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Peter Ackroyd's Ghostly Heroines

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<1>As is perhaps fitting for a writer who has immersed himself so thoroughly in the subjects of the biographies he has produced, the dead are at the centre of much of Peter Ackroyd's writing, particularly his novels. For instance, *Hawksmoor* (1985), *First Light* (1989) and *Milton in America* (1996) foreground the central rôle of the buried dead as an active force in the living world. The dead are stakeholders in the community of the living, and Ackroyd is at pains to stress the need for interaction between the two. In the introduction to his 2010 anthology *The English Ghost*, Ackroyd points to the importance of the revenant as 'a bridge of light between the past and the present, or between the living and the dead' (1). This image echoes the bridge of light seen by Matthew Palmer in *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) which is taken up by the narrator in his plea for a communion between past and present: 'help me to create another bridge across two shores [...] and all those with whom we dwell – living or dead – will become the mystical city universal' (277). Ackroyd's revenants bring the living across this bridge, calling them out of the dimension of time and into perpetuity.

<2>The interaction between the living and the dead embodies the more general interaction between the past and the present which informs Ackroyd's visionary view of London as a perpetual city. In an interview with Julian Wolfreys, he states that 'only in London could [T. S.] Eliot have imagined the sense of time, of time past, time present and time future' (Gibson and Wolfreys 255). It is thus not surprising that the most explicit instances of the interactive relationship between the living and the dead should occur in three novels concerned directly with the question of location: the defeat of time by place is central to Ackroyd's visionary approach to London, and to England itself. It is true that in *The Great Fire of London* (1982) the ghost of Amy Dorrit underlines the significance of the Borough (despite being a fictional ghost, something which has exercised some readers (see Charnick 54)), but it is the three 'ghostly heroines' of the novels *First Light* (1989), *English Music* (1992) and *The House of Doctor Dee* (1993) who exercise an active force on the living, encouraging the protagonists of their respective novels to embrace the ongoing human continuum, a theme developed through the trope of the family and linked inextricably with the concept of place.

<3>The possibility of such a motif has not yet been suggested, principally because, as will become apparent, insufficient attention has been paid to the deceased Kathleen Clare, Cecilia Harcombe and Katherine Dee as active participants in their respective novels. Cecilia Harcombe is particularly absent from considerations of *English Music*, possibly because she is dead when the narrative begins, but nonetheless her presence pervades the narrative, as will be seen below. The portrayals of all three characters have moreover much to say about Ackroyd's promotion of the idea of reception, again a topic which requires exploration but which is beyond the scope of this examination.

<4>*First Light* is concerned with the wider portrayal of England and as such does not focus on London. However, the novel is explicit in its promotion of the significance of place in relation to time, and it is in this novel that Ackroyd begins to develop the motif of the 'ghostly heroine' and her involvement with place. At the heart of *First Light* is the extended family of the Mints, and their perpetual presence at Pilgrim Valley is embodied in two specific locations: the Mint family cottage and the grave complex which is centred on the coffin of Old Barren One.

<5>It is in connection with this grave complex that the ghostly heroine motif arises. The finds at the complex, and the marks left behind by generations of Mints, embody the overall human continuum, as exemplified by the locals' practice of bringing their dead to Pilgrim Valley to be cremated near Old Barren One's remains. Indeed, the novel's emphatic recapitulations of the need to connect – earth and sky, past and present, fact and fable – confirm the need to see the extended Mint family, and the locations associated with them, within the context of society at large. The ties that bind the family together are drawn on a wide scale, and the imperative of the family's interests permeates local society.

<6>As a consequence, their exclusivity causes the narrative's husband-and-wife relationships to suffer, in juxtaposition with the greater cohesion of the extended family. Thus the relationship between Joey and Floey Hanover comes under strain as the comedian Joey, an adoptee searching for his history, becomes drawn into the Mint family after discovering that he is himself a Mint. While Joey becomes regenerated by his reunion with his cousins, his wife Floey resists this integration and becomes an outsider, an embodiment of the world which Joey is leaving behind.

<7>It is from the narrative's other husband-and-wife relationship, that between Mark and Kathleen Clare, that the ghostly heroine motif arises. The relationship is not as cohesive as that of the Hanovers, threatened as it is by Kathleen's isolation and by Mark's obsessive archaeological quest. Many readers have pointed out the echoes of Hardy in *First Light* (see Onega 85-8 and Lewis 57-60), and the Clare marriage is true to the novel's Hardian atmosphere, with both partners so distracted by their own preoccupations that the relationship is doomed to perpetual misunderstanding until Katherine throws herself from Swithin's Tower. Thus, though Susana Onega (86-7) and Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys (150) attribute Kathleen's suicide to her seeking release from depression and disability, it is also the culminating act of her gradual withdrawal from her husband's life and constitutes the ultimate breakdown of the Clares' relationship.

<8>It is in death that Kathleen Clare becomes transformed. As a revenant, she loses her introspective depression to become instead an active participant in Mark's quest to

engage with the continuum represented by the Pilgrim Valley tumulus and its occupants. Viewing her suicide within an anthropological context, Laura Giovannelli sees Kathleen as a willing sacrificial victim, laying down her life to enable Mark's quest to interpret the grave complex (176). Certainly her active rôle is foretold by Mark Clare's dream, lying inside the tumulus, of his wife leading him by the hand, but it is realised in the imminence of her presence as he begins his journey to the centre of the complex. He feels 'as if Kathleen herself were leading him forward' (266), and he seems to smell her scent; later, after he has fallen down into the inner chamber of the tomb, his first coherent thought is of Kathleen.

<9>Mark's journey into the tomb culminates in a moment redolent with spiritual significance as he places his hands on Old Barren One's coffin. It is at this point that Mark is taken momentarily out of the sphere of time with a glimpse of eternity which Barry Lewis sees rightly as 'a moment of epiphany' (Lewis 56): 'He had seen eternity, too, for here there was no beginning and no end' (289). Mark reaches beyond the confines of time towards Kathleen, saying her name out loud and feeling that he has entered 'another time, a time where his wife continued to exist'. This is not however merely a communion between husband and wife. Kathleen is now part of the imminent community of the dead, as Mark understands: 'he felt at peace not only with Kathleen but with all the dead'. The dead permeate the chamber where he stands: 'They were the stone against which he leaned, the rock upon which he stood. They had become the world'.

<10>It is through the imminence of his dead wife that Mark reaches the communion with the dead which, in *First Light*, constitutes a true alignment with the human continuum, reached in connection with Old Barren One's tomb. This alignment is confirmed later at the burning of Old Barren One's coffin, when the living standing around Joey's cottage are confronted by apparitions which restore the fractured relationships elaborated throughout the narrative. In this final vision of reconciliation, Mark is again with Kathleen 'as he knew he always would be' (325). In her death Kathleen is no longer solitary, having joined, and having helped bring others to join, the wider family of the human continuum.

<11>Kathleen Clare then becomes associated with the pull of Old Barren One at the geographic focus of the narrative where place overcomes time, a tension at the heart of Ackroyd's overall narrative thrust, where location causes time to lose its meaning. This is made explicit in his next novel *English Music*. It is here that Ackroyd turns his attention back to London, but only to establish a dichotomy between the city and the country, between the London of the father of the narrator, Timothy Harcombe, and Upper Harford, his dead mother's childhood home. The motif of the ghostly heroine is deployed here to explore this dichotomy. In an expansion of the portrayal of the dead Kathleen Clare, who approaches through suggestion until the climactic moment of apparition at the cottage, the background presence of the deceased Cecilia Harcombe, mother of the narrator, is central to the narrative of *English Music*, giving her an imminence in the lives of both her son and her husband, Clement.

<12>This imminence seems too subtle for some readers. For Giovannelli, Cecilia's intuited presence is marginalised by the influence of Clement Harcombe (199), and subsequent readings of *English Music* tend to focus on what Gibson and Wolfreys call the 'dead weight of paternal authority' (146) to the exclusion of any consideration of Cecilia

Harcombe. For instance, Jeffrey Roessner cites 'Tim's dependence on his father' as representative of the 'stranglehold' exercised by the past over the characters of *English Music* and that Timothy has no identity apart from Clement: 'Losing direction in his life when separated from him, Tim has trouble finding a career and often spends his time trying to locate his dad' (118).

<13>However, despite having died giving birth to Timothy, Cecilia Harcombe's presence in the narrative is inescapable, expressed principally in terms of the objects she has left behind. For Timothy they evoke her presence as if by a kind of psychometry, appropriately for the son of a medium and faith healer. For instance, after healing his grandmother, he finds solace from the resultant distress in wearing his mother's dress and playing her mandolin. Onega seems to misunderstand, and indeed to underestimate, the significance of this moment, which she sees as revealing Timothy's 'strong Oedipal attraction' for his mother, and his 'taste for transvestism' (104, 105), a Procrustean statement given that Timothy has never met his mother, nor is there any other moment when he cross-dresses.

<14>While Giovannelli acknowledges that Timothy establishes spiritual contact ('un contatto spirituale') with his mother in Wiltshire, she does not develop the idea: in the face of his father's influence on Timothy, she relegates Cecilia's presence to that of a purely symbolic muse or guardian spirit (221; cf. 199: 'una sorta di Musa o "spirito tutelare"'). It is to be remembered however that Timothy has been shown in the Chemical Theatre to be sensitive to the presence of the dead, and his engagement with his dead mother is presaged by his feeling unsettled at his first visit to her grave, particularly when he touches her gravestone. That he is sensitive to her increasing presence is therefore not to be dismissed lightly. Indeed, his engagement is reflected in the death of his mother's dog Friday, who is replaced with another called Monday: like his mother, Timothy has a dog bought for him, and while her dog's name speaks of the end of the week, his dog's name evokes the beginning. As she is the past, he is the future.

<15> It is significant that his reception of his mother's influence only develops at Timothy's grandparents' house in Upper Harford. Just as the power of the Mint family calls Joey Hanover back to Pilgrim Valley, so Cecilia Harcombe draws her son, and ultimately her husband, back to Upper Harford, to restore them to their proper contexts. It is this which calls into being the location-based dichotomy of the narrative, as Upper Harford penetrates Timothy's previously sealed world of London, a place associated inextricably with his father. It has trapped his father, and Timothy believes he will become trapped in turn. As a child, he senses the repetitive nature of London life: 'it was as if I knew that I would be walking down such streets all of my life' (12). One evening, catching sight of three members of his father's circle waiting by the garden gate, he fears that he will become like them, 'another pale, baffled, defeated, tremulous human figure standing in the London lamplight' (59). London is a place of fear, which is why he dreads his father's habit of taking him down unexpected turnings while they are out walking.

<16>Though it is Timothy's maternal grandfather who intrudes into this world, Timothy recognises that it is his mother entering his life; soon he acknowledges her hand in shaping his destiny: 'Cecilia Sinclair would not be forgotten, and her son would come into his inheritance' (107). Indeed, the pull of Upper Harford is irresistible. Though he

returns to London twice, Timothy is unable to establish himself there. Upper Harford, however, remains constant, and when after some years he returns to settle with his grandparents, he finds everything the same, the embodiment of the Ackroydian defeat of time by place. Like *First Light's* Pilgrim Valley, Upper Harford represents the extended family, and like Joey Hanover, Timothy has been called back to where he truly belongs. His grandmother says, 'Everyone belongs somewhere' (328); Timothy has no roots in London, but he does have them in Upper Harford.

<17>The significance within the novel's structure of the locational dichotomy between Upper Harford and London is missed by readings which focus solely on the paternal influence embodied in Clement Harcombe. Thus, Barry Lewis interprets Timothy's moving between London and Wiltshire within the context of the father-son relationship, describing it as establishing 'the basic rhythm of presence and absence that punctuates the book' (68). Due appreciation of the insistent presence of the guiding hand of Cecilia Harcombe however shows that the impact of both parents on Timothy's life constitutes one aspect of the overall dichotomy at the narrative's core.

<18>That London suffers by comparison with Upper Harford is clear from the brittle nature of relationships associated with the city, a contrast with the solidity of the Sinclair family. Once the initial order of their home life on Hackney Square has been broken up, the relationship between Clement Harcombe and his son is never truly restored in London; it is not until they are reunited in Upper Harford that a bond is re-established which endures until Clement's death. Just so, the Harcombe Circle disintegrates once the child Timothy leaves London: though some scraps of it remain, it can never be restored. These are people without roots, including Clement Harcombe himself. Significantly, Cecilia Harcombe's only link to London is her grave: in London she is dead; in Upper Harford, she draws her husband and her son to her to restore Timothy's parental inheritance.

<19>The climactic event which causes Timothy to leave the circus and embrace his inheritance fully is the death of his grandparents, and it is now that Cecilia Harcombe finally makes her presence felt beyond question, by appearing as a revenant to call Timothy off the road and back to Upper Harford. In a moment reminiscent of Kathleen Clare joining the dead who are so imminent to the living, the Sinclairs are united in death with the generations of Timothy's extended family: 'I knew that they were all together at last. My grandparents, with my mother and father, and others besides' (398).

<20>As in *First Light*, the portrayal in *English Music* of the extended family is anchored firmly in location, but here it goes beyond the immediate. Upper Harford itself becomes subsumed by the wider geographic context of England itself. Timothy's visions, which interrupt the narrative, celebrate the artistic continuities of England, and there are references throughout the novel to England's enduring character. Significantly, when Timothy and his father tour around England with the circus, their travels are linked to the spirit of the nation, specifically by Timothy's readings of Malory. For his father, their travels are 'a quest, a search for the past', while Timothy sees in them a predetermined destiny (375).

<21>Ackroyd underpins his presentation of the control exerted by Cecilia Harcombe, and thus the dichotomy between the narrative's two principle locations, by providing a

foil in Gloria Patterson. A member of the Harcombe Circle, she is at one point the partner, and presumably the potential second wife, of Clement Harcombe. Gloria is associated solely with London: on the one occasion she comes to Upper Harford, she cannot wait to leave. Gloria lacks the benevolence of Cecilia, coming to exert a sadistic control over the men in her life, who are seen to respond in a masochistic way. Like Cecilia, Gloria exercises control over both Clement and Timothy Harcombe, but it is a dominating, destructive control which seeks to undermine rather than build up. When a sadomasochistic relationship begins to flower between Gloria and Timothy, she uses it to drive a wedge between him and his father. The poisoned nature of her need to control, stemming largely from her lack of self-worth, confirms not only the importance of Cecilia's function within the novel as a guiding ghostly heroine, but it underlines also the danger of a London where relationships break up, fathers disappear and those with power prey on the vulnerable.

<22>The female revenants of *First Light* and *English Music* are thus embodiments of Ackroyd's imperative to acknowledge and embrace the wider human continuum, a continuum embodied in location. This imperative is developed further in *The House of Doctor Dee*, a novel which realigns the themes of family and of inheritance. Here Ackroyd uses the motif of the ghostly heroine for the last time, as he concludes his four-novel promotion of the family begun in *Chatterton* (1987). His next novel, *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994), shows the grim consequences of parental abuse in the creation of a monster, and brings to the surface questions about gender and sexuality which query the female rôle.

<23>With *The House of Doctor Dee* comes a change in the focus of the geographical dichotomy. Rather than showing London as a grim, rootless place by contrast with the long line of active continuum represented by England and the English countryside, here Ackroyd looks at the dichotomy within London itself, drawing a distinction between its possible greatness and its openness to abuse. This dichotomy is made clear in two contrasting visions, that of the World with Love and that of the World without Love, which prepare for the presentation of the mythic London at the end of the narrative. Comparing the London of the World without Love and the mythic London at the climax of *The House of Doctor Dee* Giovannelli sees the paradoxical nature of London itself, a place at once of indomitable vitality and oppressive desolation (112).

<24>The use of the revenant is more direct in *The House of Doctor Dee* than in the two preceding novels, as Dee's two visions are each presented by a different ghost. Indeed the first vision, of the World without Love, is imparted to Dee by the revenant of his dead father while Dee's wife, the ghostly heroine, is still alive. Moreover, Dee's sixteenth-century interaction with revenants is complemented by the subjection of Matthew Palmer in the twentieth century to pseudo-revenance caused by the juxtaposition, featured previously in *Hawksmoor* and to an extent in *Chatterton*, of distinct yet interactive narrative presents. The disconcerting appearances of mysterious figures and disembodied voices are not instances of revenance; rather they are moments when the juxtaposed narratives touch each other.

<25>At the heart of the story of John Dee is his rejection of his family and its consequences. As a youth, Dee's hunger for knowledge means he has 'no room at all for those who traced their inheritance only by blood' (60); his mother appears in his recollections only in dismissive references to her agonised death, and he refers cursorily

to the deaths of both his stillborn children and his brothers. This stance is displayed for the reader in Dee's treatment of his father, whom he loathes and despises equally, a device which is echoed in the complementary hostility of the twentieth-century protagonist Matthew Palmer toward his own father. It is down to the ghostly heroine to reverse this antipathy and to create an ongoing family dynamic.

<26>Dee's hostility to his family however is symptomatic of a more general rejection of society which has an impact on the city itself. Matthew Palmer has become aware of a growing darkness inside London: as a teenager, he was filled with joy at discovering his oneness with the city, but 'slowly, over the years, the city has darkened within me' (42). The darkness of London is expressed principally in its treatment of vagrants. As Palmer ponders their situation, he notes that the city has 'grown steadily larger by encroaching upon, and subduing, the energy of its inhabitants' (48); later, Philip Jennings, the canting tramp, gives Dee explicit testimony of the hardships endured by the sixteenth-century London vagrant.

<27>The darkness of the city is however not an impersonal force, but it is the creation of those who make London what it is, and Dee's father comes to him to warn Dee of how he has contributed to this darkness. Just as his father has been the recipient of Dee's callousness and animus, so this is reflected in the loveless city Dee has helped to create. Dee's father acts aggressively now; no longer the wasted, dying creature seen lying in the hospital, he is determined to impart the urgency of his warning: 'If I begin with you, I will make you leave smiling for ever' he asserts, gripping Dee by the throat (203). The nightmare scenario which follows, of the predatory, luxurious city, wherein he is shown 'the very emblems of hell' (207), is thus of Dee's own making: as Dee sees himself brought to execution, he is described by a passer-by as 'a very skilful and cunning man who helped to build this city' (210).

<28>Dee's rejection of his family is thus aligned closely with his attitude to society at large, and it is this which his dead wife, as ghostly heroine, intervenes to correct. Though initially Dee's attitude to his wife seems as callous as that towards his family, yet there is evidence of an underlying friendliness between the two. However, like Mark Clare, Dee allows his quest to come between him and his wife, so that by the time he realises her danger, it is too late. It is this affection however which allows her, after death, to lead him into the right path.

<29>As she approaches death, Katherine prepares to adopt the rôle of the ghostly heroine. Like Kathleen Clare, whose suicide is inspired at least in part by the desire to rid her husband of the burden she feels herself to be, Katherine looks to her death, and the inevitable collapse of Dee's plans, to bring about his reclamation from a dangerous obsession with arcane lore. Katherine welcomes death, telling Dee, 'We will meet again, John, and till then farewell' (244); seemingly a reference to meeting again in the afterlife, this can be taken also to refer to her return as a revenant to bring his second vision, to prepare Dee for his journey to the visionary London he has hoped to find, but has not sought properly. Though the vision has a pastoral atmosphere, yet it is set in the urban context of a garden.

<30>The intent behind the vision of the World with Love is to bring Dee to a greater understanding of the imperative of love embodied in the human continuum itself. Just as Kathleen Clare guides her husband towards the universal reconciliation of which the Mint

family is the focus, so Katherine seeks to inspire in Dee a more universal love. The focus of Katherine's vision is the dance, a motif used by Ackroyd to symbolise the ongoing continuum of humanity and which thus applies Katherine's message of love to the wider human context: the dancers she shows to Dee are tracing 'the proper movement of the world' (255).

<31>Katherine does not control like Cecilia Harcombe, but like Kathleen Clare she leads her husband, relying on persuasion and response. It is not an intellectual understanding but that born of love which Dee needs to pursue, so Katherine awakens his emotions. Thus the sight of the dancers in the maze lightens his mood: 'I felt as if a ton weight had also been lifted from my own shoulders' (255), a moment echoed after the vision when Dee remembers Katherine's words (270: 'at that my heart was eased of its great weight'). She demands a visceral response: Dee must reach the state 'when the powers of man and woman leap in the bowels of the body for joy at the instant of recognition' (256-7). This visceral aspect of Katherine's teaching is underlined by her alignment with Dee's mother, who in the vision embodies love as the only refuge: Dee confesses that when he was a child, her 'present love' meant that 'there would be no more fear' (250). Thus, when Katherine appears to Dee on the night of her death, the child in her womb representing his rebirth through her agency causes Dee initially to think she is his mother.

<32>Dee's quest throughout the narrative has been to find the ancient, forgotten city of London, which he believes to be buried beneath Wapping. The narrative proves that he was right, but in the wrong way. Dee has sought the ancient city as an intellectual pursuit, but his dead wife has shown him that he must renounce such ways. Thus, as Dee comes round from his vision, he finds his library on fire, recalling Katherine's admonition, 'Go burn your books, and come to learn of me' (245). Symbolically the only book to survive the fire is the Bible rescued from Katherine's room. Dee places it in the Fleet after the manner of an offering: it is vision rather than learning which he will now pursue, and thus the book becomes a symbol rather than a text. Dee speaks now only of following Katherine; he seeks escape from time to join her in eternity just as Mark Clare joins Kathleen.

<33>Having entered the pursuit of the visionary, Dee is able now to find his way to the gateway to the mythic London. As he enters, the subterranean city is described in terms which associate it with the New Jerusalem: Dee feels an 'inexpressible comfort' and alludes to the Book of Revelation (21:4-5) as he describes how the city 'seemed to come from some new heaven or new earth' (272). Dee has foreseen the splendours of the mythic London, but what he has not understood before is that it is a city of reconciliation: 'There is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying [...]' (273). Giovannelli has described this London as an earthly copy of the heavenly city, where the living and the dead encounter each other on shining streets by jewel-studded walls (109), and indeed here all are brought together. Dee is reunited with his father and his wife, along with others who have found resolution and reconciliation in this mythic city, including the canting tramp Jennings, who finds himself transformed almost to apotheosis.

<34>These encounters recall the gathering of the dead at Joey Hanover's cottage at the climax of *First Light*, except that Dee meets characters from both the past and the future, a transcendent moment born of the novel's structure, which allows a rising above linear time. The mythic city with which the narrative climaxes is thus very much in

keeping with Ackroyd's imperative of the supremacy of place over time; it embodies the eternity of London, 'a holy city where time never was' (272). The news that Dee is to be reborn in a new London, implicitly as Matthew Palmer, underlines the intimate connection between the dead and the living which reinforces the Ackroydian vision of the perpetual nature of place, particularly of London.

<35>Katherine Dee's emotional rescue of her husband is complemented by the reconciliation between Matthew Palmer and his mother when she reveals that she protected the young Matthew from the threat of sexual abuse from her husband (125-6). However, she does not promote the universal reconciliation which is at the heart of Katherine Dee's message: having achieved reconciliation with Matthew, she is not interested in reconciliation with her dead husband. Thus when Matthew asks her come to Clerkenwell 'so that we might begin to exorcise the past' (259), she is reluctant; it is only the thought of a possible find of treasure that arouses her interest and makes her hasten to the abandoned garage in Wapping.

<36>The lines of development of the ghostly heroine motif are then clear to see by comparing the portrayals of the three female protagonists. Both Kathleen Clare and Katherine Dee are self-sacrificial, embracing death as the only way to redeem their husbands by calling them to a point of reconciliation with humanity. In death Kathleen Clare confirms her husband's direction, but both Cecilia Harcombe and Katherine Dee intervene to direct the male protagonist's course, their activities offset and highlighted by the provision of a foil. The family is for Ackroyd a paradigm of the ongoing human continuum from generation to generation, so while Kathleen Clare aligns herself and her husband with the power of the Mint family, Cecilia Harcombe and Katherine Dee act within the context of their own families.

<37>Though they operate in varying ways, each of Ackroyd's ghostly heroines manages to achieve the common goal of reconciliation. Kathleen Clare, Cecilia Harcombe and Katherine Dee, though dead, intervene successfully to bring the male protagonist to embrace the wider human continuum. The negation of time brought about by the promotion of the human continuum is aligned explicitly with that of place, providing not only a focus for the dead, but also an embodiment of the Ackroydian resistance to chronology. The mythic London of *The House of Doctor Dee* is a culmination of this development, showing how a visionary approach to London based on a reconciliation of past and present can go beyond the immediate to achieve a true understanding of the city's nature. It is a salutary warning before the darkness arises again in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, when the city becomes hungry again, preying on its inhabitants: Dee's experiences warn that this is a darkness which is not inherent in the city, but the product of those whose cruelty shapes London.

<38>The common purpose behind the function of the ghostly heroine thus validates Ackroyd's presentation of the dead as a whole. The dead are not just an inert juxtapositional link reminding the present of the past, but an active force maintaining the human continuum in the face of linear time, operating as they do within a context of perpetuity. The truly receptive can hear their message and become freed from the harsh demands of linear time.

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