‘spectral’ as it were, that remains to be resolved at its conclusion because, as Matthew asks: “who in this world can make the dead speak? Who can see them in vision? That would be a form of magic – to bring the dead to life again, if only in the pages of a book” (Ackroyd 1994, 258).

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