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Mapping the Dark Allure of Ackroyd's Femme Fatale: Psychogeography, Walking and the Reclamation of Agency in Peter Ackroyd's The Limehouse Golem (1994)

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Abstract

This paper explores the intricate transgressive, psychogeographical, and spatial narrative of Peter Ackroyd's heroine Elizabeth Cree in *The Limehouse Golem* (1994) by emphasising her relationship with London as a historically layered and psychologically charged space. Ackroyd's heroine, positioned within the gothic undercurrents of his works, use the liberating act of psychogeographical walking as a subversive tool to challenge gender and socio-spatial norms. London in this book is imagined as a palimpsest where the past and present exist side by side, and it becomes a critical site for her transgressions, enabling her to reclaim agency in spaces traditionally dominated by patriarchal authority. By analysing the interplay of masking and mapping within these texts, this paper examines Ackroyd's female character's engagement with the spectral and historical as a form of resistance to conventional gender constructs. This paper situates Ackroyd's heroine as a pivotal figure within the broader discourses of psychoanalytical theory, urban space, and gender critiques.

Keywords: Peter Ackroyd, Psychogeography, transgression, heroines, London, spatial theory, gender, macabre, masking, urban narratives.

Introduction

Peter Ackroyd's 18th century London as portrayed in *The Limehouse Golem* is a confluence of crime, theatricality and macabre. The gothic narrative of this speculative text is imbued with the vibrancy and vigour of psychogeography. Ackroyd's female characters do not walk the chalked lines of traditional identity laid out to them; they create their own pathways. For them, walking through London's space is not merely an act of traversing its streets; it is an act that enquires into and challenges ideas of gender, power, and control by resisting its existing social structures and power dynamics. Michel de Certeau writes about walking this context in, *The Practice of Everyday Life* :

> Walking affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc., the trajectories it "speaks". All modalities sing a part of this chorus, changing from step to step, stepping through proportions, sequence, and intensities, which vary according to the time, path taken, and walker (De Certeau 99).

Psychogeography, in the context of walking through the city, can be understood as an avant-garde movement that emerged in the 1950s Paris as a product of the Situationist International movement. This movement was led by the French philosopher Guy Debord in the 1950s to explore the relationship between urban spaces and their impact on the behaviour of urban inhabitants (Coverley 93). Merlin Coverley, in his book *Psychogeography* (2006), defines psychogeography as:

> The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals (Coverley 93).

Will Self, an author who has written extensively on the subject of London psychogeography writes that Ackroyd's psychogeographical London can be understood as city of paradoxes, a place where the past and the present exist simultaneously, and where physical geography intertwines with the geography of the mind:

> London is a city of paradoxes, a place where the past and the present exist side by side, where the rich and the poor live cheek by jowl (Self 178).

This duality of the city as both a physical and psychological construct is evident in Ackroyd's lead female character, Elizabeth Cree, who is psychogeographical and spatially driven, as embodied through the analysis of *The Limehouse Golem*. Through an in-depth analysis of this work, I am scrutinising this text from the spatial and feminist perspectives of interpretation of identities laid out by Michel Foucault and other critics like Doreen Massey, Linda McDowell, and Michel Foucault.Space is an inevitable element in Peter Ackroyd's works. No narrative of his is complete without its eternal character. His female characters engage in the complex intersections of space, gender, power, crime, and transgressions through the performative stage of London's liminal urban space. The narrative of the book follows the mysterious story of Elizabeth Cree, a golem figure, who hunts and kills her victims in Limehouse, a marginal neighbourhood known for its crime and poverty. This paper looks at Elizabeth Cree, the protagonist of the book, from the lens of Foucauldian "heterotopia" as discussed in "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias" (1967) by referring to spaces of Limehouse as spaces of "otherness" (Foucault 3).In his book, *London in the 18th Century: A Great and Monstrous Thing* (2012), Jerry White comments that the East End of London is a "city within a city", referring to the identity of East End as a space of great complexity. Peter Ackroyd's book captures a similar image of Limehouse, a space of "in-betweenness" as articulated by anthropologist Victor Turner (95). It is the place of perpetual transit and betweenness that Elizabeth Cree, the female protagonist of Ackroyd, walks, performs, and transgresses the normative gender conventions of eighteenth-century society. Although her character trope can be viewed as a tragic figure, given the elements of her personal fallings, social constraints, and moral dilemmas, she can also be interpreted as a figure who is a product of her social and spatial circumstances. Her trope can be seen as one who resists and navigates oppressive spaces, claiming voice and agency.Merlin Coverley defines a "psychogeographer" as, "One who explores and reports on psychogeographical phenomena" (Coverley 93). Ackroyd's *The Limehouse Golem* is a story of Elizabeth's spatial and psychogeographical journey through the streets of the crime-infested space of Limehouse. In addition, it is also a macabre story of the economic, spatial, social, and gender oppression of a traumatised character who gives radical transgression as a measure of self-erasure of her identity as a woman. Her identity as a woman living in a gendered space in London is shaped by her engagement with the urban space she inhabits.Elizabeth Cree who is born in poor neighbourhoods of Lambeth Marsh, to a repenting, remorseful, religious sex worker is later seen as a male drag walker who facades herself as man to commit murder in a Jack the Ripper fashion. She is named The Limehouse 'golem,' a Jewish folklore animated being, created from inanimate matter, as she commits her staged macabre murders in the areas in Limehouse.In *The Limehouse Golem*, we meet Elizabeth Cree, whose mother sees the music hall as morally degrading for women. She refers to music halls as evil and forbidden places for young women to visit. This shapes Elizabeth's idea of femininity and identity from infancy, as Ackroyd shows. Elizabeth says in the text:

> I was my mother's only child, and always an unloved one. Perhaps she wanted a son to provide for her, but I cannot be sure of this. No she wanted no one. God forgive her, I think she would have destroyed me if she had possessed the strength. I was the bitter fruit of her womb, the outward sign of her inner corruption, the token of her lust, and a symbol of her fall (*The Limehouse Golem* 9).

Elizabeth's mother's isolating tragic death, as depicted by Ackroyd marks her childhood with a sense of deep trauma relating to the loss of a true self. Nancy Chodorow a prominent psychoanalyst and author provides a frame of reference through psychoanalytical theoretical framework in studying the psyche of Elizabeth Cree. In her article, "Gender, Relation, and Difference in Psychoanalytic Perspective", Nancy Chodorow writes that the child in the pre-Oedipal phase of infancy associates

himself or herself with the world through the image of

its mother ; it is only after six months that the infant starts recognising itself as a different being separate from the mother (Chodorow 13). Chodorow also emphasises that after the Oedipal phase, the upbringing of the child involves the active role of the mother, as the child understands ideas of difference through the mother's persona. She writes that a girl child's understanding of this difference is not problematic or less complex in understanding the biological and social difference in formative years because a girl child looks at the mother in physical continuity; if the mother is mentally healthy, she passes on positive ideas about femininity and womanhood; if not, the female child is not able to form a whole separate true self (13). Chodorow also argues that the understanding of gender difference is comparatively non-complex for male children, as they look at the mother as "not-me" (14). This psychoanalytical perspective given by Nancy Chodorow can help shed light on Elizabeth's character and her transgressive, dark, and unlawful violent behaviour towards women in the narrative of the text.Elizabeth's journey from a young girl in Lambeth Marsh to becoming a gory murderer can be understood as an embodiment of her internalized misogyny that was instilled in her through her mother's wounded identity. Her mother's socio-spatially vulnerable position in society as a sex worker can be understood as one of the reasons for her hatred towards her own body and gender identity. Her miserable and problematic gender stance is a dark and critical commentary on the social and marginal position of women in eighteenth-century London's Limehouse. This sense of gender vulnerability that is passed down to Elizabeth by her mother is a possible rationale for her internalized hatred of women, especially those who are visible in the public space of Limehouse practicing the sex trade. Elizabeth's killing her innocent victims in a theatrical way can be interpreted as an act of self-erasure, that is a part and parcel of her fragmented wounded infant self, as earlier mentioned in Nancy Chodorow's writings.In addition to Elizabeth's dark male drag allure, the psychogeographer of Limehouse, who haunts the streets of Limehouse, is also a radical act of claiming a new self-identity. We see Elizabeth walking the city as a naïve young girl who soon realises her fragmentary state of mind when she joins another masculine world of music halls. To her, music halls symbolise a space where she can erase her old self and forge a new identity. Ackroyd's young Elizabeth writes:I had only one wish in my life, and that was to see the music-hall. Curry's variety was by the obelisk, close to our lodgings, but mother told me it was the abode of the devil which I was never to enter (*The Limehouse Golem* 12).Elizabeth Cree's journey from Little Lizzie to being the golem of Limehouse, is a story of her rebellion, spirit of survival and her failed attempt to erase herself. Her male cross-dressed, masqueraded Debordian psychogeographical walks through the liminal spaces of London symbolise her resistance and freedom-longing desire to engage with the urban space that is denied to her from her birth. Fragmented by her deep personal and social trauma, she ventures down the path of transgression as a means of claiming power and control by assuming the drag role of a man. Dressed as a man, she walks the dark, fog-engulfed streets of Limehouse, challenging the ideas of social and spatial mobility. Walking through an urban space can also be seen as a desperate attempt to escape her identity and self-hatred as a vulnerable woman.Ackroyd depicts the psychological effect of the suppression of vulnerability in her formative years through her acts of transgression in the form of performative murders in the novel's later part. Through the passage of Victorian music halls, Elizabeth engages with the male world of performance and drag and meets the carnivalesque character of Dan Leno, who, unlike her, accepts and embraces the tragedies of his life. Inspired by his female drag caricatures on stage, she adopted the name Dizzy Boyd. Through the mask of male drag, Elizabeth realises the power that comes with impersonating a man. This realisation marks a shift in her journey as a vulnerable character. By Impersonating herself as a man, she ventures into the spatially gendered space of Limehouse, which prohibits women from walking in masculine spaces.The performative stage of the music halls and her impersonation of male drag triggered her deep- seated hatred for sex workers. Her act of killing innocent sex workers is thus her transgressive way of desperately trying to erase the part of her and her mother's memory that she loathes. Her engagement with

theatre and the performative aspects of her work can be seen as a tool of resistance that helps her play the role of a transgressor through the masquerade of a masculine identity.Ackroyd has donned Elizabeth Cree's character on the speculative and infamous image of Jack the Ripper, the mysterious murderer of five female victims who worked as sex workers. Through the narrative of this book, the author opens up the possibility of looking at macabre events and the speculative image of the male Jack the Ripper's mystique of the eighteenth century through the speculative lens of gender. He recreates Elizabeth Cree as the female Jack the Ripper. Ackroyd's Elizabeth describes one of her murders as " so, I obliged her with a few deep cuts. Then, Lost in the fog, I created such a spectacle that no eye seeing it would fail to move. The head came off first, and the intestinal tract made a pretty decoration beside the womb" (*The Limehouse Golem* 57). In portraying Elizabeth as a macabre, gory, cold blooded killer, Ackroyd exposes the readers to the socio-spatial, marginal conditions of eighteenth century London, where for many women like Elizabeth the path of transgression was the only way of radical survival.*The Limehouse Golem* is an intriguing narrative of how identities are shaped, erased, and destroyed by the phenomenon of gender-spatial identity and the dark aspects of marginality. In addition, the text opens avenues for enquiring into the role of space in shaping gendered identity.

Mapping identity through streets of Limehouse

She walked down Craven street and then crept over Hungerford Bridge-She knew her way to Lambeth Marsh well enough, even in the darkness (*The Limehouse Golem* 17).Elizabeth Cree's act of psychogeographical walking is marked by an immaculate accuracy of memorising the map of London's in all its essence. Her behavior has been shown to have been intricately affected by the city's decade-old squalor, aged violence, and dark corruption. Her transgressive character symbolises the oppressive and macabre facets of life in liminal London during the Victorian era. Thus, Limehouse's streets become a quill for Elizabeth to write her own story, which is full of tragedy, death, and gore. Ackroyd captures Elizabeth's wounded and gendered childhood through her mother's subversive life, portraying Elizabeth as a victim of institutional gender and social oppression. He captures Elizabeth's hatred of her mother by giving her a voice in the novel. She says:He was not her husband but some masher, some fancy man who had got her in the family way. I was the family, and I was the one forced to bear her shame…..Well, let her burn (*The Limehouse Golem* 9).In the novel's initial part, we see a young, naive Elizabeth taking care of her repenting, diseased, and ailing mother in her last days. She says to her mother, "To be pitched from Lambeth Marsh into hell- is that the answer to all your prayers? " (*The Limehouse Golem* 11). These lines present Elizabeth's complex relationship with the oppressive space of Lambeth Marsh, shaped by her subjective experiences of hatred and abandonment. These experiences deeply shape her life and can thus be held responsible for her later acts of transgression. Elizabeth Cree and her mother, therefore can be understood as tragic victims of systemic oppression of women in 18th century context, that leads them to transgress criminally. The transgression of both characters is a consequence of acute poverty and societal struggles. Elizabeth's mother's repenting behaviour also hints that she became a sex worker out of necessity and not choice, which can be read as a commentary on the condition of women in eighteenth century London. The generational trauma passed on to Elizabeth can also be read as a reflection of the grave consequences of female poverty and the lack of opportunities for women to survive in 18th century London.It was a fine bright morning, and I could feel a murder coming on. I had to put out a fire, so I took a cab to Aldgate and then walked down Whitechapel way.. I may say that I was eager to begin, because I had it in mind as a novelty for the first time: to suck out the breath of a dying child and see if all of its youthful spirit mingled with mine (*The Limehouse Golem* 21).Ackroyd's narrative captures young Elizabeth, who becomes both an actor and a performer through the performative space of music halls. She climbs the social ladder of social vulnerability to respectability by marrying John Cree, a journalist and aspiring playwright. By cleverly using the façade of a respectable wife, she conducts her transgressive acts by dressing as a man, walking through the streets of Lambeth Marsh,

looking for personal satisfaction from her childhood wounding and psychological trauma. Her trauma and detachment are captured by Ackroyd through her walks across Limehouse. There are numerous accounts of her walking through the streets of Limehouse that display her gendered experience of walking in London. Here is an instance:I left the soon after, and I walked through the night. I could not have slept, because I was already in a dream. I drifted down the lines of gas lamps, and sang as softly as I could the words I had heard to the Craven Street theatres, I could not remember the rest of it. But it was enough for me to imagine myself dancing upon the stage with the beautiful picture of London behind me (*The Limehouse Golem* 51).Elizabeth's act of wandering through Limehouse reveals that walking can act as a tool of expression, freedom and resistance particularly when it comes to engaging with one's identity through urban space of the city. It has the ability to shape gender experiences by allowing them to resist voices and representations from spaces that they are excluded from and where they are prohibited to enter.Walking can also be understood as a way to empower oneself through mobility by creating a sense of self. Feminist geographer Doreen Massey elaborates on this in her book *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), which reflects how we engage with gender (Massey186). Linda McDowell solidifies this idea in her book *Gender Identity and Place* (1999) by writing that places are defined by social practices, in addition to this, it is a result of overlapping and intersecting places with multiple boundaries, constituted and maintained by relations of power (McDowell 1999). Drawing from Massey's and McDowell's ideas on gender and space relations, we can interpret Elizabeth's walks and her associations with liminal spaces of marginality, as a way for her to reclaim her lost sense of identity and agency, which is product of socio spatial marginalisation of the urban spaces. Her donning male drag to walk through the marginal neighbourhoods of Limehouse is also a form of resistance, a kind of disruption of gendered expectations and prohibitions.London, with its dark narrow alleys, wide thoroughfares, and hidden architectural secrets, represents Elizabeth's inner chaos, internal conflict, and deep-seated trauma. Ackroyd depicts her deep psychological wounding to find an expression through transgression, making her violent actions an inevitable response to the dark world she inhabits.The narrative of Ackroyd's text is not merely an expression that displays her inner social and psychological complexity; it is also a symbolic representation of marginality and otherness for an orphan girl aiming to survive in a socially and spatially marginal London. Her identity as a woman who takes the path of transgression can therefore be read as an exploration of a vulnerable figure standing on critical margins, positioned to fall off the edge of a patriarchal world. Thus, through an exploration of trauma and gender performance, female identity can be examined from spatial angles.In examining pain, crisis, and hysteria through Elizabeth's trope of transgression, it is important to engage with the écriture feminist theoretical framework of Hélène Cixous, particularly her seminal essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1975). Helene Cixous, through her critique offers a feminist understanding on the concept of hysteria, arguing that this very idea been used to sideline women by treating them as deviant beings. She also argues that madness, rather than a symptom of a clinical or mental disorder, can be studied or read as a form of resistance, a transgressive space in which women challenge patriarchal norms. For Helene Cixous, the hysterical body can be viewed as a site of empowerment, a point of subversion to the repressive structures of patriarchal social structures (Cixous 875).Ackroyd's writing of female characters in *The Limehouse Golem* is thus in tandem with Cixous's ideas, using hysteria as both a symbol and an act of rebellion. Elizabeth Cree's violent acts, particularly the murder of John Cree, her husband and the killings connected to the historic Ratcliff murders, and other killings can be interpreted as a response to the regressive gender expectations placed upon her (Flanders 2011). Elizabeth's kills others because she abject her own body and her female identity, no matter how many women she kills she fails to express from her body, in a way she fails to accept herself due to feelings of her deep seated disgust for her body, as Kristeva mentions in her book *Powers of Horror* (1982). Kristeva writes, "Abjection is described as the state of being cast out, and this state is the necessary condition for the existence of the subject" (Kristeva 4). According to Kristeva, the state of abjection is a space in which the subject feels

undermined and cast away. Elizabeth Cree's actions of murdering female sex workers can be seen as abjection because their existence reminds of her own femininity. Her act of killing women in a theatrical fashion that resembles the image of her own traumatised mother figure can be understood as an act of self-erasure of her feminine identity and body (Kristeva 1982).As a woman, she is not immediately considered a possible murder suspect, as women are not typically perceived as capable of such violence because of the nurturing aspect traditionally associated with them. Instead, the murders are attributed to the mythical male figure of the Golem, as mentioned in Jewish folklore, which further obscures Elizabeth's agency and reinforces the narrative that women are not seen as perpetrators of violent crime but rather as victims. This dark hysterical act stems from a clear lapse in judgment and serves as a defiant challenge to patriarchal societal structures that aim to regulate her female identity.Elizabeth Cree's transgressive acts can, therefore, be read and interpreted as a radical refusal to conform to patriarchal definitions of feminine, a form of rebellion that Helene Cixous would consider as an act of reclaiming of individual agency. London's literary history and its timeless figures loom large in Ackroyd's narrative. Through such character portraits, Ackroyd explores how decade-old historic facts, such as the murders of Jack the Ripper, can serve as a possible avenue for exploring possible discussions on space and gender engagement.

Limehouse: A Heterotopia of Deviation

According to Michel Foucault, "Heterotopias" are spaces that exist alongside real spaces. These spaces are "spaces within the spaces". These spaces, as Foucault writes, follow their own rules and are governed by their own norms that dictate interactions between genders or different identities (Maeir 76). Drawing on Michel Foucault's idea, this part of the paper looks at Limehouse as depicted in *The Limehouse Golem* through the lens of heterotopia of deviation.Ackroyd posits Elizabeth's social spatial reality as a space of difference. It is a space that alienates women who deviate from social and patriarchal norms. Her journey of survival and the spaces she lives and thrives through, such as the Music Hall, abusive domestic space, and prison, can thus be viewed as heterotopic in nature. These spaces are reserved for individuals who deviate from normative behaviours and have their own rules of entrance and existence, as Foucault mentions in his writings (Foucault 48). In this context, the physical existence of Limehouse, music halls, and prisons can be read as heterotopic spaces governed by their own laws of survival. According to Foucault, prisons, asylums, and hospitals are representative of such spaces.Elizabeth's journey through the places like a violent home, music halls, domestic space of John Cree's house are symbolic and physical representations of both literal and metaphorical heterotopias. This is primarily because the boundaries of normality and deviance are often blurred in these spaces. The only way one can survive is to break norms and inhabit different identities, as Elizabeth does in the novel. The theatre and its stage become a space for her to bend gender rules through role-playing, which is not normatively accepted in non-heterotopic spaces. These heterotopias help Elizabeth cope with her traumatic past by providing her with an alternative space for constructing a new identity.Prisons, a physical form of heterotopia, is explored through the narrative of Elizabeth's story. The prison symbolises confinement and isolation, where she is subjected to surveillance and control. Her murderous transgressive actions place her in a space of confinement, where she must face the consequences of her deviance, thus becoming a victim of her acts of defiance and resistance. This portrayal of prison highlights the conflict between personal agency and societal control in the broader realm of how power structures penalise deviance to maintain the normal order of societal functioning.The ideas of paradox and contradiction are essential to the concept of heterotopia. Such spaces can thus be defined as repositories of contradictory situations (Foucault 48). London, as a space that becomes a medium for her to become someone, ends up being a space that destroys her. This idea is succinctly put by Alexandra Warwick in her book *London and the Literature of the City*, where she writes that Ackroyd's London as a space and a living entity constantly reinvents itself; in this process, it offers a paradoxical space where history constrains but also liberates (Warwick 2005), thus pointing out the paradoxical nature of London as a spectral and intricate labyrinth space of dualities.

It is significant that history and architecture play an essential role in shaping the identity and actions of female protagonists, providing them with a space for enquiry through which they navigate their transgressive journeys. The streets, decaying buildings, and oppressive fog of Victorian London in *The Limehouse Golem* become metaphors for the oppressive symbols of Elizabeth Cree. The architectural urban structure of Limehouse, with its eerie and shadowy corners, reflects both the physical and psychological prisons of its inhabitants. As readers see, Elizabeth traverses these streets, and her identity is shaped and affected by the city's architecture, which symbolises the oppressive weight of tradition and the patriarchy. Ruth Livesey notes that Ackroyd's use of architecture, "encodes the experiences of marginalized figures, particularly women, whose identities are shaped by the historical and spatial boundaries of the city" (Livesey 57). For Cree, these spatial and architectural boundaries are disabling constraints, but they become spaces that are a medium for resistance and a claim for power.Thus, the city's historical and architectural landscape becomes both a prison and a tool for self- redefinition and self-erasure. Ackroyd's female protagonists are also connected to the historical and literary women of London, creating a palimpsestic interplay between their narratives and those of their predecessors. The parallels between Elizabeth Cree and the historical figures like Jack the Ripper, also underlines that Peter Ackroyd aims to bring out a counter narrative to display female marginalization and resistance in London's history, through a fictive lens. As Alexandra Warwick observes, Ackroyd's heroines, as pointed out by Alexandra Warwick, "embody the spectral presence of women from the past, whose struggles and agency haunt the city's spaces, creating a continuum of resistance" (Warwick 130).

Reclaiming the Space through Psychogeographical walking

In Ackroyd's novels, walking emerges as a powerful act of violent transgression, allowing female protagonists to spatially reclaim the city's streets and assert their radical autonomy in a society that seeks to confine them. Walking, both literally and symbolically, becomes a way to rebel and resist the spatial and social constraints imposed on women in Ackroyd's imagined London. For Elizabeth Cree in *The Limehouse Golem*, traversing the dark, foggy streets of Limehouse is not just an act of movement but a thought-through act of defiance of gender rules that restrict women to the realms of the domestic sphere.The streets of London are employed and written as a passage for Elizabeth to challenge oppressive restrictions and reclaim a sense of personal agency. Ruth Livesey argues, "Walking in Ackroyd's London signifies a breaking away from prescribed roles, offering female characters a means to navigate and redefine their identities" (Livesey 63).

Victorian London, as depicted in *The Limehouse Golem*, operates in many ways, a space where women's visibility is equated with vulnerability. Elizabeth, however, deliberately ventures in Limehouse as a solitary walker, masqueraded as a man, tracing, liminal spaces of the city, thus asserting her right to occupy the same urban landscape as men. Elizabeth's subversive relationship with the city through the subversive act of crossdressing and claiming urban space can be understood as an embodiment of her claim of personal agency. Psychogeographical walking, as captured and represented through the narrative of *The Limehouse Golem,* gives voice to her claim of urban space and her voice. In this book, Ackroyd writes:… he always considered this area of London to be his true home […] only within this small neighbourhood did he feel entirely at ease. It was the spirit of the district itself which, he supposed, affected him so profoundly. Even the tradesmen he passed on his walk to the museum […] seemed to share his sense of place and to accommodate themselves to it. He knew the porters and the cab men, the strolling musicians and the casual street sellers, and he considered them as part of some distinctive human family to which he also belonged (*The Limehouse Golem* 138).The act of walking undertaken by men and women in Ackroyd's works is connected to his assimilation of historical resonance. For Elizabeth, urban walking as a masked woman serves as a reclamation of autonomy, using walking as a means to challenge the societal surveillance forced on her. Tom McDonough notes in his writings that, "Walking in Ackroyd's works becomes a radical assertion of selfhood, a way for women to inscribe their own narratives onto the city's palimpsestic layers" (McDonough 72). Therefore, Ackroyd's female characters claim freedom by treating walking as an act of defiance.

Elizabeth Cree as an Agent of Change

The journeys undertaken by Peter Ackroyd's Elizabeth Cree through the fog-laden streets of London's urban terrain reveal elements of humanity, grit, and resilience in the face of societal control. This act of resistance through London's labyrinthine streets and engagement with its dark allure empowers characters like Elizabeth Cree to reconfigure their roles within an oppressive framework, transforming the city into a fertile space of self-discovery.As Rebecca Solnit postulates, walking is both a literal and symbolic act of radical defiance, enabling women to reclaim urban spaces and inscribe their narratives onto the urban fabric (*Wanderlust* 5). The planned and unplanned urban meanderings of Ackroyd's heroines strongly resonate with Guy Debord's psychogeographical explorations, as their purposeful drift through urban space disrupts traditional spatial hierarchies and challenges the spectacle of victimhood (*The Society of Spectacle* 50).Ackroyd's representation of women have potential to offer complex and layered insights into the fluid relationship between gender, space, and power in literary realm. Drawing on feminist geographies and ideas of space engagement and production by Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose, we can examine the gendered aspect of urban space and its potential for resistance. Massey's assertion that space is a dynamic interaction of social relations (9) can be interpreted in the way Ackroyd's heroines modify the traditional roles created and enforced upon them using moral codes assigned and connected to the feminine body. Gillian Rose's critique of spatial exclusion also lays emphasis on significance of Ackroyd's heroines as figures who challenge the silences and boundaries of geography 139). By engaging with London's layered history and architecture, the actions of female characters transcend victimhood by using walking as a tool to assert their agency and control in patriarchal spaces.Thus, Ackroyd illuminates the historical and spatial dimensions of gendered power through the space of London and offers a compelling framework for understanding the Meta space city as a site of both spatial oppression and liberation, where heroines can emerge as transformative agents of change.

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