

UNIVERSITY OF HULL

*Labyrinths: Navigating Daedalus' Legacy*  
*The Role of Labyrinths in Selected Contemporary Fiction*

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By

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**Summary of Thesis submitted for PhD degree**  
**by**  
**Katharine Cox**  
**on**  
**Labyrinths: Navigating Daedalus' Legacy**

This study initially engages in an historical survey of the varying key realisations of labyrinths and their applications from antiquity through to the beginnings of the twentieth century. The shifting cultural significance of the labyrinth and its deployment in historical documents and literature alike is also evaluated. In particular, it focuses on two distinctive manifestations of the labyrinth: the Egyptian and the Cretan. The examination of these ancient artefacts affords an analysis of the intersection of archaeology, mythology and cultural productions.

At the core of this study is the analysis of the fecundity of labyrinths in late twentieth-century fiction, focalised through four salient texts: Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980), Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985), Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (1987) and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000). These novels target specific usages of the trope, whereby the physical event of the labyrinth and its navigation, coupled with the labyrinthine text, intensifies an exploration of thematic issues. I will argue that a late twentieth-century engagement with complexity and ideas of selfhood coupled with a propensity for self-reflective narratology recalls the Egyptian and the Cretan labyrinths and so privileges these models.

The labyrinth is considered as an appropriate medium to describe narrative construction and consumption in a manner that deconstructs the text as artifice and prioritises the reader's and the author's relationship to it. Specifically, the adoption of the labyrinth addresses the interplay between space and history in the textual arena and so encourages the individual to be envisaged as a transhistorical wandering figure. These textual usages foreground the apposite deployment of the labyrinth as this ancient meta-signifier is an entirely apposite vehicle for the interrogation of the late twentieth-century postmodern condition.



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## Introduction

### 1.1 Why labyrinths?

The labyrinth is a key motif in modernist and postmodernist fiction. I will argue that this modernist and postmodernist usage is enlivened by archaeological investigations that retraced mythology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The appearance of the trope (*OED Rhet.* 1) in late twentieth-century fiction is of particular note, as these labyrinths mediate textual and ontological articulations of subjectivity, sexuality, history, space and time. In these contemporary occurrences the labyrinth is variously deployed as an image, symbol, trope or a narratological technique, and these usages demand that the encounter with the labyrinthine is complex.

The aim of this thesis is to scrutinise the labyrinth and the labyrinthine in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (1980), Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (1985), Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (1987) and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000). These fictions intensify and play with the labyrinth, both adopting and adapting the labyrinth's textual heritage. A critical factor in the selection of these novels is their engagement with the textual history of the labyrinth. In the case of Winterson this is an elaboration of the rare representations of a watery maze whilst Eco, Ackroyd and Danielewski make reference to the ancient forms of the labyrinth achieved through a remembering of the archaeological investigations in Egypt and Crete.

These historical fictions use the labyrinth to disrupt time and space, and so instigate a dialectical conversation between the past and the present. The temporal settings of *The Name of the Rose*, *Hawksmoor*, *The Passion* and *House of Leaves* will



enable analysis of the process of the labyrinth through these historical sites. In doing so, there is highlighted a lineage that details the transmutation of the labyrinth into the contemporary, thereby identifying the labyrinth not solely as a generic symbol but as a reworking of earlier literary and cultural writings. Fittingly, the exploration of labyrinths in literature and history is a journey that is itself labyrinthine.

These texts overtly incorporate the labyrinth as an event, either as a building or city to be navigated through or lost within. Chosen for their highly specific inclusion of labyrinths, these novels express the labyrinth both as a physical device and as a metaphor for the nexus between reader, writer and text. Though Wendy B. Faris argues that modern and postmodern fiction adopts the labyrinthine discourse as a dominant narrative mode, she ignores the extent to which the labyrinth has repeatedly functioned in this manner (*Labyrinths of Language* 9-14).<sup>1</sup> The portrayal of text or thought processes as labyrinthine is by no means a contemporary phenomenon and is extensively articulated in the work of Homer (*Odyssey*), Boethius (*Consolation of Philosophy*) and Chaucer (*House of Fame*) amongst others. This study widens the examination of contemporary textual labyrinths to consider them not as an isolated occurrence but as an apex of articulations about the labyrinth.

Labyrinths are historically bound by notions of repetition, return and transformation; a thematic grouping that is clearly evident in the mythology surrounding the Cretan model. Books that incorporate depictions of a labyrinth, consciously or unwittingly, resonate with fragments from a wealth of literature. Such representations necessarily articulate stories of love, horror, confusion, quest,



fabrication and death. To appreciate the altering nature of the labyrinth it is necessary to scrutinise the two labyrinths of antiquity. An examination of these ancient models through a review of the excavations of the two sites in Egypt and Crete will provide a means by which to view the literary labyrinths conceived by contemporary authors. From these early labyrinths, the distillation of a literary and philosophical journey may be drawn: a passage that is itself labyrinthine and regressive, and which evokes the memory of these ancient occurrences.

This introduction will consider the discovery of the palace at Knossos, Crete, as a catalyst for renewed interest in the labyrinth during the early twentieth century. The significance of the Cretan excavation, through its direct influence upon modernist texts and in a wider cultural context, led to the intensification of the form in postmodern literature. This is predominately because key modernists and early postmodernists were fascinated by the concept of the labyrinth, as it provided both a metaphorical basis and a narratological mode for their textual experiments. Such writers include James Joyce (*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 1916; *Ulysses*, 1922), Jorge Luis Borges (“Two Kings and Two Labyrinths”, 1944; “The House of Asterion”, 1944) and Italo Calvino (*Invisible Cities*, 1972). Postmodern literature’s propensity towards textual reflectivity leads to a cycle of reflection and appropriation. This is evident in Danielewski’s exploration of the labyrinth which recasts Eco’s textual use of Borges as Jorge of Burgos (*Rose*) in his character Zampanò who ultimately is a characterisation of the writer Borges himself. Positioning Danielewski’s text last is appropriate as it is a novel keen to reverberate with previous engagements of the labyrinth and hence the narrative forms a site for labyrinthine issues voiced in the other novels.

By scrutinising the labyrinths of antiquity, this study identifies a passage from physical artefact through to a transformation into mythology and fiction. Appropriately, the route of the labyrinth tends towards circularity and, in these contemporary renditions, the narrative again returns to its roots and delves into archaeological sites that are overlaid with stories.



## **1.2 Unearthing Mythologies: Fayoum, Knossos and the Name of the Labyrinth**

Depictions of the labyrinth have been found engraved on ancient tombs,<sup>2</sup> on Cretan coins,<sup>3</sup> on Roman floor mosaics; and the mythology of the Cretan labyrinth even inspired Roman graffiti.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these religious and domestic instances, the labyrinth's narrative of power, shame, love and betrayal has continued to captivate writers. These representations impress that the labyrinth is emphatically both a fictional device and an archaeological fact. Though examples of labyrinths have been found globally,<sup>5</sup> the labyrinth as an architectural feat has two significant predecessors: the Egyptian and Cretan constructions. Both magnificent and complex, these ancient labyrinths were conceived as deliberate devices to inspire awe or dread in the walker.

The word 'labyrinth' was also applied in relation to a massive and elaborate building that stood at Fayoum, Egypt (W. H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development* 6), although this name may have been assumed in retrospect. The rediscovery of the Egyptian labyrinth in the late nineteenth century ignited interest in the possibility of the existence of the Cretan labyrinth. Excavations at Fayoum gave new impetus to the desire to view ancient narratives as topographically and historically based in reality. If Herodotus was accurate in his descriptions of the Egyptian structure, could the fabled Cretan labyrinth also exist? Archaeological research conducted by Flinders Petrie at Fayoum in 1888 and based on early chroniclers' reports (Herodotus, fourth century B.C.E.; Strabo, first century B.C.E; Pliny the Elder, first century C.E.) validated the location of the Egyptian labyrinth and stressed the size and complexity of the building. Although interest in



the Egyptian labyrinth tends to be specialised, Ackroyd uses Egyptology to discuss ritual in *Hawksmoor*. He also adapts writings about the Egyptian structure in particular to consider the interrelationship of his pyramid and labyrinth (*Hawksmoor*; cf. Herodotus, *Histories* II. 148). Danielewski also explores this lesser-known building to complete his history of the labyrinth.

Though the Egyptian labyrinth is relatively obscure, its connection to the Cretan labyrinth identified by Greek and Roman writers ensure that the trace of this ancient structure is not completely lost. Likewise, Ackroyd's and Danielewski's remembrance of this earliest structure signifies an unsettling of the Cretan labyrinth as principal antecedent. The artifice was supposedly built as a palace for Amenemhet III, in approximately 1850 B.C.E.<sup>6</sup> Herodotus' vision of a multipurpose edifice has been affirmed by later chroniclers<sup>7</sup> who reiterate his determinations that the pharaoh's house served as his seat of government, his temple and, ultimately, his mausoleum (*Histories* II.149-151). This conflation of possible usages maintains the labyrinth's elusiveness and is also important in theorising the Cretan space. It is believed that the structure was massive and intricate with a further underground storey (Herodotus, *Histories* II. 149; Strabo, *Geography* XVII.i.37; Matthews, *Mazes* 15 fig. 3). Such a description of a multi-layered labyrinth is in contradiction to the majority of labyrinths that exist today which tend to be variations of the nineteenth-century leisure devices or earlier turf mazes. Eco, Ackroyd and Danielewski make reference to the physical descent possible within a labyrinth which recalls the journey of *nekuia* or descent into the underworld whilst Winterson examines mental illness as a metaphorical descent (Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* vol. 8, 413). Literary affiliations between the labyrinth and death are realised in the Egyptian model. As a visitor to

the building, Herodotus was denied access to the lower reaches containing sacred remains: a restriction that contributes to the shared mystification of the two ancient labyrinths.

As with fictional accounts of the Cretan building, Petrie described a complex structure which was demonstrably man-made and as such highlights the role of the creator. The size and dominance of the Egyptian and Cretan buildings are confirmed by ancient writers who laud both the works and the principle of labyrinth building. Pliny the Elder's generic praise of labyrinths identifies the aesthetic supremacy of the Egyptian and the Cretan examples<sup>8</sup> and stresses their existence as physical monuments that are "by no means [...] fictitious" (*Natural History* XXXVI. xix. 84-85). Using the structure of the Egyptian type as a guide, Pliny (*Natural History* XXXVI. xix. 85-86) and Diodorus of Sicily (*Library of History* I.61, first century B.C.E) are in agreement that Daedalus used the Egyptian prototype to construct his building, concluding that the Cretan copy was inferior in size, despite its infamy.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Daedalus' labyrinth, the inventor's most enduring project, was considered to be derivative. By mimicking a building whose innovation and design was said to surpass even the pyramids (Herodotus, *Histories* II.149), Daedalus was forced to alter the scope of the project. The adaptation caused the structure to distort within itself and thereby accentuated its involuted habit. This manner of artistic debt is apposite for postmodern authors as it complicates further the route of labyrinth appropriation.

Of these two celebrated labyrinths of antiquity, it is the Cretan that is predominant, unquestionably as a result of the mythology surrounding Daedalus' creation. Reports of this labyrinth were disseminated by Pausanias (*Description of Greece*,



second century C.E.), Ovid (“The Labyrinth” *Metamorphoses*, first century C.E.), Plutarch (*The Life of Theseus*, second century C.E.), Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca*, second century C.E.) and Catullus (poem 64, first century B.C.E.), amongst others. Sadly, only fragments of Euripides’ version of the myth remain, but his continuation of the story in *Phaedra* is interesting for the unrelenting punishment of Minos’ line.<sup>10</sup>

Though the labyrinth was not forgotten by Western cultures, the interest in and influence of the Cretan labyrinth was re-mobilised by the publications of Arthur Evans (cf. Evans Lansing Smith, *The Myth of the Descent into the Underworld in Postmodern Fiction* 109). A journalist turned archaeologist, Evans’ quest for Theseus<sup>11</sup> led him to Knossos in Crete<sup>12</sup> where he identified the site as the mythological labyrinth.<sup>13</sup> The desire to unearth what had previously been considered myth cannot be underestimated, because here, in the early twentieth century, at the intersection of archaeology and legend, the mythical labyrinth became a physical fact.<sup>14</sup>

The imperative to confirm the legitimacy of the Cretan dig, in vindication of his long quest, caused Evans to support a convoluted etymology for the term ‘labyrinth’. This rash action has caused major and residual confusion in the praxis of the labyrinth ever since. The term ‘labyrinth’ is commonly thought to have derived from *λάβρυς* (*labrys*), a Carian word used to describe a double-headed axe, whose symmetry is said to recall the ambivalence of the labyrinth.<sup>15</sup> Although Evans’ research was initially challenged by W.H.D. Rouse, his views become the traditional orthodoxy and it is only recently that a reassessment of his writings has elicited ferocious debate.<sup>16</sup> Latterly, the arbitrary nature of Evans’ archaeology and



work practices have been cited, calling into question his methodologies and pre-eminence as a scholar of the Minoan civilisation.<sup>17</sup> This investigation of Evans' scholasticism emphasises the extent to which the discoveries at Knossos and subsequent labyrinth research are grounded on the projection of one man's imagination.

The instability of the etymological root of 'labyrinth' makes problematic its contemporary usage and prompts critical engagement with etymology, naming and reliability. Evans' determination of *labrys* as the pre-Hellenic etymological root of the labyrinth relies on a complicated trail, predicated on his belief that Zeus was worshipped at Knossos by means of the double-axe (Evans, *The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account* 447; cf. *OED* 'labrys').<sup>18</sup> This research was instrumental in Evans' decision to name the palace: "House of the Double-Headed Axe" (Evans, "The Tomb of the Double Axes at Knossos" and *Palace*). The commonality of an axe-like symbol at Knossos crystallised his belief in the impact of his find and the centrality of the axe as a ritualistic and sacrificial weapon. Unfortunately, such a determined process is flawed and was attacked by his contemporary Rouse who ardently refuted such a correlation between axe and god.<sup>19</sup> Rouse deduced that the Carian statue of "Zeus Labrandeus", critical to Evans' argument and any cult it may have inspired, was post-Minoan ("Double Axe" 272).

Though this definition of the labyrinth is pervasive, it is not the sole theory regarding the etymology of the labyrinth (cf. Matthews, *Mazes* 175-176). Ronald M. Burrows links the word to a derivation of a mistranslation of Amenemhet's name, though this is widely dismissed (qtd. J. Alexander MacGillivray, *Minotaur* 213-14; cf. also Matthews, *Mazes* 175). Of these other hypotheses, Hermann

Kern's literal translation "house of stone" is of particular note (*Through* 10). It seems likely that Kern's designation stems from Herman Güntert's findings, which resolved that labyrinth means "place of stone".<sup>20</sup> Though Kern gives little time to this definition it is appropriate as the novels studied incorporate constructions of stone in a library, partitions of the home and the city space.

An additional variation is Penelope Reed Doob's discussion of a medieval source of labyrinth as a pun on the Latin "labor intus", meaning 'house of toil'.<sup>21</sup> This medieval gloss is in keeping with the term 'maze' which denotes confusion (see Chapter Four for an in-depth discussion of 'maze') and so combines the labyrinthine structure with its effect. In general, turf mazes and ritual dances associated with the labyrinth have led to an understanding of labyrinth beyond this concept of the house. Despite this extension and broadening of the concept, each novel returns to an early understanding of the term as viewed through the Egyptian and Cretan labyrinths. The attention of this study is the examination of labyrinths as buildings, representations that reflect the suffix '-inth', meaning of place or building (Kern, *Through* 25).

There are many genres of labyrinth, ranging from simplistic single track representations through to intricate multi-branched types. Matthews refers to labyrinths in two groups, as either *unicursal* or *multicursal*, depending upon how many decision points they impose upon the walker. Discussions of labyrinths vary according to the definition of the term; from the strong classification as a unicursal form with no decision nodes (Kern, *Through*) which differentiates between maze and labyrinth to any complex path (Carol Shields, *Larry's Party* 81). This unicursal position excludes discussion of the ancient Egyptian and Cretan labyrinths. Each



novelist presents the labyrinth as a difficult and complex model, in an often deliberate engagement with the early labyrinths, and so refutes a narrowing of the 'labyrinth' to only unicursal constructions.

Though the etymology of 'maze' emphasises the emotion of the walker, (Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth* 98-99) whilst the labyrinth refers to the structure itself, distinctions between the maze and the labyrinth are blurred in popular usage (*OED* lists them as synonymous). Writings about the labyrinth either apply a separation of the two terms, tending to privilege the labyrinth as unicursal (Kern, *Through*; Faris, *Labyrinths*), or stress their similarity (Matthews, *Mazes*; Nigel Pennick, *Mazes and Labyrinths*). The use of classical and medieval renditions of the labyrinth in art to promote the supremacy of a unicursal track is flawed; rather the unicursal artistry denotes a complex idea and structure (Doob, *Idea* 39-63). The appearance of the labyrinth in literature is commonly that of the difficult multicursal type of labyrinth, though there are apparent exceptions like the flowing repetition of Alain Robbe-Grillet's *In the Labyrinth* (1967) and Shields' *Larry's Party* (1997). Whenever rigid distinctions are used to try and separate the maze and the labyrinth these arguments are invariably undermined as a result of the long and common heritage of the two terms. The Egyptian and Cretan labyrinths lie uneasily between the notions of maze and labyrinth and so undermine rigorous attempts to establish distinct definitions. While I support the principle that the terms may be used interchangeably,<sup>22</sup> it becomes necessary in the analyses of *The Passion* to consider Winterson's persistent use of the word 'maze'. Nuanced differences between the maze and the labyrinth are explored in Chapter Four (*The Passion*), where a full exploration of 'maze' is given, whilst significant Christian mutations of the form are a central consideration of Chapter Two (*The Name of the Rose*).



### 1.3 The Story of the Labyrinth

The proliferation of the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur makes the basic story well known.<sup>23</sup> The myth may be read as a transfiguration of the Minoan dynastic power rite as Minos (worshipped as or by the bull) was thought to retreat to labyrinthine caves to perform some sort of duel to decide the outcome of his reign. The arrival of Theseus, the strong custodian of Athens, perhaps demonstrates the exchange of power from native Minoan rule to Athenian supremacy.

Rather than recounting the entire story it is pertinent instead to outline some of the lesser-known parts of the myth. As a space steeped in ritual, the Cretan labyrinth served as a sacrificial arena for the slaughter of Athenian youth and yet the impetus for its construct lay in King Minos' failure<sup>24</sup> to adhere to ceremonial practice. The king's desire to possess the white bull sent by Poseidon led to him hiding it away, instead of offering the beast to the gods, as decreed. In retribution, Zeus made his wife Pasiphaë fall in love with the bull and, in a contraption of Daedalus' devising, she conceived the monstrous Minotaur.<sup>25</sup> In recognition of his shame, Minos housed her bastard child, Asterion,<sup>26</sup> in the labyrinth, using the beast to dispose of the Athenian youth sent in tribute every nine years. The nomenclature 'Minotaur' dehumanises this strange child and is formed of a conflation of the words 'Minos' and 'Taurus', and which translates literally as "Minos's bull" (Matthews, *Mazes* 35).<sup>27</sup>

The king's non-compliance with the god's wishes led to a distortion of the initial ritual of monumental proportions and resulted in the construction of the labyrinth, which also functioned as an enclosure to sacrifice the Athenian homage in a highly ritualised fashion.<sup>28</sup> There are ambiguities and contradictions about the building that remain,

mostly concerning its location and purpose; namely, was it a structure to hide the abhorrent flaunting of the god's edict, visually realised in the body of the hybrid Minotaur? Or did the labyrinth refer solely to the palace that Daedalus was commissioned to construct? Both questions emphasise the labyrinth as a structure devised for dwelling. If we consider the former, repeatedly evinced in mythology and literature, the labyrinth certainly would have created a poor spectacle for the populace. More likely, the edifice was intended for concealment, as the labyrinth masks the body of the Minotaur and his action, and so disguises the building's function.

Subsequent analysis of the myth has obscured the labyrinth still further with major critics such as Kern (*Through* 10) and Eco (*Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* 80) erroneously portraying the Cretan labyrinth as a straightforward system that, after the defeat of the Minotaur, affords no difficulty to the interloper.<sup>29</sup> Though classical and medieval depictions would tend to support this argument, Doob has evidenced that there exists a disparity between visual depictions of the labyrinth and the complex historical and textual labyrinths they denote (*Idea* 39-63). Ariadne's 'clue',<sup>30</sup> the thread given to Theseus to enable his escape from the maze, stresses the complexity of the Cretan structure. The laying of the thread demonstrates the maze itself, as a manner of revealing its difficult passageways. The presence of the clue reaffirms that the Cretan labyrinth is not analogous with the visual interpretations of the form;<sup>31</sup> rather the looped and unicursal format is used as a means to represent the structure visually, as evident on Cretan coins, manuscripts and floor mosaics.

Classical and medieval illustrations of the Cretan labyrinth tend to display the structure from above and so enable the onlooker to perceive its design, with the



Minotaur at the centre often in mortal combat with Theseus.<sup>32</sup> The effect of this is to provide the reader with the artificer's view, the ability to witness the labyrinth from above, and hence smooth the intricacies of the maze. Later Renaissance depictions show the building from a raised perspective or sometimes on high to illustrate Daedalus' escape route. The sophistication of early mazes and their capacity to disrupt knowledge of their hallways is signalled by Ovid who describes Daedalus' own bewilderment within his creation:

Such was the work, so intricate the place, / That scarce the workman all its turns cou'd trace; / And Daedalus was puzzled how to find / The secret ways of what himself design'd. (*Metamorphoses* 8, 27-30 trans. Dryden et al)<sup>33</sup>

This feat of complexity is made more sinister when it is considered that the Minotaur, destroyer of life, also walks the passageways. The Minotaur, half-man half-bull,<sup>34</sup> was housed in the labyrinth and is the only character able to dwell comfortably within its walls: the structure serves both as his home and prison.<sup>35</sup> The central space of the labyrinth is concealed and protected by the Minotaur.<sup>36</sup> Entry into the labyrinth is to stray into a threatening and disorientating area which further conceals the menacing beast. This is a key concern as the texts chosen document the encounter between wo/man and her/his environment as a dichotomy between disorientation and knowledge. The labyrinth finally remains empty with the Minotaur slain and Theseus fled, as the structure no longer fulfils its function as house of the beast. The emptiness and continued menace of the structure is explored in *The Name of the Rose*, *The Passion* and *House of Leaves* where the slaying of the beast or the discovery that the labyrinth was its own monster leads to a pervasive sense of anti-climax.

The labyrinth is not a house in the usual sense; rather the internalised space is convoluted and hidden, thereby subverting the 'domestic' area. Instead of opening



into a welcoming arena the Egyptian and Cretan models contort and conceal. The labyrinth's distortion and confusion of space is apparent in the inversion of medieval hierarchies in *The Name of the Rose*, in the excessive patterning of *Hawksmoor*, the spatial fluidity of *The Passion* and the overwhelming textuality of *House of Leaves*. The labyrinth represents the known, comforting and enclosing proportions of the house, whilst at the same time evokes a sense of the external as experienced through the journey, the over-implementation of boundaries and the ensuing confusion (Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* 369-379). The effect created is a conflict between movement and stasis. The experience of walking the maze evokes feelings of the *unheimlich*,<sup>37</sup> which Martin Heidegger translates as a feeling of "not-being-at-home" (*Being and Time* 233; Alan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity* 118-119). This tension between the known and unknown, the domestic and the unfamiliar, is a key concept within Danielewski's *House of Leaves* where the corporeal effect of the labyrinth is explored.

The ancient labyrinth is a multivalent (*OED* a2) space which functions as home, temple and prison; both the Egyptian and Cretan examples share multifunctional uses. Though these labyrinths perform the function of a house, the space is also emphatically ritualistic. The suitability of the labyrinth as a site of ritual has survived from its earliest usages and leads to its transition into a Christian icon. Religious depictions of the labyrinth construct an inner space that represents the goal of enlightenment with passage out of the labyrinth modified from escape to rebirth. These ecclesiastical labyrinths are often floor mosaics which signify Christian existence as a complicated path towards God, who is located at the centre. Illustrations of labyrinths used in contemplation and prayer were adopted as a

substitute for pilgrimage to the Holy Land for the infirm (perhaps the source of the Jerusalem pattern).<sup>38</sup>

Walking the labyrinth has been used as both a metaphor for redemption, visibly represented in the floor mosaics of Chartres, Amiens and Rheims, whilst similar mazy coils denote the entrails of hell, as the form reprises the mythical descent into the underworld (Eliade, *Encyclopaedia* 413).<sup>39</sup> In Virgil's *The Aeneid* the Cumean gates are garnished with the iconography of the labyrinth and anticipate the passage to the underworld. This fundamental ambivalence is most evident in Milton's adoption of the motif in *Paradise Lost* (V.622 and IX.499, II.584 and IX.183) and is explored later by Michael Ayrton (*The Maze Maker*, 1967).

The association with hell is reinforced by the location of the labyrinthine in fiction where it is often represented by subterranean caves.<sup>40</sup> By travelling into the cavernous tunnels of hell the same passages also offer the inverse: a means of return or a path to redemption.<sup>41</sup> For example, in Mathew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796) the vaults of St. Clare, where Alfonso absconds with his victim, are underground caverns. It is of note that during his pact with the devil the monk wishes to renege on his promise and flee instead to the surface, but he feels unable to travel the passageways back to the surface without assistance. He equates the descent into the maze with Satan and the ascent to the outside with God and redemption. Without the assistance of God he lacks the necessary interpreter to return to the exterior.<sup>42</sup> These labyrinths beneath the earth bewilder those who enter, especially those reckless enough to descend without provision.



In medieval Italy, Alighieri Dante's *Divine Comedy* aligns the labyrinthine with the descent into hell.<sup>43</sup> This association is intensified by his placement of the Minotaur within these hellish coils (*Inferno*, 1314 canto 12) and also conversely, with the path of ascent (*Paradise* c1315-1317). The labyrinth contains the dual properties of redemption and damnation, and confirms an assertion of the intrinsic ambivalence of the labyrinth (Doob, *Idea* 1-13; Eliade, *Patterns* 369, 379). Dante's work fortifies the concept of traversing the labyrinth with a guide, a human version of the clue (first Virgil, then Beatrice and finally St. Bernard).<sup>44</sup> The properties of the labyrinth are two-fold here, marking a movement from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. The labyrinth holds the ultimate promise of transformation, achieved through the perception of its whole and the experience of its navigation, but this movement is held in tension by the threat of annihilation either by the Minotaur or by the structure itself. It is partly these dangers that are used to prominent effect in contemporary literature.

#### 1.4 Emblems of the Contemporary Labyrinth

No, do not hurry.  
No need to hurry. Haste and delay are equal  
In this one world, for there's no exit, none,  
No place to come to, and you'll end where you are,  
Deep in the centre of the endless maze.  
(Muir, *The Labyrinth* 41-45)

Edwin Muir's 1949 collection of poems, entitled *The Labyrinth*, explores the proximity of man and his environment as the experience of, and interaction with, a labyrinth. In this nihilistic extract, there is an articulation of lost bearings and confusion, both of which are distinctively employed in the modern labyrinth. The narrator's earlier dream-like musings are subsequently refuted by his 'bad spirit' who details the omnipresent and grotesque size of the labyrinth, whereby experience of the labyrinth's overwhelming whole entirely traps the walker, reduces his role to mere loiterer, and undermines the urgency of locating a path that leads out of the maze.<sup>45</sup> Recognition of the futility of engaging with the structure results in continued symptoms of the maze where feelings of disorientation, bewilderment and lack of progression remain even after exiting the structure.

The labyrinth is a significant trope in twentieth-century fiction, employed in Joyce's *Ulysses*, André Gide's monologue, *Theseus* (1946), all of Borges' writing, Robbe-Grillet's *In the Labyrinth*, Anaïs Nin's *The Seduction of the Minotaur* (1961), Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *The General in His Labyrinth* (1989) and beyond into the novels that frame this study. In art, Pablo Picasso's later works depict an obsessive return to the iconography of the labyrinth, specifically to that of the Minotaur as a re-examination of man's monstrous self (see *Minotauromachia* (1935), *Guernica* (1937) and his Minotaur sequence). Similarly, the mediations of Ayrton show his identification of the monster



with Daedalus, causing a subsequent de-centring of Theseus. These eclectic examples reflect the labyrinth's importance as a mythical and historical device which typifies the ultimate quest for the centre, for identity and wholeness, where "every life, even the least eventful, can be taken as a journey through a labyrinth".<sup>46</sup> The apparently stable structure of the labyrinth contrasts the effect of walking its pathways, which invariably creates the effect of uncertainty. As Doob notes, this is the experience of both the unicursal and the multicursal model whereby deceptively fixed and constant passageways allow play through the labyrinth's repetitions (*Idea* 39-63).

Experience of the labyrinth in twentieth-century literature and art is still transformative, but tends towards negative alteration. Some of these modern labyrinths lack a central space altogether, making them appear grotesque and monstrous, akin to the Cretan labyrinth. Absent from Muir's poem "The Labyrinth" is the eponymous Minotaur; rather it is the structure itself that threatens to subsume the walker: "[i]n sudden blindness, hasten, almost run,/ [a]s if the maze itself were after me" (35-37). The inability to exit the maze may force the walker to adopt the role of the Minotaur and so remain indefinitely incarcerated at the heart of the maze. It is the articulation of disorientation caused by the building's complex construction that is given prominence in this study's selected twentieth-century texts.

The labyrinth necessarily creates profound uncertainty and often invades beyond the immediacy of the physical structure: an action felt in *Hawksmoor* and *House of Leaves* most pervasively, with *The Passion* making the process ubiquitous through common-place fantastical sequences that exist outside of the improbable Venice. *The Name of the Rose* layers labyrinths, which exist not solely as the library but as microcosms for the world, both medieval and modern. The texts portray the



confusing effect of the labyrinth as a sensation that extends out of the confines of the ritualised space to infiltrate the exterior world.

A return to early representations of the labyrinth in archaeology, history, mythology and literature, and the use of the form as a mode of textuality, so suitable for contemporary considerations and prevalent within the modern novel, consolidates an aesthetic continuity that easily predates temporal notions of the postmodern.

Labyrinthine digressions characterise the form of an intricate search for knowledge in *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767):

-----Endless is the Search of Truth. [...] ---stop! My dear uncle Toby, ----stop! go not one foot further into this thorny and bewildered track, --intricate are the steps! intricate are the mases of this labyrinth! intricate are the troubles which the pursuit of this bewitching phantom, KNOWLEDGE, will bring upon thee. (II, iii: 110)

Sterne's text is preoccupied with mazes and labyrinths of both a horticultural and philosophical variety.<sup>47</sup> These figures function both on the physical level of the garden and in the mazy textual design of the narrative implying the deeper connotative properties of the labyrinth which threaten to engulf Tristram and his uncle Toby. Repetition of delay and detour in this digressive narrative creates a perpetual labyrinth as the protagonist continually seeks meaning; a procedure that refutes Faris' claim that such labyrinthine narratology is solely a twentieth-century phenomenon (*Labyrinths* 10).

The labyrinth epitomises the condition of modern wo/man as a cog within a vast unknowable city-machine, from a legacy of religious uncertainty and doubt, without the surety of a guide to aid navigation. The condition of such modern mazes is paralleled by the relationship between Borges and the labyrinth, and the transition from his writing to his later emplacement by other authors as custodian of the form (Eco, *Rose*;



Danielewski, *House*). In this manner, the architect becomes embroiled within his own designs.

The labyrinth comprises the mythological archetype, incorporates the threat of the unknown, foregrounds constructions of artificiality and materiality, and typifies the moment of crisis. An over-connotative icon, the labyrinth invites rich historical, literary and philosophical speculations. Its presence within multiple disciplines ensures an overwhelming surplus of meaning, whereby the properties of the labyrinth intensify the need to grasp one thread, to follow its many digressions through the maze; and yet, at the same time, these same characteristics ensure that a singular 'clue' is illusory.

The labyrinth, with its allusions to creation and navigation, stresses the arduous nature of both and becomes an appropriate metaphor for the contemporary novel. Working specifically within the late twentieth century, the chosen novels exemplify the labyrinthine as an articulation of space and time, of narrative construction, as a physical event and as the interaction with earlier representations of the labyrinth. Treatment of the labyrinth is typically twofold: it exists both as a perceivable structure that ensnares characters and also as a metaphor for textual manufacture and narrative progress, and so highlights the active role of reader and author. A reading of this co-dependant triangle (incorporating author, text and reader) and the artistic realisations experienced and implemented by the reader is a distillation of Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory.<sup>48</sup> Iser proposes the role of the reader as an active participant in the game of meaning-making. Eco's theories of reader-response, though indebted to Iser's thinking, demonstrate an evolved idea of reader-response that dwells in labyrinths of inference. At the core of Eco's appreciation of the relationship between the text and the reader is the idea of the labyrinth and so it

is necessary to explore Eco's semiotics in relation to the labyrinth. The novel 'houses' the text whilst the reader undergoes the journey into the narrative maze and creates a unique communication through her/his relationship with the discourse. The labyrinth exemplifies this sense of the instability of meaning and articulates the reader's response (the labyrinth walker) to the narrative through their interface with the 'contained' textual unit (the labyrinth itself). Creation of a narrative labyrinth also indicates a particular concept of an author who, like Daedalus, is ultimately contained in his work. The labyrinth as a metaphor for narrative stresses the complexity of the reader's path, whilst simultaneously emphasising the role of the author as guide and constructor of this narrative meander. Navigation and disorientation for both protagonists and readers alike becomes a key narratological issue.

The appropriateness of the labyrinth as a model to interrogate theoretical practices such as semiotics, narratology and post-structuralism complements the postmodern self-conscious relationship between theory and narrative. The labyrinth is a persuasive and pervasive metaphor for narrative encompassing textual complexity, recursion and the relationship between author, reader and textual meaning. A labyrinthine discourse makes manifest the complex and convoluted aspect of the narrative flow and process whilst the intricacy and entanglement of meaning also emphasises the repetitious nature of the text. Original meaning is obscured through a plethora of interconnected signs and through an "economy of traces" (Jacques Derrida, *Positions* 40). This is particularly relevant when considering *The Name of the Rose*, which concentrates on the capacity of the labyrinth as a metaphor to reflect these semiotic chains of meaning.



Derrida's postulations upon a theory of elliptical difference demonstrate that the semantic promise is lost within innumerable labyrinths of language ("Structure, Sign and Play" 351-370; "Ellipsis" 371- 378; *Positions* 40). The doublings and complexities of the labyrinth reflect the emergence of the sign that "begins by repeating itself" (Derrida, *Writing and Difference* 297). Repetition and tracery are important motifs within such linguistic labyrinths where encounters with the spirals of language lead inevitably to multiple intertextual comprehensions and palimpsests of meaning. Duplication in a text is ultimately subversive as "repetition is what disturbs, suspends, or destroys the linearity of the line" (J. Hillis-Miller, "Ariadne's Thread" 70), and so causes the labyrinth to be revealed.

The play of *différance* in a word ensures the search for an origin or a beginning is eternally recursive. Movement and fluidity eradicate the notion of dwelling within the maze, inhibit a sense of a cohesive self and ensure that the quest, epitomised by the experience of the labyrinth, is a futile exercise. Re-appearance from within the model of the labyrinth is not uniform; the outcome of this cyclical recurrence and meandering is an elliptical passage, which returns to view the origin through a filter of previous meanings, signs and outcomes. Out of this apparent chaos emerge reader-imposed meanings that create multiple routes through the allusive, intertextual debris of the text.

Despite the labyrinth's significance as a metaphor for narrative construction and progression there is no comprehensive critical study that applies a concerted 'labyrinthine' theory. Faris also elicits her surprise that this is the case and postulates the awkward term "labyrinthification" to cover this discipline (*Labyrinths* 10). The adoption of the labyrinth as a means to articulate theories of semiotics is a

notable usage pioneered by Eco (*Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*), and likewise the shadow of the labyrinth haunts the cyclical process of 'eternal return' (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*; Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*).

Each of the chosen texts is an 'experimental' novel which engages with schemes of innovation and challenges conceptualisations of spatiotemporality through its distinctive use of the maze. Depictions of identity in these contemporary novels reveal a composite of fractured personae whose experience is stretched and manipulated in, or by, the labyrinthine environment. Present re-imaginings of the maze undermine and invalidate the promise of return as the walker becomes excessively transformed by her/his experience within the labyrinth. The significance of the labyrinth is reflected by the decision to examine complementary examples from each writer's earlier and later work in the introduction to each chapter. This will aid and complement central examinations of the labyrinths and the idea of the intertext indicated through the image of the labyrinth in their other writings, both fictional and theoretical.

Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (Chapter Two) is a discourse engaged in the rebuttal of ecclesiastical labyrinths, in a return to a scheme that recalls the complexity of the Cretan model but which is also subtly different. Contemporary versions of the labyrinth, based on Eco's interpretation of the rhizome<sup>49</sup> formation, pervade the medieval setting. He employs three distinctive variations of the labyrinth, identified as the classical, the maze and the rhizome (*Semiotics* 80). The rhizome is particularly significant as the tangled network of routes displaces the idea of a centre. Eco's rhizome is a 'hyperlabyrinth' of gigantic and engulfing proportions. Theoretical engagement with labyrinths is evident in Eco's work on semiotics, where he has



repeatedly sought to categorise the formations of the maze.<sup>50</sup> The novel skilfully balances the Cretan, the ecclesiastical and the rhizome modes of the labyrinth, drawing directly on medieval and ostensibly Christian iconography to assert the intersection and pre-eminence of the rhizome labyrinth over other varieties.<sup>51</sup> Eco's medieval novel of detection, suffused with theology, philology and philosophical thought, creates an atmosphere of apocalyptic expectation. The themes of hidden knowledge and epistemological enquiry, often perceived as ultimately futile, complement the progression through the contemporary labyrinth. Its associations with detection are furthered by the climactic confrontation of protagonists that promotes the image of the beast within the maze. *The Name of the Rose* was originally written in Italian and analysis of the novel in translation raises a plethora of issues regarding translation and adaptation. Significantly, these concerns themselves intensify some of the salient themes of the text and so sustain the decision to work substantially from the English edition with reference to the Italian where appropriate (cf. Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* 45-46, 95).

Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* (Chapter Three) attends to the fictive use of the labyrinth in the construction of early eighteenth-century churches in London. There is a direct invocation of its Egyptian origins, primarily through Herodotus' description of the Fayoum pyramid and labyrinth (*Histories* II.148). The depiction of London's alleyways re-enforces the motif, as does the experience of its streets and its ability to change and repeat. This maintains a bridge between the eighteenth- and twentieth-century time sequences which are infiltrated by an ancient and exotic past. Correlation of the labyrinth and ritualistic death, in the manner of the Athenian sacrifice and the earlier Egyptian usage, is an integral textual component. There is an oscillating bi-fold movement between the eighteenth- and



the twentieth-century timeframes which positions the diabolic Dyer alongside the contemporary detective Hawksmoor. Significantly, all the novels make an emphatic correlation between the labyrinth and sacred space.

Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion* (Chapter Four) adapts an overtly patriarchal desire to penetrate the labyrinth that results in a realisation of heterogeneous space.<sup>52</sup> Winterson's feminisation of the maze is predated by Evans (*Palace*), Robert Graves (*The White Goddess*, 1948), John Kraft ("The Goddess in the Labyrinth", 1987) and reiterated by Smith's investigations (*Myth*). Winterson's usage is subtle and seeks to maintain a heterogeneous city space that repels a straightforward homogeneous reading of the site. The novel accesses an obscure literary lineage of the maze envisaged as water.<sup>53</sup> This unusual application of the labyrinth reflects Winterson's adoption of it as a tool for destabilisation and liquid possibility, not only in the obvious context regarding the plurality of identity, but also to contest the experience of space and time. Significantly, Winterson refers only to the 'maze' in *The Passion* and accordingly it will be necessary to consider the implications of her decision.

Mark Z. Danielewski's immense labyrinthine novel, the *House of Leaves* (Chapter Five), foregrounds its own materiality and textual artifice. Storylines, snippets of film documentary, cartoon, collage and poetry present an eclectic bundle of textuality, whilst the perpetual flux and slippage within the text is highly evocative of the labyrinth.<sup>54</sup> The excessively contrived discourse foregrounds the knotted nature of the narrative and ensures that the reader's experience parallels that of the characters encountering the maze. It is the destructive abilities of this labyrinth that are obviously so threatening, both to the protagonists and also to the integrity of the



text. Analysis will focus on the novel as fabrication and will detail the arduous nature of the reading process that parallels the distorted gothic house of the title. The text is preoccupied with ideas of repetition and originality: an examination of these considerations will be paralleled by scrutiny of the idea of the mutating labyrinth.

These texts make extensive use of the mythological, psychological and transformative effects of the labyrinth and celebrate the convoluted narrative implications that a labyrinthine text conveys. The process is explicit in Eco, Ackroyd and Danielewski's writing, yet not so immediately obvious in Winterson's work. Appropriately, the labyrinth is a creation of high artifice whose recursive movement complements the playful and teasing nature of these narratives and their linguistic games. As such, factors of narrative authenticity, ludic etymologies and the processes of naming will be considered in each chapter.

The chosen novels occupy an unstable historical space whose navigation is achieved by the looped ability of the narrative to pass from the present to the past. Although *The Name of the Rose* and *The Passion* are outwardly historical novels, seemingly detached from the author's and reader's present, here too are strong and persistent engagements with the contemporary. These are achieved partially because it is impossible for the author or produced text to escape the burden of cultural and temporal ideologies and also because both novels purposefully interrelate with the contemporaneous. Winterson has spoken of the constructed Venice acting as a "mirror" for the city of London in the 1980s (*The Passion* preface), whilst Eco emphasises the debt that the contemporary owes to the Middle Ages ("The Return of the Middle Ages"). Both authors make the validity and authenticity of their

chosen historical sites problematic through the inclusion of anachronistic episodes, quotations and intertexts, all of which construct a labyrinthine matrix of associations. *Hawksmoor* actively foregrounds a dual narrative composed of eighteenth and twentieth-century timeframes and visits the same space, events and utterances in a bipartite form. Narrative layering in *House of Leaves* disguises the historical movements of the discourse, as the contemporary vernacular and profane dialogue stress the modern.

The chosen order of the novels follows the chronology of their publication and their temporal attentions as well (from medieval, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries). The ability to examine the progression of these settings is most appealing, allowing a comparison and depiction of the labyrinth at these different historical eras. These texts cover major historical events or time periods, located in different countries. The isolationism of Eco's medieval monastery is such that the events at the abbey seem remote from the surrounding physical environment. William of Baskerville's frame of reference includes prophetic moments from the medieval, including the use of eyeglasses and the possibility of flying machines which tie the medieval and the contemporary together, in a symbiotic relationship as Eco recognises in *Travels in Hyperreality* ("Return" 64-65). The movement of Ackroyd's narrative is labyrinthine, regularly looping from eighteenth-century London to the contemporary of the same locality. By tracing the central experiences of Dyer and Hawksmoor the narrative corresponds to Winterson's use of two protagonists' voices. *The Passion*, conceived within a similar political climate (Britain in the 1980s), explores the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath in nineteenth-century France and especially Venice. This enables Winterson to contrast a Romantic narrative of individualism with a climate of totalitarianism. In



comparison, *House of Leaves* is startling in its arrangement and project; Danielewski's novel is lengthy, multi-faceted and derivative, employing multiple narrators, discourses and genres. The novel unites the rhizome labyrinth of Eco's vision with Winterson's projections about the interaction of labyrinth and mental health, combined with the threatening and deadly properties of Ackroyd's labyrinth. The most recent of the fictions, it evidences an explicit debt to the Egyptian and Cretan models, whilst its exploration of Borges' and Eco's writing unites all the threads of the novels. The selected novelists, by incorporating narratives concerned with detection, discovery and murder, are necessarily indebted to Borges, the guardian of the literary labyrinth in the twentieth century, whose extensive, even obsessive, use of the labyrinth motif elevates his labyrinthine writing to the level of virtuoso performance.

Of the two British writers chosen, Winterson aligns herself most consciously with European modernism, as emphatically separate from the realist fiction that dominated the middle half of the twentieth-century in Britain. This European tradition does not, according to Winterson, discard modernism in favour of realism ("Vintage Living Texts"). Ackroyd makes a similar, if less obvious, assertion through his comments concerning England's covert Catholic past and its alignment with a European Catholic tradition, steeped in the fantastical and mystical, of which Eco is emphatically a part (Susana Onega, "An Interview with Peter Ackroyd" 5-8). The extensive word games utilised by Joyce (*Ulysses*; *Finnegan's Wake*, 1939), Thomas Pynchon (*The Crying of Lot 49*, 1966) and Borges (*Labyrinths*, 1964) are directly continued by Danielewski and Eco, whilst the ethereal and dislocated worlds of Calvino (*Invisible Cities*), Nin (*Seduction of the Minotaur*) and Marquez (*The General in His Labyrinth*) are reworked by Winterson. The labyrinthine

claustrophobic cityscapes of Franz Kafka (*The Trial*, c1925) and Pynchon foreshadow Ackroyd's work on the city, and yet Ackroyd makes note of solely English predecessors such as Daniel Defoe, William Blake and Charles Dickens. This follows Ackroyd's identification of a literary heritage focalised through England, and specifically London, which in turn attempts to narrow his discussions of the labyrinth.

Through the consideration of the labyrinth it will be possible to assess the manner in which it is being manipulated and used in conjunction with its classical origin, affecting and altering its temporal emplacements. This late twentieth-century literature returns to Egyptian and Cretan illustrations of the labyrinth and views the structure through an historical and cultural taxonomy that has appropriated the labyrinth.



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<sup>1</sup> In particular see Penelope Reed Doob for her examination of labyrinths in medieval England (*The Idea of the Labyrinth: From Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages* 192-221).

<sup>2</sup> For example see the Indian temple Halebid at Mysore (Nigel Pennick, *Mazes and Labyrinths* 51) or Newgrange in Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> See W. H. Matthews, *Mazes & Labyrinths: Their History and Development* (44-45 figs. 20-31) and Pennick, *Mazes* (14).

<sup>4</sup> The graffiti in question was preserved in the ruins of Pompeii which I visited in June 2003. The small diagram is a type of early emblem and contains an image of the labyrinth with a Latin caption that compares a homeowner to the bestial Minotaur (labyrinthus tuc habitat minotaurus). See Matthews (*Mazes* 46) for a reproduction of this graffiti.

<sup>5</sup> See Janet Bord *Mazes and Labyrinths of the World* and Hermann Kern *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5,000 years*.

<sup>6</sup> J. Alexander MacGillivray suggests a period of construction from 1853-1808 B.C.E (*Minotaur* 1), which makes the building contemporaneous with the Middle Minoan period (1700-2100 B.C.E.), an epoch that witnessed the construction of the first and second phases of palace building. Matthews places Amenemhet's reign at approximately 2300 B.C.E. (*Mazes* 13). These calculations contrast with Pliny's estimation of the building's age at approximately 3,600 B.C.E. (*Nat. Hist.* XXXVI. xix).

<sup>7</sup> See Diodorus I.66, Pliny, *Natural* XXXVI.xix and Strabo, *Geographies* XVII.i.

<sup>8</sup> Herodotus wonders whether these buildings might be semi-divine (*Histories* II.149-151).

<sup>9</sup> For confirmation of this see William Smith et al (*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* Vol. I. 926), W. H. Matthews (*Mazes* 23), and Jacob E. Nyenhuis (*Myth* 28).

<sup>10</sup> Seneca also engaged with this subject in his play *Phaedra*. See also Jean Racine's reworking of Euripides in his version of *Phaedra* and also Ted Hughes' translation of Racine. Both playwrights stress the continuation of monstrous love, reinterpreting Phaedra's mother (Pasiphaë) and half-brother's fate.

<sup>11</sup> The Athenian hero is graphically reproduced in a range of ancient frescos, mosaics, manuscripts and pottery (cf. Jacob E. Nyenhuis, *Myth and the Creative Process* appendix). Despite Theseus' heroic status, his deeds were sometimes questionable and he proved fallible on occasion. His careless abandonment of Ariadne and the indirect murder of his father support this view. Theseus' ineptitude is tempered by his heroic qualities and his status as patriarch of the city; though this is deftly subverted in Gide's monologue, *Theseus*. Other re-imaginings of Theseus can be found in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in Plutarch's *Lives* sequence and in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* where he acts as arbiter and custodian of the city of Athens. Plutarch's compendium on the hero's life is particularly useful (*Theseus*).

<sup>12</sup> The discovery of the Cretan palace is somewhat of a contradiction (as were Petrie's findings) as Evans' investigations were easily predated by Minos Kalokairinos' local survey of the site (1878-79). A subsequent report filed by W.J. Stillman referred to a "Daedalian labyrinth". Stillman's description alerted Heinrich Schliemann who repeatedly attempted to buy or excavate the land between 1883 and 1889. See MacGillivray for these and other aborted digs at Knossos (*Minotaur* 96-99, fig. 5-7).

<sup>13</sup> The hypothesis that the palace itself should be considered the labyrinth is refuted by viewing the scale of the ruin which is intimate and straightforward to navigate, as Evans himself attests: "[t]here is nothing in all this to suggest a labyrinthine plan" (*Palace* III. 284). Evans launched various theories to explain the absence of the labyrinthine home



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of the Minotaur. These included the idea that the labyrinth was Ariadne's dancing place, or that it existed in the form of a now-destroyed floor mosaic, through its etymological root, and through the identification of the "Hall of the Double Axes" as sacrificial temple of the *labrys* (*Palace* III.). After visiting the excavation, it seems obvious that the "Hall of the Double Axes" is extremely small and the architectural layout owes much to the imaginative rebuilding of Evans who reconstructed the room from bare foundations (cf. Matthews, *Mazes* 33 fig. 10). Also, as this thesis highlights, the notion that 'labyrinth' originated from '*labrys*' has become increasingly untenable.

<sup>14</sup> Evans' dig and subsequent scholarly observations are currently being re-examined in a process that is not without controversy. MacGillivray, a recent biographer of Evans, has been castigated for his attack on the reputation and methods of the scholar. His recent biography (*Minotaur*) exposes the flaws in both Evans' preconceptions and archaeological practices.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, *Palace* I. 447 and Matthews *Mazes*, 175. The definition stems from Max Mayer's comments about the double-headed axe, which seemingly validates Heinrich Schliemann's research, and is substantiated by Evans' archaeological and journalistic investigations into the earthworks at Knossos, Crete (cf. W.H.D. Rouse, "The Double Axe and the Labyrinth").

<sup>16</sup> With a thriving tourist industry relying on Evans' mythology, Cretan authorities appear reluctant to challenge the basis of Evans' investigations. According to MacGillivray, such reticence is still being circulated in wider archaeological circles (cf. "Labyrinths").

<sup>17</sup> See Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5,000 years* and J. Alexander MacGillivray, *Minotaur*.

<sup>18</sup> This decision was evidenced by Heinrich Schliemann (see also Matthews, *Mazes* 34 175-176; MacGillivray, *Minotaur* 213).

<sup>19</sup> Rouse, "Double Axe" 272; qtd. MacGillivray, *Minotaur* 212-214. MacGillivray also denies that the symbol found at Knossos is indicative of an axe and instead relates it to the Egyptian hieroglyphic denoting the horizon. This may be a compelling argument as Pasiphaë was related to the sun god, Helios, and Minos' father was Zeus.

<sup>20</sup> Kern, *Labyrinth* and W.F. Jackson Knight, *Vergil* 149. Knight's commentary on Güntert's findings refines rather than rebuffs Mayer's perceived association between the labyrinth and the axe. Instead of discarding the role of the axe, Güntert strengthens the significance of *labrys* by arguing that it stems from root 'lapis', meaning 'stone', and so forms the root of both words (cf. Knight, *Vergil* 248).

<sup>21</sup> Trevet qtd. Doob *Idea*, 95, 97. This word play is also surveyed by Helmut Jaskolski (*Labyrinth* 89).

<sup>22</sup> As endorsed by Knight (*Vergil* 188), Matthews (*Mazes* 1-2), Doob (*Idea* 1), and Nigel Pennick (*Mazes* 13).

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account of the myth see Matthews (*Mazes* 17-22), MacGillivray (*Minotaur* 25-6), Plutarch (*Theseus*) or Charles Kingsley (*Heroes*), whilst Nyenhuis succinctly draws together key Greek and Roman sources that document the Daedalian myth (*Myth* 23-33). André Gide also reworks the narrative in his amusing monologue *Theseus* (cf. Faris for her critique of the work in *Labyrinths* 123-129).

<sup>24</sup> The myth is not congruent with the image of Minos as the righteous arbiter and law giver as defined by his role of judge in Hades (cf. especially Plutarch, *Theseus* XVI; Dante, *Inferno* 5; Racine, *Phaedra* IV.xi).

<sup>25</sup> In particular, see Michael Ayrton's *Minotaur!* and also Danielewski's protagonist Zampanò's hypothesis of the Minotaur's origins in *House of Leaves* (110-111).

<sup>26</sup> The name Asterion is reported by Pausanias as the name of Minos' son killed by Theseus. In his description of the labyrinth myth he refers to Asterion as a man only



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(*Description of Greece* II.xxxi.i). Apollodorus uses 'Asterius' but I have adopted the earlier term to conform with Borges' usage in his story "The House of Asterion". To mark the bull's semi-divine ancestry, the Minotaur was immortalised in the constellation Asterion. This action suggests that the Minotaur was destined for the stellar system as the name 'Asterion' is translated by Jaskolski as "star being" (*Labyrinth* 16).

<sup>27</sup> Crete has many stories with bovine protagonists; for example, Minos was born of Europa whom Zeus kidnapped in the form of a bull whilst it was thought that Daedalus constructed a bovine automaton 'Taurus' to guard the island. This device is possibly another candidate for the Minotaur (Diodorus, *Library* IV 77).

<sup>28</sup> Although the reason given for this sacrifice varies, it would appear that it either formed a war tribute or was in recompense for the murder of one of Minos' sons, Androgeous, after he surpassed Athenian warriors during city games (cf. Plutarch, *Theseus* XV).

<sup>29</sup> Faris has similar concerns regarding Eco's discussion of labyrinths and the simplistic manner in which he attempts to delineate their meaning (*Labyrinths* 158-166).

<sup>30</sup> Eliade equates the thread with the sun's rays and so the 'clue' lightens the mystery at the heart of the maze and exposes Minos' shame (*Encyclopaedia* 411-419). It is fitting, given Ariadne's ancestry from the sun god that she bestows such a method of illumination. The need to light the labyrinth implies a covered or subterranean structure incompatible with Daedalus' eventual airborne escape.

<sup>31</sup> The ecclesiastical depictions of the labyrinth are investigated visually by Kern (*Labyrinth*). The shape became popular in cathedrals, but can also be found in turf mazes, in South American versions of the 'man in the maze' and Scandinavian sites. These representations do not tax the walker as the individual moves to the right until the centre is found at which point the structure is exited by moving to the left. It is a genus that has led Kern to argue that the maze and labyrinth are distinctive and incompatible units.

<sup>32</sup> See the twelfth-century manuscript *Theseus and the Minotaur* housed at Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. Comprehensive collections of such illustrations are contained in Bord (*Mazes*) and Kern (*Labyrinth*).

<sup>33</sup> Diodorus describes the structure in less threatening terms: "a man who enters it cannot easily find his way out, unless he gets a guide who is thoroughly acquainted with the structure" (*Library of History* I. 61).

<sup>34</sup> Nyenhuis (*Myth* 211 fn. 11) recalls that Plutarch *Lives* and Euripides (fragment) refer to the ambivalence of the Minotaur as half human, half beast: whilst Apollodorus' *Library* describes 'Asterius' as a male human but with a bull's face (III.6.i). Diodorus also describes the Minotaur as bull only to his shoulders (IV.77).

<sup>35</sup> It would seem inevitable that the Minotaur would eventually stumble free of Daedalus' design, so perhaps the structure was too brilliantly devised, the exit blocked or the Minotaur lived there willingly and hence removing the label of prison (cf. Philochorus qtd. Plutarch, *Theseus* XVI). Gide's *Theseus* (87-88) portrays a structure containing soporific herbs transforming the 'prison' into a house of hedonism whilst Ayrton's *Minotaur!* (9, 45) denotes an intricate system of pulleys and rooms. Plutarch would seem to indicate that the structure was inescapable as he describes how many of the youths died from starvation and thirst having never faced the beast (XV). In doing so, he lessens the threat of the creature and instead increases the fear of the labyrinth. See also the changeable labyrinth prison in Iain M. Banks' *The Player of Games* (118-119), intended to alter so that only the innocent can escape.



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<sup>36</sup> As Spratt attests, it would seem to make sense that the Minotaur inhabited an area of the labyrinth, rather like a den (qtd. Rouse, “Double Axe” 274). Diagrams of the maze invariably display the beast at its core.

<sup>37</sup> Though the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘unheimlich’ as “uncanny, weird” a more thorough examination of the term can be found in Sigmund Freud’s essay “The Uncanny” (154-167 esp. 154-157). For a discussion of the relationship between the individual and her/his surroundings resulting in the feeling of alienation see Heidegger “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” *Poetry, Language Thought*, Nele Bemong’s “The Uncanny” (5) and also chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>38</sup> Another function of the labyrinth utilised in England from the Renaissance onwards was its playfulness. Experience of the maze as a leisure activity was thought to detract from the importance of the form. The Christian labyrinth at Rheims was removed at the behest of the bishop who objected to its usage as a pleasure pursuit by local children.

<sup>39</sup> For a comprehensive view of the occurrence see W.F. Jackson Knight (*Vergil* 137-287) and also for the labyrinthine descent into hell see Evans Lansing Smith (*Myth*).

<sup>40</sup> See also Laurence Durrell’s *The Dark Labyrinth* where tourists become lost in a Cretan cave system.

<sup>41</sup> To ultimately escape the labyrinth it is not always possible to simply retrace one’s footsteps. Daedalus, for example, was forced to don angelic wings of feather and wax to soar out of the labyrinth (cf. Ayrton, *The Maze Maker*; Edwin Muir, *The Labyrinth* and Lawrence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, II, iii 110). Sadly, for Icarus the same method of deliverance resulted in death through his ignorance (Pieter Brugel *The Fall of Icarus*; Ayrton *Testament*). In Dante’s commentary it is Icarus’ inability to follow the middle path that led to his demise (*Inferno* 17, 26, 29). Whilst Michael Ayrton’s engagements with Icarus in *The Testament of Daedalus* and *The Maze Maker*, explore his homoerotic desire to merge with the sun as the root of his destruction.

<sup>42</sup> Horace Walpole’s novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), also involves a subterranean episode in labyrinthine tunnels, from the castle to the church. I am grateful to Catherine Wynne who reminded me of this prior occurrence.

<sup>43</sup> Descriptions of hell often emphasise the inaccessibility of the underworld space coupled with its inescapability. Passage to the underworld, particularly for those not yet dead, is in the form of a quest.

<sup>44</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer in *The House of Fame* uses Ovid as his mentor through the maze of the text. See Doob (*Idea* 307-340) for the labyrinth in Chaucer’s writing.

<sup>45</sup> The speed of navigating the maze is evident in fertility rituals, especially in Scandinavian examples, where male youths would race to the virgin at the centre (cf. John Kraft, *The Goddess in the Labyrinth*).

<sup>46</sup> Eliade, *Patterns* 382. Michael Ayrton uses this premise literally as the central thesis of his lecture “The Meaning of the Maze”.

<sup>47</sup> See Stephen Soud’s essay “Weavers, Gardeners, and Gladiators” for his discussion of the garden maze.

<sup>48</sup> See Iser *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* and “The Reading Process” and also Stanley Fish’s “Interpreting the *Variorium*”.

<sup>49</sup> See Gilles Deleuze’s and Felix Guttari’s seminal exploration of the rhizome and later Eco’s manipulation of their writings (*A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*). For further examination of the rhizome model see chapter two.

<sup>50</sup> The rapport between author, reader and writer is extensively examined by Eco in his writings about narrative, and a more comprehensive engagement with this topic can be found in the introduction to chapter two.



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<sup>51</sup> Eco's delineation of labyrinth genre, reiterated by Jaskolski, is a transformation of the labyrinth from its ecclesiastical mode, then to the maze and through to a postmodern appearance that is envisaged as a rhizome (Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* 80; Jaskolski, *Labyrinth* 11).

<sup>52</sup> The labyrinth may appear explicitly masculine with its animalistic guardian, marauding patriarchal prince, cruel impassive judge (Minos) and its wily creator; but the labyrinth was created as a direct result of Pasiphaë's infidelity and it is her daughter, Ariadne, that lends the clue to Theseus to solve the maze. There is also a body of scholars that suggest the labyrinth was Ariadne's dancing place, an association loosely based on the ritual dance of the crane deity, Geranos (cf. especially Evans, *Palace* Vol. III. 66-80). Furthermore, Evans insisted upon the relationship of the maze to an ancient matriarchal deity (cf. Knight, *Vergil* and Evans Lansing Smith, *Myth*).

<sup>53</sup> This includes Milton's descriptions of the watery Lethe; Pliny, Strabo and Chaucer's description of the river Meander and Percy Shelley's *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills*.

<sup>54</sup> This recalls Borges' masterful short story "The Garden of Forking Paths" (1941) where the text and the labyrinth are indistinguishable: "to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing" (*Labyrinths* 50).

## *The Name of the Rose*

### **2 Umberto Eco's Use of the Labyrinth**

Impressions of labyrinths dominate Umberto Eco's debut novel, *The Name of the Rose*,<sup>1</sup> as the dialogue communicates an overabundance of the labyrinthine both physically and textually. *Rose* is formed from the memoir of a medieval monk Adso whose observations have been passed through, and translated by, a line of scholars. Blending contemporary and medieval sources, the novel creates a multivalent space that is extremely rich for analysis. It is partially such textual overabundance that causes the route travelled by the reader, through the disseminated sculpture of *Rose*'s residual texts and quotations, to resemble the labyrinth.

This chapter will uncover the appropriateness of the labyrinth for discussions concerning semiotics and, by extension, its worth as an applicable model for the processes of detective fiction. The first of these analyses will examine labyrinths in a selection of Eco's writings, specifically the use he makes of the device in his theoretical works. The examination of Eco's contrived delineations of the labyrinth, his applications of these types in his appreciation of dictionary and encyclopaedic competence, and accordingly closed and open works, provides a basis for thinking about the labyrinth as a manner of determining the experiential and structural features of narrative.

A critique of *Rose* raises fundamental questions relating to translation and to anachronism, as the reader navigates the meeting of the contemporary and the medieval in a composite script. Part of this process will be the identification and study of fragments of borrowed quotations, citations and paraphrasing, whilst the self-awareness



and artificiality of the text further unsettles the interpreter's preface which, on the surface level at least, seeks to authenticate the narrative.

*Rose* is a story concerned with detection, overtly in the tracking and confrontation of a murderer and covertly in expressing the reader's interaction with the text. Both of these movements are contained within the labyrinth. The suitability of the labyrinth as a detective scheme is addressed here especially through reference to earlier detective narratives and ultimately to Borges and his short stories. Finally and fittingly, this chapter explores the apocalyptic pattern of the murders and focuses on the terminology of The Revelation of St. John that pervades the abbey space. Through allusions to the *Book of Revelation* the image of the Minotaur as central guardian of the maze is supplanted by the bestial iconography of the Antichrist.

## 2.1 Building Textual Labyrinths: Encountering Mazes in Eco's other Writings

The construction, presence and most importantly experience of labyrinths of different kinds are mediated in *Rose* and conceived through narratological interest with the intricacies of truth, knowledge and understanding. Eco's four novels may be grouped into pairs, reflecting investigations of high and low cultural practices, targeted as such through their narrator. Through their attention to complex theological and historical events, both *Rose* and *Foucault's Pendulum* can be ranked as high cultural meditations. Both of these novels deploy labyrinths, though more obviously in *Rose* through the setting of the library labyrinth. In *Foucault's Pendulum*, Eco traces "the Plan", the epitome of encyclopaedic competence united with unfettered critical readings, in which the protagonists weave a tightening labyrinth around themselves. Full understanding of their plight does not allow them to escape the structure; rather they fall prey to the monsters they created.<sup>2</sup> Mediations of the Plan expose a rhizomic matrix in an extension of his musings from *Rose* and his non-fictional writings.

The labyrinthine is a pivotal motif in Eco's discussions of meaning and semiotics in his theoretical work. Given the intrinsic relationship between his writing and the device it is not surprising that a proportion of his academic time has been given over to its contemplation. The status of labyrinths in his theoretical writings necessitates a brief exploration to better understand the varied distinctions between the mazes of his choosing. Eco repeatedly refers to three types of labyrinth: the classical, the mannerist or maze and the rhizome, which inform his reader-theory in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce* and in the recollections of his writing in *Reflections on the Name of the Rose* (54-58).<sup>3</sup> Each of his categorisations has implications for textuality: its navigation and analysis.



Visions of the labyrinth inform Eco's discussion of the structures of interpretation and semiotics, between what he terms dictionary knowledge represented by the classical model, and encyclopaedic competence envisaged as the maze and its rhizomic variations. In *The Role of the Reader* a closed work is defined as a text where the author is (largely) absent and there is an attempt to present a fictive peregrination that does not demand an explicit interactive process. The interpretative nexus generated by a closed text mirrors the classical model of the labyrinth, as identified by Eco, as a one-dimensional and simplistic passage; a system that can be completed without the need to make a decision while in the maze. An idealised form, the closed text is an elusive image as Eco demonstrates through his dextrous analysis of such popular closed texts as *Superman* and Ian Fleming's Bond novels (*The Role of the Reader*; *The Bond Affair*). Using the classical labyrinth as a model for his discussion of a 'closed' structure, Eco identifies the maze and the rhizome as paradigms that imitate the open possibilities of a text.

Eco confuses what he terms the "classical labyrinth" with the Cretan device when he remarks on Theseus' easy navigation of the structure. Eco erroneously portrays the structure as a straightforward entity that, after the defeat of the Minotaur, affords no difficulty to the interloper.<sup>4</sup> His explicit engagement with what he terms the Cretan structure is really directed towards Matthews' delineations of a 'unicursal' labyrinth (*Mazes* 184). These representations are usually visual depictions present in manuscripts but most commonly found in ecclesiastical floor plans (cf. Pennick, *Mazes* 117).<sup>5</sup> The appearance of the labyrinth as entirely simplistic even in unicursal manifestations is a flawed assertion. Academics who have written about the labyrinth, including Matthews (*Mazes*), Faris (*Labyrinths*), Doob (*Idea*) and Pennick (*Mazes*), all concur with its



universal complexity and confusion across the plethora of configurations that the maze adopts.

What makes Eco's definition problematic is Ariadne's 'clue',<sup>6</sup> which comes from this mythological root and emphasises the confusion and structural complexity inherent in the Cretan labyrinth. The word 'clue' is derived from the thread that Ariadne lent to Theseus to navigate the labyrinth and so evinces a connection between labyrinth and detection in this early manifestation. This association underlines the structural complexity of the Cretan form. Eco attempts to solve this paradox in *Reflections* and also in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* by paraphrasing Hillis-Miller's conclusions concerning narrative as labyrinth: as Eco reminds the reader, the shape of the labyrinth itself when taken up is transformed into a thread. Although Hillis-Miller does not share the view that the Cretan labyrinth would, but for the Minotaur, be "a stroll", his analysis of narrative process critiques the connectedness of the rope to the maze: "Ariadne's thread, is both the labyrinth and a means of safely retracing the labyrinth" ("Ariadne's Thread" 67). In doing so, he demonstrates the reciprocal nature of the labyrinth and thread. His words are echoed by Eco's analysis of this "linear" labyrinth, again meaning the ecclesiastical form, which "[s]tructurally speaking, [...] is simpler than a tree: it is a skein, and, as one unwinds a skein, one obtains a continuous line" (*Semiotics* 80).

In *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, Eco positions the fear of the Minotaur who exists not as a threatening figure, which in the classical variety makes "the whole thing a little more exciting" (80), but as the maze itself. This is an attractive argument as the process by which the complex paths become threatening and monstrous like the Minotaur appears to be played out in these late twentieth-century narratives about labyrinths (certainly in Eco's own work and its exaggeration in Danielewski's *House of Leaves*). The supposition that the edifice itself is the 'clue' does not resolve the



confusion of the whole, whose complexity has been repeatedly stressed in literature and in myth (from Ovid, Plutarch and Chaucer to Joyce, Kafka and Borges).

Eco accredits his second definition of the maze as originating from the garden designs fashionable in the late Renaissance. Significantly, *Reflections* considers this second type a “mannerist maze” (15) and this gloss stresses the trial and error approach needed to traverse its passageways. Supplementing his description of the labyrinth with organic metaphors, Eco interprets that the mannerist labyrinth when dissected is “a kind of tree, a structure with roots, with many blind alleys” (15). This consolidates a visualization of a Porphyrian tree (Eco *Semiotics*, 80-81), whilst the use of the organic metaphor recalls the usual Renaissance construction of maze, out of turf or hedge. Though the tree’s branches are exposed in antithesis to the usual enclosing and concealed walkways of the maze, the buried root system is perhaps more sympathetic towards the concept of the maze. Sinister aspects of the labyrinth are not reproduced by Eco’s tree simile and so, again, his analogy disintegrates. By referring to the root network, Eco anticipates his idea of a rhizome labyrinth which unintentionally stresses the proximity of the maze to the rhizome. This ensures a blurring of Eco’s easy distinctions and thereby knots further the differences between the classical labyrinth, the maze and the rhizome.

Eco’s final classification of the labyrinth is the most significant, and not least for the prominence he gives this particular analogy. His third and final determination of the labyrinth is as a rhizome network which functions like a web or, as Eco claims in a moment of over-elaboration, a net whose interconnected threads limitlessly reproduce miniature pathways. The relationship of the lines in a net induces an enabling phenomenon of multiple and identically formed pathways and yet it also indicates the restrictions of space which are expressed by the boundaries created by the meeting of



the thread and the outer barrier at the periphery. This reiterates Eco's point that the study of semiotics is that of Charles Peirce's "infinite semiosis"<sup>7</sup> but within a closed and finite system articulated by the net analogy.

Discussions of this confined and labyrinthine organization are obfuscated by Eco's postulations in reference to the rhizome's organic membrane as a system that has "no centre, no periphery, no exit, because it is potentially infinite" (*Semiotics* 83). The playful and fluid text allows the reader to make multiple semantic decisions achieved both within the narrative's generic confines and beyond this enclosure in the field of the reader's knowledge. Movement between the reader, the unstable sign and the author creates a labyrinthine figure: a feature of semiotics that is remarked upon by Eco and made explicit in *Rose*.

Labyrinths, described using rhizome terminology, are present in his books *Reflections* and *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, where he cites Deleuze's and Guattari's use of the expression (*A Thousand Plateaus; Rhizome*) which defines the rhizome habit as a network of constructed interrelated skeins in the manner of organic tubers. By conflating the randomised impressions of the rhizome with the overtly structured and defined walls of the labyrinth, Eco appears to be forging a contradictory union, but one that usefully enables consideration of encyclopaedic competence. The labyrinth is then adopted as the signifier of the extrapolation of meanings and connotations by the reader from the created organisation of the text. Mann's explorations of the labyrinths at play in *Rose* ("Traversing") are predicated on labyrinthine chains of meaning. This insight is based upon Eco and Constantino Marmo's similar hypothesis outlined in *On the Medieval Theory of Signs* (7-8): namely, that the convoluted and entangled routes of the mannerist and the rhizome labyrinths refer to encyclopaedic competence.<sup>8</sup>



There are clear problems with Eco's definition of each labyrinth type. Critical descriptions of the rhizome illustrate that this structure is without a centre whilst, conversely, labyrinths have universally protected and hidden their centres. It is this innermost point that produces the goal which necessities their existence. There would seem to be an incompatibility between these two key signifiers at this juncture, or that Eco is attempting to construct, or give illumination to, a new connotative labyrinth. This emanation of a language rhizome complements the etymological properties of language stressed by Derrida in the trace of a word. Articulations concerning encyclopaedic competence envisaged as a 'word map' (*Semiotics* 82) display a system that is continually spreading and enlarging and which cannot be understood from above, and so recalls the mystifying labyrinths of antiquity.

The exploration of labyrinths in Eco's theoretical work and its correlation in his novels is not an isolated phenomenon. An exemplar of the crossover between his theoretical and fictional writing is witnessed in his third novel, *The Island of the Day Before* (1994), which contains a distillation of the significance of the dove through literary and mythological imaginings: a discourse that wittily dismisses the more obvious biblical implications ascribed to the bird. Research on the origins of the dove is extensive, lasting as it does for the best part of a chapter (344-356), and yet there is the sense that the discussion of the bird still falls far short of the total meaning, which is merely glimpsed. The effect of this is to tease out the idea of the dove, to walk the path of the word as it appears in other literature and as an archetype. Delineations of rhizome connections triggered by the sight and verbalisation of the dove disrupt the final central allusion by denying the importance of the biblical reference. By delaying this textual



node it intensifies its importance and thus highlights the writerly construction and attempted control of the passage.

Eco's authorship refuses to be limited by the publication of *Rose*, as he continues to publish and conspicuously engage with his novel. The commentary is mostly constructive and ludic in *Reflections*, but occasionally his tone is more belligerent when he advocates a return to authorial importance. Paradoxically, Eco as critic seems to contradict his stance in *Reflections* with the wish that "[t]he author should die once he has finished writing. So as not to trouble the path of the text" (7). This documents an ironic gap between Eco as critic and as author. Again, Eco makes reference to the text as a place to be navigated which implies the labyrinthine experience of the reader.

Meddling interference and control over the text's reception exerted by Eco in this essay and evidenced elsewhere confer a paradigm of authorial presence. In *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* there is a desire to 'rescue' the importance of the author and thereby wresting part of the onus of interpretation from the overeager reader. From *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (1994), Eco discloses the model of the author whose knowing voice permeates the text and seeks to position the reader in a complicit relationship:

The model author [...] is a voice that speaks to us affectionately (or imperiously, or slyly), that wants us beside it. This voice is manifested as a narrative strategy, as a set of instructions which is given to us step by step and which we have to follow when we decide to act as the model reader.  
(15)

In an ideal circumstance the model reader and the author co-exist in a complicit relationship, dependent upon the consent of the reader when engaging with the authorial voice. Eco outlines in *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* the three levels of the text-interface which function between author, interpreter and text and the performance between these three players that traces an interpretative labyrinthine web. The



intentions of the author and the text are exercised upon, navigated or redrawn by the reader. As this intimates, there is a sense of journey (through the text) where the author (guide) coaxes the reader through various possible pathways laid down in the narrative. This guidance is perhaps only partially appreciated by the reader, who is able to step from the path, forcing other possibly unintentional routes.

In *The Role of the Reader*, Eco outlines the attributes of the model reader but ultimately foregrounds the underlying pre-eminence of the text itself:

[W]hat matters is not the various issues in themselves but the maze-like structure of the text. You cannot use the text as you want, but only as the text wants you to use it. An open text, however 'open' it be, cannot afford whatever interpretation. (9)

The reader in her/his encyclopaedic knowledge in partnership with the author and manuscript forges a pathway through the book, which may alter on re-reading, and in so doing chooses and rejects possible nuances, meanings and readings. The shape of the exercise is encapsulated by the diagram of the rhizome labyrinth which delineates a dependent and interconnected network. The reader continually narrows, discards and expands elements of script and, in creating a unique route through the novel, is exposed as the murderer of the text: "books talk among themselves, and any true detection should prove that we are the guilty party" (*Reflections* 81). There is an underlying precept implicit in Eco's work, that all narrative functions on a level as detective fiction and that the progression of detective fiction corresponds to the corridors of the labyrinth. The narrative presents many possible paths that the investigator must eliminate. Correct or incorrect deductions lead down numerous pathways until William eventually stumbles across the centre of this metaphorical labyrinth where Jorge waits. By 'medievalising' this progress, Eco terms such digressions and variations as marginalia, in recognition of the colourful babooneries that supplement biblical codices.<sup>9</sup> Dead ends, delays and confusion hinder William's investigation just as they

punctuate Adso's narrative, which at times appears to be out of his control: "[b]ut resume your course, O my story, for this aging monk is lingering too long over marginalia" (25). The implications for the labyrinth are obvious as the story exists in the digressions, oblique approach and uncertainty of Adso's narrative. It also serves to elevate and deconstruct the importance of marginalia in general, centring the peripheral images and clues that, ultimately, are significant factors in solving the mystery.



## 2.2 Constructing Bridges: Translation, Anachronisms and the Question of National Identity

The intricacy of *Rose* is evidenced by the guides it has spawned in both the *Key to the Name of the Rose*,<sup>10</sup> which deals with the residual translations embedded in the text and offers brief biographies of relevant medieval personae, and *Reflections*, Eco's further interaction with his novel. The ability of a key to 'unlock' textual puzzles and obscurities is halted by the sheer multitude of layers, weight of intertextuality and aloofness of *Rose*. Indeed, the locus of Eco's book is to explore beyond surface definitions, to exist through encyclopaedic competence in the spirals between texts, to browse in the 'treasure-house' of the library and to delight in residual ambiguity, which culminates in the very antithesis of a study guide.

Several critics are drawn to the holistic claims of the *Key* only to find the editors' universal intentions wanting. One such scholar is Donald McGrady whose pithy essay "Eco's Bestiary: The Basilisk and the Weasel" (75-82 esp. 81-82) details a paragraph of text uttered by Salvatore. The essay assesses the compound effect caused by a mistranslation by William Weaver (*Rose*). The resulting semantic reversal highlights another problem with translation, and that is the menace of mistranslation. In *Mouse or Rat?: Translation as Negotiation*, Eco returns to the thorny problem of translation, essentially to the alteration of meaning through word choice and, in doing so, evidences the practice of translation as a type of mediation between author, translator and reader.

Translation is a central issue for the majority of *Rose* readers. This is caused by an accumulation of factors: from the passage of the manuscript through various inheritors, Salvatore's confusing script, to the anxiety surrounding the transformation of God's

Word in the monastery and the presence of embedded non-translated dialogue. By reading this book in the English translation, the reader is some five times removed from the writing of the manuscript. All references from *Rose* are from the paperback English translation by William Weaver, unless otherwise stated, and this is important for two reasons: firstly, it has been noted that other versions of the text are non-comprehensive, containing substantial lacunae. As Christine de Lailhacar specifies, the American copy has significant omissions (from pages 110, 120 and 279) which substantially alter the localised and universal meanings of the text (“Mirror” 163 fn. 14). Secondly, by studying the *Rose* in translation the question of transformation is emphasised. Despite Eco’s high acclaim of Weaver’s work, the English translation is a further adaptation (Eco, *Mouse* 5).

Although extensive translations are enacted upon the manuscript, segments of text remain in Latin or German, whilst Salvatore’s Babelisms forms a hybrid of various Romance languages.<sup>11</sup> The existence of a translator that silently haunts the text is evident in the initial framework of the preface where the practice of translation is addressed by the fictional, and evidentially convoluted, journey of the text. Deliberate framing of the discourse through a series of narrative filters is prefaced by the final translator, who slyly introduces the narrative, and whose masked presence has caused some critics to identify him as Eco (Liberato Santoro, “The Name of the Game the *Rose* Plays” 255).

*Rose* is a document that was purportedly discovered and translated into Italian from the French, in a flurry of scholarly output during the summer of 1968. This authorial endeavour was initiated by the Soviet invasion of Prague.<sup>12</sup> A climate of political instability also marks the production of Beatus of Liebana’s eighth-century manuscript,



the *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, in a Spanish environment threatened with Moorish attack. The French book, from which the Italian is taken, professes to be a faithful rendition of a seventeenth-century Latin manuscript which is itself a copy of the original document written in the late fourteenth century by Adson<sup>13</sup> of Melk, who narrates and participates in the narrative. The character that reportedly translated Adson's original into Latin was J. Mabillon, a non-fictional Benedictine scholar of the eighteenth century,<sup>14</sup> whilst the next known holder of the text was Abbé Vallet. His contribution was to transform the subject matter into French, though he left intact elements of Mabillon's Latin passages because, as the final interpreter suggests, he "did not feel it opportune to translate" (5).<sup>15</sup> The ultimate product of this endeavour is the Italian translation that confronts the Italian reader of Eco's work.

These non-translated elements cause questions of consistency to arise, as a critical survey of translation in regard to *Rose* reveals. For instance, a MLA bibliographical search (30.05.05) evidences that of the hundreds of articles, chapters and books dedicated to Eco's writings and *Rose* there appears to be no consistent or duplicated translation of the final line. Alarming, these translations are both numerous and various.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the only hint Eco allows in response to this enquiry is contained in *Reflections* where he refers to "pure names": a reference that recalls Brendan O'Mahony's translation: "the primal rose remains in name, we retain only pure names" ("The Name of the Rose" 229). Adso's closing address is extracted from Bernard of Morlay's poem *De Contempu Mundi*, a poem that examines the empty grandeur of Rome that now exists only in name (cf. Stefano Tani, *The Doomed Detective* 71; Eco, *Reflections* 1). Ironically, in early transcriptions of the poem it appears that the line Eco chose to cite was miscopied from the earliest manuscript; instead of "rosa" the text should read "Roma" which significantly alters the meaning. Eco has commented on his



choice of verse and its mistranslation (*Reflections* 1), whilst Ronald E. Pepin also makes this point: “Stat Roma for Stat rosa” (“Adso’s Closing Line” 152). The use of such a mistranslation, whether accidental or intentional, in light of the playful and dissembling assemblage of quotations and paraphrases within the text, appears decidedly appropriate.

Problems of translation cause certain mistakes or unintentional nuances to be intensified, and one such glitch is the controversy regarding William’s origins. The significance of William’s native land is felt in his philosophical debt to Roger Bacon and to William of Ockham.<sup>17</sup> The monk directly refers to Bacon on numerous occasions, which stresses his connection to this venerated thinker:

But he said to me, smiling, that Franciscans of his island were cast in another mold [sic]: “Roger Bacon, whom I venerate as my master, teaches that the divine plan will one day encompass the science of machines”. (17)

William’s island birth emphasises his vantage point as an outsider and untainted philosopher, who is relatively emancipated from the theological dogma and power struggles of mainland Europe. Many instances in the text point to William as a quintessentially English thinker in accordance with medieval notions connecting place and philosophy, and yet this is clouded through the diverse and conflicting references to his origins, possibly as a result of translational issues. By anglicising William, he becomes connected with the famous Franciscan monastery at Oxford where Bacon studied and which also nurtured William of Ockham.

Intermittently, William talks of his island, or islands: given that he is an old and venerated monk having witnessed some “fifty springs” (15), the islands he describes would have been under Plantagenet rule (a birth in c1277 would correspond to the kingship of Edward I). Medieval maps like the Cottonian (or Anglo-Saxon) map and



Giraldus Cambrensis' illustration, display a topographical series of islands that appear to be closely linked.<sup>18</sup> Copies of the Hereford map held in Hereford cathedral reveal a Hibernia that is very close to mainland Britannia, separated only by thin slivers of water. Both Isidore's and Beatus' manuscripts include world maps as a means to mediate the spread of religion and to inform a particular view of the world.

Perhaps anachronistically, William's reference to "my islands" appears to unite the island of Ireland with England, Scotland and Wales in a contemporary sense. Historically these lands were bound under Plantagenet rule and so were colonised by the same power. Yet here again, William's aside that "[t]he men of my islands are all a bit mad" (311) paraphrases the gravedigger's sentiments about the English in *Hamlet* (V.i.140-147). Such playfulness is extended to the labyrinth as, despite the conflation of Anglican and Hibernian sources in the rooms of Hibernia (311), there exists also an "ANGLIA" (320) in the North tower of the maze. The presence of both places identified in the labyrinth foregrounds their significance and perhaps their perceived separateness, in keeping with surviving medieval cartographic manuscripts.

Tantalising references are made to William's birthplace which causes wide and disparate critical responses. This reflects Eco's conjecture regarding the propensity for critics to manipulate the text, forcing it to distort in their attempts to further scholarly debate. That the location of William's birth is in doubt seems to be proven by a variety of readings and misreadings. David Richter has claimed he is an Irish monk and that his nationality is a deliberate allusion to Doyle's Irishness ("Eco's Echoes" and "The Mirrored World"). Likewise, Paul F. Reichardt also supports this Irish origin through his identification of the medieval location of Hibernia with Ireland ("The Name of the Rose" 3), a distinction which is confirmed by the *OED* and medieval cartography alike



(cf. Gerald Roe Crone *Early Maps of the British Isles*). The majority of critics, including Pierre L. Horn (“The Detective Novel” 90), assert he is English, in keeping with Bacon’s and Ockham’s nationality. Furthermore, David G. Baxter (“Murder and Mayhem”) also foregrounds the Doyle connection but claims William’s birth between Hibernia and Northumberland is indicative of Scotland and so evokes Doyle through his birth in Edinburgh.<sup>19</sup> The similarity of William’s accent is compared to a monk from Newcastle (291) in a manner that extends this semantic play and also obliquely indicates Duns Scotus, who takes his name Duns from his birthplace in the district of Berwick (cf. Tweedale, *Scotus Versus Ockham* for a brief biography of Duns Scotus). There is an obvious contradiction in these locations, not least as Baxter’s assertion would have him born somewhere in the Irish Sea, perhaps brought about by a translation error. Eco refers to William as English (see *Reflections* and *Rose* 61, 63, 181) and constructs a figure that appears to be quintessentially English in philosophy (Ockham, Bacon) and detection (Holmes). The idea that one’s thinking is determined by birthplace is evidenced in the cataloguing of Virgil of Toulouse (311-313), a philosopher whose texts are stored in the Hibernia rooms: it is his birth in Toulouse that is viewed as a mistake to be corrected by the librarian.

William might possibly have been an English settler in Hibernia, following a medieval practice of religious ‘colonisation’, or he may have been a native of Hibernia who moved to study under the Franciscan monasteries in Anglia (England). Ironically, William’s apparent Englishness is contained in a travelling monk whose peripatetic wanderings and indistinctive roots makes problematic a notion of identifiable or essential Englishness, unless of course it is an Englishness of diversity, multiplicity and vagary.



Part of the various readings of William's birthplace is predicated on an imposition of a contemporary world view onto the medieval geography of *Rose*. These scholarly anachronisms are ironic given the criticism levelled at Eco's practice of rewriting contemporary narratives and their interspersions in the medieval environment. By combining medieval and contemporary concerns, philosophy and quotations *Rose* is understandably and deliberately beset by anachronisms. Such a conflation of utterances adds to the difficulty of determining source material and causes some critics to bemoan Eco's a-temporal voice. For example, what is perceived to be a reworking of Ludwig Wittgenstein's ladder analogy of language has been criticised by Richter ("Eco's Echoes"). The sentence in question is in German and so this first needs to be translated by the non-native reader though, playfully, William cautions against locating the quotation:

The order that our mind imagines is like a net, or like a ladder, built to attain something. But afterward you must throw the ladder away, because you discover that, even if it was useful, it was meaningless. Er muoz gelichesame die leiter abewerfen, so er an ir ufgestigen... "Who told you that?" "A mystic from your land. He wrote it somewhere, I forget where. And it is not necessary for somebody one day to find that manuscript again". (492)

William appears deliberately evasive at this point as he muddies the location of the source material and, in doing so, suggests that tracing the ownership or context of these words is unimportant. Ultimately, Eco replaces the ladder and net metaphor with the labyrinth, a trope which points to the difficulty of locating meaning as a valid goal. Whilst the mechanism of arriving at an outcome is here disregarded as a mere tool, the subsequent imposition of the labyrinth results in an elevation of the method.

By blending contemporary philosophy in a medieval setting, Eco justifies the appropriateness of the medieval as a means to communicate contemporary ideas; whilst the novel's vein of ludic ventriloquism serves to blur the various ages of the book. In a



process that anticipates similar criticism of Eco, the accuracy of Vallet's translation is questioned and Adso's work is scrutinised for its resemblance to later manuscripts. As the last translator's critique of the text argues, Adso's commentary borrows "too literally both formulas of Paracelsus and obvious interpolations from an edition of Albertus unquestionably dating from the Tudor period" (4). In this way, Eco addresses notions of untimeliness as elsewhere he attempts to pre-empt avenues of critical analysis directed at his own work. Complaints of scholarly anachronism are still levelled at Eco whose 'medievalising' of contemporary sources and modernising of medieval quotations has drawn aesthetic criticism where it is felt this impinges too strongly on the thoughts of the medieval. As Eco explains, ironically:

[E]very now and then a critic or a reader writes to say that some character of mine declares things that are too modern, and in every one of these instances, and only in these instances, I was actually quoting from 14<sup>th</sup>-century texts. (*Reflections* 76)

This sentiment supports Eco's hypothesis of the root of the contemporary existing and being formed in the Middle Ages (cf. "The Return of the Middle Ages").

In his theoretical writings, Eco is acutely aware of the historicising of contemporary issues, which is especially felt in the ironic inflections of the translator, who declares: "I transcribe my text with no concern for timeliness" (5), and further:

[I] can happily write out of the pure pleasure of writing. And so I now feel free to tell, for sheer narrative pleasure, the story of Adso of Melk, and I am comforted and consoled in finding it immeasurably remote in time... gloriously lacking in any relevance for our day, atemporally alien to our hopes and our certainties. (5)

This irreverent gloss is refuted by Eco who claims the Middle Ages<sup>20</sup> formed the birthplace of Modern man ("Return"). This period more than any other, according to Eco, touches the contemporary in a symbiotic relationship. He views the medieval as a mutable historical space, perpetually revisited and reworked in later fiction. The



patchwork lure of the Middle Ages reflects our own economic and civil era. Eco lists the stirrings of Capitalism, Communism, continuing religious conflict and class inequality existing in violent union, then as now (Eco, "Return" 64). Using psychoanalytical terminology, Eco proposes an examination of the Middle Ages as a psychological site that informs the present. This conceptualises the antithesis of the statement made by the fictional translator of the *Rose* who claimed his translation was a document that had no relevance to contemporary issues or concerns (5). In doing so, there is created an ironic distance between Eco the author and his fictional final translator of *Rose*.

### **2.3 The Case of the Hesitant Scribe: Naming Detectives, Fragments and Intertexts**

*Rose* is a story of detection culminating in a revelation balancing Eco's investigator-monk's agency of enquiry with the detective overtones of the reader's engagements with the narrative. Cloaked by the contrived, artificial and self-aware characteristics of the text is a detective pulse; a dynamic feature that has caused Richter to suggest that this factor accounts for its global popularity as a means to transcend the ingrained theological arguments and narrative complexities ("Mirrored" 257). Many paths are available to the reader, but these oscillate between esoteric demands on encyclopaedic competence and the strong driving element of the detective fiction. Exegesis of the text exposes partially submerged intertexts, the experience of which forms a multi-dimensional investigative story where the reader, in partnership with William, is responsible for tracking and identifying the murderer and also in distinguishing literary antecedents, citations and non-translated passages of text.

Noting the textual marriage of scattered quotations and allusions conflated in a medieval setting, Rocco Capozzi stresses the palimpsestic characteristics of the text and recognises *Rose* as a "literary pastiche" ("Palimpsests and Laughter" qtd. Jorge Martin Hernandez, *Readers and Labyrinths* 415). *Rose* is haunted by the "[g]hosts of books" (500) that are deployed within the whole and which recall Eco's stance that "books always speak of other books" (*Reflections* 20; cf. *Rose* 286). Textual concealment and adaptation of a bewildering array of contemporary and medieval sources shapes a truly "open" work.<sup>21</sup> Strategic use of quotation and intertext is supplemented by literary and historical protagonists that further the communication between narratives, and make awkward clear distinctions between the historical or the fictional.



In his discussion of contemporary aesthetics, Eco identifies the postmodern trend to construct a cloth of 'stolen' textualities in order to conceive a self-aware dialogue containing multiple temporalities ("Innovation and Repetition"). A similar stance is re-enacted by Adso's return to the abbey and his futile collection of textual fragments: "I had before me a kind of lesser library, a symbol of the greater, vanished one: a library made up of fragments, quotations, unfinished sentences, amputated stumps of books... the more I reread this list the more I am convinced it is the result of chance and contains no message" (500-501). The soggy library enables a "glimpse of an image's shadow, or the ghost of one or more words" (500) and constitutes a metaphor for Eco's composite text.

The novel is extremely structured, ostensibly as a result of multiple editors and the imposition of medieval liturgical hours; whilst issues of unreliability, narrative construction and the experience of labyrinths compound this complexity. *Rose* documents a progression from a medieval over-ordering of systems and taxonomies, akin to the delineations of early Christian labyrinths (Chartres), which finally gives way to chaotic and randomised events. Conversely, there is exposed a nostalgia for such structures, culminating in the revelation of a dominant rhizome model which is abundantly over-structured.

The manuscript contains compound narratives that frame the reconstruction of one monk's week in an undisclosed monastery in the year 1327.<sup>22</sup> The regulation of the seven days is broken up into the timely components (Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers and Compline) each taken from the Benedictine Rule which serves to impose a medieval ordering of time. These routines guide the brothers back into prayer

and worthy contemplation, and act as a means to regulate the monks' location and their thinking. Despite its intrinsic fragmentation, the Rule is intended to impress cohesion through an enforced and structured routine. Time as marked by the Rule prevents deviation, though the flagrant abuses at the abbey suggest the breakdown of this divinely-given edict as a means of circumventing behaviour. Though the abbey's community of Benedictine monks are bound to the Rule, William's (Franciscan) unorthodoxy is registered by his willingness to stray from the strict time requirements of the Benedictine order which causes him to flaunt the order of the abbot under whose edict he is staying.

The imposition of this temporal system resurrects a medieval cultural impetus, based on order and taxonomy, which is extended to the narrative itself. Such structures, rules and guidance are imposed by Eco, who alludes to the first one hundred pages<sup>23</sup> of *Rose* as a literary device to delay the contemporary reader and to synchronise the modern individual with the envisaged speed of monastic life, which is both fragmentary and monotonously routine. During these first hundred pages, readers are shaped by the narrative trials which mirror Adso's literal approach to the abbey. These difficult pages resemble "a penance or initiation, and if someone does not like them, so much the worse for them. He can stay at the foot of the hill" (*Reflections* 41).

Like the novice monk, the reader is instructed in medieval monasticism: an experience reliant upon logic, faith and austerity and mediated through the interface of textuality. This medieval ecclesiastical environment was not uniform: denominational divergence forms a key feature of the text whilst the subtlety of these varieties is also apparent in the actions of the novice and his mentor.



The older Adso, through repeated references to William's difference, occasionally admonishes him for flagrant displays of liberty. This makes the reader aware of Adso's removed position as scribe of past events, his establishment in a Benedictine order, his desire to conform and of William's incongruous liberal persona. William's physical and intellectual movements outside the Rule make him a threatening force and at odds with the (apparent) stability of the fraternity. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his manoeuvres through the labyrinth, whose structure is supposedly emblematic of the mystified, absolute and closed ecclesiastical routines. His inevitable exposure of the systems of the labyrinth illuminates the structure as made by human hands and emphasises the fragility of this model as a means to discuss man's relationship with God and, by extension, the world. It is appropriate that he comments on these most mysterious structures as his detection invades and enlightens such forbidden spaces. Despite William's impressive reasoning, the murderer may elude or 'out-smart' him and so disrupt the expectations set up by a narrative overtly aware of detective practice.

*Rose* consciously adheres to, and manipulates, the rubric<sup>24</sup> of detective fiction especially through its imitation of archetypal detectives. These detective allusions include obvious evocations of Arthur Conan Doyle's protagonist, Sherlock Holmes, Edgar Allan Poe's Auguste C. Dupin and the more recent Lönnrot from Borges' "Death and the Compass" (1944). Such correlations create a comforting constant as William is identified as a recognisable hero, ostensibly in the mould of Holmes, who is then subjected to the subversions of the genre which Eco employs. Straying from the directed path of the intertext intensifies this feeling of labyrinthine digression.

Acknowledgment of Doyle's detective formulae is obvious in William's appearance (15), method of reasoning (22-23), terminology (16) and also with Adso's manner of



recollection. Even the relationship between Adso and William mirrors the co-dependence of Holmes and Watson. Like Watson, it is the apprentice Adso who acts as scribe to record his master's deductions and adventures in an attempt to understand them and, in part, to resemble his master. The similarity of Adso's and Watson's commentary is alluded to by David G. Baxter ("Murder and Mayhem" 173-174), who details their shared quixotic voice, vicarious detailing of another's brilliance and their mutual desire (and failure) to adopt the cerebral functions of their mentor as collective characteristics. Additionally, Adso does not begin his narrative immediately; rather, in the mode of Watson, his writings are retrospective. His are the remembered and recreated version of the events he witnessed as a novice, combining the memories of the young 'innocent' apprentice with the clouded eyes of the experienced monk.<sup>25</sup>

It is partly the blindness of Adso's narration that leads an examination of *Rose* to question the reliability of his voice; principally, whether age (both young and old), his intellectual competency, emotional character and religious bent prevent a holistic representation of the facts of the case. This stresses the unreliability of the text which is further amplified by Adso's ignorance of dealings both as a naïve young monk and ultimately as a re-constructor of events he does not fully understand (14).

His lack of scrutiny and concentration is shared by Holmes' associate, Watson, who is repeatedly admonished for his lack of concentration. In the short story "A Scandal in Bohemia", Holmes castigates his colleague for his inability to truly record and assimilate clues: "[y]ou have not observed [a]nd yet you have seen" (162). Though Adso suffers similar rebuffs at the hands of William (23-24), he nevertheless purports to be "now repeating verbatim all I saw and heard, without venturing a design" (11). This phrase is loaded with irony as the chaotic pattern of the rhizome labyrinth eventually



overwhelms the text in structural mockery. In an aware poststructuralist aside, possibly saturated with authorial intent, he claims to be recreating the “signs of signs, so that the prayer of deciphering may be exercised on them.” (11). The passage is highly involved as Adso appears to link the exegesis of divine scripture with the textual analysis necessary to solve Eco’s puzzle. The description of the labyrinth as a meta-signifier is so full of meaning that Adso’s reproduction causes him to construct a textual maze.

The events in the abbey appear so disparate and disordered that they fuel his bewilderment as he repeatedly confides: “I understand nothing” (196). His lack of awareness slows the intellectual progression and allows William to re-clarify matters which, in turn, ensures the reader is better equipped to follow the clue of the investigation and esoteric argument. Adso’s competency is frequently probed as his ignorance surely clouds his vision of the theological polemic and of the murder investigation. As Eco notes, the reader must surely question the narrator who claims to be transparent (*Reflections* 34) and, as a consequence, also the writer who ensures that comprehension is achieved “through the words of one who understands nothing” (Eco, *Reflections* 34; qtd. Mann, “Traversing” 137). Adso’s blind wanderings, both through the library’s interior and, significantly, through the passage of the text, trace the shape of a labyrinth. The past becomes a knotted ball of tangled enquiries that Adso lays out in a tracery of pathways and false starts of the labyrinth. Unable to perceive the design, he remains in a state of disorientation and is still embroiled within the walls of the labyrinthine construction at the end of his life.

Although Adso spends a short time with William, he has decades to reflect on the drama at the abbey and yet, crucially, he confides that he is unable to perceive the nature of William’s mission. His ignorance is cross-temporal as hindsight does not aid his



comprehension of his mentor's intentions: "I did not then know what Brother William was seeking, and to tell the truth, I still do not know today" (14). Adso's narrative method, complete with his sense of incomprehension, is congruent with other medieval scribes who depict the divine plan, and so his repeated protestations of ignorance possibly belie the scope of his understanding. The rapid departure from his mentor shortly after leaving the monastery perhaps emphasises Adso's appreciation of William's outcomes. The unsettling relationship between the two men is prematurely curtailed as Adso retreats back to the enclosed shelter of the Abbey of Melk and foregoes the travelling Franciscan life he previously enjoyed with William. Adso then has been exposed to a range of proto-humanist and older facets of medieval Christianity and has chosen to reside in the latter, a transition that is highlighted by the present narrator's denouncement of Adso's outmoded recitation.

Adso's narratological proficiency is iterated by the latest translator's comments which condemn the hyperbolic nature of his writing as indicative of the influence of earlier sources: "Adso thinks and writes like a monk who has remained impervious to the revolution of the vernacular, still bound to the pages housed in the library he tells about...[it] could have been written, as far as the language and the learned quotations go, in the twelfth or thirteenth century" (4). His narrative style dates him from another era and confers a strain of anachronisms which root Adso firmly in this early middle-age tradition. Far from having William's proto-modern methodologies, Adso is entrenched in the medieval, specifically within a conservative vein of thinking. He echoes his counterpart Watson's incredulity when confronted with Holmes' systematic way of 'reading' events. Watson's initial appreciation of Holmes' philosophy is extracted from his mentor's article entitled 'Book of Life'<sup>26</sup> which appears in their first case together, "A Study in Scarlet". The publication communicates Holmes' belief that



minute elements of the truth exist in a pure but tiny state which can then be studied, collated and understood. A similar conceit is recast by William's comments: "I have been teaching you to recognize the evidence through which the world speaks to us like a great book" (23). Reading life as a physical text presupposes underlying structures that exist and propose the concept of an implicit creator beyond the process. Ironic play is created between the (fictive) medieval notion of the absolute relationship between text and meaning, and the contemporary post-structuralist disruption and disintegration of this correlation.

William's sharp observations enable him to read this book of life and also to appreciate how others view the world through their appreciation of text: "[h]e not only knew how to read the great book of nature, but also knew the way monks read the books of Scripture, and how they thought through them" (24-25). The ubiquitous presence of the Bible is stressed here, as contemplation of God's Word was invested in every aspect of the daily routine. This relationship leads Lesley Smith to deliberate that "[t]he medieval imagination is a biblical one" ("The Theology of the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Bible" 232). William acknowledges this correlation and so settles upon a textual impetus behind the murders.

William's purposeful and deductive pursuit of the murderer is in contrast to the old Adso's reiteration of the observation that only God sees all, knows all and that humanity must be content to "see in fragments (alas, how illegible) in the error of the world, so we must spell out its faithful signals even when they seem obscure to us" (12). Here Adso voices his desire to replicate God's design without pretending to understand its pattern. William's approach is more proactive as he tests and imposes reason onto the unknown. In keeping with William of Ockham's teachings he looks for the



dissemination of lesser truths, read through repetition or luck, which may inevitably expose a pattern or reveal a certainty. The promulgation and diffusion of truth is submerged in reflections of error and disorder in a labyrinth of falsehood, which is replicated in William's scepticism: "the truth was not what was appearing to him at any given moment" (14). William's miraculous ability to trace and then follow these threads of truth, which would seem to suggest his inevitable success, does not dispel the complexities and indistinctness of parts of the text. Indeed, the residual ambiguities of the *Rose* remain even after the unveiling of the murderer and the disclosure of his scheme. The complexity and regularity of embedded quotations and allusions encountered in the text encourages the process of re-reading.

Re-reading the text is a pleasure not dissipated by the knowledge of the eventual revelation, as the novel remains convincing after the outcome is known;<sup>27</sup> for example, the religious contestation<sup>28</sup> which climaxes in the meeting between Michael and Bernard is fundamental to the story, as this gives the detective level of the text additional gravitas and historical emplacement. Detective stories which 'survive' an initial reading have been termed "analytical detective [fiction]" by John Irwin (*The Mystery to a Solution*). Irwin cites Edgar Allan Poe as a writer of such fiction and this is perhaps noteworthy as Eco in his essays repeatedly alludes to his debt to, and his delight in, Poe's work.<sup>29</sup> Particularly significant in this discussion is the echoic presence of "The Purloined Letter", where the analytical capacity of Dupin's erudite questioning is demonstrated and the manner of disguising material is examined.<sup>30</sup> The correspondence in question is an epistle of extreme sensitivity, the significance of which is realised by the potential blackmailer who chooses to 'hide' the letter in full sight, placed in a letter rack and so safe from the invasive police searches. The masterful Dupin, through a leap of imagination highly suggestive of Holmes' and William's



analytical work, enables the recovery of the letter by adopting the actions of the miscreant.

The location where the hidden object is least incongruous is potentially the most successful hiding place and this procedure is replicated by Jorge's trust of the manuscript to the library. However, this scheme is not successful as many monks before William have guessed its existence and attempted to access the library to read and possess the script. By settling upon the presence of the book, William's investigations implicate the library. His intellectual conclusion is anticipated by Jorge who smears the pages with poison to kill any who seek its ownership. The murderer's recognition of William's methodology is accentuated by his covert surveillance of the other monk:

I heard you were asking the other monks questions, all of them the right ones. But you never asked questions about the library, as if you already knew its every secret. One night I came and knocked at your cell, and you were not in. You had to be here. (465)

Jorge's logical analysis is comparably equal to that of William's reasoning as he undertakes an unseen deduction and detection of his own. His sharp and critical mind confirms his guilt as it is Jorge's overtly Aristotelian terminology used during his diatribe about laughter (78-83, 471-2) which alerts William both to the premise of the hidden book and the elderly monk's complicity in the murders.

By mimicking the criminal's thought processes in an attempt to circumvent the murderer the detective may become like her or his nemesis. The doubling is identified by Tani (*Doomed* 7) as existing through intellectual engagement.<sup>31</sup> Systematic disclosure of another's covert motivations is duplicated in the *Rose*, as Jorge reasons: "you know that it suffices to think and to reconstruct in one's own mind the thoughts of the other" (465). He recognises William's capacity to follow a model of tracking a

criminal evidenced in Dupin's castigation of the inept methods of the intelligence officers unable to look beyond their own reasoning in "The Purloined Letter" (693).

The arrival of the great thinker William at the abbey necessitates the existence of the murderer, as what greater puzzle can a detective fathom than the identity of an apparent serial killer? Consequently, the presence of the murderer demands the detective and further, complementing William's syllogisms, the existence of the murderer requires the presence of the book. Such an apparently simple triangle of deduction generates an atmosphere of subterfuge, uncertainty and ambiguity. The final meeting of all three components, which would seem to require the demystification of the events of the past seven days, merely intensifies the confusion in Adso's mind and culminates in a revelation which is not synonymous with "understanding" for him.

The confrontation of a murderer in an overtly labyrinthine environment is a dramatic moment envisaged repeatedly in Borges' writing and is also recast in the other three books in this study. Thematically, Eco draws widely from Borges' short stories especially "The Library of Babel" and "Death and the Compass".<sup>32</sup> His debt is acknowledged by the conscious caricature of Jorge as a Borgesian figure, which combines attributes of the writer and his fiction.<sup>33</sup> Though the connection is prefaced by critics concerned with the two writers, including Eco in *Reflections*, the surname of the monk is universally overlooked. The choice of Burgos is truly apposite for it recalls both the Argentinean writer and the abbey of Silos in the Burgos province (470). The monastery was intrinsically bound to the historic dissemination of apocalyptic culture through the production of famous copies of Beatus' manuscript.



For Borges, the labyrinth formed the inevitable archetype: it prefigured his thoughts, fiction and poems. After his death, he has become immortalised (or trapped) in a series of texts concerning labyrinths.<sup>34</sup> Eco's Borges is the clandestine librarian<sup>35</sup> that was so noticeably absent in his own story, "The Library of Babel". Borges' narrative combines the library and the labyrinth in a building that contains all possible permutations of words, symbols and books within its infinitely vast labyrinthine corridors. The librarians' futile quest, to locate the book that will explain everything, leads to the suicides of some of the more disillusioned custodians of the library, actions that anticipate the suicide of the monk Adelmo of Otranto in Eco's novel.<sup>36</sup> Whilst Borges' building has infinite volumes available to read, Eco's structure is secretly coded and contains a finite number of books controlled within the limits of the labyrinth. In this way, the meeting of Jorge and William prefigures the duel of the guardians of these different labyrinths, between the mathematical and deliberate Borgesian structures and the intangible web of paths represented by Eco's narrative. Eco's revelation of a 'mazed' world-view emphasises the position of language in the experience and mediation of reality. The meeting with nature and the disclosure that the world functions as an unknowable labyrinth complements Borges' vision of the desert as God's labyrinth ("Two Kings and Their Labyrinths") but contrasts the confinement and enclosure of most of his other labyrinths that detail the body and the mind.

During the final confrontation between the men, in their embodiments of both writers, an element of esteem is felt: "I realized, with a shudder, that at this moment these two men, arrayed in a mortal conflict, were admiring each other, as if each had acted only to win the other's applause (472). Their debate is based on their mutual understanding and anticipation of one another, so much so that Jorge acknowledges his preparation for



William's arrival: "I have been waiting for you since this afternoon before vespers, when I came and closed myself in here. I knew you would arrive" (463).

Such is the inevitability of this final confrontation that Adso describes the seven-day delay as time for "making, as it were, mysterious appointments" (473). Foreseeing and expecting each other's moves, as archetypes of good and evil, they are eternally locked in an attritional cycle. This deepening sense that the detective and murderer are equals (469-470) or desire one another (472-473) makes the demarcations indistinct between their two roles.

Another Borges short story that is pertinent to this praxis is "Death and the Compass" especially for its final meeting of detective against master-criminal, in a pastiche, perhaps, of the unseen meeting between Holmes and Moriarty. Unlike Conan Doyle's "Valley of Fear", where it appears both protagonists have been destroyed, Borges' villain prevails. Lönnrot's intellectual prowess and the logic of his reasoning are known and anticipated, and so can be surpassed by the criminal, Red Scharlach. The accomplished revelation is a reversal of the climax of the *Rose* where, although William's and Lönnrot's reasoning is similarly faulty, William's foray results in the anticipated destruction of the murderer, whilst Lönnrot's quest ends in his own death. In "Death and the Compass", the discovery of the murderer is supplanted by the intellectual journey employed by the detective and the reflected symmetry of the criminal's endeavour in lying down a labyrinth of crimes. Lönnrot is defeated as he fails to recognise the murderer's motive. His fatal miscalculation born of his hubris generates his sacrifice. Scharlach's superior knowledge of the officer's mental reasoning enables him "to weave a labyrinth around the man" ("Death and the Compass" 155). By predicting Lönnrot's deductions he is able to exact his revenge: "I



realized that you would conjecture that the Hasidim had sacrificed the rabbi; I set about justifying that conjecture” (155). Similarly, Jorge re-enforces William’s supposed apocalyptic pattern (470-471). In both instances the detective provides the mould within which the murderer consciously decides to participate. This inverts the syllogism that the presence of the investigator requires the criminal, as without Lönnrot the murder sequence would not have been initiated, and thus produces an illusion of pattern and knowledge that, through the final revelation, is exposed as peripheral.

Being a text concerned with labyrinths, *Rose* is necessarily proliferated with patterns and structures, plainly evident in the practice of detection. Such methods attempt to map meaning and mimic the passage of the sign (between receptor, signified and sign). However, the procedure of navigating back through this labyrinth to its source is displayed as being more fragile and tenuous as the text progresses. Early representations of deduction are without incident, as William’s first trial attests. His recognition of the horse is an anecdote awash with intertextuality. In an intertextual pastiche of Voltaire’s *Zadig* (*Zadig*, 1747),<sup>37</sup> Dickens’ *Gradgrind* (*Hard Times*, 1854),<sup>38</sup> Holmes in “Silver Blaze” and Isidore of Seville’s equestrian entry in *Etymologies* (*Rose* 24; cf. *Key* 97), William is able to speedily surmise a situation from a scarcity of facts: to literally conjure a horse out of nothing. Although not quite nothing, William, in a repeated effort to demystify his conclusions, iterates the composite of his diminutive methods to Adso (23-25) and in so doing conveys a collection of minute, apparently insignificant signs which cohere to communicate the impression of a horse. He acknowledges that “I found myself halfway between the perception of the concept ‘horse’ and the knowledge of an individual horse” (28). Because this represents the first time the reader is faced with William’s skill it is an episode much examined by critics.<sup>39</sup> William’s deduction, though achieved through an element of luck, is sound and



reaffirms in part a “non-arbitrary relation between signs and things, between signifiers and signifieds” (Robert Caserio, “The Name of the Horse” 7). Later investigations expose language as a post-structuralist labyrinthine trail where the attempt to return to an origin is to experience transformation and to appreciate the illusiveness of singular meaning. The episode of the horse identifies the dialectic between God’s design, whose oblique presence is perceived universally by the monks, and William’s ability as a rational man to deduce an outcome. This is a correlation that is scrutinised throughout.

William’s reasoning, like Holmes’, exceeds that of Zadig as he uses conjecture to make the final connective leap, whilst the other man is solely bound by empiricist logic in his decision not to name the horse and risks death for witchcraft as a result (23). This opening action resembles Holmes’ display of deductive genius where, prior to engaging a case, he often meticulously surmises the subject matter of the investigation before he is told of the predicament.

Reinforcing the bond between William and Doyle’s Holmes is the selection of ‘Baskerville’ as a surname, which strongly suggests the case of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Comparably, Adso’s initial description of his master’s demeanour and outward appearance (15-16) vividly resembles Watson’s depiction of Holmes in their first outing together in “A Study in Scarlet”. The interplay between Eco’s detective and Doyle’s Holmes is consistently reinforced and manipulated in *Rose* and the resulting intertextuality is routinely commented upon in critical articles about the novel.<sup>40</sup>

According to *Reflections* (27), Eco had intended to use the historical figure William of Ockham as the detective; a persona that would have bound the knowledge of Roger Bacon with Ockham’s later reasoning and so create a composite that unites the



competences of Ockham, Bacon and Eco (Liberato Santoro, “The Name” 255). Using such a non-fictional character in this instance would appear too restrictive and by rejecting this choice it allows the meaning of the name to insinuate both William of Ockham and to intensify the connection with the inspirational Holmes<sup>41</sup> while avoiding a narrowing of interpretation.

William, in direct relation to his proto-modern thinking, suffers an ‘uncertain’ destiny (498). He dies in the random act of plague (probably in the mass outbreak of Bubonic plague in Europe 1347-1350)<sup>42</sup> whilst Adso returns to the familial security of his youth. Interestingly, David Richter notes that Ockham also died of plague (“The Mirrored World” 266)<sup>43</sup> and so implies that Eco borrowed this incident from Ockham’s biography. This historical fact or co-incidence distorts the appropriateness of William of Baskerville’s demise in a return to historical pattern above writerly invention.

*The Hound of the Baskervilles* forms for many the apotheosis of Holmes’ reasoning skills and guile as a detective. The case also disrupts the union between Holmes and Watson, with the doctor active alone in the initial investigations. Importantly, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* requires the detective to plot a course through a labyrinthine bog complete with a supposed supernatural hound that threatens to devour trespassers. Although the demonic dog would appear to be disincentive enough, the bog itself menaces the men and digests a pit pony in its glutinous wastes before consuming the murderer Stapleton.<sup>44</sup> This organic maze shows aspects of contemporary articulations of the labyrinth in that the contorted structure directly threatens to assimilate the walker. The connection to Doyle’s story is not the sole inference that can be drawn from this choice of name: Baskerville is also a letter font created by the eighteenth-century typographer and printer John Baskerville (1706-1775; cf. *Oxford English*



*Encyclopaedia*).<sup>45</sup> So, tangentially, Baskerville is also synonymous with writing and the action of printing.

The surname 'Baskerville' forms an interesting choice for an archetypal English thinker. Other monastic nomenclature in the novel indicates the monk's affiliating abbey and yet this does not appear to be the case here as there is no English location of this name. This raises the question why would a monk from the British Isles (sic) carry a surname more closely aligned to continental Europe, France or the Basque region? Possibly, the most obvious conclusion is the extent to which Eco intended to signify the connection between William and Holmes. It is also feasible that William travelled and worked in a different monastic site that bore the name, though this is not alluded to in the text.

Eco discusses the problem of onomastics both generically in *Search for the Perfect Language* and in relation to naming a book in *Reflections* (1-3). It is appropriate that naming is in the foreground and iterated by the title of the piece, which is emphatically ambiguous. Critique of the novel's title favours multiple yet insubstantial readings and is pertinent for a text concerned with the nature of signs. The 'name' of the title is deliberately tantalising, partly owing to the figurative properties of the rose as a commonplace trope in literature and culture alike.<sup>46</sup> As Eco concedes, the scrutiny of the title is perhaps the first point of analysis for a scholar. In "An Author and His Interpreters", Eco quotes from *Reflections* in regard to his choice of title and claims that the rose of the title is intended to "set the reader free" (66; cf. *Reflections* 3). Instead, the reader becomes enmeshed in a network of connections as the rose is a connotative symbol that, after Eco's demonstrations in *The Island of the Day Before*, it would be unviable to attempt to exhaust fully.<sup>47</sup> The rose as a visual motif is notably peripheral to the narrative, though it is present in a brief allusion made by Adso to the girl's rosy



perfumed language and breath (246), as a pun on the sexual encounter (244) and also drawn on the panel marking the start of each new day. However, the most significant reference to the rose occurs in Latin at the finale of the piece.

## 2.4 Spatial Cartographies: Mapping the Library and Abbey

Explanation of, and guidance through, the labyrinths at play in *Rose* is elucidated in *Reflections* (54-58). Eco principally foregrounds two labyrinthine modes: “[t]he labyrinth of my library is still a mannerist labyrinth, but the world in which William realises he is living already has a rhizome structure: that is, it can be structured but is never structured definitively” (*Reflections* 57-58). The interplay caused by these two conceits is fascinating and functions as a major tension in the text. William repeatedly imposes delimiting structures and orders in microcosm that appear to work, such as in the identification of Brunellus, but when these systems are extended to create universal laws they are exposed as fleeting and transient. This practice of system-making is seen in the construction of the labyrinth, which is a shape that describes the manner of the world in oblique terms.

William’s own pattern based on an apocalyptic scheme and influenced by the others within the abbey is successful but for the wrong reasons. Although the murderer is apprehended, the manner of William’s investigation highlights the futility of attempting to formulate and then follow a plan. Castigation of this method of enquiry is obvious when, after the fire, he states: “I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe” (493). William ultimately concedes that order exists only as a cultivated mental approach which imposes artificial delineating structures as a necessary facility to deal with overwhelming chaos. Representations of medieval interactions with the physical world illustrate such intellectual systems and this can be seen in the outline of ecclesiastical labyrinths. These labyrinths maintain the concept of a divine creator whilst accepting that daily life is shrouded in mystery and confusion. What is significant about these



contours is that they act as an allegory of God's plan; a providence that becomes increasingly obscure and undermined in the abbey. Initial deductions that appear to support a view of this type of labyrinth, present in the tracing of knowable chains of meanings, are refuted by William's growing appreciation that such passages are illusory. In response to Adso's effusive remarks concerning the discovery of the abbot's horse, Brunellus, William is forced to concede only: "there is a bit of order in this poor head of mine" (208). Finally, William understands that such taxonomies are proffered by man, in conflict with the notion of divine creation, and so evinces that chaos and godlessness are pervasive in the destruction of the abbey.

Labyrinths are elevated in *Reflections* where, in a one-line synopsis of the content of *Rose*, Eco states: "even the ingenuous reader sensed he was dealing with a story of labyrinths" (54). This apparent clarification really obscures, as given that a single labyrinth is elusive and richly full of meaning, a composite of multiple labyrinths intensifies textual and mental difficulty. Impressions of the labyrinth loom large: it is integral to the plot in the impenetrability of a library that is "not like others" (35), with a difficulty that guards both Jorge and the book. Those who possess knowledge of its whole or understand its structuring principle can navigate the library's design, constructed by man as "sign of the labyrinth of the world" (158).

Often the only person to understand a labyrinth would be its builder. This understanding is reinforced through Eco's use of the labyrinth at Rheims as a partial model for the library.<sup>48</sup> This labyrinth depicts four master masons at the corners of the maze and in so doing the significance of these artificers is stated. When discussing the navigation of the labyrinth, but equally valid when considering tracing the path of the murderer, William claims it is necessary to "retrace in our minds the operations of the



artificer” (218). This recalls Jorge’s and William’s advice concerning the apprehension of the murderer (465) and so connects the murderer to the artificer; a correlation that is extended in Peter Ackroyd’s *Hawksmoor*. The labyrinth conveys the realisation that in any attempt to witness its totality it is necessary to begin by expressing a mechanism for its navigation.

In the labyrinth, as an allegory of the world view, man is unable to place himself outside the structure. Such confinement is understood by William who surmises the extent to which he is contained by a massive and interwoven matrix where there exists no microcosmic procedures that extend to allow guaranteed navigation. This is understood in the labyrinth where, when questioned about the methods of escaping an unknown labyrinth, William replies that the success rate for such an operation is “[a]lmost never, as far as I know” (176). Labyrinths seem to repel those who seek to understand them either through their impenetrability or by devouring those who enter.

The physicality of Eco’s monastic space is a feature of the text that is beginning to receive more attention;<sup>49</sup> a factor that complements the analysis of the labyrinth as an event. There are two major cartographical diagrams contained within the narrative. Through the incorporation of accomplished sketches of the abbey’s ground plan, the church’s cruciform shape is displayed centrally, whilst at the edge lays the library, the focus of William’s investigation. The boundaries of the Aedificium are outlined and yet the internal layout of the main building is left blank; an incongruity when positioned next to the realised dimensions of the chapterhouses and outbuildings. Even on the illustration the excessive size of the Aedificium is evident. Descriptions of the library recall *Travels in Hyperreality* (77) where Eco quotes Giuseppe Sacco, whose writings concerning cultural disruption document the apparent mutation of “public buildings



[into] fortresses” (Eco et al, *Il Nuovo Medioevo*).<sup>50</sup> The use of the Latin word *Aedificium* to depict the library and kitchen is oblique and would appear to distract the reader from the building’s narrative importance. The library as the murderer’s lair is concealed at this early juncture, as the library (as a library space) is not identified as such on the main map. Fundamentally, the crux of detective fiction is to mask and distort the inevitable solving of the mystery and so this foregrounds the necessity to disguise even the location of the final duel. It is unclear who has introduced this diagram of the abbey; whether it has been rendered from an original by Adso or included by a later translator to illuminate the relationship of the buildings within the abbey.<sup>51</sup> The former seems most likely as the abbey remains anonymous, much to the agitation of the final translator.

It may be conceivable, given Eco’s claims in *Reflections* (25) regarding the authenticity of the action and time in *Rose*, that a faithful illustration may be extracted from the text. Attention to real time displays the interaction between the character and their surroundings, as Eco stipulates:

When two of my characters spoke while walking from the refectory to the cloister, I wrote with the plan before my eyes; and when they reached their destination, they stopped talking. It is necessary to create constraints, in order to invent freely. (*Reflections* 25; see also Eco, “How I Write” *Illuminations* 179-180)

Imagined architectural limitations are then rigidly imposed upon the characters. These physical parameters recall the labyrinth as the epitome of structured space.

Although the identity of the abbey is in dispute (or unknowable), the authenticity of the site is repeatedly referred to by Eco who regularly discusses the construction of his “invented [...] world” (“How I write” *Illuminations*, 179). The mystification of the abbey is maintained by Adso’s memoirs, which are “shrouded in many, shadowy



mysteries, beginning with the identity of the author, and ending with the abbey's location, about which Adso is stubbornly, scrupulously silent" (3). The ground plan of the abbey is reminiscent of surviving cartographies detailing the abbey of Melk (George L. Scheper, "Bodley Harm" 6) and is perhaps conflated with the idealised but never constructed abbey of St. Gall (Adele Haft, "Maps, Mazes, and Monsters") and the wealthy monastery of St. Denis. The richness of the abbey recalls twelfth-century narratives about St. Denis, possibly because Adso is using this abbey as a holy template through which he can denote the opulence of the church. Plausibly, Adso's portrayal of the unnamed monastery may have become contaminated with his earlier and later impressions of Melk. Critical judgement about the root of the abbey is clouded by the propensity of medieval monasteries to follow similar ground plans. Scheper's summation identifies Melk as a prototype for the abbey ("Bodley" 6), though he concedes that the monstrous size of the library is incongruous and potentially anachronistic as it contains a tremendous treasure of codices which dwarf "the six thousand codices" housed by the library of Novalsea in the thirteenth century (*Rose* 35). The structure of Melk may have been applied by the elderly Adso, who possibly ascribed the proportions of the abbey in which he has spent the majority of his life onto the strange monastery in the mountains.<sup>52</sup> Jeffery Garret's gloss on Rolf Kohn's analysis of medieval libraries ("Missing Eco" 373-388) highlights both the unusual labyrinthine design of Eco's library and the sheer magnitude of volumes it claims to hold, leading him to conclude that Eco's library is more in keeping with massive modern libraries. To the extent that this is so, the library itself becomes another example of the crossover from the medieval to the contemporary.

In Adso's identification of the abbey it becomes apparent that the church and surrounds have been added to the site of an existing Aedificium. The fortress-like building is a



residual formation that has been incorporated into the monastic settlement: “I immediately realized it was much older than the buildings surrounding it” (26). It follows that the library, which has haunted his thoughts, is large and mysterious. The structure rises above him, “[t]owering above the abbatical church itself” (37), on the approach to the monastery. During the ascent of the mountain, Adso is “amazed” by the magnitude of the Aedificium (21). This is a witty and apposite observation given that this massive structure holds the labyrinth. The presence of the labyrinth is complemented by the young scribe’s bookish delineation of the mathematical proportions of the building. The library is then both peripheral and liminal: built at the very north of the roughly octagonal settlement, it is equally and simultaneously within and outside the monastery’s girdled walls: “the building joined the walls and seemed to plunge, from its towers, toward the abyss, over which the north tower, seen obliquely, projected” (26). When describing the Aedificium, Adso declares that the northernmost ramparts seemed “to grow from the steep side of the mountain” (21) and so gives the impression that the structure is both natural and unnatural. Overpowered by the vast scenery, Adso views the impressive mountain as approaching sublimation: “reaching up toward the heavens” (21). The sensation is countered by the precariously sited abbey which resides above the chasm, underscoring the permanent threat of the fall.

Ever-present trepidation and the need to battle the forces of the Antichrist are alluded to in Abo’s warning of the escalation of man’s avarice. He declares man’s propensity to sin as the factor which will inevitably lead to destruction: “[b]ecause of mankind’s sins the world is teetering on the brink of the abyss, permeated by the very abyss that the abyss invokes” (36). Abo’s words ironically recall the abbey itself which stands perilously above its own literal chasm. On another level, the library is also evoked, as within the Aedificium the codices are partitioned around a void. The centre of the



labyrinth, often the objective of a quest and which denotes successful navigation of its primary coils, is here sealed off and inaccessible. It is recognised either as the central space used to circulate air around the books or as the locked room; an unknown or impenetrable portion of the maze.

The drama of the architecture lends itself to the detective *topos*, especially within this irregular and undulating fortress where the intricate circuits contained in its library become a haven for evil. The Gothic edifice affirms the inconsequential position of the individual in relation to its vast proportions and recalls the fashion of continental cathedrals whose gigantic façades play with the traditionally symmetrical internal dimensions of a church in an act of defamiliarization (cf. Robert Branner, *Gothic Architecture* 11). Although Adso associates the massive dimensions of the Aedificium with holy and symmetrical numerology, the residual effect is to nudge the reader towards the unholy aura that surrounds the abbey where towering buildings evoke impressions of death and horror.

The labyrinth works both explicitly and implicitly: as an ostentatious Gothic architectural feat documented by the map, as an insurmountable fortress in the narrator Adso's psyche and as a signifier of the concealed within the text. The massive structure contains a mundane ground-floor refectory and kitchen whilst the level above houses the scriptorium, a place of study and the site for the creation of manuscripts. A staircase leads from the scriptorium up to the protected library at the summit. The monstrous edifice decentres the religious centre of the abbey and signifies the importance of education and learning, which is held in tension, as some learning is forbidden. The upper prohibited floor holds the library whose dimensions and navigation are under the sole custodianship of the librarian and his assistant, in accordance with traditional



precepts. The labyrinth as library is a central metaphor concerning hidden knowledge. Since what is covert is veiled by the walls of the labyrinth the investigator necessarily becomes involved within the labyrinthine composition, both represented by the library and by walking a maze-like path of deductive digressions within the abbey.

The Aedificium functions as a microcosm of the whole abbey, as it intrinsically represents the social and hierarchical nuances of the monastic environment. The arrangement also relays a corporeal separation of bodily and spiritual experiences. Stephen Kolsky, in reference to Theresa Coletti's discussion of the Aedificium, identifies the "cultural, social, epistemological and metaphysical" ideologies represented by the structure (Kolsky, "Theoretical Spaces" 73; Coletti, *Naming the Rose* 128). Through his extension of Coletti's analysis of the Aedificium, Kolsky implies that the building reflects certain facets of human behaviour, though his analysis is restricted to Salvatore and his association with the kitchen ("Theoretical" 74). To progress this analysis towards its natural extension, as Laurel Braswell employs ("Metapsychomachia" 3), the Aedificium forms a corporeal encapsulation of human experience.<sup>53</sup> The kitchen located on the ground floor, nearest to the earth (apart from the underground ossarium), is an area for the pursuit of bodily passions. It is in the kitchen that the monks' daily meals are prepared and where at night their sexual proclivity is sated. The use of the space thus forges a connection between two types of appetite: the culinary and sexual. The kitchen is the site of Adso's only sexual encounter, located at the central point of the novel on Wednesday evening as Joseph J. Carpino identifies ("On Eco's" 389). The description of Adso's lust is recounted using terminology from, and graphic allusions to, the *Song of Songs* whose ingrained sensual imagery further sexualises (and 'textualises') the space. This knowing and literary seduction reiterates both Adso's persistent and indoctrinated use of biblical script to



inform his past and present and Eco's continued utilisation of a patchwork of theological and literary allusions. Notably, it is during their sexual encounter that the first allusion to the rose occurs, her language despite being unintelligible to Adso is described as "a rosy perfume" that "breathed from her lips" (246).<sup>54</sup> The kitchen forms an unstable boundary where the village and the monastic co-exist. The indigence of the village is demonstrated by the desperation of the girl's predicament. Such a piteous existence is in stark contrast to the opulence of the abbey and the comparative luxury in which the monks live. The division in wealth is made manifest by the lowly 'worker' monks Salvatore and the cellarer who, in turn, manipulate the villagers whose situation is precarious and entirely dependent on the monastery. These two monks, tainted by their associations with the outside and the worldly, are 'sacrificed' to the Inquisition in order to protect the independence of the monastery.

The scriptorium located on the second level is affiliated to intellectual enquiry and forms a location for philosophical debate. During the day it contains monks busy in the holy act of codex illumination and copying, close by the entrance to the library, which the librarian accesses through the two great doors and elevated staircase that separate the two areas. The library is the containment and the imposition of control onto a system of books, and yet, as Michael F. Winter observes reiterating Eco's position, the joy of discovering new books in a library is partly achieved through the individual's freedom to wander unhindered amongst the bookshelves ("Umberto Eco" 125). The liberty to peruse the shelves is rigorously denied the monks, who instead approach the librarian for pertinent books for their study.

The library as the site for the discovery of a death or as setting for the revelation sequence in a murder mystery is surprisingly clichéd. Scheper glosses a remarkable



array of writers who deploy this utilitarian and intellectual space in their crime fictions (“Bodley Harm”).<sup>55</sup> Detective and murder stories use the library as an innocuous setting to be subverted through the discovery of a body. Alternatively, the library as place of reading uniquely balances the unravelling of the murder plot and the disclosure of the murderer.

As the investigation proceeds it becomes apparent that the number of monks able to access the library floor is larger than first indicated, which casts other monks as suspects in the murder. Given the severity of the crime and the location of the first victim who, based on an initial hypothesis may have been pushed from an upper level window, it is surprising that William is denied access into the restricted recesses of the library. Whilst the abbot gives William his blessing to wander with impunity amongst his fellow monks, he recoils at William’s wish to gain access to the library: “[t]he abbot rose, almost starting, with a very tense face. ‘You can move freely through the whole abbey, as I have said. But not, to be sure, on the top floor of the Aedificium, the library’” (35).

An extreme response to apparently so simple a request is influenced by a number of factors: Abo’s fear of the old librarian, the historically guarded space of the library and his belief that books can alter and inspire evil even in the most pious. This is confirmed by his later deliberations: “not all truths are for all ears, not all falsehoods can be recognized as such by a pious soul” (37). This reaction, though apparently radical, has strong theological foundations and maintains the abbey’s policy of guarding knowledge and the residual hierarchical order for accessing the shelves. Traditional edicts which forbid unlawful entry to the library and translation of its codes result in a librarian whose knowledge and power surpass the abbot’s. At the core of Abo’s thinking is his need to maintain the abbey’s hegemony and protect the library, the symbol of the abbey’s power, from the investigator. In doing so, William is flatly told “to conform to



the rules of the abbey” (38). It transpires that the abbot’s reluctance is predicated on his belief that the crime grew out of the ‘unnatural’ couplings between some of the monks, who confessed to him of their carnal longings and deeds.<sup>56</sup> Abo’s deliberated protection of the library, achieved through the manipulation and restriction of William’s investigations, is circumvented by the Franciscan scholar who chooses to disobey his explicit orders.

Monks who flaunt Abo’s wishes and so penetrate the library may find the labyrinthine habitat prevents their leaving. The structure and its additional miasmas would certainly disorient the interloper and clearly inhibit the retrieval of a desired volume, if not prevent his leaving. The codices are recorded in a format that enables the librarian to locate a volume, but as William notes, the classification is incomprehensible to all those who do not contain the topological knowledge of the labyrinth. This connection is tacitly acknowledged when Adso’s garrulous questioning regarding the nature of the catalogue’s cipher is received with stern reproach from the librarian, Malachi: “[i]t is enough for the librarian to know them by heart and know when each book came here. As for the other monks, they can rely on his memory” (75).

Malachi’s ruminations seem to distance him from his role as librarian; as Adso notes: “[h]e spoke as if discussing someone other than himself” (75). The catalogue describing the collection is incomplete, partly due to the abbot-enforced exorcising of inflammatory texts and also to Jorge’s custom of censorship.

The monks’ inquisitive desire to enter the library is tempered by the practice of sealing the Aedificium’s exterior doors. Although Malachi claims the routine is to prevent entry “by outsiders or animals” (84), it would appear that this is primarily a means to restrict unlawful access to the books by those within its walls. The monks’ allusions to



the menace and fear of outsiders is displaced by the unforeseen threat from within; rather than articulate the inner threat to the abbey's hierarchy, Malachi is willing to dissemble by maintaining a pattern of xenophobia. His intention to contain William is futile, as the old scribe perceives his meaning and confidently utters just a few pages later: "[w]hat is certain is that in the abbey they want no one to enter the library at night and that many, on the contrary, have tried or are trying to do so" (91). This would seem to indicate that the power and authority of the abbot's word, so confidently alluded to by Malachi, is in reality insufficient to quell the monks' intellectual lust. Although the Abbot appears erroneously content that the knowledge contained within the labyrinth is safe from incursion, he emphasises the treacherous nature of the labyrinth for those foolhardy enough to enter: "[t]he library defends itself, immeasurable as the truth it houses, deceitful of the falsehood it preserves. A spiritual labyrinth, it is also a terrestrial labyrinth. You might enter and you might not emerge" (38).

Abo's gesticulations towards the labyrinth epitomise Eco's description of the mannerist maze, as the structure paradoxically becomes its own Minotaur. William's investigations are primarily hampered by the structure, though his later intrusions are made difficult by the knowledge of another monk, as one who is at home in the structure. Jorge's bestiality and murderous design conflate images of the beast and the architect: a potent and deadly foe that lurks in the labyrinth, awaiting his Theseus.

In order to contravene the abbot's wishes and the rule of the abbey, William must determine a passage into the labyrinth at night. Generally, it is easier to enter a labyrinth than to leave it, and this is certainly true of the labyrinth in the *Rose*, but there are few labyrinths that are as difficult to enter as this library. In total there are three secret passageways that lead into the Aedificium. Once the physical limit of the building is breached the intruder can easily gain access to the library through the main

entrance leading from the scriptorium. William's deductions detail the functional necessity of an ossarium and its role as a conduit for passage from the church to the Aedificium (97). Finding his summation correct, he and Adso approach the library through this subterranean passage. The ceiling of the ossarium leaks bones and cadavers down from the graveyard above so that the dead monks continue to descend after their death, a displacement that is in antithesis to the metaphorical heavenly ascent.



## 2.5 A Discarded Bundle of Narratives: Uncovering the Apocalypse

Eco's monastery is an enclosure saturated in religious fear and hypocrisy, predicated upon an eschatological culture steeped in the *Book of Revelation*. It is also infused with 'Revelation' textuality, and so confirms Lesley Smith's thesis that the medieval imagination and culture is a biblical one ("The Theology of the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Bible"). Given *Revelation's* emphasis of one thousand years of Christ's reign,<sup>57</sup> logically its influence should have dissipated in strength shortly after the passing of the millennium. Instead the breaking of this prophetic deadline has engendered a spirit of apocalyptic proximity and urgency amongst the monks: an atmosphere that is intensified by the elevated and isolated location of the abbey. Patterns of apocalyptic expectation drive the text towards its conclusion and act as an analogy for the tension between providence and freewill found in the labyrinth.

Though the mountain's summit is speedily clambered, the monks are really descending and entering into a place of disorientation and abomination. The fragmentation and circularity of their journey recalls Dante's guided descent into Hell. Intellectual and religious disorder is acknowledged from the entry into the abbey as there is an initial sense that the world is out of kilter: "[e]verthing is on the wrong path" (15). Loss of this one true way into universal disharmony plunges the abbey into intrigues of confusion and doubt. Although harmony and order reflect God's presence in the medieval mind, paradoxically disorder and the chaotic act as signifiers of God's apocalyptic plan (cf. Boyer, *When Time* 258).

Original feelings of dislocation are not dissipated and instead become exaggerated. A sensation which, when coupled with the arduous opening section of the novel, leads to a



reliance, by both the young monk and reader alike, on William's incisive comments. Inversions are obvious in discourse surrounding marginalia, sexual couplings and even, as Laurel Braswell notes, in the position of Adelmo's and Venantius' cadavers which are both discovered upside down ("Meta-Psychomania" 6). The main biblical intertext for the abbey's chaos, beyond the primal void described in Genesis (1:2), is *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*. John's vision details the culmination of God's reign when the revengeful Antichrist has been released from his imprisonment. Despite the fear attached to the Apocalypse, the appearance of the Antichrist confirms a prophecy that ultimately results in the triumph of Christianity.<sup>58</sup> So it can be argued that part of Jorge's invocation of the Revelation is a desire for finality through a consolidation of the cities of Heaven and earth.

'Apocalypse' is generally synonymous with the action of disclosure or revelation though John's writing has inextricably tied it to notions of catastrophic destruction. Although contemporary and medieval usages of the term 'apocalypse' are negative, it appears that its earliest usage does not appear to share its wider cataclysmic associations. Various critical approaches to John's Revelation and its dissemination through Beatus have conceded the distortion of the term from its Greek origins. John Williams' introduction to the history of the Morgan Beatus Manuscript (*A Spanish Apocalypse* 11) briefly relates 'apocalypse' to 'revelation' and so too does Paul Boyer, namely that "[t]he word itself is Greek, meaning an unveiling of that which is hidden" (*When Time Shall be No More* 23). The *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* lists the root of 'apocalypse' as coming from the Greek "apokalypsis", which literally translates as "uncovering" and is derived from "apokalyptein" meaning to "uncover".<sup>59</sup> By acknowledging the source of 'apocalypse', the two integral themes within *Rose* of discovery and destruction are intrinsically bound.



Mediations of the apocalypse are invested in every level of the text and so it is fitting that Eco has alighted upon the name of Adso to act as scribe, as it directly addresses Adso-Montier-en-Der whose tenth-century manuscript, *Libellus de Antechristo*, became a core medieval mediation upon the apocalypse.<sup>60</sup> This affiliation is directly raised by Jorge who remarks upon the earlier Adso's credentials as a prophet of the Apocalypse (83). The encounter with Jorge implies that the apocalyptic fervour of Adso's narrative is distilled from his time during and after the murders as the text foregrounds that the young monk, perhaps surprisingly, has not heard of his namesake. Despite his initial ignorance, Adso's prologue resounds with trepidation about the time that is to come, leaving his writing: "to those who will come after (if the Antichrist has not come first)" (11). His dread of the future, coupled with terminology entrenched in the *Revelation*, construct a link to his literary predecessor and date the writing to an earlier century. As Vallet's nameless successor concedes in his introduction: "Adso wrote in Latin, but it is also clear from the whole development of the text that his culture (or the culture of the abbey, which clearly influences him) dates back even further" (4). The narrator is here alluding to a progress from an early medieval fearfulness of the Revelation to a later de-centring of the Apocalypse text. The journey is encapsulated by the detailed and gruesome drawings displayed in Beatus' *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, composed in the eighth century, and Adso-Montier-en-Der's narratives leading up to the millennium. Evolution of apocalyptic thinking is a process from which Adso and the abbey appear excluded. Individual monks cite the phrase that regulates the *Book of Revelation*: "for the time is at hand" (*Rev* 1:1; 22:10),<sup>61</sup> which results in an atmosphere of immediacy and apocalyptic expectancy. Even William's invocation of Brunellus the abbot's horse seems to have been preordained, or could be re-envisaged as the horse's gallop that begins the advance of the apocalypse (*Rev* 6:8; *Rose* 23). The *Book of Revelation* is a



pervasive element present in the abbey's architecture and library collection and accordingly in the psyches of the monks at the abbey. The cultural imperative of the document directs William's interpretation of the sensitive young Adso's vision until he finally considers it as a suitable detective paradigm.

Adso's musings make manifest the apocalyptic fervour behind the church's construction as his descriptions are bound to John's *Revelation*.<sup>62</sup> His narrative voice clearly encapsulates the hyperbole of an imaginative novice monk which has not been dissipated by the long years between its happening and the inscription of the event. Adso's sensitivity leads him to see the hallucination as an allegory of the murders in the abbey: "I realized the vision was speaking precisely of what was happening in the abbey, of what we had learned from the abbot's reticent lips" (45). Such visions are described with hindsight and perhaps show the imposition of the older writer upon the younger man's trance and so cause the obfuscation of the command to Adso to: "[w]rite in a book what you now see" (45). This manner befits John's instruction: "[w]rite: for these words are true and faithful" (*Revelation* 21:5).

Adso's preface is reminiscent of Beatus' opening to his *Commentary* which is, as Williams suggests: "a borrowed commentary using borrowed terminology" (*The Illustrated Beatus* 1:19). This tautological process is a means to present the divine in a traditional and unalterable fashion. John's discourse denies a creative impetus and instead draws upon the rhetoric of prophecy as commonplace in religious documents of the medieval period to ensure authenticity. Adso's evident ambivalence towards this sentiment is contained in the differences he illustrates between his thoughts as an old and a young monk and so raises the debate between faithful rendition and the creative urge to alter and improve. Abo reacts to this same tension when he espouses the



protection of the written word through the censorship of the library. His reasons for doing so parallel John's warning about the alteration of God's holy word: "[i]t is up to us to defend the treasure of the Christian world, and the very word of God, as he dictated it to the prophets and to the apostles, as the fathers repeated it without changing a syllable" (36-37).<sup>63</sup> This embittered response underlines a monastic call to arms to prevent perversion, with the monks as purveyors and guardian of God's light: "[i]n this sunset we are still the torches and the light, high on the horizon. And as long as these walls stand, we shall be custodians of the divine Word" (37).

Abo's belief in the permanence of his abbey is doubly misplaced in both the sanctity of his monks and in the fortitude of the abbey. Despite his grandiose speech, he is unaware that after the cycle of the seven days is complete the walls of the abbey will no longer stand, which creates an increased irony on re-reading the novel.

These walls mark a boundary, outline sacred land and delimit the profanity that lies beyond. These fortifications constructed to repel invaders to the faith also enclose the sinning monks who flaunt the Benedictine Rule. As J. Patrick Greene outlines: "[r]eligious houses were susceptible to two principal dangers: decay from within, and attack from without" (*Medieval Monasteries* 3).<sup>64</sup> The perceived new learning and threat from cities and universities iterated by various monks during the course of the novel (36, 126, 146, 151, 153, 184-5, 204) initially disguise the threat from the canker within.

The monks are tacitly aware of the silent 'infiltration' of foreign librarians and monks in an abbey that contains "Germans, Dacians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, [and] Greeks" (35). This 'commonwealth' reveals the dilution of their order and functions as a potential internal menace. The significance of birthplace and national identity is a considerable



issue in the text as the abbey's monks are extremely sensitive to issues of denomination and divergence incited by the penetration of their abbey by foreign monks. At first William interprets the fears of the Italian monks as a xenophobic gloss before realising that they are really alluding to the penetration of the library by a singular foreign and unhealthy monk (465). Jorge's successful and progressive colonisation of the library and, by extension, the abbey is achieved through his power and knowledge over others, which stem from his reading and scholasticism. Such influence is affiliated to his homeland, his linguistic ability in infidel languages and the opportunity to rob the abbey of Burgos of its copy of Aristotle's *Comics*.

Despite Jorge's physical frailty and disability there are various reasons that highlight him as suspect: namely, his Spanish associations, academic acumen and his terminology, punctuated with Aristotelian imagery.<sup>65</sup> Even William's comical retort to Jorge's description of the Antichrist implicates him as a source of evil within the abbey:

“[T]he Antichrist will defeat the West... and in a violent fury the flame will burn... the bearer of darkness. These are the features that will mark him: his head will be of burning fire, his right eye will be bloodshot, his left eye a feline green with two pupils, and his eyebrows will be white, his lower lip swollen, his ankle weak, his feet big, his thumb crushed and elongated!”  
“It seems his own portrait,” William whispered, chuckling. (403)

In his carnivalesque sketch of the Antichrist, Jorge repeats the necessary sense of destructive conflagration and subsequent darkness which correspond with the abbey's engrained clichés of the Revelation. The pedantic exactitude of Jorge's portrait is humorous and so ironically undermines his unwavering stance against laughter.

Questions of national identity are alluded to by the structure of the labyrinth. Indeed, the key to the labyrinth's room is discovered through William's discussions of his homeland (312), while the confrontation with Jorge occurs in the 'Y' room of Yspania.



William's allusions to Hibernia, which he refers to as "[m]y islands" (312), and Jorge's birth in Spain suggest that the beginning and end of the two protagonists' struggle is preordained in the cartography of the labyrinth. This *mappi mundi*, displaying the start and climax of the affair, begins with William's native reasoning and ends in the fiery heat of Yspania. Jorge effectively returns to where he stole the book and exits the labyrinth of life where he began, in the place of his birth and studies.<sup>66</sup>

The climatic dénouement occurs within the enclosed room within the labyrinth and heightens this feeling of a puzzle within a puzzle. According to the two detectives' deductions, the rooms of the labyrinth include a further chamber which is apparently inaccessible. In Haft's research ("Maps"), the enclosed room represents the much discussed fourth and unknown continent of Middle Age thinking, the *terra incognita*. Adso utilises the same terminology when he identifies the library as existing at the fringe of the monastery and refers to its body as a celebrated Jerusalem which is conversely situated at the edge "between terra incognita and Hades." (184). This mention of the *terra incognita* pre-empts the investigations in the *finis Africae* room as medieval maps, including the Hereford listed amongst the library's treasures (85), often depict the *terra incognita* as existing off the coast of Africa. The amalgamation of *terra incognita* and Hell indicates the permutation in Adso's psyche between the unknown and evil; a connection that is repeatedly made by the monastery's native monks as they voice their fear of intellectual invasion from the outside. Hades, the Latin vision of Hell envisaged by Virgil, combines Adso's classical teaching with his use of hyperbole. The library is a rivulet connecting Heaven and Hell, allowing William and Adso to ascend towards the demonic Jorge in a reversal of the expected decent into Hades, and in a manner which recalls the many narrative and symbolic inversions.



After discovering the beast at the heart of the maze, William recognises that the plan he perceived was false and that it absolved Jorge of his responsibility for his actions: “I conceived a false pattern to interpret the moves of the guilty man, and the guilty man fell in with it. And it was this same false pattern that put me on your trail” (470).

Although William has identified that the apocalyptic model that he investigated was an erroneous one, the interrogation of this scheme ironically enables him to make the necessary connections to solve the murders. In tracing the murderer’s motives, William re-enacts the method of Hercule Poirot in the *ABC Murders* and *Murder by Numbers*. In the former instance, Hercule’s deductions expose a false pattern conceived by the murderer to mask his real intentions. William’s process bends to this plan as he judges his quarry’s decisions to be based around the Apocalypse. Jorge finally thwarts William in his endeavour because in the fulfilment of this false order he progressively devours the impregnated text. An act that ironically is encapsulated in God’s and the angel’s message to John:

Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and eat it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. (*Rev*: 11:9-10)

The departure of the seventh angel heralds the beginning of the reign of the Antichrist and the devouring of the book. Jorge quotes this Revelation phraseology when he begins to eat the manuscript (480-481), thereby ‘sealing’ his own death and preventing others from possessing the book. Although the apocalyptic schemata has been exposed as a false order, the plague forewarned by the biblical text occurs and as a direct result of these three years of widespread Bubonic plague William dies.<sup>67</sup> Ultimately, there remains a labyrinthine play between disorder and order, as what remains despite the confusion is the semblance of structure. *Rose* teases out the tension between the man-made construction of a maze-like world-view, present in the library, with the residual



and prevalent rhizome structure which the former arrangement masks. God is literally absent from this confusion, as William in his despair professes: “[n]on in commotione, non in commotione Dominus” (493). In this significant aside, William exposes that only confusion and mystification lie at the heart of the labyrinth.

## 2.6 Coda

The experience of the world as reflection of the labyrinth is expressed as a rhizome, an unmappable mesh of strands, which is quite distinct from the time-consuming yet determinable medieval ecclesiastical labyrinths. Remaining 'truths' are merely a conscious fabrication imposed upon a chaotic universe. Through this examination of Eco's *The Name of the Rose* there is established the flexibility of the labyrinth as a trope to discuss narrative, issues of reader-response, language and epistemology. Ackroyd's fiction also plays with ideas of the labyrinth; his subtle approach draws upon Eco's appreciation of the detective qualities inherent in the application of the labyrinth, and thus the interplay between detective and criminal, architect and writer.



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<sup>1</sup> The novel will hereafter be abbreviated to *Rose*.

<sup>2</sup> A chapter of *The Island of the Day Before* is termed “The Labyrinth”, and yet this is a very different experience from the mazes of either of his earlier novels. The labyrinth in question is both a metaphor for the puzzle in which Roberto finds himself and the physical description of the ship that holds an Edenic garden. Like the labyrinth of mythology, the text relates the presence of an ‘other’ and Roberto chases this shadow of himself believing himself to be stalking death. In a subversion of the myth, Eco exposes a frightened and passive stowaway not the monstrous ‘other’ that Roberto was hoping for.

<sup>3</sup> This book has also appeared as *Postscript to The Name of the Rose* and in a shortened version without the pictures as “Reflections on *The Name of the Rose*”. Citations from *Reflections* are from the full London text (1985) and the title will be abbreviated to *Reflections*.

<sup>4</sup> Faris has similar concerns regarding Eco’s appropriation of the labyrinth and the simplistic manner in which he attempts to delineate its meaning (*Labyrinths* 158-166).

<sup>5</sup> There is also a connection with turf mazes which tend towards this naïve shape for clarity and convenience.

<sup>6</sup> Eliade equates this thread with the sun’s rays and as such the ‘clue’ lightens the dark recesses of the maze (*Encyclopaedia* 411- 419).

<sup>7</sup> Eco’s critical engagement with Pierce is mentioned in his essays and also by critics (cf. Eco and T. Sebeok *The Sign of Three*).

<sup>8</sup> For a diagram of this imagined structure see the rhizomic-labyrinthine characteristics of *Finnegans Wake* (Eco, *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos* 71).

<sup>9</sup> ‘Baboonery’ is the term given to the bodily and comical caricatures that augment early monastic books (cf. Peter Ackroyd, *Albion* 132-134, 322, 342).

<sup>10</sup> Hereafter known as *Key*.

<sup>11</sup> See Donald McGrady for an in-depth discussion of Salvatore’s speeches (“Eco’s Bestiary”).

<sup>12</sup> The discovery of a manuscript is a recurring *topos* especially within Gothic narratives and allows the author to distance her/himself from any repercussions from the reception of the text and to add a mysterious element or to imply that the fictive is really factual.

<sup>13</sup> In the preface Adso is named as Adson a determination that stresses a close alignment between the monk and Watson, as the sound of the name resembles Doyle’s character. This point is made by Pierre L. Horn (“The Detective Novel”). Other critics had stressed the similarities between the two fictional characters but have not tended to refer back to the preface where the elongated choice of “adson” intensifies this close comparison.

<sup>14</sup> This has been identified as such by Laurel Braswell (“Meta-Psychomania” 4).

<sup>15</sup> Eco refers to the finding of a second-hand book by Abbé Vallet as the motive force that allowed him to conclude his doctorate. The debt to Vallet is repaid by his inclusion as an intermediary and as a node in the narrative journey of *Rose*.

<sup>16</sup> Ronald E. Pepin’s short essay (“Adso’s Closing Line”) deals directly with Adso’s final remark, his translation is short, yet poignant: “the rose of old stands in name; we hold mere names”. See also Steven Sallis (“Naming”), Stefano Tani (*Doomed* 71-72), Thomas M. Catania (“What is the Mystery”), Joseph J. Carpino (“On Eco’s” 398), Teresa Coletti (*Naming*), Michael Cohen (“Naming” 76), Helen T. Bennett (“Naming” 126), Haft et al (*Key* 175) and the two translations offered by Lois Parkinson Zamora (“Apocalyptic Visions and Visionaries” 40).



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<sup>17</sup> Eco favours the spelling of Occam and yet William of Ockham's surname is derived from the village of Ockham outside Oxford. In keeping with the majority of critics, historians and the name of the village, this thesis will adopt the Ockham spelling.

<sup>18</sup> The Cottonian map foregrounds Hibernia with Britannia wrapped around the larger island. See Gerald Roe Crone for a collection of reproductions of early maps depicting the British Isles (*Early Maps of the British Isles*).

<sup>19</sup> Conan Doyle has a split cultural heritage: born in Edinburgh to an Irish mother and a father of Irish lineage he was known to speak with a Scottish accent and yet, as a writer and thinker, was concerned with Irish fiction and issues of Home Rule. Such blurred national identity is further compounded by his narratives of Empire which seem to align him with an English mentality (Wynne, *Colonial* 1-18). I am indebted to Dr. Catherine Wynne for her subtle explanation of Conan Doyle's heritage.

<sup>20</sup> Eco identifies the Middle Ages falling between the 5 to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D., existing in two stretches from the fall of the Roman Empire to the millennium and a second epoch from 1,000 C.E. to the advent of Humanism ("The Expectation of the Millennium" *Hyperreality* 72). This would place *Rose* just outside of this period and hence in a time of change.

<sup>21</sup> See Eco *The Open Work* and *The Role of the Reader*.

<sup>22</sup> Eco has discussed in *Reflections* the very tight temporal window he accessed in order to engage with the Papal Bull directed towards the Spiritualist Franciscans, to coincide with Michael's journey to the emperor, and the outbreaks of Black Death. This juncture in continental medieval history was significant in terms of the growth of the Spiritualist Franciscans and threats to the central power of the Catholic Church. It also was the year in British history that marked the death of Edward II.

<sup>23</sup> Various lengths are given for this pedantic opening ranging from 60 to 150 pages. A possible reason for this discrepancy would seem to be the extent to which the critic enjoyed the beginning of the novel.

<sup>24</sup> Meanings of 'rubric' include both the rules of a religious order and the liturgical annotations written in red on religious text (*OED*; cf. Martin Brick "Blueprint(s)"). Eco's use of detective fiction in his narrative blends high and low cultural modes (cf. *On Literature*) and so the ecclesiastical root of 'rubric' coupled with its description of detective practice mirrors his narrative strategy.

<sup>25</sup> Adso's different ages, eighteen and eighty, when he experiences and documents the mystery at the abbey are stated with some flippancy by Eco (*Reflections* 33).

<sup>26</sup> John refers to "the book of life" as a collection of man's deeds read at judgement (Rev 20:12).

<sup>27</sup> Thus recalling Borges' claim that it is "not reading that matters, but the rereading" ("A Weary Man's Utopia" *Collected Fictions* 462).

<sup>28</sup> The Franciscan movement preached the poverty of Christ and practised this theology by living ostensibly from alms. Their vow of poverty as an extension of the question of Christ's material ownership of goods directly threatened the power edict and wealth of the medieval church.

<sup>29</sup> A similar fascination with the writer is documented by Danielewski whose sister Ann has adopted Poe as her stage name.

<sup>30</sup> This connection is also made by Stefano Tani (*Doomed* 231-232).

<sup>31</sup> A process explicitly captured in Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor* and in the deadly climax of Borges' "Death and the Compass".

<sup>32</sup> Jocelyn Mann also notes the significance of Borges' story "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", claiming that it might be considered "a key to the commentary" ("Traversing the Labyrinth" 137).



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<sup>33</sup> Various critics have discussed the Borgesian influence on *Rose*. These include Jaskolski (*Labyrinth* 129-130), Mann (“Traversing”); Kate Fullbrook (“The Godfather” 181-196), Edna Aizenberg (*Borges and His Successors*), Jorge Martin Hernandez (*Readers and Labyrinths*) and Christine de Lailhacar (“The Mirror and the Encyclopaedia”).

<sup>34</sup> Both Eco and Danielewski play with the idea of the librarian within the maze.

<sup>35</sup> The choice of librarian is fitting as it parallels Borges’ former occupation as head-librarian in the National Library of Buenos Aires.

<sup>36</sup> The monk’s name corresponds with Walpole’s Gothic novel *The Castle of Otranto* and consequently with the town of Otranto, in Southern Italy.

<sup>37</sup> The similarity of Zadig’s and William’s explanation of the horse is remarked upon by Mann (“Traversing”), Michael Cohen (“The Hounding of the Baskerville”), Joann Cannon (“Semiotics and Conjecture”), Teresa De Lauretis (“Gaudy Rose”) and David Richter (“Eco’s Echoes”).

<sup>38</sup> Robert L. Caserio notes the naming of the horse is a seminal episode in *Hard Times* (“The Name of the Horse” 5), an occurrence that foregrounds the limitations of language.

<sup>39</sup> See for example Mann (“Traversing”) and Cohen (“Hounding” 65-76).

<sup>40</sup> For comment on the Holmes and the Baskerville connection see David Richter (“Eco’s Echoes”) and especially Benjamin A. Fairbank Jr., who ruefully indicates that “no one overlooks the hint of the Baskerville” (“William of Baskerville” 83).

<sup>41</sup> Incidentally, in the Italian edition the comparison is less pronounced as Eco’s protagonist is Guglielmo de Bascavilla, which perhaps veils the inference more than is evident in the English translation. Mihai Nadin also notes the alteration of William’s name from the Italian original in his essay “Writing is Rewriting”.

<sup>42</sup> See Lillian M. Bisson for her discussion of the relationship between this disease and the fourteenth century (“In the Labyrinth” 19).

<sup>43</sup> Paul Boyer sets the date as c1349 in the court of Emperor Louis of Bavaria (*When Time Shall be No More* 3) and yet contradicts this slightly by referring to the death as having occurred in 1347 in the main body of the manuscript.

<sup>44</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Catherine Wynne for her explanation of bogs (cf. Wynne, *Colonial* 65-99).

<sup>45</sup> Originally, this correlation is made by Lailhacar in her excellent essay which relates Eco to Borges (“Mirror” 160).

<sup>46</sup> Dorothy Tanning’s *Some Roses and Their Phantoms* (displayed at the Tate Modern) gives a sense of the mutations and transformations of the flower.

<sup>47</sup> See Robert Fleissner (*A Rose by Another Name*).

<sup>48</sup> The French Gothic cathedral was begun in 1210 and the labyrinth was later destroyed, although not through fire. The apocryphal story goes that a headstrong bishop resented the sounds made by pilgrims and children traversing the labyrinth during his sermons and so ordered the labyrinth destroyed. Adele Haft et al (*Key* 153) makes note of this as does Matthews (*Mazes*). Adso’s illustration of the labyrinth accurately reproduces the floor plan of this ecclesiastical labyrinth (321 and *Reflections* 55) whilst Haft signals the importance of this model in her essay (“Maps, Mazes and Monsters” 5).

<sup>49</sup> See Haft (“Maps”), Rochelle Sibley (“Aspects of the Labyrinth”) and Jonathan Key (“Maps and Territories”).

<sup>50</sup> Eco’s newspaper column has also compared the 1980s Italian bureaucratic system to a series of mazes guarded by Minotaurs.

<sup>51</sup> Key expresses the commonality of maps found in detective stories (“Maps” 14 fn. 4).

<sup>52</sup> Eco has commented upon the choice of the mountain retreat and reasoned that the practicalities of congealing pigs’ blood, an integral moment in his narrative.



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presupposed the setting of the abbey, whilst the isolation recalls Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (as specified both by Eco, *Reflections* 30 and Fairbank Jr., "William").

<sup>53</sup> Haft also sketches this idea ("Maps" 4).

<sup>54</sup> In *Rose* there is a general absence of women clearly in keeping with the setting in a closed monastic settlement. The unnamed girl who 'deflowers' Adso intrudes on the 'sealed' monastic environment. Her native dialect is largely unintelligible and even her demise is undocumented in the novel. In the film version of Eco's book Adso's lover is reprieved from her fate of death at the stake, whilst the devilish Bernard is killed during the confusion at the abbey. Hugh Silverman writes about this problematic adaptation ("The Sign of the Rose").

<sup>55</sup> Agatha Christie in the preface to her novel *The Body in the Library* affirms the desirability of the library for a murder mystery and her long-held aspiration to employ such a locale in her writing.

<sup>56</sup> The crime of homosexuality would be considered unnatural and threatening to the stability of the monastery as a whole, and had only recently been outlawed and so was a common slur to those who were accused of heresy (cf. Patrick J. Greene, *Medieval Monasteries*).

<sup>57</sup> A prophecy and belief known as *chiliasm* (cf. Eco, *Hyperreality* 81).

<sup>58</sup> See John Williams' brief discussion of the text in the introduction to his commentary on Beatus' Apocalypse (*Introduction*).

<sup>59</sup> I am indebted to Paul F. Reichardt's essay "The Name of the Rose: The Sign of the Apocalypse" (1984) as the writer briefly glosses the etymological origin of 'apocalypse' from the Greek "apo- and kalptein" (1).

<sup>60</sup> Given the textual importance of the connection between Adso and his namesake it is not surprising that the following critics note this relationship: Nadin, ("Writing"), Zamora ("Apocalyptic"), Theresa Coletti (*Naming*) and Haft et al (*Key*).

<sup>61</sup> See Haft et al (*Key* 94-176) for examples of the text of the *Revelation* that infiltrate the novel.

<sup>62</sup> The jewels of the apocalypse narrative (21:18-19) and from the *Lapidary* are also present in the abbey; for example, the shared numeral symbolism of candlesticks (*Rev* 1: 20, 2:1) and the semi-precious stones jasper and sardonyx, predominantly displayed in the church and also on the abbot's ring.

<sup>63</sup> The notion of lightness bringing truth and goodness echoes the gospel of St. John (1:4-9 and 3:19-21), whilst light, in Abbot Suger's writings concerning the reconstruction of the abbey of St. Denis acts as a metaphor for God's presence (cf. Erwin Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*).

<sup>64</sup> Although Greene's meditations are principally directed towards eighth-century English monasteries under the possibility of imminent Viking attacks, this dual threat is played out in the abbey.

<sup>65</sup> The rediscovery of Aristotle is relatively recent in relation to the temporal setting of the novel, as Eco confirms in his essay "In Praise of St. Thomas" (*Hyperreality*).

<sup>66</sup> Eco refers to this sense of complete return in *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, where on a visit to a planetarium he is transported back to the night's sky of his birth and comments on the roundedness of the moment: "I had the impression that I was the only man, since the dawn of time, who had ever had the privilege of being reunited with his own beginning... I had the feeling – almost the desire – that I could, that I should, die at that very moment, and that any other moment would have been untimely" (140). It is this sense of totality and appropriateness that prefigures Jorge's demise which, as Pierre L. Horn also points out ("Detective novel"), is the return to his homeland (albeit a representation).



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<sup>67</sup> Rochelle Sibley notes that “the last deaths in the novel – the abbot’s and Jorge’s – can also be made to fit into the Apocalyptic pattern” (*Illuminations* 40, fn 18). To this list I would also add William.

## *Hawksmoor*

### **3 Pattern and History in the Textual City: Labyrinths in the Work of Peter Ackroyd**

Ackroyd's novel *Hawksmoor* fabricates a physical labyrinth in the grounds of an eighteenth-century church. In addition to this, the labyrinth is also present as a metaphor for the city, a controlling system for the narrative and as an analogy for the passage of time. Ackroyd's fictions shape the past as an active force which through the medium of the city is able to infiltrate or supplant the present. Topics that accentuate such a process include a recurrent Catholic tradition steeped in ritual and the vision of London through the activity of antiquarianism. Thematic consistency in Ackroyd's writings demonstrates a delineation of labyrinthine terminology which exists across his fictional, biographical and non-fictional writings. Given his inclination to extrapolate ideas of nationhood and the English imagination, the persistence of the labyrinth trope would tend to stress its importance in the English canon.

An examination of *Hawksmoor* will focus on the intertextual and historical folds caused by the overlap of narratives and sources. Analyses will demonstrate the labyrinthine movement that Ackroyd employs to discuss the historical renewals of London. Commentary on the city foregrounds the correlation of different 'Londons' where the experience of the city is viewed through circular repetition and the re-enactment of crucial events.

The labyrinth formation is emphasised in the opening two chapters, documenting the death of Thomas Hill at the Spitalfields locale, and used as a textual motif throughout. The network of sensitivities across the contemporary and eighteenth-



century narratives is analysed through the effect of the churches upon the onlooker, especially the behaviour of each victim who surrenders to the pattern imposed by the murderer, Nicholas Dyer. Crucial to this discussion is the idea of the city as a tissue of historical narratives.

### **3.1 The Forest and the City: Labyrinths in Ackroyd's Fiction and the Location of an English Imagination**

Physical encounters with labyrinths in Ackroyd's fiction are realised in two determinate groups. There is the forest or tangled wood, an untamed area that threatens to mislead or engulf. The journey into this heart of darkness is evidenced by Milton's blind wanderings in the uncultivated paradise of Ackroyd's *Milton in America* (1997), in a comparable experience of Dante's descent in the *Inferno* (1314). Second, and most significant for this study, is the representation of the labyrinth as an architectural composition, either as the construction of an ecclesiastical building, as a house or city environment. These types are divided between the natural and the manmade and parallel possible distinctions concerning the composition of the maze and the labyrinth. This secondary grouping is possibly more obviously labyrinthine as the architectural construction or resulting street patterning is artificially imposed on the landscape. Such a designation effectively guides the movement of the individual or crowd through multiple routes. Treatment of these two modes will be briefly considered here; firstly, the maze *topos* in *Milton in America* will be addressed before the analyses concentrate upon the labyrinthine commonalities found in Ackroyd's city novels.

The encounter with the mazy dimensions of the forest is a common trope to convey human bewilderment in nature. This process is highlighted in Dante's *Inferno* which begins with the protagonist decrying his situation: "I came to myself in a dark wood, for the straight way was lost" (1.1-3). For Dante the loss of the path preludes his descent into hell and initiation through the twisted pathway. Like Eco's exploration of labyrinths in *Rose*, Ackroyd manipulates the contradiction



between the labyrinth as constructed by God and its metonymy evident in the devil's intentions. Frustrating or fearful encounters within woodland perhaps recall a pre-historic relationship with nature as representative of the unknown at the edge of the village. The growth of the city has caused natural woodland habitats to shrink and so it seems proper that the remaining forest should unsettle modern wo/man, causing her/him to lose her/his bearings, adrift from civilisation and susceptible to the treacherous pathways through the trees. Despite the terror of the unknown, the description of the woodland as a maze acts as an implicit reformation of God's unseen design which, though not revealed, reassures the walker, as it supposes the presence of a creator, guide and an overarching pattern.

Appropriately, the labyrinth in Ackroyd's *Milton in America* sympathetically incorporates John Milton's application of the labyrinthine from his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Ackroyd's Milton is a curmudgeonly old man who leaves England in fear of the wrath of the newly returned king (1660). Instead of writing his epic *Paradise Lost* (1688), he embarks on an odyssey into the recently colonised America. Impressions of the labyrinth are implied through ideas of creation, navigation and guidance in the New England setting.

For Ackroyd's Milton the perils of the forest act as a metaphor for the difficult path ahead, where "[i]n the dark wood of this world I lost my way" (198). The maze threatens to engulf the troubled protagonist who in an attempt to tame the wilderness demonstrates a propensity for gardening, especially growing apple trees. When in this Edenic and cultivated corner of North America, Milton is confronted by a snake, described in *Paradise Lost* as contorting its body into a maze-like figure (IX.181, 497-498). The poet berates the serpent in labyrinthine terminology: "[y]ou

labyrinth of many rounds self-rolled!” (*Milton* 123). This episode maintains a consistency of image between the two works. Indeed, the line is transposed from Milton’s poem, where the description of the serpent is of a “labyrinth of many a round self-rowld” (IX.181). The association between the serpent as symbol of evil and the labyrinth is reprised in *Hawksmoor* (56).

The maze also functions as an analogy for the complexity of Milton himself who claims that “I am a swamp. I am a maze” (276). This suggests he has unfathomable dimensions which threaten to forcibly integrate or entrap those who encounter him. Although mazes and swamps can share a common attribute of disorientation, they also have marked distinctions. The maze covertly incorporates the idea of a creator who has constructed the form, whilst a swamp is solely natural and overtly more dangerous. Bogs have sometimes trapped and destroyed the more foolhardy explorer, preserving the body, whilst the maze tends to confound and confuse only.<sup>1</sup> Although it is Milton who is morally adrift, by referring to these entities he equates himself with the mechanisms of disorientation and also preservation.

The semantic association with *Paradise Lost* is sustained as Milton becomes reduced, in a pastiche of Adam’s fallen state, to stagger alone in “wander’ng steps and slow” (XII.648):

Dark. Dark. Dark. Dark still. This is the end. This is the beginning of all our woe. The blind man wandered ahead and, weeping, through the dark wood took his solitary way. (277)

Such movement at the climax of the novel records the return to the beginning of the labyrinth. The project of hope and knowledge, inherent in the adventure to the discovered land and contained within the character of Goosequill, is replaced by negativity and ignorance encapsulated in the literal blindness of Milton. Though



this episode forms the final words of the book, it is a repeated event from Milton's time in the forest. The uncertainty and shame felt here are replaced upon his return by absolutism and a determination to mould the colony in his own image. Milton places himself outside the natural maze, as he intends to act as an 'architect' and construct the civilisation on his terms.

*Milton in America* and *First Light* (1989) are atypical of Ackroyd's writings as they are not predominantly set in London.<sup>2</sup> This is unusual as the writer's theme of expressing Englishness is primarily channelled through poets, artists, writers and philosophers bound to the city of London. The focus on the city as a filter for an English imagination is articulated in his works of non-fiction such as *London: The Biography* (2000) and *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (2002); in his lectures "The Englishness of English Literature" (*The Collection* 2001, 328-340) and "London Luminaries and Cockney Visionaries" (*Collection* 341-351); and especially in his biographies on *T.S. Eliot* (1984), *Dickens* (1990), *Blake* (1995) and *The Life of Thomas More* (1998).

Ackroyd's writing is directed towards the encounter with the city, to its effect on the inhabitant and the layers of meaning created through the interaction of individuals and the city space over a period of time. The habit of travelling through London with its many alleyways and thickening fog is an exercise that is fraught with difficulty. This fog is typically associated with the nineteenth century where a combination of pollution and atmospheric phenomena caused "peasoupers" whose thickness defamiliarized the terrain of the city. Experience of London fog is realised to great effect in Richard Harding's short story "In the Fog" (*Victorian Villainies* 1901). The transformative fog invades the urban expanse and the corporeal

sensations of Londoners in the opening of Dickens' *Bleak House* is evocatively realised in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994).

Ackroyd's delight in Dickens is reiterated in his canonical views and in his biography of the writer. His novel *The Great Fire of London* (1982) consciously adopts Dickens' *Little Dorrit* as an intertext. When discussing Dickens on BBC Radio Four's *Book Club*, Ackroyd recalled that the author would attempt to produce an image of the city of London in its entirety; whilst in his own thinking he consciously identifies the implausibility of creating such a city, as its real counterpart is experiencing perpetual change and upheaval. In a gesture that deliberately rejects a Dickensian appreciation of London, Ackroyd concentrates on a precise London locality which may or may not reflect on more generic questions relating to the capital collectively. This allows the juxtaposition of the amorphous and intangible boundaries of the physical London against the 'idea' of London, which is also unstable but continues to be reformed and envisaged, especially in the work of Ackroyd.

In Ackroyd's *The Great Fire of London, Hawksmoor, Chatterton* (1987), *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, *English Music* (1992), *The House of Dr. Dee* (1993) and *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003) a specific locale in London is reproduced. *The House of Dr. Dee* takes its inspiration from the Clerkenwell area whilst *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, as the name suggests, concerns the Limehouse district of the capital at the *fin de siècle*. Ackroyd once again returns to this vicinity in *Hawksmoor* and so creates his own literary palimpsest through engagements with both momentous and inconsequential historical events which are then overlaid in the course of his own writings. In the streets of Clerkenwell, Ackroyd seems to be



drawing his own mystical centre, combining English creativity prevalent within the urban space with a topology of gratuitous murder.

Discussion of London in Ackroyd's recent biography of the capital centres upon the notion of the city as a labyrinth and the necessarily labyrinthine text needed to describe and evoke such an entity (*London 2*). This reading is restricted mainly to the first person introduction, as the remainder of the book fails to take up this thread. The connection between the city, labyrinth and the individual is a personal one, as it is limited to the introduction and made by the author. This compounds Ackroyd's argument that the city cannot be visualised in its entirety as, like the labyrinth, it obfuscates and dissembles and so prevents an optical view of the comprehensive sum of its parts. Ackroyd's descriptions of the city are maze-like and illustrate the snarled and partially organic outline of streets. Ultimately, Hawksmoor's London recalls the labyrinth: from the experience of the walker, the appreciation of the city and church structure, through to the sinister figure lurking within the design.

The city as unknowable labyrinth collapses to reveal a multitude of minor mazes through which literary and historical associations create a fluid temporality. Clerkenwell and the area of Whitechapel are frequently documented as sites which have retained notoriety as the murderous territory of the nineteenth-century 'Jack the Ripper' (1888-1891) and also the lesser known Ratcliffe Highway slayings (1811). Consequently, this area of London appears to breed violence. The cyclical initiation of destructive acts recalls the regularity of the Athenian tribute whilst the city labyrinth creates new Minotaurs to fulfil its thirst for sacrifice. These murders are elevated to ritualistic slayings, whereby the interaction with the city space

instigates a murderous imperative. In this masque, the individual adopts the role that best fits her/him.

Ackroyd in his non-fictional work argues that this palimpsestic quality is inherent to the city and hence informs and affects the contemporary. When discussing the Jack the Ripper murders he suggests these savage killings re-awakened the occult in this part of London, or rather that an unseen pattern was residual and merely re-imposed itself: “[t]he essential paganism of London here reasserted itself” (*London* 273). This act would seem to suggest that despite the obvious sense of change and transformation experienced within any city there is an underlying permanence, and even teleology, present in the maintenance of the buildings of Ackroyd’s London.

Graphic enactments of city perambulation denote a repetitious city space that exists across temporal sites. The eighteenth-century protagonist of *Hawksmoor*, Nicholas Dyer, frequently wanders the roads that connect his lodgings, and the building works in an action that mirrors the beast walking his territory or enclosure. To trace his steps today along Newgate to Cheapside and beyond towards Spitalfields and Clerkenwell is to encounter a diverse panorama of buildings ostensibly stretching from the Renaissance to the contemporary. From the sixteenth-century buildings at the end of Chancery Lane (some of the few wooden buildings spared the fire of 1666), past St. Sepulchre and the Old Bailey, by the site of the notorious Newgate prison, through to the medieval street-names of Threadneedle Street and Bread Street, the architecture and street-names speak of the present and the past. Interspersed along the route are modern architectural edifices coupled with Wren’s and Hawksmoor’s churches and cathedral, growing to a crescendo in the City where the industrial Lloyds Building (1986) and the soaring glassy curves of Norman



Foster's Swiss Re construction (2004) dominate. This short walk visually documents some four hundred years of building practice in a chronology of structures that are marked by their continuity of striking facades and originality. It does not seem surprising that this locality bred and fed the imaginations of More, Hogarth, Blake, Dickens and Turner and so is tied to Ackroyd's notion of a continuity of artistry and place.<sup>3</sup>

Ackroyd's narratives are concerned with locating a "visionary" lineage of English artificers who, through their collective achievements, add to the richness of the English imagination. In his musings about an English imagination, Ackroyd distinguishes a canon of writers whose work is born out of the capital and whose inspirational impulse is created by, and is analogous with, the city. The work of these practitioners through their poetry, fiction, biography and art sustains Ackroyd's argument of an underlying *Genis Loci* of the British Isles and one which combines a sense and a spirit of place with the creative impetus.

Ackroyd identifies the creative force as being contained and intensified around the City region of London in an area frequented by artists and the literary custodians of his English tradition. These authors are scrutinised in his biographies *Chaucer* (see also *Clerkenwell*), *Blake*, *Dickens* (see also *Great*), *T.S. Eliot* and in the forthcoming *Shakespeare* (see also *The Lambs of London*, 2004). Ackroyd also finds supporting evidence in the work of Hogarth (cf. *London, Albion* and see also Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* 1956), Chatterton (*Chatterton*), Dr. Dee (*House*) and the music hall performer, Dan Leno (cf. *Dan Leno* and *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* 1984). While accepting that Virginia Woolf's writing can be considered visionary and concerned with the city of London (*Mrs Dalloway* 1925), Ackroyd

seems reluctant to consider her writings in the same mode as these other London visionaries. Susana Onega pushes him on this point when she identifies the “vital total absence of women” in his proposed English tradition (“Interview” 216).<sup>4</sup> Ackroyd has since contributed to Jeanette Winterson’s commission of Virginia Woolf introductions for Vintage. His essay on Woolf’s *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) is ironically the text Onega proposes as being potentially pertinent to his discussions of the English imagination.

Though Ackroyd claims to shun contemporary fiction (Onega, “Interview” 6), nonetheless he has voiced his respect for the writer Iain Sinclair. Like Ackroyd, Sinclair draws upon the effects of the city and this is particularly felt in his ‘novels’, *Lud Heat* (1975), *Suicide Bridge* (1979) and *White Chappel, Scarlet Tracings* (1987). These books incorporate multiple discourses to emphasise the difficulty of articulating the city and access the past through a fractured present. His influence, and especially the inspiration of *Lud Heat*, is emphasised by Ackroyd in his acknowledgements within *Hawksmoor* and is also discussed in Julian Wolfreys’ interview with Ackroyd (“Imagining the Labyrinth”). Likewise, Onega begins her discussion of *Hawksmoor* through reference to Sinclair and his book *Lud Heat* (*Peter Ackroyd* 43-44).

As Will Self’s review of *London* emphasises, Ackroyd’s visionary heritage (*New Statesman*, 16 Oct 2000) is a canonical configuration of traditional male English figures with some noticeable absences and silences. These include fleeting references to female writers, little emphasis on literary production away from London and the exclusion of writers from Scotland and Wales, who whilst living outside of England, are nevertheless contained within the same island. After



fashioning a similar project, Pevsner refers to the paradox at the core of any attempt to restrict thinking about Englishness and culture to just England and, in doing so, acknowledges the role of marginalised Scotland and Wales. Ackroyd, in contrast, prefers to talk of Albion, a name that recalls a mythical and historical passage for England and so ignores the margins of the country. This decision results in a centralised source of analysis which is fed through the focalizer of the South, and especially through London.

In *Albion* and his lectures, Ackroyd presents a thesis that identifies the bond between visionary genius and location. Commonality, from within this perspective, relies upon a general artistic emphasis, rooted in eclecticism and termed by Dickens as “streaky bacon” (cf. “And Now” *Albion*, 230-238). Ackroyd, however, refers to the phenomenon as prevalent “heterogeneity” (“The Englishness of English Literature” 333-334, 338). Through his establishment of heterogeneity as a common factor of English writing, Ackroyd refutes the contemporary tag attached to postmodernism. Instead, he highlights an historic and enduring trend of play and fragmented genre present in early novels and poems (cf. “Englishness” 333-334).

‘Englishness’ for Ackroyd is created by the synthesis of literature, art and music. This meeting and interplay of genre, as emblematic of an eccentric native corpus, exists as the central argument of Ackroyd’s recent book *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*. The multitude of discourses, poems and songs Ackroyd found in Sidney’s *Arcadia* (cf. “Englishness” 334) are sympathetically incorporated in *English Music, Hawksmoor* and in his biography of Blake, whom he refers to as a universal man, versed in poetry, song, engraving and painting.

Despite the interdisciplinary inclusiveness of this model, the evaluation of Englishness for Ackroyd is pivotally a literary one which hinges around writers whose fiction is primarily concerned with, or produced in, an urban environment. Fundamentally for Ackroyd, perhaps owing to his origins and time spent within the capital, the crucial factor is London. He follows traits that transcend time and distinguishes common features that denote “Londoners of all times and all periods” (*Blake* 22-23). These include an innate mysticism linked to England’s submerged Catholic past,<sup>5</sup> a delight in London antiquarianism<sup>6</sup> and, in the hybridism of high and low cultural modes; the unity of folk songs, poetry and music hall songs.<sup>7</sup>

These motifs are present in *Hawksmoor* although surprisingly, given its eighteenth-century setting, religious tension between Protestantism and Catholicism is largely absent. Ed Glinert intensifies this notion of religious dissension when he specifies that Hawksmoor’s churches were commissioned by the government as a method “of taking Anglicanism to areas that were rife with dissent” (*London Compendium* 316). Dyer’s religion ignores this historical mechanism and instead aligns itself with a primitive pre-Christianity that essentially eradicates Christian schism in its fundamental attack on the locus of Christianity and the scientific. The historical frame allows Ackroyd to juxtapose the foundations and inheritance of the British Enlightenment and its conflicts with occult behaviours which hold a-temporal meanings across the timeframes. This sense of contestation emphasises Ackroyd’s writing of both the continuity of English artistic expression and its suppression by rationalising mechanisms.

He recognises the multiplicity of the eighteenth-century novel as a type dependent upon the vibrant eclecticism of the city: “[a]t the time of the city’s greatest



expansion, the novel is endlessly prolific” (*Albion* 327). Such links connect the novel’s growth with the alteration and development of the city. This prolix city growth emphasises the heterogeneity of the urban space as an ever-changing palimpsest of competing historical markers. Despite the careful conflation of historical documents to apportion different timeframes in his fiction, Ackroyd deconstructs the differences that keep them separate and so causes commonality and resemblance to unsettle the notion of the temporal boundary. He relates the physical process of this technique in an anecdote of evening repose when, during a stroll through the Liverpool Street area of the city, the evening transforms into a spectacle of historical time: “Broadgate, in the early evening, contained many times, like currents of air invisibly mingling” (*London* 778). These historical layers emphasise the city as text, especially for those sensitive enough to read the culmination.

Underpinning the fluidity of time is the establishment within Ackroyd’s fictions of an historic timeframe that interweaves with the present. This is achieved in *Hawksmoor* by the interplay of the current with the eighteenth century. In this dialectic, the significance arguably falls upon the chapters set in the eighteenth century possibly because the novel begins in the earlier setting. These portions are written in the immediate first-person narration which foregrounds Dyer as an active participant. Indeed, in reviews of the novel Alan Hollinghurst (“In Hieroglyph and Shadow”) and Joyce Carol Oates (“The highest Passion is Terror”) have lauded the verisimilitude achieved in the eighteenth-century passages whilst bemoaning the lacklustre narrative of the modern sections. As Hollinghurst notes, “when he is not in his possessed mode, Ackroyd does not write nearly so well” (“Hieroglyph” 1049). From such articulations it would appear that there is a fascinating

ambivalence raised by the novel's dialogue if, as readers, we are more willing to accept the eighteenth-century discourse. Is it perhaps because this first-person conflation of sources, partially through their historical presence and partly because this is a memoir, is equated with fact and hence 'truth'? Ironically, Dyer's 'realism' is constructed through a textual composite, including eighteenth-century building tracts, letters and contemporaneous views.

Criticism of Ackroyd's contemporary and historical narratives is commented upon by Heike Hartung ("Walking and Writing the City") who refers to Hollinghurst's and Oates' analyses of *Hawksmoor* and compares these to David Lodge's review of *Chatterton* ("Marvellous Boy"). In expanding this viewpoint, Hartung includes a reading of David Richter's critique ("Murder in Jest") where Richter argues that the differences between the narratives is a purposeful strength of Ackroyd's writing (cf. Hartung, "Walking" 144 fn. 7). In justifying her position, Oates ("Highest" 3) has suggested that the insubstantial tone of the contemporary passages is possibly a reflection upon Hawksmoor's lack of imagination and so is an intentional device. In response to her reading, *Hawksmoor* is often perceived to be too intuitive and it is his sensitivity to the crimes and the city in particular that instigate his downfall. Clearly these reviews detect a consequential change in mode between the two narratives.

The competing temporal chapters construct a pivotal bridge between the eighteenth-century and the present-day passages and firmly equate the textual structure with, amongst other attributes, that of play and narrative excess. I will argue that these features, which include repetition, unreliability and textual aporia, cause time to leach from its containment in both temporal areas. Such an action causes time to be



viewed as fluid or maze-like and dependent upon the city. The choice of a modern setting with which to offset eighteenth-century prose and drama also reflects a further juxtaposition that details the expansion and capitalist growth of the City. There is perhaps a temporal reason for these narratives as prompted by the political environment or, as Ackroyd might argue, these works are part of a continuation of indigenous writing that has long antecedents within the British Isles.

The significance of the city novel to this period of the twentieth century is surveyed briefly in Susana Onega and John Stotesbury's introduction to *London in Literature* and can be traced in Nick Rennison's *Waterstone's Guide to London Writing* which is cited in the introduction to the collected essays. Urban change accompanied the growth of fiscal dealings at the heart of the capital. This hub of commerce resides within the centre of London and was identified in Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* as St Mary Axe (Wolfreys, "Imagining" 101). In *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd returns to this district a sense of its beginning, a reminder of the root of its power. The mirror he offers contains both the original and the reflection where, as the commonalities between the two world views increase, the distinctions of each become blurred.

### 3.2 The Stones of London: A History of Fire and Lost Direction

One of the earliest metaphorical applications of the labyrinth was its use to represent or describe the city. The analogy is apt as the labyrinth defends and prevents knowledge of its centre, in an attempt to obscure and mislead would-be invaders in a network of looped paths. Many labyrinths still bear the names of cities like Jericho, Jerusalem and Troy Town (cf. Kenner, *Mazes* 250). Significantly, the defences of these cities ultimately proved unsuccessful, as they were invaded or destroyed by fire. The neo-classical image of London as a new Troy (Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History* 53-74) recalls Homer's description of Priam's house (*Iliad* VI) and so continues this lineage and threat of destruction.<sup>8</sup>

Just as the labyrinth was used to describe ancient cities built for defence, it also stands as a fitting sign of the modern city and is particularly relevant as a means to convey contemporary urban experience. The Industrial Revolution witnessed a mass migration to urban places of work when rapid urban development and the experience of those migrants led to a more complex network of dwellings. This is epitomised by humanity struggling in confusion and doubt, grappling to achieve a semblance of stasis and stability. Such a movement led to a loss of identity and increased uniformity, attributable to the labyrinthine environment.

Ackroyd details within his biography of the city, the precursor of contemporary London, through the filter of pre-historical, ancient, medieval, renaissance, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century and contemporary sites, paintings and literary writings of the city. These periods are felt in the 'plan' of the metropolis, in the



remnants of earlier architecture, in the perpetual reclamation and reuse of London stone, the dirt and dust and the consistent terminology used to describe London.

In addition to Ackroyd's idea of London's creative trans-historical community, there can be drawn a similar pattern that denotes happenings within the city, often the result of major catastrophic events, such as periodical fires. Although the Great Fire of London in 1666 is possibly the most memorable conflagration seen by some as divine punishment to cleanse the immoral,<sup>9</sup> there are many other episodes that have incinerated part or all of London. This purging of the city was partial, as Richard Trench and Ellis Hillman suggest in *London under London*, and caused the city to be largely rebuilt as before with innovative plans for the sewerage system (argued for by Evelyn) shelved. The city had to wait until the nineteenth century for this modernisation, and so the dirt and dust described by Ackroyd in the eighteenth century becomes more overtly dangerous through the very real association with disease.

In a list of these major conflagrations in his biography *London* (218), Ackroyd cites some eighteen separate incidents, including Boudicca's invasion of the capital in 60 C.E. and the Great Fire of 1666. More recently the city was again engulfed in flame during the Blitz of the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> The iconography of St. Paul's was crucial in the massive rebuilding of the city after the Blitz in an act that formed a repetition of the process centuries before, following the Great Fire of 1666. In this modern rebuild, there was conceived a need to build upwards, to ascend out of the pit of rubble and ash, in an action that emulated and indeed exceeded the fine spires of Hawksmoor's churches.

London is perceived as a city that, despite constantly undergoing transformation, appears to remain the same,<sup>11</sup> and this dichotomy can be viewed in the historical Wren's desire to completely overhaul the city, following 1666, through the implementation of a planned rebuild. However, his designs were thwarted as the capital "was restored approximately to its original state" (Ackroyd, *London* 115).<sup>12</sup> The 'restoration' of the previous order was figured in narrow lanes and cutthroat alleys apparently untouched by the fire and so "[t]he city, as always, reasserted itself along its topographical lines" (*London* 238). Likewise in Ackroyd's fiction, the city functions like a prevailing pattern which, although at times is unfathomable, is nevertheless systematic.

The navigation and the experience of architecture are central conceits in Ackroyd's fictions, as the manner of walking through a house or the city becomes a labyrinthine act. As the young protagonist of *English Music* confirms, it is necessary to have a guide to steer a course through the labyrinth of London's altering streets: "sometimes I was truly lost and held on to my father's hand with determination; I suppose that he always knew his way, although there were occasions when the apparently endless sequence of passageways and courtyards and squares gave me the impression that we were walking quickly in order to stay in the same place" (13). The similarity and monotony of the labyrinth with its loops and digressions renders the city unfathomable to the younger traveller. Traversing the network becomes so uniform that it produces the impression of required perpetual movement in order to remain stationary. The older male figure, perhaps through knowledge, experience or skill, is able to lead the younger boy, who in turn trusts in his father's navigational abilities.



Physical disorientation within the capital is a common phenomenon and sympathetically reproduced in Ackroyd's writing where the multi-dimensional space is inhabited by the protagonists and navigated by the reader. A character's depicted journey through a maze of tiny alleyways and streets reflects the reader's progression through a novel rich with intertextuality, underlying connotations and allusions.

London as a manuscript is continually being rewritten. The effect is a work-in-progress that makes the reader explicitly aware of the joins and textures of the cloth, whilst preventing the viewer a glimpse of the whole. Knowledge of the labyrinth's construction is no guarantee of successful navigation and so it is the experience of the walker that is pivotal. The accelerated rate of construction exacerbates the individual's sense of disorientation within the city. This rate of incremental city growth is intimated by the citizens of the capital: "[t]he common sort of People gawp at the prodigious Rate of Building and exclaim to each other *London is now another City or that House was not there Yesterday or the Situacion of the Streets is quite Chang'd*" (47). Such rapid disintegration and renewal led to an overwhelming impression of lost direction and uncertainty, a process epitomised by the paraphrase of Daniel Defoe's writing about the capital: "London grows more Monstrous, Stragling and out of all Shape" (48; Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* 286-288). The conurbation becomes a threatening entity, spatially morphing daily (cf. *English Music*) and confounding those who live there. Certainly, the personal experience of alleyways and streets in *Hawksmoor* implies the confusion and bewilderment of a maze. The journey through this fragmented site is labyrinthine and documents a hybrid locale of "half stone and half flesh" which "cannot be conceived in its entirety but can be experienced only as a

wilderness of alleys and passages, courts and thoroughfares, in which even the most experienced citizen may lose the way; it is curious, too, that this labyrinth is in a continual state of change and expansion” (*London 2*). Significantly, there is no external or exterior view: the city, like the labyrinth, is experienced from within and so remains unknowable.

Ackroyd’s commentary recalls his remarks regarding the nature of London and the inability of the viewer, artist or reader to comprehend the whole (*Book Club*). This forms a significant variation from his earlier comments when he implied that through an engagement with London writers and artists the reader might view a “complete picture of the city of the thousand years” (Ackroyd *Interviews* qtd. Jean-Michel Ganteau, “London: The Biography” 211). This contradicts the unknowability of the capital that he espouses elsewhere.

Ackroyd’s fascination with the city of his birth is consistently sustained across all his writings.<sup>13</sup> His present-day London pulsates with the effects of all previous ‘Londons’, both real and imaginary. A site’s ability to retain some of its ascribed meaning across time is indicative, Ackroyd argues, of London above all other cities. Through this fascination with areas of London there are displayed various localities where several layered meanings co-exist and converge on a single place, partially fixed in contemporary temporality. The stability of the chronological zone is made problematic by the ritualistic chanting, folksong and architecture, explicitly from Dyer’s eighteenth-century experience, that spill over into the contemporary (or perhaps vice versa).<sup>14</sup>



Despite the many rebirths and renewals London has known, there appears to be an essence of place that is residual. The capacity of the urban to retain malevolent forces leads to the inevitable re-enactment of horrific crimes. Such a feature of inscribed evil is addressed in Sinclair's *White Chappell, Scarlet Tracings* where the bloody Ripper murders break through into the contemporary narrative apparently to claim supremacy. The city's capacity to reproduce murders in specific locations is commented upon by various guides to the capital, as Ackroyd's biography of the city specifies: "in a more elusive way the streets and houses of that vicinity became identified with the murders themselves, almost to the extent that they seemed to share the guilt" (*London* 273). This supposition is also present in Hawksmoor's pontificating on the methodologies of murder (116-117), in a speech that echoes Thomas de Quincey's famous pastiche *On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts* (1854). Through allusions to the infamous 'Jack the Ripper' murders and the mythology of the crimes, Ackroyd is able to confirm that "the areas of Spitalfields and Whitechapel [act] as the dark accomplices of the crimes" (*London* 273). The sites of the churches are overlaid with a further topographical grid (suggested by *Lud Heat*) and so these crime-marked areas fall within Dyer's septilateral diagram and are re-awoken with a fresh set of crimes. Onega notes that Sinclair's poem and Spender's musings in *The Great Fire of London* both make reference to Hawksmoor's churches and stress connectivity based on a pentacle. In *Hawksmoor*, Dyer talks of a "septilateral figure" presumably enlarged by the church of Little St. Hugh (*Peter Ackroyd* 48), and by creating this fictional church Ackroyd is able to expand the signification of the group and the site points to the textual dénouement.

In an interview with Ackroyd, Wolfreys identifies the lingering spirit of place as the study of psychogeography,<sup>15</sup> a characteristic that he and Ackroyd both consider to be



manifest in Ackroyd's compositions (Wolfreys, "Imagining" 98-99). The term 'psycho geography' contains the sense of the mystical becoming etched upon place. Ackroyd in *The Collection* describes the word 'chorography' as a principle facet of the English canon and hence also his work, as he attempts to closely align himself with this tradition. The indefatigable force of the city as the epitome of multifarious place is a resurgent factor in Ackroyd's writings, whilst the capacity of the streets to remember and reproduce, having been marked by events both trivial and substantial, is a crucial factor in a reading of *Hawksmoor*.

The prevalence of place is here taken to extremes as the spirit of paganism evidenced by the buildings of the early Britons is interpolated by Dyer outwardly into Christian sites and beyond into the appreciation of these heterogeneous monuments in the present day.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the foundations of each of these churches are rooted in paganism, an ironic and necessary inversion that amuses Dyer. The mouldering decomposition of plague corpses beneath his church establishes the "[p]illars and [...] Foundation" (24). His inverted methodology parallels the practice recorded by Bede, who discloses in his letters the habit of distorting ancient British worship through the transfiguration of pagan temples into orthodox Christian churches.<sup>17</sup> This action is repeated by the architect Hawksmoor (and also Dyer) whose works deliberately recall earlier sites of both pagan and primitive Christian significance.

Hawksmoor's churches touch at the conversion of the pagan to the Christian and,<sup>18</sup> as Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey notes, nowhere was this more evident than in the structure of St. Alfege's (*Hawksmoor's London* 79). Possibly owing to the legend of Alfege's martyrdom at the site by Danish invaders, the church comprises a union of eighteenth-century practices, ancient marginalia and re-workings of pagan artefacts:



“[Hawksmoor’s] sacrificial altars surely represent fragments of some dismantled Romano-British temple as described by Bingham, reused by Saxons to create a Christian church of their own” (79). His churches represent a tissue of architectural quotations from multiple sources, displaying an imagination that is utterly appropriate for Ackroyd’s “bookish” character. The architect’s revival of the pagan within the Christian edifice is remarkable as it reprises a union that is potentially threatening. Contrastingly, du Prey argues that this practice represented a concerted return to the purity of early Christian Basilica (*Hawksmoor’s London* introduction). As the worship of idols generally receded, the historical conversion of pagan sites was replaced by a practical impetus to build over them in a procedure intended to eradicate and efface the original temple. The nullification or permanent alteration of such space is strongly refuted by the idea of psychogeography, whereby these usages are transformed into residual and recurring motifs. Hawksmoor’s conscious and witty invocation of pagan and ancient *topos* is apposite for Ackroyd’s and Sinclair’s purposes.

Christopher Wren Junior, in his annotations of his father’s family memoirs, also suggests a similar act of suppression when after unearthing the relics of a Roman “Pavement of a Temple, or Church” his father “determin’d to erect his new Church over the old” (*Parentalia* 265).<sup>19</sup> Ironically, in this instance the scribe appears unclear as to whether the discovered structure is pagan or Christian. The incident of discovering a temple in the foundations of St. Paul’s is incorporated by Ackroyd in a paraphrase of Wren Junior’s words from *Parentalia*, regarding a spiritual site. Ackroyd writes that “after digging down sufficiently and removing what Earth lay in the way, [there] appeared to be the Walls and Pavement of a Temple” (*Hawksmoor* 55). There is a deliberate repetition of the unusual term ‘pavement’ (*Parentalia* 265; *Hawksmoor* 55), which derives from the Latin *pavmentum* (*OED*), while the other close observations



support Ackroyd's use of the script of *Parentalia* to create this portion of text. The eighteenth-century biographical document and contemporary novel diverge when there is found a depiction of an idol in the pit, indicative of pagan activity (*Hawksmoor* 56). In *Parentalia*, Wren rejects the pagan usage of the site when he castigates a connection made by the Bishop of Rochester (1713) in reference to a temple of Diana lying under St. Paul's. He similarly refutes the suggestion of an Apollonian structure at the same site (*Parentalia* 293). Dyer is at pains to confirm the pagan nature of these sites in order to utilise their energy.

The resulting archaeological layering is directly alluded to by Dyer's philosophy and through his determined choice of church sites that overlay earlier Roman and Anglo-Saxon temples and dwellings.<sup>20</sup> Such practice forms a link to the beginning of the city itself which, as Lewis Mumford argues, is rooted in archaeological investigation (*The City in History*). Mumford's writing uncovers a masked necropolis beneath all cities whose presence and duality is also sensed by Dyer in the brickwork of the streets:

[T]his Capital City of the World of Affliction is still the Capital of Darknesse, or the Dungeon of Man's Desire: still in the Centre are no proper Streets nor Houses but a Wilderness of dirty rotten Sheds, allways tumbling or takeing Fire, with winding crooked passages, lakes of Mire and rills of Stinking Mud (47).

The foundations of London, built upon earth that contains previous civilisations, is partly the encounter with death, uncovered through the system of excavation. This subterranean necropolis exposed by the archaeological dig indicates the method by which the living city imposes itself upon and 'writes' over the burial areas of previous eras. Naturally, the continued use of pagan sites and the rejuvenation of these enclosures meant that foundations of later structures would repeatedly reveal secularised material from earlier periods.<sup>21</sup>



The relationship between the dead and the living polis is examined ironically in Will Self's short story, "The North London Book of the Dead" (*Quantity*), which documents a parallel city of the dead living parasitically and detrimentally around the living. The same relationship is remarked upon by Ackroyd when he observes that "in London the living must keep close company with the dead" (*Albion* 319). This morbid proximity recalls the Egyptian labyrinth that purportedly contained both living quarters and tombs in its vast structure. In this fashion, London acts as both a dwelling place and a burial ground, in a manner that evokes the early city practice of locating the interment place within the city confines. Alex Link argues that it is from this foundation of abjection that Ackroyd constructs his London ("The Capitol of Darknesse").

The layered stratum unearthed by the archaeologist working behind St. Mary Woolnoth represents a visible reminder of prior historical eras and the permanence of a spiritual building on that site: "[t]here's always been a church here. Always" (161). This physical reminder of the detritus of history is superfluous as the histories of these previous periods are felt all around. Unlike the revealed geological bands, the experience of time in *Hawksmoor* is fluid and recursive.

Building in London is theoretically "founded upon the Experience of all Ages" (Wren, *Parentalia* 351) and is reinforced by Dyer's enthusiastic listing of antiquarian sites and the newer plague pits as power sources for his buildings:

Thus under where the Cathedral Church of Bath now stands there was a Temple erected to Moloch, or the Straw Man; Astarte's Temple stood where Paul's is now, and the Britains held it in great Veneration; and where the Abbey of Westminster now stands there was erected the Temple of Anubis. And in time my own Churches will rise to join them. (22)

Construction in London necessarily entails the building over of previous dwellings and histories and, through the resourcefulness of early city inhabitants in their reclamation of the city wall, in the reincorporation of materials into the home. This renewal process means portions of the new city are cyclically reconstituted from the old.

Contemporary Londoners like Walter and Mrs. Best<sup>22</sup> are oblivious to the history that is leached into the stones around them and the ground beneath them. They tread the same thoroughfares as the ancients before them and yet they are insensible to the history encircling them. Hawksmoor, on the other hand, is susceptible to the processes of the city and professes in non-rational terms ways of determining crime through oblique methodologies. He displays a bookish tendency evident in his knowledge of De Quincey and in the murder patterns of the eighteenth century that stress his sensitivity towards location. In this manner, Hawksmoor's actions mirror that of his counterpart, Dyer, whose reliance on ancient and occult practices determines his world view and underpins his architectural works. Walter's desire to bring Hawksmoor into the 'now' through the demonstrations of the computer serves to make his mentor retreat into the hermitage of time that he shares with Dyer, the vagabonds and the victims.

Hawksmoor's lethargy and ineffectual decision-making is seemingly in contrast to the supposed tradition of the fictional detective, whose role is purportedly that of the scientific exponent, manifest in the archetypal analytical practitioners like Holmes<sup>23</sup> and Dupin. Hawksmoor, like Wilkie Collins' ineffectual protagonist in *The Moonstone* (1868), is unable to solve the mystery. Comparisons here are evident with Eco's Baskerville (*Rose*) who foils the serial killer but does so by chance. The



bumbling detective is a demeanour utilised in television and in film where the visual appearances masks the logical processes of the detective. This is evident, for example, in Miss Marple's frail physique or Columbo's cluttered attire and apparently inconsequential ramblings. Columbo, like Hawksmoor, is often mistaken for a member of the public. Whereas for the television detective this is perhaps a useful ploy to appear inoffensive, unofficial and insignificant, for Hawksmoor it is a side effect of his mental deterioration and his blending both with the wandering killer and with the itinerant victims. Alternatively, perhaps Hawksmoor demands a re-evaluation of what truth might be as, unlike his Metropolitan colleagues, he appears open to intuitive readings of crime.

### 3.3 Continuity and Manipulation: Names and the City

Historical protagonists are central to Ackroyd's writings either by behaving to recorded type or by disregarding their ascribed historical position. A concern with the minutia of detail is a characteristic feature of Ackroyd's rendition of these characters. This is noted by Onega ("Interview" 4) who quizzes the author over his misrepresentation of Marx's seat number at the British Library and by Silvia Mergenthal who also detects a deliberate manipulation and play on the birth date of Charlie Chaplin ("Whose City?"). Another instance is the refusal to use Dr. Dee's known residence at Mortlake, preferring instead to construct a fictional house for him to occupy in Clerkenwell. Effectively, the fictive and the factual become indistinct to the uninitiated reader.

Ackroyd also adopts historical figures as pivotal characters; for example, Milton appears in *Milton in America*, whilst in *Chatterton* there is included a narrative of the 'forger's' death, which centres around the figure of Thomas Chatterton and his subsequent immortalisation in paint by Henry Wallis. Karl Marx and George Gissing along with the music hall entertainer Dan Leno are characters in *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (Leno also makes a brief appearance in *The Testament of Oscar Wilde*), whilst the elusive Renaissance magician and occultist, Dr. Dee, is a pivotal focalizer for the narrative in *The House of Dr. Dee*.

In *Hawksmoor*, Ackroyd has chosen to undermine the practice of transposing an historical figure directly and largely unaltered into his narrative in the figure of the architect Hawksmoor, although he achieves this in the same novel with the minor characters Sir Christopher Wren and Sir John Vanbrugh. Ackroyd based his



murderous protagonist upon Nicholas Hawksmoor (c1661- 1736)<sup>24</sup> an architect who was a contemporary of Sir Christopher Wren and active, as the novel implies, in rebuilding of churches destroyed by the Great Fire of 1666, during the early part of the eighteenth century. From this historical foundation, Ackroyd transfers the deeds of Hawksmoor onto his fictional creation, Nicholas Dyer (1654-?), and compounds the architect's constructions with a series of pagan-inspired slayings. In this fiction, the nomenclature 'Hawksmoor' is applied to the contemporary detective, and so it is his name as well as that of the historic architect that forms the title. Onega's commentary suggests that it is part of the detective Hawksmoor's short-sightedness that he fails to perceive that his name is congruent with the eighteenth-century architect ("Pattern"). However, in Ackroyd's narrative Dyer has supplanted the historical Hawksmoor in all his achievements, as can be seen when Hawksmoor spies the plaque on the church of St. Ann that specifies Nicholas Dyer as its architect. This authorial decision serves to distance Hawksmoor the historical figure from the fictional murders, in a manner that acts to reaffirm the dominant association throughout the two temporal narratives between the murderer and the detective.

The synthesis of these two symbiotic sides of the law is a feature indicative of the detective fiction genre. The association and close resemblance between the psyche of both criminal and detective is evident in other archetypal literature of this type. Connections between villainy and law enforcement are apparent when the killer Dyer intends to entrap his supposed foe, the improbably named Yorick Hayes, within their shared lodgings at Scotland Yard.<sup>25</sup> Historically, the architect Hawksmoor lodged with the Wrens during his apprenticeship at Scotland Yard (see Lisa Jardine, *On a Grand Scale* 380-1). The buildings have obvious

contemporary associations with policing and by extension to the investigation and apprehension of criminals. Dyer's rhetoric substantiates this connection, as he recalls when "I entered Scotland-yard like a Guilty thing and, wheeling about to see that I was unobserv'd" (104). His haunted demeanour symbolises the meaning that the place comes to be associated with later, that of the headquarters of the Metropolitan police force.<sup>26</sup> Given the Metropolitan constabulary's subsequent moves, the Scotland Yard of the detective Hawksmoor's reality is actually the new premises at the Victoria Embankment. However, the yoke between the places that ties murder and detective together is maintained by the name.

Ackroyd's text exhibits an innate propensity, possibly as part of the English imagination, to convoluted and ludic conundrums regarding appellation and etymology. In renaming and replacing the architect Hawksmoor with the fictional Dyer it follows that the substitution is worthy of investigation. There are lengthy articulations possible upon the nature of Dyer's surname and his forename is also suggestive, as E.G. Withycombe records: 'Nicholas' stems from the Greek *Nikólaos* meaning a "compound of *vikḗ* 'victory' and *laòs* 'the people'" (*Oxford Dictionary* 227). The significance of this etymological root is partially diluted as Nicholas is also the first name of the historical Hawksmoor and so substantiates the approximation between the two figures. Although this may have been the determining influence in Ackroyd's choice of 'Nicholas', it is a forename that nevertheless affords some interesting reflections and connotations. The dual origin of his name matches Dyer's cravings for eternal triumph and his sense of victory to be amplified through his buildings. In his moment of glory the ritual summons a crowd of victims and reaffirms his connection with them.



Both Nicholas and, more emphatically, the abbreviation 'Nick' have long been related to the devil, a correlation that complements Dyer's amoral purposes. In tracing the derivation of such an ascription there are three main plausible strands:<sup>27</sup> namely that these associations may have derived from depictions of St. Nicholas, from the German word for Nickel, or from the Germanic water sprite called Nichus. Early narratives of the Christmas ritual endorse St. Nicholas as an attendant of Christ acting to reprimand unruly children. Though St. Nicholas was later perceived to be the gift-giver in his own right the characteristic of punishment lingered, creating a contrary force symbolised as St. Nicholas' 'other'. In British folklore, St. Nicholas has retained these punitive qualities, as he is traditionally perceived as being ready with either presents or coal depending on a child's annual behaviour.

This negative aspect of the name Nicholas has been investigated by the prodigious Jacob Grimm, whose compendium on mythology is astonishingly comprehensive and minute in detail (*Teutonic Mythology*). Grimm points to German nickel's colloquial name of 'devil's silver', a usage akin to the British vernacular name for iron pyrites (fools' gold), and so plausibly stemming from the devil's ability to trick and mislead those who act in hubris. He discounts the idea that the phonology of 'Nickel' resembles the nickname of the devil. Alternatively, the circumstances uniting Nick and the devil may have been formulated as a result of the Old High German word "*nichus*" (488), a name attributed to a mischievous variety of waterspirit. Grimm traces this to the Modern Dutch "*nikker*" which has more sinister overtones, being translated as "evil spirit, devil" (488), which in turn corresponds to the English foreshortening of Nicholas to "old *Nick*" (488).

Typically, Wren abbreviates Dyer's first name to Nick, which reinforces the familiar link between them. The adoption of this nickname exposes Wren's perceived ignorance of his previous charge, a factor that is ironically displaced, as by calling him 'Nick' he has inadvertently found out his 'true' nature. Dyer's essential, but hidden, self is again alluded to by the prophetic madman: "[w]hat more Death still Nick, Nick, Nick, you are my own!" (100). The rhythmic utterance discloses three primary factors: firstly, it implies that somehow the incarcerated lunatic is aware of Dyer's deeds and hence his purpose; secondly, that he knows his name: and finally, by applying this shortened form he demonstrates intimacy with Dyer. Such familiarity also functions as a conventional sign of mastery,<sup>28</sup> an inference that is substantiated by Dyer's immediate response of powerlessness. The madman confirms his recognition of Dyer thorough the corroboration: "you are my own!". The phrase is inherently ambiguous and could indicate sameness, ownership, familial ties or a combination of these readings. When Bedlam gives way to the drug-controlled dementia of the residential care home in the contemporary portion of the text, the prophetic man is doubled or recast as Hawksmoor's father, thus exaggerating the control over Dyer/Hawksmoor. Perhaps the foresight and inexplicable knowledge of these demented men is again an allusion to the visionary aspect of London history.

The numerology of three is also paramount, as the name 'Nick' is called thrice in a parody of traditional invocations of the devil. Repetitious chanting of a name in English folklore denotes a fantastical summoning.<sup>29</sup> Dramatically, the madman's invocation of "Nick" which, given its temporal location and proximity to Dyer would imply the eighteenth-century protagonist, instead calls forth Hawksmoor whom we meet for the first time in the next chapter. The juxtaposition is congruent



with the dimension shifting performed in traditional English folktales. The recitation summons Dyer's 'other', Hawksmoor, who appears to be a good variant or a reproduction of the murderous architect.

The doubling and similarities of the characters are addressed in Onega's critique where, in keeping with the circularity and interconnectivity of the text, she concludes that "the same events repeat themselves endlessly, and that the same people live and die only in order to be born and live the same events again and again, eternally caught in the ever-revolving wheel of life and death" (*Peter Ackroyd* 45). Her reading over applies the prevailing patterns within the text and complements the portrayal of Dyer as a protagonist who "shadows and foreshadows Hawksmoor in a hundred details" (Hollinghurst, "Hieroglyph" 1049). Though superficially this would appear to mirror Ackroyd's sense of continuity what is pivotal to Ackroyd's thesis, and missed by Onega, is the notion of difference. The residual effect of the narrative structure foregrounds disorientation and ambiguity, which destabilises the neatness of Onega's reading and leaves the imprint of the labyrinthine system.

The ambiguity of Ackroyd's text is conspicuous and exacerbated by the textual emphasis upon pattern and repetition, leading to disagreement regarding the fulcrum of the work. Hollinghurst ("Hieroglyph") talks of possession, whilst Oates ("Highest") suggests that Dyer himself may be waiting for Hawksmoor in the church. Alex Link, on the other hand, refers to Del Ivan Janik's suspicion that Hawksmoor himself may be revealed as the perpetrator of the crimes ("Capitol" 537).

Minute difference caused through repetition and reproduction is also evident in the representation of the geography of London. The topographical accuracy of Ackroyd's fabrication is evident throughout the novel and causes minor embellishments to be made prominent. Ackroyd's attention to detail, especially in regard to historical and geographical features is comprehensive. It is significant that Dyer, who is born specifically in Black-Eagle Street in the Parish of Stepney and spends the intervening years before the plague in that locale, shares a name with one of the predominant trades of that area during the same historical era. Vaughan Hart refers to the site of Spitalfields as being "crowded with poor weavers" in a location "beyond the City's jurisdiction" (*Nicholas Hawksmoor* 170). In the choice of surname for his murderous protagonist Ackroyd returns to the topology of London. Sinclair also incorporates a character called Dyer into his murderous transhistorical web (*Whitechappel* 70-71): he links the name Dyer to the Whitechapel murders, and yet no suspect of that name was interviewed, apprehended or formed one of the major suspects. As Sinclair has one of his characters purchase a signed edition of *Hawksmoor* for a fiver (12), this is perhaps an acknowledgment of the extent Ackroyd's fiction has seeped into the history of the area. Both writers are concerned with the city and its complicity in history, memory and literature and, moreover, their shared interests, coupled with the contemporary vogue for intertextuality and play, cause their fictions to engage with one another.

Ackroyd's depiction of Hawksmoor as a fictive character is not the initial use of the figure. In his acknowledgements, Ackroyd directs the reader to his debt to Sinclair, whose strange multi-genre text *Lud Heat* plays with the iconography of Hawksmoor's six London churches. Sinclair writes of Hawksmoor's buildings that: "his churches are the mediums, filled with the dust of wooden voices" (*Lud* 17). The suggestion that the churches are conduits for occult intentions and the



references to dust and voices are eerily reminiscent of Ackroyd's writing about the forms.

Sinclair draws upon the function of the architect's churches to execute their purpose en masse. Moreover, T. Francis Bumpus in his survey of ancient London churches comments upon the combined effect of Hawksmoor's builds that "[i]t must be acknowledged that there is a very marked originality running through the churches [...] taking them in the mass" (*Ancient London Churches* 16). Hawksmoor's combination of an English Gothic style with Baroque features and inspiration from ancient feats of architecture is indicative of a diverse and assorted fashion. Such wide-ranging inspiration and methodology is perfectly suited to Ackroyd's and Sinclair's purposes as it facilitates the convergence of the ancient, modern and contemporary, allowing at times a fluid or co-dependent temporal frame. Despite the continuity between the London churches, built between the years 1712-31, they contain a variety of motifs and themes "directly based on antiquity [...] using highly inventive adaptations" (Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner *London* 6, xii). The fragmentary yet interrelated architectural paradigm augments Ackroyd's writings about London, sustaining an idea of a patchwork.

Dyer's name would seem to correspond to the role of the dyer in the manufacture of cloth and follows the propensity for English surnames to trace the family's trade; although in the novel, Dyer's father's position is given as being a baker and a Citizen of London (11). In the eighteenth century, Spitalfields became synonymous with the recently established cloth, weaving and dyeing industry in that area of the city. The impact of these professions can still be seen in the names of the nearby Threadneedle

Street and Petticoat Lane. Sympathetically, the phonology of 'dyer' contains the word 'die' and so prefigures the fictional architect's macabre vocation.

Dyer's birth in 1654 is substantially earlier than the supposed birth date of Nicholas Hawksmoor (c1661) and so ensures that Dyer was old enough to witness, and be affected by, the events of the plague and the subsequent Great Fire, so central to the reconstruction of the capital. The quiet fields and rural environment of Dyer's youth is contrasted with the rapid urban development of the intervening years. This engulfment is depicted in Dyer's memoirs which detail the disruption, growth and swallowing up of the green land by the sprawling city, in a process integral to his personal history. In this way, the juxtaposition of Dyer's memories and experience forms a demonstrative reflection of the changing states of the city. As the urban subsumes the pastoral outskirts the navigation of these newly-urbanised streets evokes the passage of the labyrinth. A similar transformation is enacted upon an increasingly insular and layered Dyer.

In accordance with Dyer's delineation of Stepney before the fire, cartographical specimens depicting that period emphasise the rural land to the east of the city. The rapid development of London in the eighteenth century is visibly evident through the comparison of this same region some fifty years later. Residual place names such as Spitalfields and Moorfields confirm the previous arable purpose of these areas. As Dyer confirms: "[m]y Church now rises above a populous Conjunction of Alleys, Courts and Passages, Places full of poor People, but in those Years before the Fire the Lanes by Spittle-Fields were dirty and unfrequented: that part now called Spittle-Fields Market, or the Flesh-Market, was a Field of Grass with the Cows feeding on it" (13). Dyer's commentaries visually overlay the topographies



of his youth with those of his middle-age, where the urban supersedes the pastoral, and replaces the sparsely populated farmland with the squalor and warren of an impoverished expanse. The same prospect is surveyed in George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1890) where the Clerkenwell slum affirms the toil and poverty of working-class experience. The depressing and industrial nature of the slums is evident in the bodies of those encountered in the district; as Gissing writes: "on every hand are multiform evidences of toil, intolerable as a nightmare" (*Netherworld* 10).

The opening chapter of the novel shows the architect working on the production of his wooden model of Christchurch and ends with the first death at the church. Spitalfields presents an urban topography that, by the end of the eighteenth century, was "almost completely built over" (Ackroyd, *London* 243). The location of the Spitalfields' church is deliberately chosen in remembrance of his parents: "I cou'd not Weep then but I can Build now, and in that place of Memory will I fashion a Labyrinth where the Dead can once more give Voice" (16). The building represents a notch in Dyer's personal history as it stands as a monument to the beginning of his life as an orphan and at the commencement of his indoctrination into Mirabilis' strange faith, and as such is a significant node in his journey.

Ackroyd's examination of the poor of London parallels the satirical artist William Hogarth whose engraving, *Gin Lane*, depicts a maelstrom of drunkenness (as the name insinuates), usury and violence all tinged with the canker of death in the Bloomsbury locality. Above the desperate caricature of human self-induced suffering in *Gin Lane* there is an elevated perspective of Hawksmoor's church, St. George Bloomsbury, perhaps as a spiritual marker. Hart too depicts and enlarges this engraving (*Hawksmoor*



6) to indicate the moral obligation of both artists. Strikingly, this edifice is topped not by a cross as is usual, but by a human statue.<sup>30</sup> The male figure is confirmed by Hart as the monarch King George I (1714-1727) and is perhaps a political gesture (*Nicholas Hawksmoor*). At the time of Hawksmoor's designing and building the religious stability of the nation was exceedingly fragile and perhaps this monument crowned by the statue of the protestant King George (Glinert, *London Compendium* 88) was to balance the criticisms levelled at his master Wren for the popery of St. Paul's. Of Hawksmoor's churches there are two named after the monarchs under whom he served: George and Anne. The emplacement of Hawksmoor's churches within this climate of religious controversies has not been fully investigated, possibly owing to his adaptation of ancient forms which result in his buildings achieving a type of timelessness. The union of humanity and the church is intrinsic to Dyer's philosophy, where his religious buildings often appear to be more part of the earth than inclined to the heavens. St. Mary Woolnoth, although primarily a repair of an existing structure, is surprisingly squat and remains a good example of a building that, though spiritual, firmly reminds the onlooker of its terrestrial grounding.

The visual outline of the city seen in the eighteenth century is marked by both Wren's and Hawksmoor's churches: a landscape they mastered until the vertical expansion of housing and places of work popular from the 1960s onwards. Using prophetic terminology, Paul Jeffrey in his volume *The City Churches of Sir Christopher Wren* positions the significance of Hawksmoor's achievements: "Nicholas Hawksmoor, Robert Hooke's successor, was the man whose vision has dominated the London skyline for three centuries" (176). Accolades of such mastery are generally reserved for Wren and typically in reference to St. Paul's. When Hawksmoor's achievements are scrutinised, critics tend to remark on the



influence of Wren. This is hardly surprising given the impact of Wren's designs upon the city.

Investigations in the City by the detective Hawksmoor, in St. Mary Woolnoth and Christchurch Spitalfields especially, exemplify the extent to which the churches and earlier architecture in general have become overshadowed by the massive vertical structures of the surrounding buildings. Experience of these churches has perhaps become a more personal occurrence and has clearly altered from the panoramic effect of the ecclesiastical pinnacles seen by prior generations. Today, the replacements of these spiritual edifices, the towering office blocks that house the business district, dwarf the residual buildings and cause Ackroyd's protagonist to be repeatedly surprised by the eighteenth-century structures that, in comparison to the massive contemporary buildings, seem to grow out of the earthly space.

Though Hawksmoor's buildings compete for visual parity in the present-day locale their combination of ancient and baroque influences create a most dramatic impression. Although until recently denigrated as Wren's apprentice, Hawksmoor and the originality of his imagination are, in the latter half of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries, finally being recognised and given the plaudits such inventiveness deserves.<sup>31</sup>

### **3.4 Memories of Ancient Death: The Egyptian Labyrinth in the City**

The capacity for a geographical location or a particular building to act as a site for the return of the repressed is a recurrent Gothic theme. Ackroyd extends this usage through his systematic deconstruction of the relationship between the building and the land upon which it stands. The ground with its stratified cultural history acts as a foundation from which the builder can direct his occultism. Like the rising damp, the dead permeate upwards through the soil, influencing and infecting those on the surface. In this manner, Dyer adapts a natural cycle<sup>32</sup> and so causes the physical detritus of the corpse to become imbued with lasting emotional power. Such an action becomes the physical embodiment of Antony's words of homage to Caesar: "the evil that men do lives after them" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* III.ii.75). The earth into which these cadavers leach is then suffused with this force. Dyer's contentions that man is necessarily wicked in accordance with his view of the fallen state of humanity further suggests that the life-force persists in death and rises again as evil.

Building in these areas of squalor was a personal choice and reflected that, according to Hart's recent findings, Hawksmoor was involved in the process of choosing sites for these churches (*Nicholas Hawksmoor* 10). Hawksmoor's building programme included restorations of existing buildings (St. Mary Woolnoth), the rebuilding of churches using new designs upon existing parish sites destroyed by the fire (St Alfege's Greenwich) and new plots on disadvantaged land (such as Christ Church at Spitalfields and the fictitious church of Little St. Hugh, Black-Step Lane, Moorfields). In the selection of these, Dyer remarks upon the significance of Spitalfields to his personal history (16), marking a massive plague



pit and the fictional resting place of his parents. The slight journey from his home in Black-Eagle Street which borders Brick Lane, a road that had previously been a dirt track taken by the plague carts to the adjoining pit, and passing through Brownes Lane to arrive in Spitalfields, confirms that the familial dwelling lay firmly in the proximity of Spitalfields (11-15).

Dyer's commemoration of his initiation into Mirabilis' strange faith is evidenced in his choice of the land at Spitalfields: a plot that draws upon the energy from the mass plague grave beneath it. The extensive loss of life during the periods of the plague led to large pauper graves in various parts of the capital and so provides Dyer with concentrated areas to channel his power. To intensify the fetid foundations of the church, Dyer is driven to build "what is most Sollemn and Awefull" (7) in order to graphically produce his sinister and masked intentions upon the outside of the church. On this occasion, Ackroyd is paraphrasing from one of Vanbrugh's epistles on the nature of architecture that confirms that a building must have "the most Solemn & Awfull Appearance both without and within" (Downes, *Hawksmoor* 105).<sup>33</sup> This partial and embedded repetition has Dyer's speaking with his rival's tongue as elsewhere he distorts Wren's and others' writing.

The church at Spitalfields is also significant amongst Dyer's constructions as it is described with a strange secondary structure. The pyramid in turn conceals a labyrinth, built away from the church in the churchyard. The triangular edifice contains a "house underground" (23, 29), a passageway between the living and the dead. The structure is reproduced from Egyptian mythology, whilst the underground aspect recalls the martyrdom of Little St. Hugh and the murder of the modern Thomas. The pyramid is a familiar architectural device associated with

death and remembrance, as Hart concedes: “[t]he pyramid was widely understood as a funeral form in England” (*Nicholas Hawksmoor* 273 fn 56). As an ornamental feature, Wren considered it to be a thoroughly appropriate motif in keeping with the baroque style of the period (*Parentalia* 318-21).

This architectural building is closely associated with Egyptian pyramidal structures that contained the burial chambers of pharaohs (and can still be seen intact in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens). Such monumental edifices acted as sites of mystification and endeavoured to protect the integrity of the pharaoh’s body and wealth prior to the journey of the ‘soul’ (*ka*) to the underworld. The combination of an Egyptian burial pyramid and labyrinth is ironically contained in the pyramidal rubble of the destroyed labyrinth at Fayoum. The practice founded with the beginning of the Old Kingdom (2600 B.C.E.: 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> dynasty) to build pyramids as containers of the rulers’ remains represented a mechanism of expressing the hierarchy of kingship and marking a threshold linking the terrestrial and the celestial.

The dwelling of Dyer’s devising recalls Herodotus’ notations concerning the lower strata of the Egyptian labyrinth and also the possible subterranean arrangement of the Cretan design. In reference to the Cretan maze, Ayrton depicts Daedalus’ labour as the intricate crafting of a labyrinthine warren tunnelled out of the sediment of the palace’s foundations (*Maze Maker* 83-84). This association links the labyrinth and the Earth in an extension of Ayrton’s invocation of a maternal goddess (*Maze Maker* 154-155, 203-218), in a manner drawn from Evans’ reasoning (*Palace*) and repeated by W.F. Knight Jackson (*Virgil*). Interest in the constructive phase of the labyrinth causes Ayrton (*Maze Maker; Last Testament*) and Jacob E. Nyenhuis



(*Myth and the Creative Process* 25-28) to follow the wanderings of Daedalus and so evidence his interest in, and mimicry of, the Egyptian labyrinth and building practices.

In *Hawksmoor* the mantle of the architect is extended to include the craft of murderer as well as that of the author. The sketch of the architect neatly mirrors visual representations of Sherlock Holmes (as noted by Alison Lee, *Realism* 70) and of depictions of the divine architect. The invincibility of Dyer and his confidence in his scheme echoes the inventiveness and fame of Daedalus' reported projects which inevitably led to claims regarding his divinity.

The Egyptian design is consistent with Dyer's philosophy (45) and his fascination with death rituals which reflect the complexity and purpose of the earliest architectural labyrinth. The use of this ancient form parallels the capture of pre-classical components in Hawksmoor's oeuvre (du Prey, *Hawksmoor's London*) and also the pagan practices of Egyptian cults stressed by Sinclair (*Lud*). The archaic symbol of the pyramid and labyrinth as journey to the underworld preserves the Egyptian mythological and cultural themes of cycle and rebirth.<sup>34</sup>

The labyrinth as a ritualistic site of slaughter and rebirth is remarked upon by Dyer the architect, who refers to the labyrinth enclosure as a "sepulchre" (23) that will be "a true Labyrinth for those who may be placed there" (23). Taken in totality his remarks combine biblical delineations of death, mooted through the use of the word 'sepulchre', with the underlying permanence and menacing usage of ancient labyrinths. His labyrinth will be 'true' in the sense that it will evoke the rites and purpose of the earliest architectural examples of the form. Here, in this late

twentieth-century fiction, the Christian purpose of the labyrinth is enveloped by the return of the labyrinth to its ancient origins.

The sacrificial function of Dyer's pyramid recalls the fate of the pharaoh's selected subjects who might be buried with her/him:

[H]ere is the Boy who is to be Sacrificed is confin'd to the Chamber beneath the Earth and a large Stone rolled across its Face; here he sits in Darknesse for seven dayes and seven nights, by which time he is presum'd to have been led past the Gates of Death, and then on the eighth Day his Corse is led out of the Cave with much rejoycing: that Chamber [...] is inshrined to the Lord of Death (23).

The function and description of the sacrificial chamber is perhaps analogous with Christ's burial in the tomb and subsequent re-birth (Matt 28: 2; Mark 15: 46), a correlation stressed by the word 'sepulchre' and the suggestion that the dead can be "led out". It is Dyer's intention that the first of his victims should be entombed in the pyramid; a murder that will trigger his cycle of seven killings. However fate offers an alternative victim, the mason's son, and so Dyer's objective is not fulfilled until the modern Thomas dies in the structure. His death makes the initial cycle complete and renews the pattern of killings afresh in the contemporary timeframe. After the discovery of the body, the cavern returns to the earth: "when the Hill sunk down again" (23). The return into the interior of the earth puns on Thomas Hill's surname and so emphasises the inescapability of his preordained fate.

Thomas' death in the pit is reminiscent of young St. Hugh's martyrdom; a reflection sustained by Thomas' reading which appears to prelude his fate:

[T]he first of the stories he had read was of Little St Hugh: that he was 'a child of ten years, the son of a widow. One Koppin, a heathen, enticed him to a ritual house under ground where he was tortured and scourged and



finally strangled. Then his body was left there unknown for seven days and seven nights. (33)

The thirteenth-century Hugh of Lincoln was found in a well, his body mutilated with seven wounds. The figure seven is here emphasised by the passage of time before Thomas' discovery.<sup>35</sup> His murder occurs in the labyrinth under the Spitalfields' pyramid where both of these ancient figures are associated with ritual and death.

The assembly of the pyramid and underground labyrinth emphasise that the church at Spitalfields is built in parts. Rather than the focus of the monument existing in the main structure alone, Dyer has constructed a series of other interlinked detached outbuildings: "now it ceased to be one large building and became a number of separate places" (28). The temporal indicator 'now' and the choice of the word 'places' intensifies an awareness of the two time-sensitive narratives and suggests a dislocation occurring at this site: both spatially and temporally.<sup>36</sup> In this way, the labyrinth functions as a threshold connecting the narratives.

These ecclesiastical extremities have their own feeling: "some warm, some cold or damp, and some in perpetual shadow" (28). His empathy and awareness of the site implies that Thomas, the first victim in both historical narratives, is extremely familiar with the area and the structure in particular. This reading is substantiated by his impetus for seeking out the church which is to find a safe haven away from the intrusive contemporary attentions of his school classmates. Safety in the usual sense would be found in the church itself in the form of the ancient right of 'sanctuary' (cf. *OED*), but within the ecclesiastical walls the other children become frightened and so "none of them would have dared to enter its grounds" (28). Thomas at this juncture is comparatively safe, housed and protected by the

architect's composition, and yet his situation is rather like the Minotaur who, though comfortable in his mazy home, is inevitably slaughtered partially because of its restrictive properties. Thomas' death is linked to the structure but in a different manner; unlike the beast he remains in the structure because of his injury. Ironically, the boy's quest for sanctuary and safety away from the others results in his death as predicted by the myth.

Having fallen within the labyrinth, Thomas is fearful and also knowledgeable about the interior as he displays appropriate care "not to disturb those who might dwell in this place" (40). His trepidation could refer to the idea that the dispossessed might seek out such a shelter but equally could refer to a mythical presence. Thomas' fearfulness is reprised in Ned's child-like remembrances: "[h]e knew from his childhood reading that, if he ran into the forest, there would be a creature lying in wait for him" (71). His recollection is imbued with significance as the city holds a similar figure that augurs his destruction and, like Thomas' reading of the legend of St. Hugh, the fable delineates his fate. It is both the belief in these narratives and the inability to heed the inherent warnings that reside in the tales that result in their deaths. Here mythology returns to one of its primary functions as a means to circumscribe social behaviour.

As Thomas' awareness of Dyer's pattern develops, so too does his apprehension directed towards the sinister vestments of the labyrinth, represented here by the knowledge that such a structure contains an inhabitant. The first contemporary fatality, Thomas, is versed in the danger of the labyrinth, being well-read and sensitive to the principles of the architecture. Spitalfields' unholy associations are



concentrated in the burning coals of an open fire where Thomas witnesses the church's apocalyptic aspect:

[A]s they stirred and shifted in the heat, Thomas peered at them and imagined there the passages and caverns of hell where those who burn are the same colour as the flame. Here was the church of Spitalfields glowing, red hot. (37)

His recognition of the hidden nature of the church is kept secret, especially from his disapproving mother who feels the evil worked into its walls (34). His sensitivity is also evident within the church as the sound of footsteps "echoing in the half-light, [make...] him tremble with fear" (29). Despite Thomas' nervousness, the church has a magnetic effect upon him, and so rather than the boy fear the building itself, it is perhaps the thought of the company that the building holds that he finds so disquieting.

Energy condensed by the ecclesiastical shrines seems to compel those who are sensitive to it, essentially Hawksmoor and most notably the victims, drawing them towards the buildings and into fulfilling their fate. The churches become as Dyer intended, something truly awful, as structures which connect each of the protagonists with the architect's macabre purpose: "I put a Signe so that he who sees the Fabrick may see also the Shaddowe of the Reality of which it is the Pattern or Figure" (45). Each of the selected victims in the contemporary section sense their approaching destiny after encountering the figure of one of Dyer's churches, each fascinated by the ecclesiastical building that signifies their fate.

These forgotten city churches cease to be merely a footnote on the distracted tour guide's route of London (26) and instead grow in the consciousness of the detective, the victim and the reader. The manipulation of occultist practices is reinforced by the sense of a hidden pattern, based around ancient geometry. The number of

churches built and the appropriate number of sacrifices to accompany their inauguration is made prominent by Dyer, who states: “[l]et him that has Understanding count the Number: the seven Churches are built in conjunction with the seven Planets in the lower Orbs of Heaven, the seven Circles of the Heavens” (186). The numerology of seven is significant in the praxis of the labyrinth as both Pennick (*Mazes*) and Evans Lansing Smith (*Myth*) attest when they relate the figure to seven nodes of the classic labyrinth, each signifying one of the seven days and one of the pre-Copernican planets. However, to illustrate the arbitrary usage of numbers, most labyrinths have historically functioned on a pattern of nine or eleven decision points.

The churches collectively act as a code, whereby their distribution around London illustrates the symbol of the pentagon which then combines to form a septilateral figure. The pattern is used to disquieting effect by the contemporary Walter who plants the diagram amongst the murder correspondence to unsettle Hawksmoor. By sending letters to both Dyer and Hawksmoor, Walter is replaying the correspondence purportedly sent by ‘Jack the Ripper’ to goad his persecutors. Though Walter’s knowledge of his betrayal prevents him from believing in Hawksmoor’s postulations, his contamination of the evidence is largely irrelevant as what is integral is the cycle itself and its ability to become manifest.



### **3.5 Poor Tom: Tramps, Beggars and the Children of the City**

Ackroyd's fascination with the city plays with the notion of the capital as a site of oppositions, or 'contraries', to use Blake's terminology, and draws upon the images of a holy and a damned city. A city of infinite variety, lauded famously by Dr Johnson and equally castigated by Percy Shelley as being hellish (*Peter Bell the Third*), London is conversely ascribed the status of a New Jerusalem and also the inferno. Certainly there is a sense that the experience of London is that of damned souls in purgatory, which is a reading sustained by the fate of the victims that wander its streets in *Hawksmoor*. The spectrum that divides such apparent opposites, which positions and separates detective and murderer, is collapsed, causing resemblances and patterning to dominate the differences of the timeframes.

Ackroyd's loving articulation of the city displays streets littered with disease, dirt and harlotry, in a locale constantly threatened by plague, fire and violence. London teeters on the edge of the abyss, combining the road to redemption and the path to hell in a dichotomy that is best expressed by the vagrants who, as the 'children' of this vast city, meander through the streets and know and understand the city's moods. It is these dwellers of city space that die as sacrificial offerings in the labyrinthine metropolis. Their suffering is a direct result of their participation in the labyrinth as each adopts a central role in the Daedalian masque.

These nomadic wanderers seem 'out-of-time' and are not tied to either timeframe, but rather are emblematic of the city's continuity. Ackroyd's maintains the ex-centric nature of a city whose consciousness is mediated through the voices of the underclass, children and vagrants. This argument forms the basis of "They are

Always with Us” (*London* 599-605) a chapter that examines the rapid growth of poverty in the city. His character Chatterton<sup>37</sup> muses upon this subject as he too wanders the streets: “he had heard stories of deformed children abandoned by their parents and left to wander the streets. And did they then become like the city itself – brooding, secret, invulnerable?” (210). In *Hawksmoor* these indigent characters appear across temporal sites: the tramp Ned is killed in both time zones whilst Dyer and Hawksmoor are related to these people of peripatetic life.

The image of the vagabond is prevalent: from the tramps, victims to the murderer Dyer and detective Hawksmoor, who all ramble through the city. Although the beggars and children appear as custodians of the city, their knowledge and experience is rarely valued. The existence of the homeless shadows the life of the city, whilst rapid alterations in wealth enlarge and further separate this disparate populace. These impoverished few act as a visual reminder of inequality and the precarious nature of society and so intensify the impulse to ostracise them further. Likewise, as the third-person narrator muses in a contemporary section of *Hawksmoor*: “[t]hose who wander are always objects of suspicion and sometimes even fear” (70). There is a resemblance here to De Quincey’s commentary on the Ratcliffe Highway Murders where the immediate suspicion and anger of the populace was initially directed towards the dispossessed (“On Murder” 84-5).

The climate of displacement from the mainstream social environment is pervasive to the extent that the central protagonists, Dyer and Hawksmoor, begin to exhibit features of this maligned existence. Their physical alteration begun by their time spent in the city leads to the textual emphasis falling upon the peripheral inhabitants of the city, as Ackroyd focuses upon the “city within the city” (*London* 600).



Dyer's synergy with the city of London is strengthened when he confides that: "I am no great Traveller, having never been above three miles from London before" (57). Though this circumference is extended when Wren takes him to Salisbury,<sup>38</sup> Dyer maintains a physically introverted existence. Ironically given the regional restrictions of his movements, Dyer's urban walks stress his nomadic existence and his ability to be 'at home' anywhere in the capital: "I have so many Dwellings, Nat, that I know these streets as well as a strowling Beggar" (47). The question of vagrancy is often wrongly perceived to be a contemporary problem and, by extension, a result of modern living and society. Zygmunt Bauman identifies the eighteenth century as a period that witnessed a rapid increase in the creation of the dispossessed ("Class: Before and After" *Reader*). Consequently, areas of London have been associated with the homeless for centuries (*London* 603-605; cf. M. Dorothy George, *London Life in the Eighteenth Century* qtd. Ackroyd, *London* 599). Certain sites have cyclically maintained this 'usage', such as St. Giles of the Fields where, since the founding of an early leper hospital, the neighbourhood has retained its affinity with the maligned (Ackroyd, *Book Club*; Ackroyd, *The Crowd* "London"). Other areas include Ackroyd's depiction of Limehouse from where a "Settlement of Beggars" (63-4) Ned is chosen as the second victim. This is mirrored in the contemporary narrative, when Ned observes when passing Limehouse that "[t]his was an area haunted by other vagrants" (79). The use of the supernatural 'haunted' suggests the connection to the area is somehow predestined, uncanny or that the vagrants are 'out-of-time'. The homeless live outside of the 'rules' of the city, and like the dust and dirt created they are products of the city, connected with the refuge and as perpetual walkers they share their existence with those who enter the labyrinth.



In the poorer parishes of Dyer's churches, the beggars naturally gravitate towards the monuments to receive support and sustenance as Ned knows: "he had come to understand during his wanderings that churches offered protection for men and women like [him]" (77). Ironically, the explicit connection here to alms provision is overlain with the aura of Dyer's philosophy. The link between the homeless and the churches, specifically Dyer's creations, is accentuated by the 'territories' of each of the six named individuals. This thread tying the dispossessed to place is reiterated by Bauman, who claims that punitive legislation in the eighteenth century necessitated survival based around the local parish ("Class: Before and After" *Reader* 73).<sup>39</sup> Despite my identification of the beggars as wanderers within the city, this is partially refuted by the text which records that certain of the city's incumbents inhabit a specific location:

All of them led solitary lives, hardly moving from their own warren of streets and buildings: it is not known whether they chose the area, or whether the area itself had called them and taken them in, but they became the guardian spirits (as it were) of each place (82).

The beggars 'patrol' their territories and dissect the novel into six key points of power radiating out from each of the churches. The implication that the place calls and then contains the people into an area is made more important if it is considered that these six beggars are all associated with one of Hawksmoor's existing churches. Consequently, the effects of these spiritual locations are felt most by those who are aligned with the city, and in Ackroyd's fiction these are the victims and the beggars.

There is a strong sense that is developed over the course of the novel that each of these characters is steered to their inevitable death. The disinterested wandering of each victim recalls the experience of the labyrinth as they become increasingly



disorientated and unable to appreciate external influences. Accordingly, the characters appear utterly absorbed in, and by, London. The journey from the capital, undertaken by Dyer to Salisbury or glimpsed through Ned's recollections of his former home in Bristol, appears insubstantial and dreamlike. Dyer refers to the comprehension of the city and of his initiation into the "Mazes of the Serpent" (56) as unique to those who are lost. This equates the navigation of the labyrinthine narrative with a maze of sinfulness and damnation, and implies that the reader of the book is an initiate in Dyer's faith.

The series of churches, through their respective height and excess, seek to connect a knowledgeable viewer with their spiritual emplacement or, in the case of Ackroyd's re-worked version, with their occult and mystical properties. Dyer's brand of religion is transmuted through knowledge of his architecture, an understanding restricted to the victims, their murderer and the increasingly disorientated detective. Churches of Dyer's design are deliberately engineered to link the observer with a hopeless actuality and inevitability of a hellish fate through an intensification of profane space, which is conversely maintained and housed within the church.

Eliade's discussion of the segregation of the temple pinpoints the idealised location and the protection of the sacred centre within the walls, separate from the darkness and the chaos of the 'outside' (*Myth and Reality*). Likewise, Mary Douglas construes the continued desire for religions to polarise and separate so-called taboo or unhealthy practices from cleanly and spiritual arenas (*Purity and Danger*). The differentiation of these areas through social practice in the distinctions of dark and light, dirt and clean, evidence the will to expel unwanted characteristics from the place of worship.

The labyrinth makes problematic such delimitations, and instead contains such oppositions. In Ackroyd's novel, this is maintained by the patina of dust that coats holy churches and secular areas of the city alike. Dyer demonstrably subverts the sociological ordering of divine space and so ensures that the ecclesiastical monument is tarnished with death and 'evil': "[a] vast Mound of Death and Nastiness, and my Church will take great Profit from it [...] Darknesse will call out for more Darknesse" (23; 22). His comments relate to an unmarked mass grave, full of the city's poor, which presents the architect with an opportunity to concentrate their energy. In doing so, Dyer is deliberately disobeying Wren's edict regarding churchyards, voiced in the novel by his apprentice Walter, that the burial of the dead should be detached from the church to avoid the problems of damp pews or uneven walking services (Wren, *Parentalia* 319; *Hawksmoor* 7). Instead, he is following the method described to him by his mentor in the black arts, Mirabilis, who preached: "a Corn when it dies and rots in the Ground, it springs again and lives, so, *said he*, when there are many Persons dead, only being buryed and laid in the Earth, there is an Assembling of Powers" (23). This custom is in part taken from the belief that these souls will be reincarnated and their energies transformed, which like the rotted corn will live and thrive again. His advice is reminiscent of the old British folksong, John Barleycorn. The most well-known version of the ballad was composed by Robert Burns and published in 1787, too late for Dyer to be familiar with that particular variant. Ackroyd, however, makes reference to Burns' poem (*Collection*) and so demonstrates his own awareness of the poem.

Given the textual prominence of reincarnation it is surprising that Ackroyd chooses to ignore the motto of St. Paul's, the "resurgam" carved with the figure of the



phoenix above the South door. This aphorism relates to the rebuilding of the cathedral. The founding of the motto is contained in a famous architectural anecdote, re-enacted in both Laura Lamson's documentary of Wren (*Wren*; cf. Jardin, *On a Grand Scale* 428-429) and in Ackroyd's series about London (*Ackroyd's London: Fire and Destiny*; cf. *London* 777). The episode was primarily recorded in *Parentalia* (292) and relates to a workman's instructions to bring a stone to delineate the centre of the domed structure. Prophetically, his choice of a fragment of a Roman headstone clearly bore the word 'resurgam' (I will rise again/I will arise). The coincidence and symmetry of this gesture aside, such a story illustrates the rebirth both of the monument and the city. Despite the appropriateness of the anecdote, combining the architect and monument with the theme of resurrection, Ackroyd does not demonstrate his awareness by reconstructing or alluding to the event in *Hawksmoor*. Rebirth remains a key theme of the novel and is affiliated to the image of the labyrinth as a method of transformation and renewal. Dyer's cyclical process of rebirth distorts the expectation of positive transformation following expulsion from the labyrinth. Transfiguration confidently identified by Helmut Jaskolski (*Labyrinth* 98-106) as integral to an encounter with the maze is here evidenced, in keeping with other contemporary visions of the maze, as negative affectation.

The dark figure<sup>40</sup> that follows each of the victims conversely also appears to watch over them and lead them towards the church, either to ensure they enter the correct building or that they arrive at the appropriate time: "[t]ime, I mean, for you to be on your way again. This is not the place for you" (78). This overcoated individual appears sometimes benevolent and at other junctures malevolent, as he functions both as a guide and a threatening foe. The apparition in the labyrinthine streets is a

conflation of the Minotaur, Ariadne and the Daedalus: a convergence that so fascinated Ayrton (for examples of Ayrton's art see Nyenhuis, *Myth*). The figure moves Ned on from the vicinity of Christchurch Spitalfields to the place of his death, passing close to St. George in-the-East and through the nearby parish of St. Anne at Limehouse, where he is destined to die many years after first encountering the figure. The identity of this directing character is ambiguous, as a perpetual wanderer he is affiliated with the many representations of Dyer, Mirabilis and Hawksmoor. Equally he may be some embodiment of the malevolence of place, though as a guardian of the labyrinth he is ultimately threatening.

The figure watches and approaches Thomas and Ned in the contemporary sections of the narrative in the same manner that Dyer coaxed the eighteenth-century Ned and his colleague Hayes. The man's appearance resembles the drab and non-descript attire of Hawksmoor and once again raises the suspicion that the detective may be an active party in the crimes. Thomas' sighting of the man creates a paternalistic presence for him and in this way the patriarchal absence is bridged with this man as his guide. His emergence, standing between the boy and the church, transforms the guide into the predator. The murderer and the detective both tread a personal labyrinth: they become the followed and the follower, until through textual symmetry they face one another.

The church's appearance becomes transformed the nearer the observer comes to its whole: "[t]he church changed its shape as he came closer to it" (28). The structure seems to alter the space around it both creating a physical link to the past and blanketing those inside from the contemporary: "as he approached its stone wall, the noises of the external world were diminished as if they were being muffled by the fabric of the



building itself” (28). The labyrinth is simultaneously outside of time and yet also exists in both timeframes, acting as a threshold between the two.<sup>41</sup> The church functions as a conduit enabling the passage of voices, especially chanting or singing, to arrive from the past. Similar transmissions of sound are replicated in the labyrinth where the partitions resonate with noise from other walkers, or possibly the Minotaur. Here, above so much death and destruction, are channelled the rhymes, songs and emotions of those who were once living.

The merging of time sequences is exaggerated by the commonalities and patternism conceived in the dual narratives. In the manner of Dyer’s practice of constructing his designs first in wood, Thomas also fashions a model of the church and labyrinth at Spitalfields (8, 36). This comparison, while maintaining the strong bond between the two characters, intimates Thomas’ original life as a mason’s son. The correlation between the characters is deliberately alluded to by Dyer who chooses the name of ‘Faustus’ when approached by Mirabilis, and hence seems to have cheated death: “I dare say, *he replies*, that the Devil cannot catch you” (18). Thomas too is familiar with the text: “[he] had read on quickly, hoping to reach the passage where the Devil takes Faustus into the air and shows him the kingdoms of the world” (33). The allusion to Marlowe’s play, *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* (1616), foregrounds the bargain of a doomed man’s pact with the devil. Connection to *Faustus* is pertinent as both Dyer and Thomas empathise with, and consider the position of, Marlowe’s protagonist. Like the Renaissance figure, Dyer’s powerful dark arts seem to make him increasingly isolated and in turmoil. Also the presentation of Faustus’ internal wrangling, offered to the audience in the form of early stage soliloquy, is mimicked by Dyer through the construction of his narrative in the first-person.

The modern Thomas' and Dyer's fascination with the story of *Faustus* is exemplified by their shared interest in his flight. Dyer's remembrance of the text refers to this episode: "*Doctor Faustus* [...] pleased me, especially when he travelled in the Air, seeing all the World" (12). It is at this moment when Faustus perceives the world from above that he relishes the power that Satan has offered him and he appears his most free and authoritative. This airborne flight perhaps resembles his 'twin' Thomas' previous death from the parapet of Spitalfields' steeple. Likewise, Faustus is elevated to role of creator whereby he can glimpse the cartography of the land. In this way, both Dyer and Thomas aspire to the role of the divine architect.

The eighteenth-century Thomas is the son of the church's principal mason and in a moment that parallels Wren's son's completion of St. Paul's by laying the top-most stone (*Parentalia* 293) Dyer sends the boy to the apex of the tower. Typically, such an honour would have fallen to the mason or architect, but in the episode Ackroyd rewrites Wren was too infirm to complete the task. In this manner, Ackroyd's description of the conclusion of Christchurch is a mirror of Wren's architectural feat. The position of mason was shared by Daedalus, inventor of the labyrinth, and this comparison expands to include Icarus, the artificer's ill-fated son, who in his arrogance flew too close to the sun and so perished, falling from the sky to his death:

He was in great good Humour on the Morning of his Ascent and saw it as a merry Enterprise [...] He gazed steadily at me for an Instant and I cryed, *Go on! Go on!*; and at this Moment, just as he was coming up to the spiry Turret, the timbers of the Scaffold, being insecurely plac'd or rotten, cracked asunder and the Boy missed his Footing and fell from the Tower. He did not cry out but his Face seem'd to carry an Expression of Surprize. (24-25)



Dyer's imperative instruction to Thomas is a marker that is heard in subsequent chapters as his voice and other parts of the narrative transcend the different chronologies (cf. 26, 30, 144). In the moment of death, Dyer the artist notes the aesthetic beauty of the boy's descent: "[c]urved lines are more beautiful than Straight, I thought to my self, as he fell away from the main Fabrick" (25). The first part of Dyer's sentiment is an inversion of a line from the 'heirloom' edition of *Parentalia*, where Wren discusses the elevated position of geometry after the manner of Vitruvius. Wren's fifth tract on architecture didactically<sup>42</sup> approaches architectural aesthetics with a series of axioms which includes the 'line': "[s]trait lines are more beautiful than curve" (*Parentalia* 351). Hollinghurst also notes the manipulative paraphrasing of Wren and claims that "[f]ew will recognise [it]" ("Hieroglyph" 1049). Discussion of the curve is also addressed by Hogarth who claims that the "line of beauty" is to be found in the "shallow, elegant, undulating double curve" (*Analysis of Beauty* qtd. Pevsner, *Englishness* 53).

Returning to the boy's demise, the descent suffered by the young boy evokes the biblical falls present in Lucifer's expulsion from heaven, Adam's exile from Eden and the destruction of the Tower of Babel. The sensation and threat of death is reprised in the other narratives where Thomas also fears this death by falling, when being spun by his mother: "he was sure that [...] he would crash to the floor and be killed" (35). The motion of his spin is necessarily circular and so reflects the many spiral dances, cyclical movements and temporal transitions and recursions in the novel.<sup>43</sup>

Dyer in the eighteenth century is sensitive to the present-day Thomas' fate, as he too dreams of the young man's death: "I dream'd of a dark Place last night [...] I

dream'd my self to be lying in a small place under ground, like unto a Grave, and my Body was all broken while others sung" (43; 45). This vision is anachronistic and prophetic, conflating the modern Thomas' death with an eighteenth-century dream and suggests that, just as the future is affected by the past, the past is sensitive to the actions of the future. Dyer's victims are mirrored in both historical settings where they recursively parallel their predestined roles as marginal parts in his macabre ritualistic theatre. Further commonalities between the two narratives include the victims' emotional affiliation to a church, the universal appreciation of the presence of a man in a dark overcoat, sensitivity to the sound of distant voices and the experience of the expanse of dust that permeates the text.



### 3.6 Coda

This chapter has traced Ackroyd's many references to a continuous and visionary English imagination. In this, arguably his best city fiction, the idea of an English tradition is explored through the labyrinth of London. The tight recursions of the text, both in motif and event, evoke the overabundance of repetitious curves, indicative of the labyrinth. The suitability of the labyrinth to describe city space is further developed by Jeanette Winterson in her novel, *The Passion*. The fluidity of Winterson's Venetian maze complements her discussions of passion, identity and time.



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<sup>1</sup> See Peter Vilhelm Glob, *The Bog People: Iron-Age Man Preserved*.

<sup>2</sup> I have not included Ackroyd's *The Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1984) in this brief discussion of London. Mainly written from Oscar's exile in France, the majority of the passages are concerned with Oscar's past: a heritage that is firmly rooted in his memories of his time in London. Likewise, in his other fictions there is still an influence from the capital: *Milton in America* (1997) has descriptive passages that articulate the loss of London and England for the new pilgrims; *The Plato Papers* (1999) incorporates a sense of a futuristic London and even the rural expanse of *First Light* (1989) is infiltrated by tourists from London.

<sup>3</sup> See "London Luminaries and Cockney Visionaries" (*Collection* 341-351) and "Cockney visionaries: London Calling" (*Albion* 307-314).

<sup>4</sup> The writers Gaskell, Austen, Brontë, Woolf and Elliot are mentioned briefly as Ackroyd directly surveys female writers in just two out of 54 chapters in *Albion*. Ironically, these chapters are themed around "anger" and "silence".

<sup>5</sup> See for example: *Thomas More*; *Albion* 123-129 and *Collection* 336, 366.

<sup>6</sup> See *Blake* (37) and *London: A Biography* (112-122).

<sup>7</sup> See for example: *English Music* (1992); *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1995) and *Collection* (286-288, 440-447).

<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, a section in E.O. Gordon's *Prehistoric London* uses the labyrinth to bolster Monmouth's claims of Troy-Novant (Matthews, *Mazes* 216).

<sup>9</sup> There were various prophecies and religious pamphlets in the early part of the seventeenth century that decried London's immoral reputation and called for an eradication of urban sin through fire. Following the conflagration, one popular conspiracy theory blamed a Catholic plot intent on undermining Charles II by engineering the fulfilment of this omen (cf. Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Great Fire of London* 92-108).

<sup>10</sup> It is ironic given the relationship of fire and the city that the spectacle of the "river of fire", intended to crown the millennium celebrations in London, failed to ignite in 2000!

<sup>11</sup> John MacLeod's *Postcolonial London* emphasises the extent to which change and transfiguration are integral to depictions of the city.

<sup>12</sup> For Wren and John Evelyn's plans see Lisa Jardine (*On a Grand Scale* 264-5, 260) and for Robert Hooke's diagram see Berresford Ellis (*Great* 64).

<sup>13</sup> Ackroyd's biographies have developed into a deliberate blend of imagined episodes combined with historical research and hypothesis. For Ackroyd's thoughts about biography as a genre see "The Fine Art of Biography" (*Albion* 346-358).

<sup>14</sup> The play between the historic and the contemporary is non-linear and confused, as Ackroyd comments in his short essay about *Hawksmoor* attest: "I do not know if *Hawksmoor* is a contemporary novel set in the past or a historical novel set in the present" (*Collection* 379).

<sup>15</sup> See Susana Onega and John Stotesbury (*London* esp. 19-34, 221-231).

<sup>16</sup> Pierre de la Ruffinière Du Prey argues that *Hawksmoor's* churches deliberately evoke a return to primitive Christian monuments in a serious and determined attempt to refresh the place of worship (*Hawksmoor's London Churches*). Although Du Prey seeks to consolidate *Hawksmoor's* strange visions into an orthodox edict, he undermines this serious intent through his own descriptions of the sheer hyperbole and Gothic excess of *Hawksmoor's* creations (cf. also Ackroyd, *Collection* 314-316).

<sup>17</sup> Bede's recording of Pope Gregory's letter to Abbot Mellitus (C.E. 601) concerns the sanitisation of former pagan temples where through ritual cleansing "we hope that the people, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may abandon their error and, flocking more readily to their accustomed resorts, may come to know and adore the true



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God” (*A History of the English People and Church* 87). Du Prey points to Joseph Bingham’s *Origines Ecclesiasticae* as an important source for any discussion of the early Christian conversion of pagan temples (*Hawksmoor’s London*).

<sup>18</sup> For example, see the prominent reworking of Halicarnassus’ mausoleum as a protuberance atop of St. George’s in Bloomsbury.

<sup>19</sup> References to *Parentalia* are to the “Heirloom” copy housed in RIBA (London) which contains additional handwritten amendments, notes and drawings by Wren and Hawksmoor.

<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, it would be hard not to overlay previous civilisations and periods as the centre of London is so confined, especially within the City. This feature of London is graphically realised in John Stow’s tracing of older London/s in his 1603 book, *A Survey of London*.

<sup>21</sup> This process was graphically reproduced in a display at the Tate Modern (December 2004) where a cabinet of historical debris lifted from the rubble around the gallery positioned crushed drinks cans alongside Roman amphora without apparent prejudice.

<sup>22</sup> In keeping with Ackroyd’s etymological games, the translation of Mrs. West to Mrs. Best leads the reader to conclude that ‘West is Best’. These surnames do not share the same etymological root; ‘Best’ is a derivation of ‘beast’ a name originally used in a derisory manner but which through the connotations of strength and animalism has remained popular. ‘West’ on the other hand refers to the direction (cf. P. H. Reaney, *A Dictionary of British Surnames*). It would be stretching the point too far to note that these characters combine the threat of the beast (Best) and also encapsulate the idea of direction.

<sup>23</sup> Significantly, despite Holmes’ prowess he is thwarted on occasion, most notably in “A Scandal in Bohemia”.

<sup>24</sup> There is some uncertainty regarding the date of Hawksmoor’s birth. These dates are given by Vaughan Hart, whose recent compendium *Nicholas Hawksmoor: Rebuilding Ancient Wonders* will doubtless become a modern architectural classic of its type.

<sup>25</sup> It would seem that Yorick Hayes owes his first name to the jester in *Hamlet* (the comedy of the graveyard scene mirrors Hayes’ demise) and also to the tragic figure from *Tristram Shandy*. In addition, Hayes was the surname of a detective briefly caught up in the ‘Jack the Ripper’ investigation so perhaps Ackroyd is again fusing high and low cultural markers.

<sup>26</sup> The Metropolitan police force took possession of premises in New Scotland Yard in 1829 and moved again in 1887 and 1890.

<sup>27</sup> I must thank Dr. Martin Arnold for his time and effort spent discussing the association between the name ‘Nicholas’ and the devil.

<sup>28</sup> The relationship between naming and power is prominent in such folktales as Rumpelstiltskin and is evident in contemporary writing (cf. Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* 137-144).

<sup>29</sup> The devil is often traditionally invoked in a churchyard at midnight or whilst looking in a mirror. This ritual summoning is completed by chanting the devil’s name three times. The figure three regularly appears in folk mythology as three wishes, three sisters, three challenges and so on.

<sup>30</sup> It would be more commonplace to find a cross on the top of a church, as exemplified by the bulky cross at the top of St. Paul’s or many of the surrounding churches. Another exception to this is St. Mary-le-Bow which has a phantasmagorical dragon resting on a ball. This fantastical creature seems appropriate to Ackroyd’s notion of visionary London when it is considered that to be born within the sound of the bells of St. Mary-le-Bow is to be a true cockney. Ironically, Malcolm Hough’s investigations of 1991 suggest that before the advent of the motor car the bells’ sound would have carried



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“across central London and in[to] the suburbs such as Highgate” (Ed. Glinert, *The London Compendium* 63) and so the parameters of this birthright have shrunk.

<sup>31</sup> Kerry Downes points to the lack of interest in the sale of Hawksmoor’s effects and the overshadowing of the architect, first by Wren and then later Vanbrugh, as a marker of neglect (*Hawksmoor* 10). In noting the resurgence of Hawksmoor, Vaughan Hart introduces his book on the architect, *Nicholas Hawksmoor* (2002), by identifying the renaissance of his work as stemming from Downes’ two volumes, an exhibition shown in London and Ackroyd’s novel.

<sup>32</sup> A process wittily envisaged in the regional song *On Ilkla Moor Baht ‘At* and in the growth and regeneration of the dead in T.S. Eliot’s “Burial of the Dead” (*The Waste Land*, 1922).

<sup>33</sup> Significantly, Iain Sinclair in *Lud Heat* (14) utilises the same phrase and also ‘misattributes’ it to Hawksmoor, and so this would appear to be the source of Ackroyd’s citation. Downes (*Wren* 105) and Hart (*Nicholas* 158) give the quotation as Vanbrugh’s advice to the commission: a designation which is affirmed by Hollinghurst (“Hieroglyph” 1049) though it transpires that Hart is actually citing Downes (cf. Hart, *Nicholas* Appendix E pp. 257-8).

<sup>34</sup> In Egyptian mythology the process of resurrection is prevalent. Each day is signified by rebirth and death as the sun retreats to the underworld overnight and each new day is reborn afresh. This movement was paralleled by Osiris’ rebirth after ritual dismemberment.

<sup>35</sup> In the thirteenth century, Hugh became an expedient rallying call for anti-Semitic behaviour as Koppin, a Jew, was blamed for his murder. Koppin along with eighteen others were executed for Hugh’s death. In the contemporary discourse, Thomas’ murder leads to public vigilante behaviour against the homeless who are deemed responsible for the boy’s death.

<sup>36</sup> As Hendia Baker (“Minotaur Lost”) claims, twentieth-century depictions of the labyrinth subvert time as well as space, and these temporal labyrinths announce the adaptation of the form in contemporary literatures.

<sup>37</sup> The tragic poet Chatterton appears to have been the focus of a resurgence of popular artistic expression in the eighteenth century. His ability to construct medieval writings as though original is similar to Ackroyd’s endeavour in the eighteenth-century passages of *Hawksmoor*.

<sup>38</sup> The fascination with Stonehenge was awoken by Inigo Jones’ reading of the ancient site and later, in the eighteenth century, by William Stukley’s comments that the henge “may have been a druid temple” (Glinert, *London Compendium* 94).

<sup>39</sup> Although Bauman’s comments are made in relation to legislation published in 1764, it follows a similar trend remarked upon by M. Dorothy George (*London Life in the Eighteenth Century*).

<sup>40</sup> This figure appears repeatedly and is evident on pages 42, 43, 70, 119, 120, 128, 161 and 172. His position is complicated as the descriptions of Hawksmoor share similarities with the shadowy individual.

<sup>41</sup> A depiction of Spitalfields’ fearful façade and ability to distort time and space is portrayed in Leon Kossoff’s studies of Christchurch Spitalfields (see especially *Christchurch Spitalfields Morning*, 1990).

<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Hart has suggested that these tracts recall a master’s comments and instructions to his apprentice (*Nicholas*). This observation is based on the premise that Hawksmoor was still working for Wren or, most likely, was in residence at the Wren home during the writing of these treatises. Downes, in his book *The Architecture of Wren*, seems to corroborate this when he identifies that Hawksmoor’s copy of the Perrault edition of *Vitruvius* was signed “*Nich Hawksmoor at Sir Christopher Wren’s in*



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*Scotland Yard*” which seems to place Hawksmoor within the household “in the mid 1680s” (128, fn 245). This is further supported by the presence of a drawing (found in the ‘heirloom’ copy of *Parentalia*) of the temple of Halicarnassus executed by the hand of Hawksmoor. The suggestion here is that the younger man was available to complete this exercise based on the tract for Wren.

<sup>43</sup> There are several episodes of vagrants and children completing a circular ‘Dance of Death’. Ackroyd returns to this practice in his recent novel *The Clerkenwell Tales* (2003) as he remarks on a fresco created by a thirteenth-century craftsman known as ‘Peter the Painter’. Peter’s macabre depiction of the dance of death served in “impressing and terrifying generations of Londoners” (*Clerkenwell* 209 fn10).

## *The Passion*

### 4 Jeanette Winterson's Encounter with the Labyrinth

Images of the maze and the labyrinth feature extensively in Winterson's fiction and are present in the metonymic deployment of the circle, sphere and spiral and in the barriers such bodies maintain. The urban elements of *The Passion* expose the city as a maze and extend through to the central theme of the journey. Winterson promotes this focus of her writing as a consistent intellectual engagement in the introduction to her film script *Great Moments in Aviation* (1994, vii). Typically, her narrative innovations underline her theoretical preoccupation with the nature of reading, whereby enfolded vignettes reveal an authorial position that confirms: "I really don't see the point of reading in straight lines" (*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, 1985 xiii).<sup>1</sup> This ultimately accentuates the process of the journey for both character and reader. Highly structured interlaced stories combine to reflect a thought process that is "closer to a maze than a motorway, every turn yields another turning, not symmetrical, not obvious" (*Oranges* xiii). Winterson's explication of her first novel emphasises her attention to the anti-linear maze as a founding premise of textual construction predicated upon the relationship between reader and text.

*The Passion* relates a series of love stories through the encounter with some peripheral historical figures located in the Napoleonic era and thereby creates a dialogue with the past. Europe is re-imagined at a decisive moment in the reformulation of the power boundaries of the continent. Winterson traces these enveloped and tangled stories through the patterning of the labyrinth where the expectation of the journey's end is destabilised, causing a final transient and elliptical result.<sup>2</sup>



This chapter will concentrate on the notion of journey expressed through the mechanism of the maze. Significantly, Winterson systematically adopts the word 'maze' to describe the city, and this convention demands scrutiny. Possible differences between the maze and the labyrinth are surveyed to consider to what extent the 'maze' is a useful nomenclature for realising Venice. The exploration of Winterson's Venice realises a site that is dually located in the real and the unreal, and leads to an examination of the employment of significant literary engagements with the city. The relationship Winterson draws between water, maze and text is an intriguing arrangement of boundaries and thresholds. Despite the outlandish unreality of Winterson's Venice, there is a strong sense of distinct location, spatial boundaries and exchange. Briefly, it will be advantageous to consider the socio-economic situation of the text's construction in order to analyse the realities offered by Venice in regard to gendered space and identity.

This chapter will approach notions of cartography and assess the implications and meaning of maps across her fictions. Cartography, as an ideologically saturated medium, will then lead to an examination of empire as represented by Napoleon's ambitions. Finally, this chapter will evaluate Henri's narration as the conceptualisation of his past and scrutinise his use of natural imagery and his focalised unreliability. Winterson's mediations of time also appear to adopt the shape and peculiarities of the fluid maze. Through the anachronisms and literary interventions employed, there is created a space that is conversely both out of time but also chronologically bound.

#### 4.1 Maze or Labyrinth? Unravelling Winterson's Terminology

Experience of the fluid, changeable and multiply fictionalised Venice forms a key portion of the narrative, as Winterson intensifies the labyrinthine feeling of the urban. City as labyrinth is a recognisable trope that is increasingly prevalent in twentieth-century fiction, and divulges the threatening and consuming aspect of the city.<sup>3</sup> Though the metaphor of city as labyrinth is common enough (cf. Ackroyd *London*; Caws *The City*), and recalls the labyrinth's function as an embodiment or signifier of the walled city, it is extremely rare to connect the city solely with the maze. Strikingly, Winterson never labels Venice a labyrinth and chooses instead to converse about a city of mazes. 'Amaze', formed from maze with an intensifier prefix, underlines the wonderment and stupefying effect caused by the structure and seems a fitting etymological root for so prodigious a fiction. This augments her deployment of the expression to characterise reading and writing in her introduction to *Oranges*, through to its extension as a metaphor for the process of love in *Written on the Body* (1992, 88).

Though she adopts 'maze' exclusively in *The Passion* to refer to the complex network of canals, she exercises an interchangeable approach in *The PowerBook* (2000, 239). This latter choice reflects perhaps the generalist understanding that the two terms are largely indivisible (Matthews, *Mazes*; Fisher, *Art*). Critical attention to her work has ignored any subtlety or distinction between maze and labyrinth, with some of Winterson's major critics, Susana Onega ("The Passion"; "'Self' and 'Other'"), Paulina Palmer ("The Passion" 114-115) and Judith Seaboyer ("Second Death"), referring solely or predominately to the labyrinth in *The Passion*. These international critics' prevalent use of 'labyrinth' is interesting and possibly suggests an elevation of the term



as a theoretical concept; arguably as an extension of the conceptualisation of the Cretan labyrinth as a feminine space.

The nuances between maze and labyrinth have become increasingly diffused causing divergent classifications to be extremely problematic. Frequently, critics who seek to distance the two terms tend to argue that the labyrinth is unicursal; a religious symbol denoting the progression to God, whilst the maze is a conundrum of multiple walkways that confuse.<sup>4</sup> In a significant variation, Hermann Kern maintains denying the semantic collusion of both terms that the maze is the application of the labyrinthine in literature. He directly castigates Matthews' position (*Mazes*) regarding the interchangeability of the labels in his book *Labyrinths: 5,000 Years of a Design* and refuses to even discuss the maze, as he designates the shape as a later transmutation of the labyrinth into the realm of literature. Kern argues that literary mediations of the labyrinth are always snarled and menacing, while the labyrinth as a figure is emphatically unicursal and relatively easy to navigate. This simplistic delineation is systematically dismantled both by literary examples that follow the tight symmetry of the depictions of the ecclesiastical labyrinths and turf mazes (cf. Robbe-Grillet, *In the Labyrinth*) and the intrinsic threat posed by early labyrinths, documented in both historical and archaeological research. Indeed, Doob draws a similar conclusion in her article "Contradictory Paradigms: The Labyrinth in Art and Literature". Although there is a differentiation between the labyrinth in literature and its visual representations in medieval art, Doob concludes that for the medieval imagination there existed no paradox (cf. also *Idea*).

An inability to successfully divorce the two ideas stems from their long and involved history. Given Winterson's exclusive use of the maze, it is necessary to unpick the

etymology and history of the figure fully to understand its usage and to note points of departure from the labyrinth. Arguably, the earliest 'walkable' mazes were utilised in fertility-based rites: these mazes were at ground level, cut into the turf and had no vertical structure. The labyrinth, however, was an upright physical structure and its verticality would inevitably lead to spatial confusion in ways in which the early maze would not. In the pre-medieval period, this is the most striking structural difference between the two phenomena.

The different fashioning of types made it possible for walkers to infringe the boundaries laid down in early turf mazes in a manner inconceivable in the stone and walled demarcations of the ancient labyrinths. Confident affirmation of this reading is offered by Angus Fletcher who cites the labyrinth as "a term from building or architecture" ("The Image of Lost Direction" 342, fn. 2). Coupled with this physical difference it would appear that one of the major variations between mazes and labyrinths was the material used in their construction, as traditionally mazes were principally cut into turf, planted in hedge or lined with pebbles whilst the labyrinth was built out of stone. However, the assumption that all horticultural labyrinth constructions are known as mazes is undermined by the fabled murder of Rosamond, Henry II's supposed mistress, who died at the heart of a garden bower termed 'the labyrinth' (Matthews, *Mazes*). Likewise the mazy garden in Rome is known as the 'Labyrinth Garden' and as such further complicates any simple pronouncement. As the two terms have become approximate in meaning the distinctions between the two forms have blurred and the building materials utilised have become convergent where appropriate.<sup>5</sup>

Mazes of ancient ritual were cut into turf and it seems conceivable that the shape and terminology of the maze was reinforced by Viking and Danish settlements because



earlier Scandinavian pebble mazes are congruent with the later turf examples (Ackroyd, *London* 14-15;<sup>6</sup> Adrian Fisher and Diana Kingham, *Mazes* 8-10). Despite the possible intercultural exchange there is sufficient evidence to suggest that such symbols are ubiquitous and present in comparative religions globally.<sup>7</sup> Expanding upon the interchangeability of the terms, Matthews (*Mazes*) argues that deviation may be regarded as an elaboration of linguistic sources, as 'maze' is generally understood to be used as a Northern equivalent of the European word 'labyrinth'. In confirmation, the *OED* cites the root of 'maze' as Old English, originating from earlier Norwegian and Swedish dialects specifically, from 'masa' or 'maz' which refers to toil and labour. Currently, 'mafe' still carries this meaning of difficulty (J. Brynildsen, *Norsk-Engelsk*). Furthermore, Fletcher locates 'maze' as being derived from the Middle English *masen* and compares this with the Norwegian *masa-st*, a term loosely connected with the act of sleep, disorientation and dreaming ("Image" 342, fn. 2). Partly, the reason for the hybridisation of these terms is the introduction of 'labyrinth' into the English lexicon. Early usages of labyrinth adopt the word 'maze' to elucidate the meaning of 'labyrinth', almost as though the one is used to define the other. In her discussion of labyrinths, Doob (*Idea*) demonstrates the medieval positioning of the terms in this way, whilst the *OED* lists a lineage of writers who continue this trend.<sup>8</sup>

Once the maze became part of the popular horticultural imagination, as a formal construction for garden games from the late fifteenth century onwards,<sup>9</sup> it was transformed from the prone turf variety to the hedge. This usage extended the unicursal template, adding decision nodes, loops and dead-ends for amusement and sport. Originally planted in yew<sup>10</sup> the extension of the height of the maze's parameters transformed the structure into potential clandestine meeting places.<sup>11</sup> Connections with fertility rites, bawdy games and lovers' bowers are reaffirmed in literature where the



maze is a frequent metaphor for the progression of a love affair,<sup>12</sup> an association heightened in *The Passion*. By solely referring to a 'maze' in *The Passion*, Winterson is making a specific acknowledgement of the English turf mazes found on village greens.

Neglect of these ritualistic early mazes is recorded by William Shakespeare in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (II.i) which positions the abandonment of these traditional rites as a part of a process of change and innovation.<sup>13</sup> Patterns cut into turf are difficult to maintain without regular walking and so, as fashion favoured formal garden designs, green mazes cut from turf are now extremely rare (pristine examples can still be found in Dalby [North Yorkshire] and Alkborough [Lincolnshire] though). Later garden fabrications moved anyway from the spiritual resonances of a unicursal track and become more complex and increasingly secular.

The growth of the maze from early turf examples into garden hedge varieties marked a further blurring of the distinction between the maze and the labyrinth. The raised and increasingly complex passageways of the hedge maze are in keeping with the earliest reports of the labyrinth, and so the cultural significance of the maze alters in the public imagination and coincides with an obfuscation of the differences between the two modes. It is this intricacy and confusion engendered by these later designs that causes Shields to remark in her fiction that a "maze is more likely to baffle and mislead those who tread its paths" (*Larry's Party* 81). Her protagonist, Larry, paraphrasing an aside made by Matthews (*Mazes*), determines that "the two words call up different *ideas*" (82); essentially that the maze stresses complexity and the notion of a puzzle in a manner not immediately associated with the labyrinth. Likewise, Fletcher confirms the psychological bewilderment that forms the core of maze etymology as distinctive from the labyrinth ("Image" 342, fn. 2). Paradoxically, however, Faris delicately navigates



the differences between the two forms in a manner that leads her to the conclusion that the connotations of the labyrinth are altogether more sinister. In doing so, she draws more directly upon the Cretan model and upon Borges' mediation of the terms (Faris, *Labyrinths* 201-202, fn. 2). What seems to be at the core of this inconsistency is whether the writer is more familiar with the idea of the ancient labyrinths of antiquity or if her/his knowledge is permeated through the ecclesiastical modelling of the form from the medieval onwards. The core mythical narrative concerning the labyrinth is infused with such inherent complexity and difficulty that makes it analogous with later versions of the maze. Though the distinctions between the maze and labyrinth are unsettled, the two terms involve a common association with passion.

The maze in *The Passion* functions primarily on three levels: firstly, the maze exists as the setting for the Venetian elements of the story; secondly, as a metaphor for narrative and the reading process and, finally, the maze also mediates questions surrounding the experience of space and its effect upon the formulation of identity. Winterson's description of Venice is of a partially organic and partially man-made construction that is a site of oppositions: "[t]he certainty of man-made stones contrasts the ocean's awfulness" (Stokes, *Quattro* 21). The city's changeability hampers Henri's navigation and renders him lost (112-113) and so unites contemporary attributions of the maze and its etymology.

Despite using the term 'maze' to describe Venice, the imagery present is more obviously evocative of the labyrinth and reinforced by the contorted Venetian streets that parody the man-made architecture of the labyrinth. Part-human and part-animal depictions of the woman and the cook at the centre of the maze correspond to the presence and fate of the Minotaur, whilst Napoleon's monstrous gluttony and disregard

for soldiers' lives is equally bestial. Mythic resonances of this type are substantiated by Judith Seaboyer who equates the cook's death with the slaying of the Minotaur as an inevitable action upon entering the labyrinth ("Second Death"). Winterson's parody of Asterion's destruction is elevated to a mythological killing or sacrifice by Bényei Tamás who observes that the action recalls the sacrifice of Christ and hence again evokes the Passion ("Risking" 205, 207). Employment of the term 'maze' possibly delays the comprehension of this event's inescapability, as latterly mazes have been viewed as monstrous in themselves but without the necessity of a predator within the structure.

Consistent with the image of the labyrinth is the notion that the city cloaks a secret centre, represented as a ghetto of the dispossessed, an interior which does "not lie on any map" (114).<sup>14</sup> The approach to the hidden city patterns the symbol of the infinite: "[w]e rowed in a shape that seemed to be a figure of eight working back on itself" (113). Residing within this privileged site, found through instinct (53), is an exotic and foreign milieu of starving children and political refugees. Entry into the central space is enabled either through the abandonment of the practice of everyday life or by the assistance of the boatmen. Such mysterious navigations, partly innate and partially observed, emphasise the importance of regional knowledge. Through the discovery of a city within a city the urban is effectively deconstructed.

Appropriately, within the hidden quarter there is a monstrous, nameless woman who reigns over the twilight world of the inner city and who despatches sphinx-like prophecies. She functions as a feminine counterpoint to the Minotaur as guardian of the maze. The female grotesque and her riddling recall the sphinx who, as Elizabeth Wilson persuasively argues, reflects the deep-rooted masculine anxiety that congregates



around the fear of the feminine (*Sphinx in the City*).<sup>15</sup> In *The Passion* the reader is presented with two such creatures, a female sphinx and a male Minotaur. Their presence subverts the idea of a single guardian and confers an ambivalent gendering of the city.

The cook especially is massively inflated and becomes the physical embodiment of the threat he represents. Winterson's fictions are marked by similarly grotesque figures, often female, whose bodies and personae are exaggerated and larger than those around them. In *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) this is visualised in the gigantic size of the Dog Woman, in the obesity of the seventh princess' husband whose gluttony finally causes him to explode, and in the melding of the grotesque within the domestic sphere to emphasise the threat of this space in *Written on the Body*. Winterson regularly subverts the normal demarcations and the perceived limitations of the body and chooses to emphasise excessive and inflated properties. In doing so, the text deconstructs, or indeed pressurises, the space that the body inhabits. The body in *The Passion* perpetuates the disintegration and fragmentation of the self through emphasis on the distended isolation of certain body parts. Kenner, paraphrasing Ayrton's writing about mazes, supposes that the labyrinths exhibited by the external and internal body "gave humans their first obsession with the labyrinthine" (*Mazes* 246). Such internal labyrinths are evident in Venice, caused by the city's capacity to mimic both the body and the labyrinth which transforms the journey through the centre of the city into a quest of self.

The canals of Venice are a mazy network that Winterson describes using corporeal metaphors. Experience of this urban body stresses a network of spaces and passages that is not a cohesive body; rather the parts are fragmented and isolated and, as



Purinton's notes ("Postmodern Romanticism" 80-81), are in a process of perpetual change underlined by Villanelle's description of her home as a "living city" (113). Dwelling here is similarly episodic and even the action of passion is disseminated in the Venetian carnival, with each body part savouring the thrill of lust or risk. Kisses stolen from strangers swinging above the street: "fill the mouth and leave the body free" (59).<sup>16</sup> Revellers in Venice can respond to love and sex without giving the whole of their selves because the external pleasures encountered in the street ensure that the heart is remote from the senses of the extremities. It is not until Villanelle gambles her heart that she risks everything and allows herself to be utterly consumed by passion. Ironically, this fragmentary system of interaction that initially Villanelle finds satisfying is analogous with Napoleon Bonaparte's sentiments concerning love, as the emperor wrote: "were I to fall seriously in love I would dissect my love piece by piece" (H.A.L. Fisher, *Napoleon* 248). Scott Wilson also quotes Napoleon's maxim to draw a comparison between Villanelle and the emperor ("Passion" 68). The use of such an emphatic correlation is problematic as Henri chooses Villanelle for her difference from Napoleon (88). Passion is not the totalising and uniting force that Henri hopes for, rather it encourages the unnatural segregation of the body, as evidenced by the episodes of cannibalism in Russia (82), the capture of Villanelle's heart (98, 109, 115-116) and the gambler's dismemberment (91, 93-94).

Although love and passion represent an avenue by which wholeness may be achieved, the labyrinthine journey undertaken and the realisation of passion frequently result in the understanding that the goal is usually not enough to achieve stability and cohesion. The journey through the maze allows the opportunity for a variety of protagonists to prove her/himself worthy of her/his intended partner by defeating the metaphorical or literal monsters at the heart of its structure. For the majority of these lovers the end of



their search is signalled by failure or loss; for example, the prince beheads his ideal woman (*Oranges*), the three brothers are scythed down by that which cannot be found (which ironically finds them [*Sexing*]), Pablo and Francesca are murdered (*PowerBook*) and Winnet and Jeanette are exiled (*Oranges*). Quests are evidenced as frequently futile or non-substantial, as in the case of *The Passion*, and yet repeatedly these participants show a dogged need to risk their heart again in the hope that they will chance upon a final fulfilling love.

The search for a configuration of identity forms one of the central themes contained within Winterson's work, where wounded manifestations seek wholeness. Thomas Fahy argues that such quests act as a defining structure within *The Passion* ("Fractured Bodies"). In this way, her questing protagonists enact cyclical courses striving for passions to reinvent, transform and refresh themselves only to ultimately learn that "no emotion is the final one" (*Oranges* 48). It is not the goal but the attempt contained within the journey that is perceived to be important. This ensures recursive continuity as protagonists re-enter their labyrinth to begin a quest for love through the filter of their previous failures.

Such narrative mazes that can be navigated in the pursuit of passion promote the realisation that these journeys are love. Taken from an ancient illuminated manuscript, the protagonist of *Written on the Body* becomes aware of the mazelike attributes of language and love where even the letter itself forms a map of a maze:

The first letter a huge L...The letter was a maze. On the outside, at the top of the letter L, stood a pilgrim...At the heart of the letter, which had been formed to make a rectangle out of the double of itself, was the Lamb of God. How would the pilgrim try through the maze, the maze so simple to angels and birds? I tried to fathom the path for a long time but I was caught at dead ends by beaming serpents. I gave up and shut the book, forgetting that the first word had been Love. (88)



This extract strongly suggests a biblical passage, possibly an adaptation of the Gospel of St. John where 'love' is a substitute for John's 'Word'. The 'clue' to this maze is love which indicates that desire enables travel through the maze and acts as an motive force that prefigures exit and hence enlightenment. Religion, passion and the maze are again united here as they are in *The Passion*. As Matthews (*Mazes*) and Faris (*Labyrinths*) attest, to view the labyrinth from above is to be given the opportunity to understand it. Manfred Pfister alludes to denial of this spectacle in *The Passion* as "we are never granted such a view from above; we are always in the maze and its overall *gestalt* remains a mystery" ("The Passion" 18).

Invariably, the journey undertaken in pursuit of love is a means to discover oneself. Winterson's writing advocates the pre-eminence of the love story as a means to engage with the unfathomable language of the heart in a mazy series of "metaphors for the heart" (*Sexing* 80). Geographies of love and passion reveal to the individual a true image of themselves lying at the centre of the maze:

When I fell in love it was as though I looked into a mirror for the first time and saw myself. I lifted my hand in wonderment and felt my cheeks, my neck. This was me. (154)

The culmination of passion offered by Winterson as the object of the ultimate quest is an unselfish state that acts as a catalyst for self-awakening and fulfilment for the individual. Moments of wholeness are fleeting gestures as the passionate encounters are often limited, brief and finite. Passage through these personal labyrinths is elliptical and is exemplified by the actions of Villanelle in *The Passion* who, upon exiting the maze, desires to re-enter.

Passion functions as an impetus to begin a journey and acts like a 'clue' through the maze, but the experience of passion in its various guises is not viewed as ultimately



fulfilling or healthy. If the process and passage of love is regarded as a central concern in her work then *The Passion* implies, by its very title, the zenith of this experience. The text details various consuming loves and yet the passion of the title is unclear. Palmer itemises the various loves within the novel and observes that these passions are all destructive (“The Passion” 106-7; “Lesbian Fiction” 165-166). In contrast, Tamás concentrates upon the definite article in the novel’s title as an echo or remembrance “of what our culture knows as the “original” passion” (“Risking” 199). *The Passion* constructs sharp juxtapositions between spiritual passion, through the allusions to Christ’s Passion, with earthly passion, epitomised by Napoleon’s and the cook’s lustful gluttony, whilst the only reciprocated passion between Villanelle and her married lover is ultimately doomed.

## 4.2 Venice: Winterson's Invention of the City

Located within *The Passion* is the depiction of an exuberant Venice whose definition facilitates dialectic conversation with other works of fiction, through intertextual nuances, regarding this mercurial city.<sup>17</sup> The composite of the city and the labyrinth, as Faris notes, juxtaposes “the physical qualities of cities and the nature of the texts and thoughts they engender” (“Labyrinth as Sign” 34). Sensitive to the fluid mix of the sea water and criss-cross canals, Winterson blends a liquid and intertextual narrative detailing a similarly elusive and convoluted sense of time and space.

Venice is a city of the imagination, the ultimate object of desire and home for Marco Polo in Calvino's *Invisible Cities*,<sup>18</sup> which is “like seeing an invented city rise up and quiver in the air” (*The Passion* 109). Winterson acknowledges the influence of Calvino's novel in her article “Invisible Cities”, whilst various critics have mentioned Winterson's work as derivative from the earlier piece (Pearce “Emotional Politics” 30; Grice and Woods *I'm Telling You Stories* 2). This invocation of Calvino's novella is noteworthy as the text draws a series of fictive cities that are in essence distilled from Marco Polo's remembrance of his Venetian home. In direct parallel with Winterson's text, the mediated city is fluid, fictional and desirable.

Venice has always fascinated and enticed, uniting themes of love and loss, death and despair in literature, poetry, music and film. The fourth canto of Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* meditates upon Venice, her decay and ruination, remarking that the city survives and is renewed by literature (IV.iv). Indeed, the canon of literature concerning the city causes Seaboyer to suggest, echoing Winterson's comments about her novel, that “we know [Venice] before we ever visit it” (“Second Death” 484). From



the tragic passion of *The Wings of a Dove*, the contamination of *Death in Venice* to the disquieting cinema of *Don't Look Now*, Pfister proffers that the suitability and adaptability of Winterson's title acts as a "subtitle of almost any fiction localised in Venice ever since the Renaissance" ("The Passion" 16). Purinton, however, identifies the exploration of passion as a typically Romantic notion ("Postmodern Romanticism" 71). Their comments unite a crucial thread of enquiry regarding the novel; namely, that this text is an amalgamation of multiple historical and literary narratives regarding the city and that these discourses invariably pivot around love and death. Winterson's decision not to visit Venice whilst writing *The Passion*, emphasises her scheme to "recreate Venice where it has always been strongest – in the imagination" ("Invisible Cities"). An emblem of Western desire, the city becomes both the vessel and metaphor for a conflation of narrative explorations arranged, as Pfister argues, in a flaky palimpsest ("The Passion"). It is, as Winterson reflects, a "cusp city, working at the intersection of art and life" ("Invisible Cities").

Venice is indicative of Winterson's use of a cityscape: as living backgrounds, her cities become characters within their own right as they invent and move. This magical essence is present in Venice and exemplified by the changes enacted upon Henri.<sup>19</sup> Though Venice is central to *The Passion* there are other urban portraits drawn, albeit briefly, in the cities of Paris and Moscow. Venice is a doomed collage of opposites, precariously situated in a swampy lagoon. The city is constantly threatened with submersion by the waters of the Mediterranean.<sup>20</sup> As Byron reasoned, the city is merely waiting the inevitability of its third age, having been born out of the waters and been both bride and lord of the ocean, Venice anticipates its final surrender to the sea. As a location chosen specifically for its inaccessibility and marshy location, Umberto Eco's novel *Baudolino* (2002) parodies the finding and forming of the great city.



A city glorified in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries with revenue achieved through its trading links with the East, Venice was suffused with art, architecture and outlandish pageantry. The city was also the point of departure for Marco Polo whose journeys “created Asia for the European mind” (John Masefield qtd. Davis, *Venice* 44). By the nineteenth century the memory of the city’s former glory days further exemplified the city’s otherness.<sup>21</sup> As an historical reality and now an ingrained notion (cf. Pfister, “The Passion” 18-19), Venice remains a mysterious blend of the European and Orient, the ‘other’ whose discontinuity lies partially within the borders of the known. Winterson further employs this ambivalence through the creation of an ‘inner’ city or ghetto that houses a foreign and impoverished underclass.

The real city’s dualisms are epitomised through its identification with both male and female signifiers. Venice is conversely known as the ‘Bride of the Ocean’ (the city is married each year to the ocean in an extravagant ceremony), and yet has the dominant masculine symbol of the lion as its emblem. In Byron’s poem *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* the terminology used genders Venice as both male and female within the same stanza (IV.xi). Seaboyer (“Second Death” 485) assigns the ‘abject’ foundation of Winterson’s city as a major factor in the feminising of the city and also notes that such feminine attribution is a common manner of discussing cities. On the other hand, Pfister (“The Passion” 21-22) makes problematic a singular gendering of the city as he contrasts female images and representations of Venice, both chaste and lascivious, with the masculine features of the city.

The most significant external factor concerning this unusual maze is the view of a labyrinth that is simultaneously both a city and a complex waterway. The meeting of



water and labyrinth is an intriguing combination and one which has been made increasingly common in leisure mazes that use watery elements (cf. Hever castle). Though rare in literature, it can be found in Pliny the Elder's writings about the river Meander (*Natural Histories* X.xxxvi-xxxvii), Andrew Marvell's *The Wreck of the Bermudas* (5-6) and in Milton's description of Lethe (*Paradise Lost* II. 582-586). The Venetian canals highlight their essential ambivalence as a devised and artificial container of seawater as they ebb and flow with the tide. Venice is, then, a dyadic mixture of the artificial and the natural, in a synthesis of the organic and the non-organic. This fusion of water and land creates an appealing union of opposites in an unstable threshold, which simultaneously unites and separates the two forces. Its combination or transformation of contradictory states<sup>22</sup> was viewed by Percy Shelley as: "Ocean's nursling [...a...] peopled labyrinth of walls" ("Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills" 95-96). The precarious situation of Venice is stressed by the paradoxical inevitability of submersion in the very waters that sustain it.

Fluidity and water<sup>23</sup> are consistently employed in Winterson's fictions to reflect the rejuvenating and transformative properties of liquid: to represent narrative flux and to imply an underlying metonymic evocation of the maternal and the feminine.<sup>24</sup> Perpetual wanderings of rivers parallel the protagonists who ostensibly seek love or to escape from the confines of their socially-ascribed destiny. Fascination with water is intensified in Winterson's recent publication *Lighthousekeeping* (2004), where the mercurial Silver acts as a guide for those on the watery maze.<sup>25</sup> Water represents freedom as an unstoppable flow away from its origin, and yet these watery allusions can also disempower. In *Gut Symmetries* (1997), Alluvia's name refers to the deposits of silt stranded on land by the river's flood and, inevitably, she becomes marooned between the warring partnership of Jove and Stella. In this manner, naming



acknowledges the fate of the person guiding and shaping their progress.<sup>26</sup> Winterson directly examines the onomastic process both through Dickensian-style naming and in a rejection of this Adamic tradition. Winterson's interest in nomenclature is manifest in Henri's refusal to name his companion bird, the mysterious Queen of Spades, and elsewhere in the anonymous romancer of *Written on the Body*.<sup>27</sup>

The naming of her key fictional protagonists demands attention; principally, the decision to adopt 'villanelle'<sup>28</sup> as an appellation complements the poetic texture of Winterson's writing. Certain phrasing can be traced which is echoic of the strong patterning of the villanelle form. Matthew Gilbert's review raises the novel's resemblance to this genre of poetry.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, the root of the villanelle composition was "a French verse form derived from an earlier Italian folk song" (Ferguson et al., *Norton* lxxv) which directly corresponds to Villanelle's and Henri's nationalities. Named by her stepfather, Villanelle appears to confirm the Gallic root of her name, though she appears indifferent to its origin: "He gave me a French name too. Villanelle. It's pretty enough" (53). The derivation of her name is acknowledged by the woman in the inner city who understands that such an appellation acts as a further obfuscation of Villanelle's identity, being at odds with her Venetian birth (54).

The verse form which begat her name is said to parallel a circular form of dance which presumably accompanied the Italian folksong. Notably the Cretan labyrinth is sometimes referred to as Ariadne's dancing place (Virgil, *The Aeneid* VI. 12-52) and so the invocation of dance on this level again recalls the image of the labyrinth (Evans, *Palace* III. 60-88). Moreover, Matthews (*Mazes*) traces the fertility dances in honour of Geranos as being particularly mazy, and Plutarch also depicts the saved Athenians dancing a labyrinth rite after escaping Crete (*Theseus* XXI).



The villanelle poetic form is a highly regulated and structured arrangement which contains a rigid and hypnotic repetition of rhyme.<sup>30</sup> An example of a villanelle embedded in literature can be found in Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where the protagonist Stephen Dedalus<sup>31</sup> composes the verse. Seaboyer specifically cites Joyce's villanelle as a primary source for *The Passion*, as she claims that Villanelle is the developed object of Stephen's lust: the bird-like, red-headed woman of *Portrait* ("Second Death"). Significantly, Stephen's villanelle is born out of an "enchantment of the heart" (235), which perfectly augments Winterson's subject matter.

Whilst some passing critical attention has focused upon the poetical naming of Villanelle, Henri's name is universally overlooked in criticism to date (up to the end of January 2005). Clearly, Henri is the French equivalent of the English 'Henry' and as such was popular and remains in common usage. It is valuable at this time to cite Withycombe's entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, as his commentary is entirely apposite. He writes that Henri stems from the Old German word *Haimrich*, a compound of the words "*haimi* 'house', 'home', and *ric* 'ruler'" (*Oxford Dictionary* 149). Exposed at the core of Henri's being is his association with the home coupled with his strong affiliations to his ruler Napoleon that leads to a doubling between himself and the emperor.<sup>32</sup>

Unlike Winterson's central characters, the object of Villanelle's passion is denied a standard name. Villanelle never refers to her lover by a name in the chapter she relates. 'The Queen of Spades' is given as the heading to the chapter and is a conflation of the woman and the card in Villanelle's story as recorded by Henri (94). Such a label for this unknown and enigmatic woman seems appropriate, and recalls the

anthropomorphised suits of cards in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (69-110). Onega in "History and Story-telling in *Oranges*" likens Jeanette's mother to Carroll's raging matriarch, whereby Mrs Winterson becomes "the "Queen of Spades" in *Alice in Wonderland*" (123, 144). The suit of spades props up the bottom of Carroll's hierarchal procession and is represented by the gardeners (cf. Hugh Haughton, *Alice* 313 fn. 1). This confirms that Onega, who works primarily with *The Passion*, has erroneously conflated Winterson's Queen of Spades with Carroll's Queen of Hearts. This slip is interesting as it accidentally re-affirms the connection between the two characters. Winterson's choice of name encourages this intertextuality as suitably the Queen of Spades acts also as the Queen of Hearts, as she jealously guards Villanelle's heart.

The sobriquet is given by chance as it is the lucky card of the city extracted from the deck denoting "the symbol of Venice" (59). Through its association with Villanelle's lover, the card stresses the femininity and duplicity of the city. The card is also a member of the modern Tarot<sup>33</sup> pack, in a deck considered to have originated in the city of Venice (see Papus, *Tarot*; Stuart R. Kaplan, *Classical Tarot* 21). Like Eliot's Madame Sosostriis in *The Waste Land*, Winterson exposes a figure of destiny at the core of her unreal city.

The Tarot's suit of spades (or swords) symbolises "progress or accomplishment for good or bad, sometimes misfortune and disaster" (Kaplan, *Classical Tarot* 130). Alexander Pushkin's *The Queen of Spades*, a skilfully-crafted short story of gambling, love and malevolence which functions as a subtext within *The Passion*, suitably places the card as an unlucky one: "[t]he queen of spades indicates some covert malice" (*Queen of Spades* 69).<sup>34</sup> The conniving attitude of Pushkin's Countess mirrors



Villanelle's lover, who seeks to imprison Villanelle forever by sewing her image and heart into a tapestry. Older and married, the Queen of Spades appears to be a predatory seducer, able to stalk the streets at night, and causes Patricia Duncker to remark upon the inequality of their relationship that unites "a wealthy married woman with a handsome palace and a wandering boatman's daughter" ("Jeanette Winterson" 84). Compounding this sense of imbalance, Carolyn Allen comments upon the control exerted by the Queen over her risk-seeking junior (*Following Djuna* 57). Indeed, the second meeting between the lovers occurs whilst Villanelle is in soldier dress and tends to allegorise their relationship in terms of a chess game, where the Queen is able to out-manoeuvre the limited pawn. An impulsive gambler,<sup>35</sup> Villanelle risks what she values most and in her arrogant youthful relationship there is concealed a representation of the gambling mantra: "You play, you win, you play, you lose. You play" (73). As Jan Rosemergy argues ("Navigating" 261), Villanelle risks rejection as well as the catarrh when she reveals her sex to the Queen of Spades. In contrast, her lover is free of the gamble as she has already penetrated Villanelle's disguise (71). Despite intimacy with her married lover, Villanelle is careful to keep her feet well-hidden and so is always disguised during this relationship.

The description of their love affair is surprisingly free from fantastical comment and so grounds their lesbian relationship in a sense of reality, and also normality. The conclusion of their liaison marks the cessation of this narrative mode as Villanelle apparently seems to float "in mid-air" (75) and in masculine guise to "walk on water" (76). Such miraculous events are interspersed with the mundane and routine business of everyday life and production in a city. Indeed, the elements of magical realism which sweep the reader along are arrested by the sardonic refrain: "[y]ou must admit it is not usual" (94). There seems to be a sense of ironic distance in the phrase, as in the



carnival aspect of Venice such activities are commonplace and condoned by her stepfather, who claims: “[t]here are stranger things” (61).

In this meeting of the unreal and the real the labyrinth typifies the conceit of the threshold, as Angus Fletcher argues in “Definitions of Threshold for a Theory of Labyrinths”.<sup>36</sup> It is fundamentally a bridging device that simultaneously separates and connects. The labyrinthine waterways function as a gateway allowing those born into the ways of the boatmen to access the denied hidden interiors of Venice. Foreign poets, artists and exiles are welcomed into the cultural milieu and subsumed by the city, forming part of a tapestry of nationalities. By associating the labyrinthine canals with a bridge it repels those who should not enter and imbues the city with a sense of liminality: “[b]ridges join but they also separate” (61). As Palmer notes (“The Passion” 113), the interest in bridges recalls Calvino’s “Phyllis” (*Invisible Cities* 90-91), a city laced by canals and bridges. The space of the bridge can mark an end point, a beginning, or a possibility. Calvino uses the labyrinthine in a manner similar to Winterson in that the bewilderment of these spatial passageways makes problematic the easy discussions of difference (cf. Fletcher, “Image” 343-344 fn. 10).

Though the canals necessitate the building of bridges, these bridges define and differentiate the two sides of the canal. The bridge simultaneously joins opposing sides and ensures they remain separate. The liminal space of the bridge “is tempting to all and you may lose your soul or find it here” (57). As a place of transformation the bridge is paradoxically tethered to, and yet free from, both sides. Venice is effectively a city of oppositions that cannot exist without its dichotomies, as a bridge needs both sides to exist.



### 4.3 Sex in the City: Difference, Exchange and Gender

In Renaissance Italy, Venice acted as a powerful economic port in the Mediterranean. This legacy was alluded to by Shakespeare where, in the opening of *The Merchant of Venice*, a handful of protagonists discuss trade on the city's famous Rialto Bridge. A localised financial epicentre literally over the water, this economic locale recalls the monetary district in London. Reflecting on her 1987 novel (*The Passion*), Winterson makes explicit reference to the inspiration of 1980s London, especially towards the saturation and hedonism of fiscal dealings in London at that time. Arguing that she constructed Venice as a mirror to the City, Winterson effectively confirms that Venice is an imaginative construction tied to a reality. This recalls Palmer's argument ("The Passion" 114-5) that Winterson's city is not based solely on Calvino-esque unreality but is a shifting, complex mirror on a contemporaneous London, whose socio-economic environment "is very much like the "real" world, insofar as it is both gender- and class-specific" (Asensio Aróstegui, "Subversion" 269).

Winterson's portrayal of Napoleon's military and personal actions creates a bridge from the past to the politics of the twentieth century. Napoleon displays a shocking disregard for his soldiers and consigns them to death in ill-judged and semi-fantastical schemes. Failing to recognise the ability and uniqueness that surrounds him and protected and inviolable in his tent, he is disengaged from any common reality. A priest with telescopic eyesight and a philosophical circus performer are delivered to the camp by others, but Napoleon appears oblivious to them as soldiers or people. Condensed to mere numbers, they are easily replaced by more eager young men. This exemplifies Napoleon's belief that to lose twenty thousand men crossing the channel would be "good odds" (20).

Such episodes are recorded with accountant-like precision by Henri in a manner required by historical discourse (24-25, 42-43). Henri's enrolment in the army followed a period of looking for passion. Finding no solace in religion he turns, as Villanelle describes, like a duckling and alights upon Napoleon (147). Henri's aspirational love for Napoleon leads to his recruitment as his chicken chef in the army. Deemed too weak to be a drummer, he is instead sent to tend to the broken and silent chickens who, with their "beaks and claws cut off", stare "through the slats with dumb identical eyes" (5-6).<sup>37</sup> Here the emblem of France, the proud cockerel, is emasculated, bound and mutilated in cages awaiting its inevitable death in mute acceptance. This pitiful confinement and hopelessness parallels the ignorance of the soldiers who blindly follow Napoleon and who are drowned, frozen and slaughtered in their thousands.

It is fitting that Napoleon's emphasis of cultural difference (79, 83, 105), fed by inflated oral narratives, leads his troops into the heart of the Russian Zero Winter where they turned into the nation's flag: "We're white with red noses and blue fingers. The tricolour" (5). His totalising and homogenising actions seek to construct an enforced community which Winterson suggests will attempt to swallow difference and individuality. Trekking through the Russian foothills, Henri's social contact promotes his identification of his own yearning for a figure of passion amongst by the locals: "[t]hey called the Czar 'the Little Father', and they worshipped him as they worshiped God" (81). In this manner, Henri is able to pity the naïvety of his previous self after he is made wiser by his first encounter with love's maze.

Discovering commonalities between cultures deflates Napoleon's grand rhetoric and yet the text also stresses the difference afforded to communities and to individuals. Acting



to resist Napoleon's totalising efforts, the Venetians intensify their particularities that mark them as Venetian and so their eccentricities become a stamp of their regionalism. Essentially, Venetian difference and resistance underlines their citizenship and it is from their nature that the city follows. This relationship evokes the meaning of *civis*, which applied to the citizen and the community before expanding to incorporate the habitat of these people (cf. *OED* etymology of 'city'). It is Villanelle's Venetian recognition of the differences between peoples, in sharp contrast to Napoleon's disinterest, which causes Henri to fall in love with her:

[T]he Russians could hide under the snowflakes. Then she said, 'They're all different.'

'What?'

'Snowflakes. Think of that.' (87-88)

Such anachronistic<sup>38</sup> multiplicities are in conflict with the edict of Henri's soldiering, where the soldiers' erroneous simplistic subdivision of society is conveyed in the periodical allusion to good and evil:

'Will you kill people, Henri?'

'Not people, Louise, just the enemy.'

'What is the enemy?'

'Someone who's not on your side.' (8, 79)

This duplicated phraseology occurs at the beginning of the novel (8) and later after Henri's disillusionment (79), indicating in its initial occurrence the beginning of Henri's search for his 'little father', whilst the same refrain signals the end of his hero worship for Napoleon. Such causality highlights the juncture of Henri's entry into, and exit from, the labyrinth. Both Shields (*Larry's Party*) and Robbe-Grillet (*In the Labyrinth*) use repetitious phrases to create a sense of the renegotiation of the past and present as features of the labyrinthine experience. The duplication or revision of the line is viewed through the futile outcomes of Napoleon's battle campaign and so exposes the transitory nature of Henri's initial findings. Just as Henri is about to start a second departure he is able to reflect upon his first and this represents the axis point where, at a moment of

repetition, the original utterance is exposed as tainted and altered. In contrast, his fellow soldiers have remained in their cyclical pattern of identical drudgery, rooted in the present, neither able to exit or progress through the labyrinth.

Villanelle's captivating attitude towards difference, that so contrasts Napoleon's aphoristic dogmatism, is an extension of her identification with the city of her birth. The intensification of difference within the city is not consistent and leads to some interesting repercussions for gendered space. Delineations of the Cretan labyrinth through Evans' research communicate a female space as a sacred dancing place for Ariadne and support Monique Wittig's and Sande Zeig's claim that the labyrinth is an ancient matriarchal signifier, the semblance of protected and gendered space (qtd. Palmer, "The Passion" 114). The symmetry of the *labrys*, that Evans found so compelling, alludes to the bi-fold female genitalia: the labium. After Evans' discoveries, the feminisation of the labyrinth was elaborated upon by Smith and Ayrton. However, the gendering of the maze is an increasingly fluid concern and made so by revelations about the contrived nature of Evans' methodology articulated by Rouse ("Double Axe") and MacGillivray ("Labyrinths"). Contestation of Evans' excavation creates a conceptual controversy that threatens the feminine lineage of the site.

The reconstruction of Venice foregrounds chance and instability as its intangible, changing streets allow a malleable play of destiny and identity. Yet the city is not solely an elusive composition of impossibilities because there are stark reminders that Venice also behaves in a deterministic fashion. The city's watery dimensions co-exist with the man-made streets and create tension and difference, evidenced in the moments at which the rule-governed society breaks through. Despite the perceptible rejection of



established hierarchies in the repelling of Napoleon there is also an overt adherence to these systems.

The contemplation of money forms a core concern within the Venetian environment. The loss of wealth, and consequently the fall from power, is seen in the predicament of the 'Woman of Means' in the hidden city and in Josephine's abandonment. Conversely, money is stressed as an enabling force through the freedoms available to Villanelle's lover and her own later position as an heiress to her husband's fortune. The economics of sexual exchange are integral to the politics of the city, as Villanelle loses her heart to a woman, but the rest of her sexual couplings described are with men (59-60) who, with the exception of Henri, are all the result of economic wagers. Palmer refers to the enforced mode of these encounters noting Henri's mother's marriage (11), the instance in the brothel (13-15) and Villanelle's role as *vivandière* (87) as a direct result of economics ("The Passion" 104). A product of her marriage, Villanelle is bartered and sold into prostitution and becomes the epitome of the fallen and public woman (98-99).

The usefulness of production is accentuated through Villanelle's prosperous stepfather who stresses the centrality of money: "you could make your fortune here... there's chances here for a young man" (117). His speech, directed towards Henri, emphasises the opportunities for men to succeed in the public arena. In comparison, her mother repeatedly stresses the need for Villanelle to remarry, ostensibly to consolidate her daughter's status. Confirmation of gendered roles accounts for Villanelle's exclusion from the boat industry and the restrictions of employment for a woman in general: "[t]here aren't many jobs for a girl [...] and what I would have most liked to have done, worked the boats, was closed to me on account of my sex" (53). In spite of her obvious ability, Villanelle is barred from earning her living on the sea and so, to slip the



obligatory restrictions placed on her, she disguises her sex and thereby achieves a degree of financial independence and freedom. That the segregation of space in the city is under threat is apparent in Villanelle's subversive ability to slip into different gender roles, which allows access into different gendered spaces. By disguising herself, Villanelle is able to access principally masculine areas and roles within the city. This masquerade frees her to work in the casino during the night where her elaborate face paint and costume accentuate the arbitrary boundary between gendered identities and serve both as a practical disguise and as a sexual lure. Her costume heightens her sexual ambivalence, as a façade that excites those who encounter her, and registers her position as "sexually indeterminate" (Scott Wilson, "Passion" 69).

The blurring of her sex, gender and sexual preferences raises concerns for *The Passion* as a narrative concerned with lesbian love and leads to criticism for her lack of a political agenda.<sup>39</sup> Both Doan ("Jeanette") and Moore ("Teledildomics") claim that through Villanelle's 'effortless' bisexuality, the 'de-sexed' narrator of *Written on the Body* and in the androgyny of *The PowerBook* there is an avoidance of the limitations placed upon homosexual identities. While these restrictions are not enforced through threat of violence or perceived abhorrence there is still a sense of the abnormality concerning Villanelle's lesbian relationship. However, Villanelle's comments that specify that her relationship was "not usual" might equally refer to its clandestine nature or the manner of their meeting, rather than as a pronouncement of a sexual nature.

In her identification of Villanelle's bisexuality,<sup>40</sup> Jana L. French argues that such a sexual destination is subversive, as it allows Villanelle to remain 'in between' ("I'm Telling you Stories" 93). This recalls what Andrea L. Harris determines as Winterson's exploration of "the space between self and other, word and object [...] between



masculine and feminine” (*Other Sexes* 130). By emphasising the “non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex”, Villanelle’s sexuality exceeds the delimiting normative practices of her society. Freedoms of this nature prompt Moore to argue that in Winterson’s work lesbian space is central and as such will not be marginalized or treated as ‘other’: thus her characters appear to have transcended the boundaries that restrict the readers of the text (“Teledildomics”). However, the apparent avoidance or surpassing of such constructions is problematic and only partial.

Exploration of gendered roles in the matrix of the labyrinthine Venice becomes the exploration of a prison, not only in the sense of the lineage from the Cretan model but also as an examination of possibilities for protagonists fettered by binary representations. As Duncker explains: “[w]e should not then be too preoccupied with trying to transform or to re-configure the prison of gender, but with planning an escape” (“Jeanette Winterson” 78). Such a decampment is not to be attempted on the wings of Icarus but rather in the reshaping of narratives into new forms. Kutzer (“Cartography”), Gonzalez (“Winterson’s Sexing”) and Nunn (“Written on the Body”) suggest that Winterson’s sexless narrator in *Written on the Body* disrupts the balance of polarised oppositions and so creates a third point of reference, that of an androgynous voice.

In a discussion of binary oppositions it seems appropriate to consider Villanelle, who is a liminal, hybrid creature of both land and water, a ‘hermaphrodite’ who bears both male and female signifiers. This ‘birth defect’ is a result of her mother, who as a foreigner to the ways of the Venetians, fails to execute the local pre-natal ritual correctly.<sup>41</sup> Carolyn Allen argues that her webbed feet are a precursor of Villanelle’s fluid gender play, as by carrying the mark of the patriarchal hierarchy she “is already a border creature” (“Following Djuna” 55). Of the same device, María Del Mar Asensio



Aróstegui writes that it undermines the dominance of the patriarchy (“Subversion” 270). For the Venetian male the webbed foot is the phallogentric marker of entry into the patriarchal order, and yet the men keep their feet hidden. Similarly, Villanelle is perpetually in disguise as she binds her male markings.

Even as Winterson establishes the gender of the web protrusions Villanelle bears she unsettles this distinction by the terminology used: “[e]nfolded between each toe were my own moons” (69).<sup>42</sup> By describing her masculine feet using an invocation of the feminine, Villanelle is again a union of oppositions. Her emphatic androgyny resists re-definition and, in a parody of circumcision, the tiny moons repel the phallic blade (52). Born in an apocalyptic eclipse, she is effectively part-human and part-fish: a fusion of two entities reminiscent of the crossbred Minotaur. Villanelle’s hybridity causes her to inhabit what Duncker refers to as the ““deadly space between”” (“Jeanette Winterson” 79; *The Deadly Space Between*),<sup>43</sup> represented by the space of the inner maze. Despite ending the novel as a mother, Villanelle exists between the gendered or sexed modes of behaviour and representation, in an indeterminacy that parallels the fluidity and the perpetual reconfiguration of the canals.

Villanelle is permanently in disguise and equally comfortable in her breeches as she is in skirts and dresses (66). With her compromised gendered identity she is able to fall in love as both a woman and a man. Notably the initial courtship advances with the Queen of Spades occur while she is disguised in male attire. Villanelle’s homosexual desire enters the marital home, as she arrives in disguise and so infiltrates the heterosexual unit. By subverting the outward markings of gender Villanelle is able to change, reconstructing her gender as it suits her. This prompts various critics to use Judith



Butler's seminal work *Gender Trouble*, which concerns gender as a performative act, in their reading of the text (cf. especially Elizabeth Langland, "Sexing the Text").

Although the restrictions of city life through the designation of social boundaries and taboos explicitly encourage the marginalization of homosexuality, this practice is disrupted in *The Passion* as individuals wear disguises and are able to move and shift, apparently beyond the control of boundaries. Villanelle's ability to bend the rules of social engagement is countered by a residual conservative vein of thinking. Ultimately, Villanelle's transgression of normative sexual practices is covert and so although her lesbian relationship is disruptive of domestic space it does not impinge unduly on the public sphere.<sup>44</sup>

Ability to slip arbitrary gender boundaries highlights the socially constructed root of these distinctions and emphasises the fluidity and possibility open to the individual. The mutability of the canals parallels Villanelle's ability to adapt and access the core of the city, since her decisions and destiny are formulated through inconstant chance and her tendency towards risk (the crooked path).<sup>45</sup> Cross-dressing allows Villanelle increased potential to wander and loiter during both the day and night though, as Palmer notes, her casino wear "draws attention to her gender while at the same time rendering it ambiguous" ("The Passion" 112). The ability to wander and traverse the city streets is principally a male pastime; women, with the possible exception of the prostitute, are excluded from this liberty. However, Villanelle's nameless married lover is able to walk the city streets with impunity as she dons the primary masculine role of the flâneur (71-72; 122).<sup>46</sup> She also enjoys the pleasures associated with her freedom: "[s]he is much prone to going to the theatre, and because [her husband] does not enjoy the stage she goes alone" (72). Her ability to travel alone is set in contrast to Villanelle whose

ease of passage tends to be accomplished through cross-dressing. Her lover bears the accoutrements of a moneyed existence: she dresses well and lives in an elegant house, and as a woman of independent means she transforms herself daily through her change of outfit: "She dresses for me. I have never seen her in the same clothes twice" (73).<sup>47</sup>

This passage reaffirms a sense of opulence but also that of disguise and renewal.



#### 4.4 Finding a Path: The Intriguing Cartography of the Maze

Winterson's fictions detail the journey towards an appreciation of selfhood and explore the tension between the impetus to record such movements, contrasted with the unreliability and impossibility of constructing accurate representations. In *The Passion*, the mechanisms of traditional history and cartography are thwarted and re-envisioned. Her historical writings are formulated in periods where maps are not universal or absolute. *Sexing the Cherry*, in particular, reinforces the fantastical nature of early mapmaking, whilst the dizzying encounter with Venice in *The Passion* raises problems of navigation and cartography. The map has become an accepted ideologically orthodox tool and it is perhaps the authenticity and 'truth' ascribed to conventional cartography that Winterson is scrutinising.

Attention directed towards issues of cartography relates to Venice's early naval dominance which transformed the city into a workshop for cartographers and as a departure point for explorers. Some of the most accurate maps of early cartography were produced in the city, a heritage that leads Buisseret to comment that the city was "the leading Italian state [...] in map consciousness" (6; cf. Thrower, *Maps*). In Winterson's city, though, progressive and rational methods of cartography are halted by the enigmatic canals which resist control and definition as evidenced by Napoleon's inability to remodel the city.

Cartography is born of a desire to mark and apportion space, to illuminate and make known. The map seeks to transcribe a representation of known space, in a transposition of experienced three-dimensional reality into a two-dimensional map: an action that Kathleen M. Kirby notes privileges "boundaries over sites" ("Cartographic" 46). Henri

Lefebvre concurs and remarks that the process reveals a “dominant tendency [to fragment] space and [cut] it up into pieces” (*Production of Space* 89, qtd. Massey, “Masculinity” 121). Such cartographies can be regarded as an epistemological emblem of the need to sanitise, contain and know space. It ostensibly makes manifest a truthful image, and yet paradoxically is exposed as constructing the opposite. By emphasising the fictive and ideological functions of the map, Winterson is able to offer instead the innovative narrative necessary to document the unfeasibility of the invisible or internal journey. Ironically, Venice parodies the segregation and dismemberment of space that Lefebvre alludes to and causes the city to exacerbate the process whereby comprehension might be achieved.

The urban setting of *The Passion* and its mazy rendition ensure that navigation functions as a key concern. Passage into the secret heart of the city, into that which remains most obscured and hidden, is reflected by the annotated phrase from *Oranges* and *The Passion* that “the cities of the interior do not lie on any map” (*Oranges* 111; *The Passion* 68; 114). This strongly implies that these journeys are non-recorded because to explore into the interior is to reject the authority of the map.<sup>48</sup> The unmapped expanse of the interior contrasts with Anaïs Nin’s primary use of the phrase in the *Seduction of the Minotaur* where her main character comments that avenues of the self are coming into focus, exposing “a map showing only the cities of the interior” (80; qtd. Faris, *Labyrinths* 135). Winterson’s rebuttal of Nin’s phrasing belies their common thematic concern with the exploration of the self.

The malleability of the city prevents mapping and suggests that an aerial view of the streets would not provide comprehension of the whole. Knowledge is localised and variable, at odds with the totalising absolutism of Napoleon’s conquests. Consequently,



in Venice we can read a history of the contestation of space, of the coloniser and the colonised, and ultimately the physical environment as a site of resistance.

In their discussion of Luce Irigaray's work concerning space and cartography, Cathy Stowers ("No Legitimate Place") and M. Daphne Kutzer ("Cartography") identify the drive to colonise and explore as masculine attributes and advocate that cartography is primarily a projection of the dominant to ascribe ownership to a site. The scope of Napoleon's empire is realised through the lines of a map; the territories, annexes and battles he has fought document his power and are evidenced on maps and historical accounts. Examination of these maps and the mapping process explicitly reveal the power structures that have designed and made them.

Although the explication of space is partially achieved through the process of cartography, the resulting rendition of space is merely a representation; significantly a translation or projection of an experience. The fictional Venice's deceptive streets refuse to be understood or restricted by cartography and yet, as Hugh Kenner proffers, "[m]azes [...] demand maps" (*Mazes* Preface). Paradoxically, the city that requires the map also prevents it by its very nature. In doing so Venice reiterates an absence that, as Hubert Damisch notes, was missing in the Cretan labyrinth, as Daedalus does not create or furnish Ariadne with a plan of the maze. Knowledge of its navigation comes from the maze itself in the laying down of the clue (Damisch, "La Danse de Thésée" qtd. Fletcher, "Image" 344-345, fn. 16). Here in this strange city maps are useless and quite unable to represent the morphing streets that confuse.

The geography of Villanelle's world is in a state of slippage formed as a site of contestation outside of the notion of cartography. Just as Henri's diary undermines



historical fact, Villanelle's narrative directly attacks presumptions of geography and its communication through cartography. Emphatically elusive, the city denies imposed linearity or cognitive approaches and this results in a rapidity of urban change that ensures the city is perpetually evading definition. Venice guarantees its uniqueness and malleable shape, as it becomes a living network:

The city I come from is a changeable city. It is not always the same size. Streets appear and disappear overnight, new waterways force themselves over dry land. (97)

Water appears aggressive and triumphs over the land by surging forward in an unpredictable fashion, and yet the transforming effect is not limited to the water because the city itself changes its boundaries, streets and overall shape. The city of mazes stresses its complexity as Venice is not simply a maze but a multitude of mazes which intersect, mingle and keep separate:

This city enfolds upon itself. Canals hide other canals, alley-ways cross and criss-cross so that you will not know which is which until you have lived here all your life. (113)

The misleading disposition of the city encourages the traveller to exhibit spontaneity when faced with uniform streets and to be guided and formed by the irregularity of the canals. The labyrinth of changing streets and waterways implies that strangers to the city are often lost or wandering within its structure, which is the embodiment of Jordan's dream-like town, where "the number of buildings in the city is always constant but they are never in the same place from day to day" (*Sexing* 42; cf. *The Passion* 112). Reactions of confusion and doubt are formulated by foreigners within these cities whilst, by contrast, the inhabitant of the city becomes a nomad within her/his own environment, further emphasising the human condition of the perpetual wanderer.

The innate ability of the locals to navigate the city and their intimate knowledge of its bends enable them access to each of the islands. Local knowledge ensures that the



internal Venice can never be captured by Napoleon and as such remains evasive and not mapped in the usual sense. The fluid inner city repels the invading French and instead maintains a sealed interior space away from the conquering force. Napoleon's binding and remodelling of the organic is futile, as after the capture of this fantastic city of mazes Venice begins to revel in its own excesses: "[w]e became an enchanted island for the mad, the rich, the bored, the perverted" (52). Strikingly, the catalyst for this fecund progression into hedonism is the annexation of the city, which signals a concentration of Venice's 'ex-centric' aptitude as a separate city that becomes intensified and excluded. Winterson's layered Venice is a grotesque island of shifting streets cut off from mainland Europe and allowed to grow beyond Napoleon's overlord control. The outward lustre of Venice's carnivalesque existence belies a deeper, darker core, glimpsed as a shadow beneath the veneer of the surface.

Napoleon's colonial advances display the practice of an invading force to conquer and rename, making the land of their acquisition a demonstrative mirror of their homeland. This process is resisted both by the people of the city and by the city itself. Knowledge of the city's mazes are inexorably deferred as the urban thrives upon the ambivalent and unsettling forces of passion and faith, resulting in a citywide sensation of risk and gambling<sup>49</sup> that is resistant to the colonising force.

Part-submerged streets are constantly altering with daily tidal patterns, encouraging discontinuity and plurality, where the rational is quite literally lost: "Your bloodhound nose will not serve you here. Your course in compass reading will fail you" (49). This suggests that instinct, education and logic are worthless qualities when attempting to navigate the city. Henri's perambulations in the Venetian space denote the wanderer, a figure who "lack[s] a place" (de Certeau, "Walking in the City" 103). During his



labyrinthine trajectories, Henri repeatedly calls for home as the place he desires. This imagined and often-thought of place is intensified through its absence. Used to Napoleon's straight roads and linear enforcement of orders, Henri is ill-prepared to understand the concept of this shifting city, let alone successfully map and find his way:

I got lost from the first. Where Bonaparte goes, straight roads follow, buildings are rationalised, street signs may change to celebrate a battle but they are always clearly marked. Here, if they bother with street signs at all, they are happy to use the same ones over again. Not even Bonaparte could rationalise Venice.

This is a city of madmen. (112)

In this fictionalised Venice of uniformity and repetition, Henri is unable to differentiate one street from another, as his wanderings confirm the irrelevance of the map. The sensation within the city is that of half-recognition and misrecognition, as an environment of homogeneous signs and the unfamiliar creates a site crisis for the rational. Writing of city space, Kevin Lynch identifies systems, grids and networks as determinable nodes of city orientation, and yet Henri experiences these signifiers in inconstant and myriad form which leads to confusion and disorientation (*Image of the City* qtd. Caws 2). Such repetitious experience is evocative of ecclesiastical labyrinths' over-stylised coils, and yet the altering and tortuous nature of the streets is in keeping with the Egyptian and Cretan examples.

The desire to eradicate difference and nature is exhibited by Napoleon's creation of a formal garden. The futility of this containment is perceived by Villanelle:

He tore them down to make a public garden. Why did we want a public garden? And if we had and if we had chosen it ourselves we would never have filled it with hundreds of pines laid out in regimental rows. They say Josephine's a botanist. Couldn't she have found us something a little more exotic? (52-3)

Destruction of the four churches that dominated the islands of Venice and their replacement with an artifice of pathways and formal displays forms a critique of a garden maze: one constructed without passion. By destroying these ecclesiastical



buildings Napoleon seeks to replace this semblance of passion with the rational. The formalised and nouveau-landscape indicates Napoleon's wish to force the natural into a regulated, containable arrangement, whereby the rigidity of such formulations parallel social hegemony, echoing both its infrastructure and the firm lines of command. Palpably, here is the need to control the organic, to redraw and redefine its boundaries and to replace the chaotic with an image of harmonized proportions.

The phantom of religion is important in Venice as the routine activities of the lowly peasants and fisher folk are elevated through the intensification of religious parallels. Christ-like attributes are ascribed to sexual exchange, the execution of a soldier, the crown of rats and the episode of walking on water amongst others: features that cause Tamás Bényei to comment that *The Passion* explores a common dissemination of Christ's Passion ("Risking" 207-208). Ubiquitous miracles, religious allegories and fantastical events amongst the common populace elevate personal suffering to Christ's Passion, so that the aura of the Passion, and hence suffering itself, permeates generically. Individual pain is given voice, and through associations with Christ's sacrifice a sense of ritual, religion and repetition is stressed. These factors are evocative of the labyrinth's ancient antecedents.

Maps are physically present in *The Passion* where Napoleon, as coloniser and emperor, holds the globe "tenderly with both hands as if it were a breast" (4), feminising the lines of the spherical map.<sup>50</sup> Whereas Napoleon fantasises about being able to invade and capture the territories shown on the globe, Henri is passive and watches in awe and silence, whilst lying on "an old and impossibly folded map of the world" (16). This confirms his early role as an inert onlooker who observes the boundaries of the French empire expand without truly becoming involved.



The futility of man's wanderlust resulting in mapping is exposed in the actions of the husband of the Queen of Spades who pores over archaic maps in search of the mythical Holy Grail, but fails to recognise the treasures all around him in this magical city (67; 119). The couple's marital house is a puzzle, containing an eccentric and improbable collection of articles recalling a medieval taxonomy. Villanelle's narrative surveys a catalogue of Chinese ornaments in another reminder of the exotic East and "also a strange assortment of dead insects mounted in cases on the wall" (66). This macabre hobby intimates a certain embedded sinister tendency concerning the Queen of Spades which is strengthened by her intention to imprison Villanelle's heart within a tapestry, as a prize amongst many. Her husband's role as a collector is subtly contained within his wife's actions. Their shared trait can be viewed as an extension of Seaboyer's comments about the city that functions as a "museum" ("Second Death" 484). Henry James in his *Portraits of Places* also confirms that the "Venice of to-day is a vast museum" (qtd. Davis, *Venice* 157). Perhaps a 'necropolis' would be more accurate, as death is always threatened in this city in keeping with the menace of the labyrinth. Death and passion are united when Henri discovers Villanelle's fluttering heart in a jar, resembling a pickled specimen. The room he enters also contains two coffins, possibly to denote the finality of death and the certainty of the heterosexual couple's fate. The discovery and rescue of Villanelle's heart in the partially completed tapestry suggests Penelope's shroud for Laertes:

Why was she so upset? Because if the tapestry had been finished and the woman had woven in her heart, she would have been a prisoner for ever.  
(121)

With the weaving of the heart she would have become bound and unable to continue in the maze or to gamble her heart again. This episode emphasises that Villanelle most fears stasis as the freedom to travel even internally, as epitomised by Henri's final



mental wandering, is paramount. Henri occasionally lapses into inactivity to stare at the stars, but for Villanelle it is “unnatural for her to be still” (123).<sup>51</sup> In this way she remains always on the run. Such dynamism forms the need to initiate new forms of passion and maintains the hope that the quest will eventually be successfully completed.

Henri’s second cycle of maturation is linked to his time in Venice where the streets undermine the authenticity of the map and cause him to become lost within its living matrix:

‘I need a map.’ ‘It won’t help. This is a living city. Things change.’ (113)

There is an initial helplessness about Henri, a need to be guided and a singularity in his endeavour that supports his belief in a sole outcome, that there is a single (straight) path through the maze. Within the evanescent streets, he appears to strive for a solution, for one constant place, whilst Villanelle feels the murmurs of parallel lives in the ever-changing “city of mazes”. These oppositional forces, embodied by the two protagonists, are accentuated by the contrasts of location within the novel, especially between depictions of the city and the country.

Henri appears to find such natural parallels comforting and frequently associates the feminine with rural imagery. His descriptions of Villanelle as the sun bearer with her fiery red hair conflict with her own delineations of self as a lover and creature of the night. The light disseminated through her hair is a guide and reassurance to the Frenchman, as her confident movements navigate the maze for him and act to illuminate its structure. He adores the manner in which her tresses envelop him as he wishes to be contained and surrounded by such a comforting sign of her femininity which marks a return to the safety of the domestic and to the maternal: “Her hair was down. I was in the red forest and she was leading me home” (129). Again he wishes

to be directed or guided and the ultimate return is to his home. As an inmate on the rock, Henri is unable to look at Villanelle's brilliance in the prospect of the lagoon as her presence seems to burn him. He views her instead through her reflection in the mirror, like Perseus surveying the Medusa, unable to view her directly for fear of petrification (152). Her hair, once a reassuring forest to be lost within, is now transformed into an aggressive and consuming entity that recalls literary descriptions of the Gorgon Medusa's locks as a maze of snakes (Edmund Spenser, *Epithelial*, 1595 cf. *OED* 'maze'). The significance of her hair has changed or perhaps it is Henri's capacity to deal with its meaning that has altered. His description of her hair moves from images of comfort, through holy resonances to that of bewilderment. The auburn hair and Villanelle herself are variously described as both the maze and the means to navigate towards home. In a conflation of the labyrinth myth, Villanelle as Ariadne the clue-bearer is combined with Henri's incarceration, which echoes Ariadne's abandonment on Naxos. This compounds the implication that Henri is unable to travel life's maze without Villanelle's guidance or Patrick's help. His helplessness is evidenced when, after losing Patrick, he returns to the idea of navigation: "I wanted him to see us home" (108). Henri is still searching for a guide through the maze, to take responsibility for its navigation.



#### 4.5 Recalling Home: A Labyrinthine Re-construction of Time

In *The Passion* elements and protagonists from canonical history co-exist with more prodigious components. Figures who have been allotted historical gravitas are not erased from Winterson's document and so ensure that her work is not simply an inversion of existing premises. Josephine and Napoleon make brief appearances at the moments they impinge on Henri's life and through their manifestations outwardly valorise established gendered oppositions. The emperor is the epitome of empire, an apparently rational and methodical man who, crazed with ambition, ravenously engorges himself on chickens. In comparison Josephine is aristocratic, practical and feminine, with a predilection for melon slices. She is remarkably resourceful and through her gambling parallels Villanelle; and yet, unlike her counterpoint, she refutes the gambling inevitability as "[s]he never lost" (29). Josephine and Napoleon exist in a predictable world untainted by chance as they lie preserved in history whilst the fictional characters representing the periphery of recorded history are awash with possibility, and survive in the present as initially they are denied a past. The stability and determinacy of the emperor and empress is contrasted with the actions and representations of Henri and Villanelle.

Henri keeps a diary, in a pastiche of Napoleon's exiled writings, to record his feelings and is often perceived as feminine or childlike.<sup>52</sup> His use of the genre engages with the notion that the autobiographical heightens and elevates the writer's experiences, and illuminates that which has been hidden.<sup>53</sup> Winterson employs and manoeuvres the styles of the autobiography and the diary, from the more specific adolescent questioning in *Oranges*, through Henri's authorial sophism, to the experiments of *Written on the Body*, *Art & Lies: A Piece for Three Voices and a Bawd* (1994) and *The PowerBook*.



Revelling in the distinctions between biography and autobiography and in deconstructing its conventions and traditions, she claims: “there is no such thing as autobiography there is only art and lies” (*Art & Lies* 141). This sentiment is contained in Henri’s knowing remarks that permeate his autobiography: “I’m telling you stories [t]rust me” (5, 13, 160). The unreliability of narrative voice is a recurrent theme in Winterson’s writing and is perceived as crucial by Helena Grice and Tim Woods, who use the example of Henri as a marker of the fictionalism of history, as well as using his phraseology as a title for their collection (*I’m Telling You Stories* 1). Henri’s faculty for openness and his apparent naivety is contrasted to his role as the erratic narrator whose knowing deception is also punctuated by an inability to mould language to communicate an event. Meaning becomes lost in-between as: “[n]ow, words and ideas will always slip themselves between me and the feeling” (26). When Henri attempts to portray Villanelle in unambiguous terms she evades description and causes him to remark that the feminine is repeatedly intangible: “I wrote about her or tried to. She eluded me the way the tarts in Boulogne had eluded me” (36). Such disarming honesty masks Henri’s improbity and yet this unreliable feature is accentuated later through his mental deterioration. Although this madness occurs at the end of the novel, the format of the text in a series of memoirs means that Henri’s ambivalence infiltrates the text earlier than is first recognised.

The ongoing creative process of Henri’s journal, detailing his actions and emotions, is routinely alluded to, indeed, María del Mar Asensio Aróstegui (“Subversion”) strongly asserts that Henri’s account is written, whilst Villanelle’s stories are oral and in the style of a series of folktales. Such a reading of the text is undermined by the salient marker from these written accounts that “I’m telling you stories [t]rust me” (spoken by Patrick 40; by Henri 5, 13, 160), which stresses both the explicitly oral quality of the record as



well as its unreliability. Similarly, the magical and fanciful elements of Venice are contrary to the ascribed arbitrary formulation of normality and reality and as such would be erased or distanced from factual discursive practices.

Away from Venice, Henri also recounts prodigious tales of localised and fantastical events that complement Villanelle's narratives. Henri disassembles and routinely invents stories and, though the wonder of Venice is initially beyond his comprehension, he encounters miracles and superhuman qualities in Russia and France during his relationships with Domino and Patrick.<sup>54</sup> Though fantasy is not restricted to Venice it does reach an apotheosis in the city. Or rather is it that such magical realism is so often the domain of the suppressed, especially the colonised? Neither Domino nor Patrick are French, nor, obviously, is Villanelle, and each of these characters are active participants in exceptional events, whilst Henri as voyeur of their enterprises denigrates myth into reality with the bloody dissection of the cook.<sup>55</sup>

As a collector of these magical stories, Henri seems to hold these vignettes at some distance with scepticism as though he distrusts them or is fearful of their power. Henri's disagreement with Domino attests that he intends to record an emotive narrative rather than a factual account:

'What makes you think you can see anything clearly? What gives you the right to make a notebook and shake it at me in thirty years, if we're still alive, and say you've got the truth?'

'I don't care about facts, Domino, I care about how I feel. How I feel will change, I want to remember that.' (28-9)

Domino lives in the present, dispensing with the possibility of the future, and only occasionally lapses into stories about his colourful past: "[t]here's only now [t]he way you see it now is no more real than the way you'll see it then" (29-28).<sup>56</sup> Usually the characters build up complex narratives about themselves and the world around them to



articulate their experiences, but Domino is marginalized in this way and remains on the periphery of Henri's narrative.<sup>57</sup> Wounded and voiceless, Domino scratches in the snow: "FUTURE. And then he put a line through it... Future. Crossed out" (86). As Domino demonstrates the future is glimpsed only in a state of erasure (29, 86).<sup>58</sup> In the Zero Winter the past is reshaped and rewritten whilst the future is out of reach superseded by the present.

Wearing the mantle of a soldier, Henri engages in a routine of daily existence bound to notions of survival. However, the realisation and rejection of the ferocity of Napoleon's personality cause him to seek a future away from the battle's perpetual present and reconsider his past. Alienated from a sense of self, he recognises that he remains in disguise (100) and so begins to search for home, for a place of permanence that will render any further performative roles obsolete. Following Villanelle partly as a need for a guide and also out of love, his encounter with her city is far removed from the comparable certainties of his pastoral upbringing.

As David Lodge pointed out in his early and sensitive review of *The Passion* ("Outrageous Things"), the text is specifically located within the period of high Romanticism<sup>59</sup> and France is in a stage of post-revolution transformation, specifically at the cusp of welcoming a monarchy in a different guise (32).<sup>60</sup> In keeping with ideas of the Romantic, Henri is closely aligned with nature through his pastoral childhood, his feminised inclinations and his innocence. The appropriation of seasonal change and agrarian imagery are evident in his descriptions of women in his writing and in the assembly of his memoirs into four elementally-inspired chapters. Henri's discourse consistently records events in the vocabulary linked to nature. Through his writings, prostitution is elevated as he likens the episode in the brothel with the natural imagery



of his home and the domestic: “[h]er hair was yellow like dandelions and like a living rug” (13). Henri’s portrayal of the prostitutes contrasts the brutal actuality of the place with the narratives he had been told. In the unfamiliar starkness of the brothel he retreats into remembering smells from home: “I was thinking about porridge” (14). The union of the two images causes a conflation of homely and commonplace pleasure with a gigantic vision of femininity.

Home in the country is elevated through its contrasts with the war to an Edenic paradise, an ultimate point of return. After deserting the troops in Russia, Henri is doomed never to return and through his disillusionment recognises the illusory narratives that ‘fashion’ home:

Home became the focus of joy and sense... To keep home safe, to keep home as we started to imagine it...And the heaviest lie? That we could go home and pick up where we had left off. That our hearts would be waiting behind the door with the dog. Not all men are as fortunate as Ulysses. (83)

Henri’s reference to Odysseus by the Roman name ‘Ulysses’ creates an amount of textual play. The setting of *The Passion* easily predates Joyce and yet there would seem to be a deliberate allusion to *Ulysses* (both Tennyson and Joyce). The nomenclature of ‘Ulysses’ also forms a closer alliance with the writing of Virgil, whose work *The Aeneid* draws prolonged and derogatory comment on the Greek hero (Book II). Both Homer’s epic poem denoting Odysseus’ adventures and Joyce’s *Ulysses* are labyrinthine in order to accentuate the central protagonist’s elliptical wanderings. Odysseus’ return to reclaim his home, throne and wife, the paradigm of the successful quest narrative, is inevitably tinged with concerns over the finite nature of such stability. Depending on the reading of *The Odyssey*, Henri’s adventure is either tinged with possibility, pessimism or a delicate balance between both of these outcomes.



The possibilities inherent in the narrative's construction, the faltering threads of discourse and the stories that remain untold are reflected in Winterson's discussions of time. Spiralling and agitated depictions of time result in multi-layered representations of past, present and future which parallel the torturous runs of the maze. Her desire to re-examine personae through later intermingled textual re-workings creates a continuum of narrative concerns, enabling the reader to trace the tangential evolution of a protagonist. Without moulding anything as definite as a serial, Winterson reintroduces, amongst others, the flame-haired lover, the hopeless traveller buffeted by time and the grotesque woman, all recursively reprising their pursuit of love.<sup>61</sup> The accumulation of time is represented in many existences compressed into one body, the stardust in our gut and in the re-emergence of the utterance "we are multiple and infinite" (*PowerBook* 103). The action results in a sense of cyclical temporality; of time without end going beyond in *Gut Symmetries* and *The PowerBook* the distinctions of past, present and future. The essence of these two souls are felt in her other fictions where similar schemata and characters are a-temporal as the narrative flits between different time periods.

An apparently linear narrative is made problematic by the interspersions of Henri's persistent phrase:

I'm telling you stories. Trust me. (5, 13, 160; spoken by Patrick 40)

This discursive marker associated with Henri is primarily spoken by Patrick (40) and also appears in Villanelle's story (69) and so contorts the expected chronology and narrative progression. Scott Wilson refers to this line as a means to trace the complexity of the interwoven narratives ("Passion" 68). Likewise, some of Villanelle's phraseology infiltrates the text apparently before she and Henri meet: "You play, you win, you play, you lose. You play" (43). These moments accentuate the constructed



and opaque nature of Henri's writing, and expose the extent of his authorial manipulation over events in the past. Henri's autobiography subtly intrudes on earlier sections in a manner that outwardly emphasises the constructed fabrication of the journal whilst simultaneously engaging in a technique of prolepsis (cf. 24-25).

Henri's initial intention to keep a diary to remind him of his feelings is perhaps unnecessary as latterly he is routinely visited by the ghosts of his journey. He lives in a mimesis of the past, in a shell that encourages the repetition of events to play out from his memory, "in eternity because time has stopped" (134). Meanwhile, Villanelle has exited her maze after finally re-visiting the Queen of Spades and stands on the threshold to await the lure of the gamble to re-enter. Though Henri and Villanelle appear to have chosen different outcomes, Villanelle is also altered by her experiences and this is demonstrated by her refusal to dress up. In this topography of love, both have made their existence into a personal labyrinth.

Ayrton's writing regarding the trans-temporality of the maze is useful here as "in a maze, time crosses and recrosses, and one time lives in another" (qtd. Kenner, *Mazes* 250). Although he is discussing the representations of Jerusalem in ecclesiastical labyrinths, this holds true for the text, as anachronisms link past and future events in the now of the reader and create a semi-real, semi-mythical zone akin to Foucault's definitions of the 'heterotopic'. In this way, slivers of different sites co-exist in Venice operating as a "system of opening and closing that simultaneously makes them both isolated and penetrable" (Edward Soja, "Heterotologies" 16).

Henri is acutely aware of the illusory nature of his romanticised vision of home as his retreat into interiority on San Servelo<sup>62</sup> is a deliberate method to lose himself in the

twilight of his memories rather than seek an inconstant outcome. His nostalgia for the past contained within his musings of an Arcadia is, as Langland writes, a remembrance of “stability embodied in a pastoral paradise [...which] never existed; life is flux, quest, and challenge” (“Sexing the Text” 102). Appropriately, Henri has already exposed the realisation that home is a myth of his own and others making; rather than discounting such constructions he chooses instead to embroider upon them and so lose himself in a cloak of narratives.

The final chapter of *The Passion* is mostly located in the ‘mad house’, which sits isolated and set apart from the Rivo Alto on an island in the lagoon. There is a sense of destruction and of the futility of unreturned passion in this barren setting which is paralleled by Villanelle’s meeting with her former lover. On the desolate island, Henri tends his sparse garden like *Candide* and spends his time rewriting incidents from his past in order to explicate his daily experience: “I stay here by choice. That means a lot to me” (152). This marks a conscious decision to live in a temporal limbo. In the house of his memory and from his notebooks he reconstructs his family, friends and enemies whose presence comforts him: “[t]his is my home, I can’t leave” (149), in a manner that enables him to reform his point of origin and his present. At the bridge forming the intersection between time past, present and future and in a state of madness, he is at his closest to Villanelle’s Venetian understanding of time and destiny. Christy L. Burns, writing about Henri’s sanity, wonders whether it is a conscious choice or an instinctive reaction that causes Henri to linger (“Fantastic Language” 290-291). Certainly, Henri emphasises the extent to which he chooses to remain on the island, however futile this decision might be considered. It forms a moment in which Henri controls his destiny as he deliberately rejects chance.



Henri's recognition of himself is achieved through Villanelle and the power of her body to "[w]ordlessly [explain] me to myself" (122). Her ability to uncover and elucidate his own experience marks the end of his pursuit for love: "I'm not looking, I've found what it is I want and I can't have it" (122). Being no longer willing to accept a relationship based on chance he escapes into the past, into a state that denies the future and which allows him to retell, re-experience and reformulate his history.

In the barren setting of San Servelo there is a convergence of intertextual patterning from Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), Eliot's *Four Quartets* and, as Pfister speculates, Percy Shelley's poem "Julian and Maddalo" (composed 1818, published 1824). Pfister identifies the narrator of Shelley's poem as a resident in the madhouse of San Servolo/Servelo and so construes the possibility that he and Henri "might have told [...their stories] to each other" ("The Passion" 15; Pfister and Schaff, *Venetian Views* 1). The significance and presence of Eliot's *Four Quartets* is intensified by the structuring principles that it perhaps lends *The Passion* (cf. Seaboyer, "Second Death" 492-493). The intolerable 'Zero Winter' of the Russian plains is a pun upon the name of Eliot's 'Zero Summer' (Helene Bengtson, "Vast" 18 fn. 2) while temporal opportunities open to Winterson's protagonists bear the echo of the insistent intertextual motif drawn from Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "[t]ime present and time past/Are both perhaps present in time future, /And time future contained in time past" (1-3).<sup>63</sup> This interconnected cycle of time allows the possibility of multiple destinies to run concurrently and cyclically.

David Lodge in his review of *The Passion* berates what he sees as Winterson's apparently random use of intertextual antecedents, taking as an example her adoption of the line from Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*: "[h]uman voices wake us and



we drown” (“Outrageous Things” 131; *The Passion* 74). However, such anachronistic ventriloquism is essential as it signifies a labyrinthine appreciation of time. Henri is immediately present in a variety of different pasts and in the now of the reading, reinforcing the motif that “the future is foretold from the past and the future is only possible because of the past” (62). This confirms that the relationship between the past, present and future is co-dependant.

Fluid temporality is emphatically Venetian, a factor that underlies Henri’s inculcation into the culture. This temporal flux is conspicuous in the threshold of the labyrinth, in an environment that opens up an exploration of chance and flux in contrast to the regulated space of the logocentric sphere:

This morning I smell the oats and I see a little boy watching his reflection in a copper pot he’s polished. His father comes in and laughs and offers him his shaving mirror instead. But in the shaving mirror the boy can only see one face. In the pot he can see all the distortions of his face. He sees many possible faces and so he sees what he might become. (26)

In this reconstructed incident from his past, Henri’s time in Venice appears to have awoken in him a sense of the plural which is then superimposed upon his childhood memories. In this distorted recognition of self a multitude of possible outcomes, destinies and identities are made manifest in the feminised copper pot before being restricted and replaced by the mocking patriarchal figure whose imposed singular meaning is in the form of a homogeneous image. Reflections in the pot signify multiple ephemeral outcomes and act as an analogy of the effect of the Venetian labyrinth.

The taut surface water of the Venetian canal makes a thin boundary between the parameters of these plural lives. At the fluid intersection between time and place, time is treated as a sinuous maze or a river that “can flow in circles; its eddies and whirlpools regularly break up its strong press forward” (*Gut Symmetries* 104). There are multiple



choices and chances as “[s]pace is not simply connected. History is not unalterable. The universe itself is forked” (*Gut Symmetries* 160). Like the gyre in the labyrinth, turn opens onto turn in an advancement that continually facilitates “a new beginning [...and] a different end” (*PowerBook* 4).

Villanelle takes the past with her as a constant companion and can sense in the watery mirror possible paths or destinies that may open for her. Such existences are multiple and offer differing outcomes, made possible because of the interconnected nature of the past with the future. Villanelle is sensitive to this type of experience:

I have caught myself in that other life, touched it, seen it to be as real as my own. And if she had lived alone in that elegant house when I first met her? Perhaps I would never have sensed other lives of mine, having no need of them. (144)

These lives touch at points of decision where a choice made or chance encounter leads inexorably down a different path. In a parody of the fortune teller, Villanelle examines her hands to see if there is a physical echo of her lives' multiple presence, but the faint glimmer of these other lives is only seen in the rippled reflection in the canal water: “[p]erhaps our lives spread out around us like a fan and we can only know one life, but by mistake sense others” (144). Knowledge of these contemporaneous existences is contained in her body, through the fan of webs she hides in her boots and etched onto the lines on her palms.

## 4.6 Coda

Winterson's application of the maze unites the pursuit of passion with the discovery and transformation of the self. This investigation of the journey towards love is a constant theme in her writing and so too is the examination and re-evaluation of the body. Winterson's interest in the maze is elsewhere extended in her discussion of the Internet which, in the sublimation of the maze narrative, forms a malleable ex-centric space where identities can be created, transformed and envisaged in a state of flux. The freeing and idealistic properties of the web contrast with this earlier fiction as the maze within *The Passion* both contains the over-structuring of systems of control and the space whereby such practice may be subverted. Ultimately, Henri remains in the labyrinthine prison of his mind and in a state of near madness that is comparable to Danielewski's character Truant and his collection of coded letters from his mother. Danielewski extends the discussion of the labyrinth and maze through the express incorporation of source material and influences, whilst Winterson's text is more reserved and subtle in its suggestiveness.



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<sup>1</sup> George Lainsbury, in his brief essay “Hubris and the Young Author”, examines the problems of reading a novel through the manifesto of authorial intentions laid down by Winterson in her introduction.

<sup>2</sup> This can be seen in the prince’s search for an ideal woman (*Oranges* 58-65), in Henri’s wanderings, in the reconstruction of Louise’s body in *Written on the Body*, and in Ali(x)’s virtual stories in *The PowerBook*.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Smith (*Syntax of Cities*) addresses this metaphor directly.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Jim Buchanan (qtd. Tim Richardson, “Earth Works”), Bord (*Mazes*) and Kern (*Through*). For writers who deny such a rigid division between ‘maze’ and ‘labyrinth’ see Matthews (*Mazes*), Doob (“Contradictory Paradigms” 76 fn. 2) and Fisher (*Art*).

<sup>5</sup> It follows that early labyrinths and mazes were made out of available and affordable materials; for example, the hot and dry Southern Mediterranean could scarcely support turf or hedge mazes. Likewise, Scandinavian coastal labyrinths were constructed out of convenient pebbles. Consequently, large and expensive houses or prisons constructed upon labyrinthine plans would tend to use stone.

<sup>6</sup> Ackroyd argues that these London mazes were “the sacred equivalent of the oak grove” (*London* 14-15). Whilst these mazes are clearly ritualistic, it seems unlikely that they are mature wooded structures as early mazes were invariably made of turf (cf. Fisher and Kingham, *Mazes* 8-10).

<sup>7</sup> Labyrinths appear in Indian mythology and as the South American ‘Man in the Maze’. See Bord (*Mazes*) and Matthews (*Mazes*) for reviews of such representations.

<sup>8</sup> This can be observed in Richard Whitlock’s *Zootomia* (1654), William Falconer’s *Shipwreck* (1762, II.207) and Connop Thirlwall’s *A History of Greece* (1835, v.I.133).

<sup>9</sup> See Fisher and Kingham (*Mazes*) and also Umberto Eco (*Reflections*) who discuss the garden mazes of the Renaissance onwards. The most famous example of such a garden maze is the seventeenth-century Hampton Court Maze planted 1690 (date cited by Kenner, *Mazes* 245).

<sup>10</sup> Shields’ novel *Larry’s Party* offers an insight into a maze designer’s psyche including an in-depth examination of the organic materials needed to plant a maze (92-93, 153).

<sup>11</sup> These partitioned passageways caused a sub-genre of the maze to appear known as the bower. Matthews (*Mazes*) explores the associations between labyrinth and bower further.

<sup>12</sup> Andrea L. Harris (*Other Sexes* 174 fn. 10) briefly makes note of the connection between the maze and the love affair in reference to *Written on the Body*.

<sup>13</sup> Kenner uses this instance to mark the connection between dance and the maze (*Mazes* 250).

<sup>14</sup> Winterson’s writing often adopts internal retroversions (cf. Seaboyer, “Second Death” for these moments in *The Passion*). She also reuses and revises some key lines from her other fictions.

<sup>15</sup> See especially “Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women” which also appears in Jane Rendell, Barbara Penner and Ian Borden, *Gender, Space, Architecture*.

<sup>16</sup> See Palmer’s descriptions of these illicit encounters with the lithe acrobats (“The Passion” 111).

<sup>17</sup> Seaboyer identifies Venice as a city remodelled by writers in the late twentieth-century (“Second Death” 483). Pfister also produces a lineage of writers attracted to Venice, stretching back to the Romantics (“The Passion” 15).

<sup>18</sup> Palmer (“The Passion” 112-115) and Asensio Aróstegui (“Subversion” 271) refer to *Invisible Cities* when discussing *The Passion*.



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<sup>19</sup> The active and aggressive aspect of these cities is sustained through the spirit of New York, a city associated by Winterson with the alchemist, after Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (*Gut Symmetries* 25).

<sup>20</sup> For an evocative account of the play of oppositions in Venice see Adrian Stokes (*The Quattro Cento*).

<sup>21</sup> John Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* is perhaps the most infamous record of the city's disintegration.

<sup>22</sup> This transformation is maintained in microcosm as the marble used to construct Venice is formed from limestone beds (sedimentary rock) that has been acted upon by metamorphic activity (creating metamorphic rock) and as such is in a modified state. (cf. Stokes, *Quattro* for the relationship of stone to the city)

<sup>23</sup> Helene Bengston notes the persistence of rivers in Winterson's fictions and the connection between the flow of water and the construction of self ("The Vast, Unmappable Cities of the Interior" 19 fn. 3).

<sup>24</sup> See Lisa Moore's essay "Teledildomics" for its critique of cliché in the lesbian romance novel.

<sup>25</sup> This method of detailing the movement of rivers and naming characters after various bodies of water recalls Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*.

<sup>26</sup> See Mark Wormald "The Uses of Impurity" who examines water and naming in relation to *Sexing the Cherry*.

<sup>27</sup> Critics engaging with *Written on the Body* invariably use the gendering of the narrator as a central issue. See especially Moore ("Teledildomics") for her close textual reading of the text (in sub-heading "Colliding Subjects and Textual Fusions"). For a contrasted argument see Harris (*Other Sexes*) who uses the female pronoun 'she' to refer to the narrator based upon her analysis of the text's hints towards a female gender. Despite adopting a gendered pronoun, Harris confirms that the mystery of the narrator's sex and gender remain.

<sup>28</sup> It follows that Villanelle's name when divided reveals the suffix 'elle', which corresponds to the French pronoun 'she', underlying, at least partially her femininity, whilst the first portion of her name almost confers the impression of 'villain'.

<sup>29</sup> See also Asensio Aróstegui ("Subversion" 272), Burns ("Fantastic Language" 281) and Seaboyer ("Second Death" 493-494).

<sup>30</sup> The villanelle consists of five tercets of ABA rhyme and a final quatrain of ABAA rhyme. The rhyme pattern is strictly interwoven. The first line of the first tercet is the last line of the second and fourth tercets. The third rhyme of the first tercet is repeated as the last line of the third and fifth tercets, and this refrain also forms the concluding rhyming couplet (Ferguson et al, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* lxxv-lxxvi).

<sup>31</sup> The name 'Dedalus' is only one letter removed from the Greek architect of the labyrinth, 'Daedalus', who briefly became the prisoner of his creation. For a detailed discussion of Joyce's riddles and labyrinthine allusions see Diane Fortuna ("The Labyrinth") and Faris (*Labyrinths*).

<sup>32</sup> Seaboyer examines such doubling in her essay ("Second Death").

<sup>33</sup> See Onega ("The Passion") for her examination of the Tarot in *The Passion* and its comparison to Eliot's use of the Tarot in *The Waste Land*.

<sup>34</sup> Onega in "Self and Other in Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*" notes the influence of Pushkin's short story and so too does Julie Ellam ("Representations of Love").

<sup>35</sup> Gillian Beer itemises a number of nineteenth-century books that incorporate a female gambler ("The Reader's Wager").

<sup>36</sup> See also Angus Fletcher *The Image of Lost Direction* (344, fn. 14; 345-346, fn. 23)

<sup>37</sup> Scott Wilson ("Passion at the End of History" 64) briefly mentions the commonality of the men and chickens, and so too Onega ("Self and Other").



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<sup>38</sup> Though the snowflake has long been the subject of historic speculation, it was not until the early twentieth century that Wilson A. Bentley conclusively evidenced the individuality of snowflakes (cf. J.A. Martin, *Snowflake*). Villanelle is here refuting Henri's earlier comments that no-one knows whether snowflakes are all dissimilar (81).

<sup>39</sup> One key idea that has consumed academic time, especially in response to *Written on the Body*, is whether Winterson's work can be effectively categorised as lesbian. See especially Marilyn Farwell (*Heterosexual Plots* and "Lesbian Narrative"), Gabriel Griffin (*Outwrite*) and Patricia Duncker ("Jeanette Winterson"). *Oranges* in its treatment of burgeoning homosexuality is perhaps Winterson's only explicitly lesbian novel. Asensio Aróstegui ("Subversion") refers to the polemical properties of Winterson's narrative, whilst Nunn ("Written on the Body"), Gonzalez ("Winterson's Sexing the Cherry") and Kutzer ("Cartography of Passion") explicitly chastise Winterson for her implicit or absence of radical rhetoric.

<sup>40</sup> Cathy Stowers ("Journeying with Jeanette" 142) also refers to Villanelle as bisexual, while Ursula K. Heise ("Jeanette Winterson" 548) is more undecided: "Villanelle is a lesbian, or is perhaps bisexual". Clearly, the notion of bisexuality is potentially politically disquieting as Kutzer assesses in her discussion of Palmer's writing about androgyny (Kutzer, "Cartography of Passion" 144).

<sup>41</sup> Asensio Aróstegui notes this mistake in the ritual ("Subversion" 269).

<sup>42</sup> Henri also describes her feet in an ambivalent way: "[s]he unfolds them like a fan and folds them in on themselves" (136). Despite the masculinity of the webbing, the fan is associated with the feminine and has been regarded as a prop to communicate sexual availability.

<sup>43</sup> In her novel *The Deadly Space Between* (2002), Patricia Duncker equates this space in-between with the hybrid, partially achieved through intertextuality (especially nineteenth-century narratives such as *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Dr. Monrow's Island* and *Frankenstein* all of which signify transformation). In keeping with this liminal narrative, the hyper-masculine protagonist, Roehm, is referred to as the Minotaur.

<sup>44</sup> For an examination of homosexual activity and space see Nancy Duncan "Renegotiating".

<sup>45</sup> Critical engagements with *The Passion* and the notion of risk use the theorist George Bataille. These include Tamás ("Risking the Tex") and Scott Wilson ("Passion").

<sup>46</sup> Walter Benjamin's identification of the flâneur is that of the male bourgeois in Paris (*Charles Baudelaire*). See also Elizabeth Wilson's discussion of the flâneur and femininity ("The Invisible Flâneur"). Winterson recalls her navigation of Amsterdam as a performance of the flâneur in *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (3-21).

<sup>47</sup> Swanson argues that the frivolity of women's clothing in the nineteenth century, especially in examples of public women, was thought to be symptomatic of the fallen woman ("Drunk with the Glitter").

<sup>48</sup> For an examination of bodily cartography see Rosalyn Diprose and Robyn Ferrell (*Cartographies*) and also *Written on the Body*.

<sup>49</sup> Winterson's fiction contains frequent references to gambling and risk, especially in a dialectic relationship with religion. This is evident in *Oranges* where Elsie uses dice to select her bible passages.

<sup>50</sup> Fahy uses this example to combine the feminisation of space and the threat of female violation through male violence and invasion ("Fractured Bodies").

<sup>51</sup> See the gypsy's prophesy in *Oranges* (7). Tamás ("Risking" 203) also makes this connection between the two texts.

<sup>52</sup> Purinton notes that Henri's section combines the masculinity of the emperor with the femininity of the diary form ("Postmodern Romanticism" 71). For other critics who engage with Henri's femininity see Palmer ("The Passion" 104), Asensio Aróstegui



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(“Subversion” 266-268), Helga Quadfleg (“Feminist Stories” 101), and Kutzer (“Cartography” 138).

<sup>53</sup> See Elizabeth Wilson (*Mirror Writing*) and Florence Howe (qtd. *Moi Sexual/Textual Politics*, 255) identify the centrality of the diary and autobiography to elucidate female experience.

<sup>54</sup> These superhuman abilities are prominently seen in Winterson’s female communities while few of the male protagonists explicitly display these abnormal traits. Grice and Woods claim Patrick is the sole male character of superhuman ability in Winterson’s fictions (*I’m Telling You Stories* 7). In *The Passion*, the superhuman qualities exhibited by Patrick and Villanelle are partially disguised.

<sup>55</sup> The labyrinth frequently occurs in post-colonial narratives, for example, in the work of Borges, Marquez and Salman Rushdie.

<sup>56</sup> Through Domino’s name there are obvious parallels to gaming and also, given the text’s exploration of European hegemony, to the susceptibility of Western Europe to the ‘domino effect’.

<sup>57</sup> Purinton briefly comments that both Domino and Patrick are figures at the cusp of Winterson’s narrative (“Postmodern Romanticism” 86-87).

<sup>58</sup> Domino’s script recalls the striking through of ‘being’ suggested by Heidegger (*Question* 80-83) and a similar occurrence can be found in Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (111).

<sup>59</sup> The significance of *The Passion*’s setting in the Romantic era is commented on by Seaboyer (“Second Death”) and the text’s Romanticism forms the thesis of Purinton’s essay, “Postmodern Romanticism”.

<sup>60</sup> There would seem to be a distinction between the French desire evidenced by Georgette’s comments for the re-establishment of a dynasty and the Venetian sentiment regarding the recently dispossessed Venetian Republic.

<sup>61</sup> There is a suggestion in *The PowerBook* that ultimately there are just two personae whose relationship is tracked through time.

<sup>62</sup> The name of the island that housed Venice’s lunatic asylum is San Servolo. It may be argued that this is an added manipulation between the boundary of fiction and reality. As Onega (“‘Self’ and ‘Other’”) suggests, Winterson’s “San Servelo” could be viewed as a deliberate pun with the Italian word “cervello” meaning brain which would complement the reflective mood of this final passage, or could be considered as a spelling mistake, as posited by Pfister (“The Passion” 15) and Ellam (“Representations”), or as a “typographical error” (Seaboyer, “Second Death” 491). Incidentally, the Venice International University now stands on the site of this old asylum (Pfister and Schaff, *Venetian Views* 1).

<sup>63</sup> Winterson’s use of Eliot’s poem as a means of articulating ideas about time is noted by Onega (“Self and Other”).



*House of Leaves*.

## **5 Gathering Scattered Leaves: Mark Z. Danielewski's Overwhelming Textual Labyrinths**

Perhaps the most striking feature of *House of Leaves*, Danielewski's debut novel, is its playful and innovative discourse that draws heavily upon the labyrinth and the labyrinthine. The composition of narratives insists upon an attention to intertextuality, authorial manipulation and woven dialogues which makes prominent the materiality of the text. The voices interact and negotiate page space, resulting in distinctive typographical patterning that makes the reading process precarious and ensures that the reader's journey of interpretation is hindered. This massive undertaking intersperses numerous ideas of the labyrinth made overt in the investigations at Ash Tree Lane and in the academic research that augments it, whilst the taxonomy of competing genres and narrative voices emphasise the labyrinthine tendencies of the text.

*House of Leaves* creates an excess of authorial and editorial voices and comment that create a pastiche of narrative authority. One of the core narratives, the Navidson Record, forms the mediation of an encounter with a physical labyrinth. A purportedly multi-media event, the encounter is represented and mediated through a critical narrative produced by Zampanò. The validity of both the event and its commentary are probed by a further narrative frame: the editorship of Johnny Truant who, as finder of the paperwork after Zampanò's death, comments on and recasts the discourse. Crucially, the writings found by Truant are eclectic and unfinished dictations (xxii), transcribed by various hands. The validity of Zampanò's words is tested further by his blindness, which prevented him from reading the notes produced by his female helpers (xxi). Beyond Truant's focalisation are the intrusions of a series of reticent "editors", the transcriptions of

Karen Navidson's investigations as well as various eclectic collections of material contained in a series of appendices.

This chapter will engage with the labyrinth's effects of the *unheimlich*, a sensation that makes dwelling within the structure an uncomfortable experience. Monstrous and protean passages negatively affect those who enter the labyrinth whilst such transformation witnessed in the physical labyrinth is suggestively paralleled in the labyrinthine encounters with the book, as the labyrinth threatens to escape the bounds of the text and affect the reader (513).



## 5.1 Get out of the House: The Role of the Uncanny and the Threat of the Void

The Navidson footage cinematically captures five expeditions into a maze and is represented as the mediated transcript of a collection of video diaries and explorations into the house. Will Navidson, after whom the Record is named, is a prize-winning photographer who relocated to Ash Tree Lane as an appeasement to mend his frayed marriage. Marital reconciliation is rapidly undermined by the discovery of a hallway complete with a door which materialises during a weekend away. Its mysterious appearance is shortly to be compounded by the knowledge that the hallway is erratically but rapidly growing, stretching into inconceivable reaches through and beyond the house.

The colossal size of the labyrinth, improbably contained within an under stairs cupboard,<sup>1</sup> heightens the persuasive atmosphere of the uncanny. From quite innocuous beginnings the hallway contorts and becomes a labyrinthine area of instability whose confines stretch and shrink without warning, but which produces little discernible change in the outward measurements of the house. Consistency of known space is irrevocably damaged through the discovery of a quarter of an inch discrepancy between the inside and outside of the house; a small deviation that flaunts the physics of the known universe. Immediately the labyrinth is perceived as supra-natural, unconstrained by functions of universal law. Though connected to and contained within the house, the unreal properties of the labyrinth and the sheer magnitude of the *unheimlich* it engenders nonetheless incorporate elements of the outside.

Regardless of the abnormalities in the hallway, the façade of a normal familial house remains and ensures that despite the rapid turnover of owners the house “always sells” (409). Though the labyrinth is initially contained beyond a series of doors leading from the known house, the final confrontations with the structure manipulate other surfaces within the building and ensure that the house at Ash Tree Lane becomes indivisible from the labyrinth.

There are several factors to consider when examining the location of the labyrinth: fundamentally, the relationship between the labyrinth and the home raises the question of transitions between known, marginal and unknown areas. The labyrinth effectively creates a contestation of space through the transformation of a hallway which is an area that “separates and simultaneously unites an outside and an inside [from] what is alien and what is habitual” (Norberg-Schulz, *Architecture Meaning and Place* 46). Although Christian Norberg-Schulz is here contemplating the idea of a porch as an entry point into the house there is a sense that the same is true for the labyrinth, as it forms a bridge between the known and unknown, the inside and the outside. Indeed, Eliade argues that the labyrinth is a union of the inside and the outside (*Encyclopaedia*) whilst Doob (*Idea*; “Contradictory”) makes a similar claim when she remarks that the labyrinth is both ordered and chaotic. This dichotomy is exaggerated by the labyrinth’s systematic incorporation of recognisable household paraphernalia which include hallways, doors and stairs. These familiar markers of the house are accompanied by features of the outside like the wind, the apparent growls of a beast and the extension of passageways into seemingly limitless expanses.



The equation of the labyrinth with the home is made in Chaucer's descriptions of its chambers as "Domus Dedali" (*House of Fame* 1920), a connection that is accentuated by Danielewski's choice of quotations, especially from Doob (Danielewski, *House* 107; Doob, *Idea* 95-100). Accordingly, the mythical delineations of the labyrinth emphasise the correlation of a structure that is ambivalently both a home and not a home. Such observations juxtapose the idea of the building as the Minotaur's dwelling place and as Daedalus' construction. It is significant as the participants in the maze fear both the monster and creator, afraid that the characters are really synonymous with each other.

The description of the labyrinth as a house echoes its birth and subsequent meteoric growth from within the Navidson family home. Encounter with the labyrinth exacerbates the sensation of the *unheimlich*, an emotion that pervades the labyrinth, the house, the narrators and ultimately the reader of the book. Translation of the German word 'unheimlich' is supplied by Heidegger as the state of "not-being-at-home" (*Being* 233; qtd. Danielewski 25). This determination is reiterated by Freud who also explores definitions of *unheimlich* across various languages in his essay "The Uncanny" (154-167 esp. 154-157).<sup>2</sup>

The expeditions which seek to explain and understand the labyrinthine space are forced back by the *unheimlich* as they are unable to dwell within the structure or map its parameters. Technologically advanced equipment is woefully unable to measure the enormity of the labyrinth, both because of the shifting aspect of the maze and its repudiation of physical normality, which emphasises that such scientific enquiry is inadequate. The home represents the stability and safety of known space and, more than the word 'house', includes a sense of belonging. It is

with much irony then that Danielewski entertains such discontinuity, of not-being-at-home, within the exploration of the home. The effect of this is to turn the domestic, the stable epitome of security, into a threatening, warped entity whose astronomical growth defies all parameters of the comfortable and the known.

Those who encounter the extremities of the house are all physically affected, from niggling ailments through to death and extreme frostbite suffered on Navidson's final return to the labyrinth and dissolution of the house (523). The labyrinthine space also intensifies existing medical conditions: it affects Tom through an exacerbation of his claustrophobia whilst Karen's agoraphobia precludes her entry in to the maze until it becomes essential. There is a hypothesis put forward by Zampanò (21-23) and reaffirmed by his fictitious critical engagements (165) that the labyrinth transforms itself in relation to the mental state of those who enter it and so the angst-ridden adults are under threat whilst the relatively innocent children and animals remain largely unaffected.

Within the labyrinth there is an over-implementation of such boundaries leading to disorientation through the abundance of familiar markers. In the case of a dwelling the spaces are separated and identified through the use of dividing walls; a process intended to create a protected locale at odds with the turbulent outside. The changing shape of the structure prevents a usable cartography and ensures, as Zampanò notes, that "no one ever sees that labyrinth in its entirety" (114), and so the human experience of the maze remains that of disorientation and confusion. The confines and the grounding of the margins are disingenuous and recognised by Truant as impinging upon his environment: "you'll discover you no longer trust the very walls you always took for granted"



(xxiii). Discussion of the mutability of architecture is extended to the experience of the text which as Michael Silverblatt's interview with the author reveals: "[the] book is architecture" (qtd. Martin Brick, "Blueprint(s): Rubric for a Deconstructed Age" 8).

The establishment of layers of critical commentary enables Danielewski to educate and attune his reader to idea of the uncanny. Though Freud uses the term 'uncanny' interchangeably with the German *unheimlich*, Zampanò illustrates the root of both terms and surveys the derivation of 'uncanny' from the Old English *cunnan*: "uncann-y literally breaks down or disassembles into that which is not full of knowing or conversely full of not knowing" (359). The central ignorance at the core of his definition forms a suitable analogy for the expedition into the labyrinth, where its very dimensions prevent an overview of the structure and so withhold comprehension of its design. The inability to witness the labyrinth in its totality inhibits understanding of its maker or the practice undertaken to construct the maze. Instead, the inexplicable and expansive dimensions of the house cause the protagonists to refer to it in terms of the divine. The house becomes, as Jacob describes, an immense and terrifying "house of God" (121; *Genesis* 28:17).

Zampanò highlights three possible uses of the labyrinth: as a prison, a mortuary or a place of amusement (111), in a series of conclusions that correspond with Faris' idea that the labyrinth is a place of "play and terror" (*Labyrinths* 1). The maze within the house at Ash Tree Lane would appear to incorporate all three functions as an initial air of innocence and exploration rapidly gives way to more explicit sinister overtones. These three uses deftly underline the connection between house and labyrinth: as house of detention, house of death and fun house.

The trope of the house as a metaphor for bloodline (*The Fall of the House of Usher*) and as a prison of the repressed (*Jane Eyre*) in Gothic fiction is sustained in the cinematic tradition. Danielewski's novel adopts and plays with both lineages. The frequency of the house as site of the uncanny in nineteenth-century fiction is outlined by Anthony Vidler (qtd. Bemong, "Uncanny" 3). An underlying menace within the perceived safety of the home is a common theme in cinematic horror and the Gothic canon, whilst reluctance to flee the house and the boundaries of the known often results in the death of peripheral figures.<sup>3</sup> The excessive labyrinth extends into the lower dimensions of the building, into a subterranean location that connects the labyrinth with a descent out of the terrestrial into the hellish, whereby the passageways function as a conduit between the earthly and the divine.

The house remains without a number or a nomenclature and so becomes affiliated with its location on Ash Tree Lane. The importance or isolation of the building is alluded to by the use of the definite article when discussing Navidson's house. Its site unites the domestic and the divine and is reaffirmed by the repeated image of the Norse world tree, until it is finally named as Yggdrasil in the final poem (709).

The meeting of the celestial and the domestic is replicated in the early labyrinths in Egypt and Crete. The Egyptian edifice was thought to be both house and heavenly palace of the Pharaoh Amenemhet III and seat of his government (Herodotus), whilst the Cretan labyrinth is home to the semi-divine Minotaur (Ayrton, *Minotaur!*; Borges, "The House of Asterion" *Labyrinths*). The labyrinth's defensive and disorientating properties would appear at semantic odds with the notions of a



house or a place of dwelling and it is this fundamental anomaly that is explored in Danielewski's novel.

The ability to remain is the capability to sanitise and articulate space, as Norberg-Schulz claims: "only when man has taken possession of space, defining what is *inside* and what remains *outside*, may we say that he *dwells*" (*Architecture, Meaning and Place* 33). The actions of the groups which infiltrate the labyrinth are utterly unable to fulfil Norberg-Schulz's premise: indeed, it would appear in each case that the labyrinth repels each invasion at will. Their expeditions appear futile as the dimensions of the labyrinth can not be approximated: it remains profoundly enigmatic.

Although the origin of Navidson's labyrinth is a mystery, its impossible dimensions and the control it appears to exert over those who enter it, suggest a sentient presence which overreaches the structure. As Zampanò construes, "the question soon arises whether or not it is someone's house. Though if so whose?" and, more threateningly, "could the owner still be there?" (121). Navidson addresses this concern in his final letter to Karen, which uses the same type setting as Pelafina's letters: "God's a house[...w]hat I mean to say is that our house is God" (390). Perhaps it is not surprising that Navidson reaches such a conclusion, as the house is massively powerful, enigmatic and totally at the limits of his understanding. Rather than searching for an esoteric 'other', Navidson confirms that the labyrinth itself has become the personification of the Minotaur or God. The entity appears not to tolerate human or external influences as it removes any residue of human presence: "[t]here was very little evidence of the first team's descent remaining on the stairs. Navidson determines that the neon markers and fishing line last at most six days

before they are entirely consumed by the house” (182). This animalism is supported further by the presence of the roar which Holloway recognises as “an utterance made by some definitive creature” (123).

Paradoxically, despite Navidson’s ownership of the house, there is a sense of trespass whereby infiltration of the labyrinth is reminiscent of the transgression in fairytales.<sup>4</sup> The fear that there is something lurking in the labyrinth is maintained by the underlying threat of the Minotaur who, as guardian of the building, legitimates the need for the labyrinth: “[the] Minotaur [...] watches within Daedalus’ palace [...] the palace which imprisons him, protects him, was built for him, manifests externally his mixed monstrous nature” (Foucault, *Death and the Labyrinth* 80). Borges reiterates this correlation between beast and building and affirms that the monster “justifies the labyrinth” (qtd. Faris, *Labyrinths* 217 fn. 3).<sup>5</sup> The beast therefore gives the labyrinth meaning because in its absence the labyrinth is little more than an empty house. The conceptualisation of a labyrinth without a Minotaur or a creator appears sinister and perhaps explains why Zampanò sought to erase these elements from the text. In this manner, Danielewski plays with the necessity that ties the Minotaur to the maze and implies that Truant will encounter or transform into the beast (70-72, 496-497). Though the mythological beast never physically materialises, the threat of its arrival coupled with the labyrinth’s non-conformity to conceptions of space ensure that the expeditions are unable to linger within the structure.

In his essay “The Uncanny”, Freud notes the extent to which an appreciation of the uncanny may derive from the apparent discovery of repetitious events or reoccurring numbers (165), which reveals a clandestine system accidentally



uncovered by the individual. The perpetual reinforcement of 'house' in a different colour setting incorporates the notion of an underlying scheme and maintains a consistency across publishing conventions, narrators and languages alike. This use of colour, as Martin Brick argues, is indicative of the practice of coloured annotation in medieval codices and also of a computer hypertext which "suggests an unseen network" ("Blueprint" 8).

The excess of the labyrinth inspires notions of the Gothic:

[U]nheimlich when used as an adverb means "dreadfully," awfully," "heaps of," and "an awful lot of." Largeness has always been a condition of the weird and unsafe; it is overwhelming, too much or too big. (28)

Zampanò's fabricated definition of *unheimlich* is engineered to incorporate the extremes of the void. By connecting the authentic etymology with the fictive, the text interweaves ideas of the home with unsettling concerns of enlarged space and these ideas expediently combined to create "the perfect description of the house on Ash Tree Lane" (28). The confusing labyrinthine passageways explored by Navidson are reminiscent of a house of vast proportions:

Navidson pushes ahead, moving deeper and deeper into the house, eventually passing a number of doorways leading off into alternate passageways or chambers[...]

His flashlight finds the floor but no walls and, for the first time, no ceiling.

Only now do we begin to see how big Navidson's house really is. (64)

The enormity of the house is repeatedly stressed and so emphasises the innumerable choices of direction that can be made within the labyrinth. Although the maze is an intensely changing and fluid entity there are seemingly two constants: the presence of an enormous Great Hall and the massive spiral staircase which connects the upper and lower aspects of the labyrinth. The stairs link the Great Hall with the

labyrinthine basements of the lower levels and function as a threshold which both connects and separates that which is above from that which is below.

The expeditions leave the apparent safety of the explored regions of the labyrinth to encounter the lower hidden depths at the base of the staircase. Entry into this subterranean environment instils Gothic fear as it signals the encounter with that which lies beneath. Distinctions between the upper and lower portions of the maze are increased and marked by the exponential growth of the staircase, which seemingly severs the expedition from the gateway liminality of the hallway. The expansion of the stairs further underlines the awesome power of the labyrinth to alter and transmogrify its dimensions.

Though the labyrinth has walls, a residual space named (perhaps as an aside to the Norse tradition) the Great Hall and a staircase as constant 'homely' features, there are a plethora of materialistic items that the 'house' does not contain. An eclectic and comprehensive list of the labyrinth's lacking paraphernalia is contained in footnote 144, a compressed box that falls through some twenty-six pages (119-144). This graphic footnote causes N. Katherine Hayles to remark upon the cinematic quality of the square that endeavours "to project into this space the linguistic signifiers for everything in the world" ("Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*" 792). It is as though these disparate items contain a sense of what it means to dwell. Notably, the same footnote documents the physical accoutrements afforded to the staircase which contains "risers, treads, two large newel posts, one at the top and one at the bottom, capped and connected with a single, curved banister supported by countless balusters" (133). As this list signifies, the labyrinth, in antithesis to Hayles' reasoning ("Saving"), combines recognisable and functional



household items within the disquieting and enormous space. The ambivalence of the situation is further underscored by the occasional absence of a ceiling or the immeasurable distances to the walls which, instead of offering freedom, paradoxically appear more confining and fearful. The importance of the comparison between the labyrinth and the abyss is the issue of crisis and unrest that it raises, reflecting the significance of the labyrinth as a site of change. Navidson's final encounter with the labyrinth results in the structure's disintegration into void which causes him to plunge, spiralling, into nothingness.

## 5.2 Listening for Echo: Myth, Repetition and Narrative Difference

The origins of the labyrinthine house are innocuous enough, beginning with an internal growth of one quarter of an inch, undetectable to the eye, and the discovery of a hallway which, though a physical improbability, is not initially terrifying. It is the deeper implicit inference of this growth that the reader, along with the Navidson brothers, does not yet fully anticipate which is altogether more sinister. The mathematic equations that expose the physical discrepancy are unable to reason its cause:

No matter how many legal pads, napkins, or newspaper margins they fill in with notes or equations, they cannot account for that fraction. One incontrovertible fact stands in their way: the exterior measurement *must* equal the internal measurement. Physics depends on a universe infinitely centred on an equal sign. (32)

The labyrinth overtly challenges scientific rule which makes any scientific approaches to its form problematic. The lack of a rational explanation for the labyrinth is contained within the erasure of the scientific study, which is both visually and semantically inconclusive (372-377). The labyrinth as a site of crisis and instability causes the misadventure of science in an event anticipated by Nietzsche, who lyrically writes that “logic curls up around itself at these limits and finally bites its own tail” (Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy* 75). Zampanò, who imbues myth with an overtly sinister aspect, directly alludes to the theme:

Except the Vandal known as Myth *always* slaughters Reason if she falters.  
[            ] Myth is the tiger stalking the herd. Myth is Tom’s [ ]r. Monster.  
Myth is Hol[    ]y’s beast. ~~Myth is the Minotaur.~~ (335)

Zampanò’s pithy description of the Echo myth, whilst discussing its application as a law in physics, neatly inverts Nietzsche’s discussion of the birth of science and



death-of-myth motif: “restlessly advancing spirit of science will recognize at once how *myth* was destroyed by it” (*Birth of Tragedy* 82).

The foundations of contemporary thought are also perceived to be inadequate and lacking as the reassuring physical properties of the echo are subverted. The fallibility of science is exposed through the inadequacies of the echo formula when encountering the labyrinth. Lack of an echo suggests the labyrinth’s space and size is unknowable and that it does not conform to notions of physics, as a site “‘unshaped’ by human perceptions” (173). Startling noises and silenced echoes construct a fearfully indistinct structure. This eerie quiet, except for the noise caused by the rapidly changing halls or the ‘beast’, underlies the idea of trespass into a forbidden area. The fundamental rubric that underpins dwelling cannot be fulfilled in the labyrinth and as such there can be no relationship, no dwelling of man in the maze.

Earlier encounters with the maze stress its inherent complexity, intensified by the enormity of its fractured passageways, in an environment that highlights, through the apparent intricacy of the route, the continual difficulty of return. Within the changing labyrinth, Navidson becomes disorientated and his attempts to create an echo to locate his position in relation to the hallway are a futile exercise, as the walls, floor and ceiling move sporadically with varied levels of velocity. There is nothing to bounce the sound-wave off or, at times, too many obstacles, resulting in uncertainty.

During one clandestine journey into the labyrinth, Navidson is saved by his daughter Daisy’s crying in the liminal space of the hallway: an act that connects the

maze and the outside. Though there are multiple instances in mythology of virgins saving heroes from danger, it seems surprising in this contemporary adventure to witness the youngest, apparently powerless, female in the household locate and save her father from the confusion of the maze. In general the male protagonists, in remembrance of Theseus' quest, primarily explore the space of the labyrinth, as the fictitious representation of Camille Paglia wittily attests (357-358). In contrast, Karen's rescue forges a path towards Will, caused by her determination to assert his presence (524), whilst her predisposition to ignore the structure leads to the disintegration of the shape. Ignoring her fear, Karen finally enters the void with the specific intention of guiding Will back: an intention that Zampanò notes signals "her love for Navidson" (522). Difficult though her entry into the labyrinth was, her route to Will is direct and non-digressive, resulting in an anti-labyrinthine movement: her singularity and concentration models the internal space in a manner not previously seen. Her loving embrace with her husband causes the collapse of the maze as, ironically, the nightmarish experience forces them to transcend their marital grievances. This is achieved through the articulation and expulsion of Navidson's terrible secret which serves as another marker that the labyrinth responds to mood and to the subconscious.

Though they escape from the labyrinth the structure remains a threat, as Karen states:

There is nothing there. ~~Be warned.~~ Be careful. (550)

Exit from the labyrinth is at a cost: Karen suffers from a progressive cancer which appears to be linked to her experiences in the house, whilst Navidson has become crippled as a result of the devastating cold. Their return to normal life has been



elliptical and fraught with danger: a cyclical journey which, although they appear cleansed and rejuvenated, has terrible consequences.

The transformative qualities of the labyrinth are intrinsic to its history and are intensified in the contemporary spiritual resurgence of the design. The process of change elicited by the structure can be understood through the elliptical nature of the echo that returns the same yet altered. The dichotomy that Echo embodies, as the figure from mythology and from science, is that of emotion and rationality. When Echo answers Narcissus' call with the same language she translates and imbues his words with a different poignant meaning, thereby illustrating the transformative effect of repetition. In a similar manner, Danielewski plays with the nuances of reiteration, especially through translation:

This exquisite variation on the passage by the "ingenious layman" is far too dense to unpick here. Suffice it to say Menard's nuances are so fine they are nearly undetectable, though talk with the Framer and you will immediately see how haunted they are by sorrow, accusation, and sarcasm. Exactly! How the fuck do you write about "exquisite variation" when both passages are exactly the same? (42)

The echo presented of Don Quixote is itself a translation transferred from Borges' short story "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" (*Labyrinths* 69) and serves to connect the missing author Zampanò with the Argentinean writer. The aloof and complex level of intertextuality is impressive and it should be noted that Borges' text deals with the principle that seemingly identical replication of a text can be infinitely richer given its broader textual network. The passage manipulates the reflection of the same information when displayed at different places on the page and the reader deals with the repetition as s/he gains a different meaning from the reading of the two instances.



This textual game suggests the uniqueness of any utterance, for as Alan Megill writes: “no thing, no occurrence, is exactly the same as any other thing or occurrence” (*Prophets of Extremity* 49). As readers, we empathise with Truant’s frustrations and yet theoretically these two instances can never be the same as they occur at different moments in the text. By this stipulation, reoccurrence is always different and determined through minute variations. With the spoken word the listener is normally able to determine subtle differences through such variables as intonation, accent and inflection, and so demonstrates that the spoken word can be viewed as a more subtle purveyor of information. The echo motif forms a pithy example of this process: “To repeat: her voice has life. It possesses a quality not present in the original, revealing how a nymph can return a different and more meaningful story, in spite of telling the same story (42). The echo functions like a verbal mirror returning the original but in a modified state: a feature that is tested by the text’s many narrative repetitions.

Danielewski’s novel surveys and engages with studies about the labyrinth. During the examination of the Navidson labyrinth he draws heavily upon Borges as a key writer about the labyrinth. He footnotes Borges, quotes him and also parodies his work and his methods of writing in a discourse that forms the physical accumulation of: “displaced and mutilated words, words of others, [which] were the poor pittance left him by the hours and the centuries” (Borges, “The Immortal Words” *Labyrinths* 147). This sentiment encapsulates Truant’s experience of Zampanò’s prolific writings. Themes common to Borges and Danielewski include the aggressive nature of language, fictional editorial intrusions and fabricated citations to validate critical passages and, of course, the labyrinth. At times, Danielewski makes playful reference to Borges, as can be seen in the inverted and warped footnote 167 (133).



*House of Leaves* recreates Borges' vision of a book that is simultaneously a narrative and a labyrinth:

*I am withdrawing to write a book. And another time: I am withdrawing to construct a labyrinth...to no one did it occur that the book and the maze were one and the same thing. ("The Garden of Forking Paths" Labyrinths 50)*<sup>6</sup>

The labyrinthine is inherent in every thematic attribute of the text and evident in the syntax and typographical aspect of the novel. The flow of the written page is distorted by the movement in the labyrinth whereby the distinctive typographical layout that Danielewski employs arrests and recasts the conventional descent of written English on the page. The contorted and rotated course of the text parallels the effects that the Navidson labyrinth exerts on scientific law, where the rudiments of gravity are unconditionally altered.

Conventionally rigid typographical systems are made liquid in a process that generates spiralled, stretched or vanishing textual units. Suitably, the labyrinth segment within the Navidson Record is twisted and extremely laborious to follow. This episode requires the reader to enter a further typographical labyrinth which emphasises the shape and progress through the maze and slows the reading process accordingly (423-489). The reader advances with Navidson along massive corridors, vertically down the staircase and meanders through claustrophobic passageways.

The disfigured, labyrinthine narrative discards many traditional typological attributes and contorts the discourse into shapes usually encountered on computer screens. Confirmation of this technological influence is identified by critic Martin Brick where, in his discussion of the colour blue applied to denote the word 'house' across the different narratives, he compares the script to on-line hypertextuality

(“Blueprint” 3). Narrative performance, that adapts cinematic and technological methods, presents the written word in a familiar yet unfamiliar context, and the union of technology and typesetting helps create a text which foregrounds both its own materiality and novelty.<sup>7</sup>

Text as a riddle to be solved is initiated by Zampanò who refers to the etymology that connects ‘reading’ to ‘riddle’ (33), and in so doing emphasises the effort and complexity of the reading process. Evidence collated in Appendix II would seem to suggest that Truant has responded to, and evolved, his mother’s narrative style. The ludic nature of the text and the choreographed moments of interaction between appendices and the earlier text offer moments of revelation, but when these instances are unnecessarily gimmicky or complex they tend to jar. These flippant gestures contrast with the serious complexities of the text and it is perhaps this marked incongruity which creates the sensation of contesting genres.

The dance of writing, through techniques such as the manipulative use of depth and movement, through disappearing footnotes or the contorting of passageways of labyrinthine text, revels in subversive techniques which affect and challenge the restricting two-dimensional plane of textual reality. These experiments manipulate publishing traditions that use certain types of font and page layout to convey meaning. Danielewski’s innovative narratives subvert publishing conventions and instead adopt elements that suggest a hand-written account.<sup>8</sup>



### 5.3 Everything Falls Apart: The De(con)struction of Memory

Truant's partial agoraphobia implies he only feels at ease within the regulated and known boundaries of the house, and yet his domestic space through comparison with the labyrinth is imbued with the chaotic and so becomes fundamentally challenging. In an attempt to confirm the limits of his home space, Truant obsessively measures and validates his surroundings, waiting for his pronounced fears to be realised by any discernible change in its dimensions. The compulsive actions he exhibits over the internal dimensions of his apartment cannot be extended to the outside which is altogether larger and more frightening. When Truant encounters the external world he occasionally suffers fears associated with the uncanny or more literally with the *unheimlich*, and the placement of Truant within the contesting boundaries of the labyrinth leads inevitably to an overwhelming feeling of the *unheimlich* and the threat of the 'other'.

A note of caution is generated by the authoritative beginnings of Truant's narrative where the preface states: "[t]his is not for you" (viii). A dramatic and emotive introduction follows which records the physical toil of collating and reading the material represented within the book. The completion of the edition has left Truant weak and fearful, on the cusp of sleep and waking:

I still get nightmares. In fact I get them so often I should be used to them by now. I'm not. No one ever really gets used to nightmares (xi)

The cause of Truant's paranoia is clearly equated with the actual creation and reading of the book and especially around the alterations he makes to Zampanò's text, where he reinstates erased segments.

The struck-through passages directly referring to the Minotaur and consequently the Cretan labyrinth convey an attitude towards space and emplacement, which makes a play of that which is intermitted or silent, and thereby forces the reader to contemplate or just ignore the phrases. The motif of the stalker within the labyrinth who patrols the space and gaps in the text is akin to that which remains hidden or obscured at the cusp of the narrative. The prominent figures of Truant and Zampanò are haunted by a third who is periodically felt, suggesting the 'other' felt in Eliot's *The Waste Land* (V. 359-265).<sup>9</sup>

The erasure of textual passages concerning the Minotaur is partial as these retrieved elements are only struck-through and allow a degree of legibility. The extent of the intended erasure is highlighted by the reconstruction of these elements, as Truant attests: "Note: Struck passages indicate what Zampanò tried to get rid of, but which I, with a little bit of turpentine and a good magnifying glass managed to resurrect" (111). The striking out of elements of the text directed links to Heidegger's discussion of 'being' (*Question* 80-83) where he uses this struck-through font to indicate the partial effacement of the concept, in a process of both construction and erasure clearly visible within the same term. There is a sense throughout the text that the missing and obliterated is that which is crucial, as Truant states: "what matters most here is unspoken" (56). The significance of the removed material is appreciated by Truant who feels uncomfortable about the struck-through passages concerning the Minotaur and about the omissions in general. In recognition of the interplay between reader and text, Iser argues that the reader responds actively to blockages in the text by creating connections and filling the gaps. Within *House of Leaves*, the erasure and



emplacement of text is taken to such an extreme that it makes the act of reading increasingly problematical.

The alienating typology forces an intensive and proactive response from the reader in order to navigate the text and by so doing create the potential for a range of personalised meanings. These readings are rich with “adjustments and revisions” which causes the reader to formulate an interactive relationship with the narrative (Iser qtd. Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, *A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* 55). Purposefully created blanks and omissions tend to degrade the narrative flow and prompt the reader to actively involve her/himself in the crafting of a path through the narrative. Such practice is alluded to by Truant in his discussion of digression (31) when he argues that it is the wandering and apparently extraneous material that contains the essence of the writer. The textual structure embodies the author-architect’s model, where the reader is free to decide whether to participate in the textual perambulations. The fragility of this relationship is further eroded by the innovative shapes and lacunae of the text.

The prominence of these effaced passages and absences of text would seem to represent the abyss that confronts Navidson in the strange labyrinth. The spaces and blanks mediated are threatening both to Truant and, it is implied, to the reader. The novel contains excessive instances of gaps that influence the narrative: some deliberately created by narrators, others offered as accidental or as an attempt to document the experience of the labyrinth. The text as a puzzle is demonstrated by the portions of missing text where the deleted material ensures anonymity and the control of knowledge. Truant expressly identifies Zampanò as the architect of such passages: “Zampanò provided the blanks but never filled

them in" (63). These absences prevent Truant and the reader from achieving verification of source material or even identifying the participants. Glaring omissions are obvious in burnt passages, struck-through sections and in Zampanò's method of obliterating elements of the text by inking out portions of his writing. The deliberate creation of blanks has the effect of taxing the reader to make meaning with scant or reduced information as such portions of missing data are often extensive. In so doing, the text disrupts the infrastructure necessary to achieve meaning and sustain meaning. Although the omissions make problematic the fluidity of movement from one sentence to another these elements are not insurmountable. Experience of the narrative in chapters IX and XX accentuates the rhythm of reading in harmony with the tension of the episode: a correlation confirmed by Danielewski (Hayles, "Saving" 796). These stylised chapters evoke the impression of navigating a labyrinth.

During Truant's decline at the hands of language, the hub of his being, his accumulation of stories, begins to unravel. It is suggested that this is the same disintegration that befell Zampanò. Truant's collapse is accelerated when the labyrinth returns him to that which he has been trying to repress: his memories of his mother. Nightmarish visions combine the violence of his mother with the beast at the heart of the labyrinth and though both images are indistinct they are persuasive. The monster lies in his past, but through the reawakening of memory activated by his writing reappears in his present and future.

Consistently delineated throughout the novel is the concept of a monster either in the form of a mythological beast or as a psychological danger. Ultimately, the separate protagonists are forced to confront her/his own self within the depths of the



labyrinth, to assimilate or be destroyed by a representation of their repressed past. These skirmishes with their internal monsters and the overwhelming feeling of disorientation thoroughly unwind the psyches of the first expedition. Holloway's mental state deteriorates to the extent that he perceives his two friends as enemies to be eradicated. After escaping the maze and locking Holloway deep within its structure the labyrinth folds into an abyss. An identification between the environment of his flat and that of the Navidsons' home causes Truant to read voraciously as a means to allay his fears of the appearance of the labyrinth (498). His methodology is only partially successful, as the progress causes him to remember a disharmonious past which converges on his own story-telling and initiates feelings of fracture.

The language of Zampanò's manuscript impinges upon Truant's narrative voice and causes him much distress as he seeks to piece it together. Personal metamorphosis upon exposure to language is repeatedly alluded to: "[j]ust remember words can exceed the might of all blows. In some cases they can be fatal. For the rare few even immortal" (595). This is an extreme form of Heidegger's premise of the transformative properties of language (cf. Megill, *Prophets* 57). His mother's vocabulary which reaches out to him through her letters offers him solace, protection and guidance. In reconfiguring his past, Pelafina elevates him from the shadows and encourages him to fly only to fall later, Icarus-like, to earth. During Truant's suffering at the hands of an abusive carer she recites from the "Battle of Maldon" (II. 112-13):

Hige sceal þe heardra, heorte þe cenre, mod sceal þe mare, þe ure maegen  
lytlad. (601)

By as much as our might may diminish, we will harden our minds, fill our  
hearts, and increase our courage. (653)

This quotation is encoded in its original form, as it seems unlikely that her young reader would be familiar with old English. Spoken by the wise Byrhtwold, these words were his rallying cry to depleted English forces prior to a final attack. Conversely, the English stand was entirely unsuccessful and the “Battle of Maldon” actually recounts the massacre of English forces by the Vikings in Essex in 991AD. Despite its rousing nature the quotation appears to offer instruction only to those who will subsequently fail and perish, and forms a fitting message for Truant whose defences begin to disintegrate. The line appears in the original in Pelafina’s letters and is also collated by Truant in appendix F where the translation is footnoted by the editors (see above). In a celebratory mood, Pelafina also quotes from “The Seafarer”, possibly to denote Truant’s on-going journey (595).

Truant acknowledges the power of his mother’s language as its force provides the impetus to escape his domestic nightmare: “I still would never have succeeded had I not received that September, only weeks later, words to find me, my mother’s words, tenderly catching my history in the gaps, encouraging and focusing my direction, a voice powerful enough to finally lift my wing and give me the strength to go” (325). In reference to the flight that must be undertaken to free oneself from the inscribed and regulated path, these instructions constitute a refrain ordering the individual to “fly from the path” (323; 324; 326). The union between the labyrinth and that of flight is a designation identified by Ayrton as a suitable reason for the twentieth-century resurgence of interest in the labyrinth (“Meaning”; Nyenhuis, *Myth*). Aeronautical plans are even present in the series of symbols that, through investigations in one of Truant’s collages (582), correspond to ground-to-air



emergency codes. Such ciphers are repeated in the footnotes to detail the route of the narrative as a labyrinth of pathways that are broken, in a manner that reinforces the tension between the terrestrial and the airborne. The overt reference to the trail directs the reader again to the process of reading and the walker to the nature of the labyrinth. The aircraft codes reiterate the litany of broken paths and call for the need to transcend the labyrinth (cf. 151). In contrast, Zampanò refutes Pelafina's advice to exceed the narrative, perhaps alluding instead to the fate of Icarus:

~~Shy from the sky. No answer lies there[...] You alone must find the way. No one else can help you. Every way is different. And if you do lose yourself at least take solace in the absolute certainty that you will perish.~~  
(115)

In this passage denoting the influence of the Minotaur, the outside of the labyrinth is no longer a viable method of escape. Unlike Theseus who had the help and guidance from Ariadne and her ball of thread to navigate the Cretan labyrinth, each maze-walker is absolutely isolated and alone within Danielewski's maze. The freedom to discover one's own route is representative of a journey through a labyrinth, where the act of traversing is inextricably bound to the narrative process. The journey is unique to each explorer as "all solutions then are necessarily personal" (115).

Zampanò's reference to perishing also applies to the incomprehension experienced when meaning is lost, especially within the difficult labyrinth segments or through the destruction of crucial components. The mutilation of references to the myth of the Minotaur, the often lengthy destruction of some footnotes and passages through damage to the paper, further hamper narrative progression. Such effaced paragraphs emphasise the Cretan maze as being somehow more threatening and personal to the writer. It also forms a link between the Minotaur as Minos'

deformed offspring, as argued by Zampanò (110-111), and Truant as the divinely given yet irrevocably scarred son of Pelafina who is also absent.

Truant is emphatically recognised as Pelafina's son and her repeated call for him to fly equates him with a modern-day Icarus, in a genetic lineage from his one-time pilot father (585). His mother's desire to inspire him to fly is extended in Danielewski's *The Whalestoe Letters* where the additional correspondence exaggerates this sense of aviation (*Whalestoe* 37).<sup>10</sup> Despite the enthusiasm and guidance from his mother, Truant again appears to be on the verge of a fall, in a destiny that suggests Icarus' hubris and ignorance. A loose connection between Icarus and Truant is maintained in the intricate word play that ensues between the 'son' and 'sun':

(☉) (☼)

A sun to read the dark. (542)

A range of interchangeable meanings co-exist through this partial erasure. The sentence could suggest that light illuminates the dark, thus allowing cognition, but could also refer to the reading process. These intricate riddles underlie the massive infrastructure of the labyrinth and also draw the attention of the reader from the vast to the micro and back again.

The precarious nature of Icarus' and Truant's position is evidenced by their susceptibility to aerodynamic fluctuations:

[A] cold wind [. . . ] It cut right through you. Your clothes feel like they were made of tissue, your lips cracking, eyes tearing, lashes instantly freezing - pay no mind to the salt. You know you have to get out of there fast, get inside, or there's no question, you will not last. (493)



The wind forms an incremental image throughout the novel that is perceived as intimidating and able to shift or obliterate the house of leaves. The growl and approaching rush of the wind is a precursor to the rapidly changing dimensions of the labyrinth within Ash Tree Lane and as such appears threatening and ultimately powerful. The breeze is also associated with the menacing music of the Minotaur's growl in Navidson's labyrinth. The threat of the wind is interwoven throughout the various strands of the convoluted narrative and evokes the original labyrinth in Egypt which, as recounted by Pliny, conveyed an internal elemental power: "when the doors open there is a terrifying rumble of thunder within" (123; see *Natural History* XXXVI. xix. 88-89). Pelafina in her poem about Truant describes his son as "gone to the wind" (631) and also compares the boy to his father's power of flight (599). This connection is extended in *The Whalestoe Letters* to Pelafina as her breathing is described as "the wind in her throat" (xii). The implication is that Truant is maintained or threatened by the howling and swirling wind, which also denotes the fragility of the house of leaves:

As walls keep shifting  
And this great blue world of ours  
Seems a house of leaves

Moments before the wind. (563)

*House of Leaves* is a curious title that unites the man-made and the natural. The term 'house' implies a composition of perceived boundaries of definite structure. The text uses the title to denote the world and suggests that Navidson's house contains everything. 'House' refers to the physicality of a building intended for domestic use, but is removed from the emotional ties overt in the meaning of 'home'. Accordingly, impressions of dwelling are contested through the novel and so too are presuppositions concerning space.

The word 'leaves' is also ambiguous; primarily, it links the house with images of a tree where the leaf's natural embodiment contrasts with the man-made structure of the house. The term could denote a series of exits which would imply a colossal or intricate structure to allow this amount of activity. 'Leaves' is further developed by the disparate voices which interweave and disappear within the text. Furthermore, 'leaves' can also refer to the pages of a book: a conjunction that becomes an important textual motif, and when combined with the architecture of the title, give the impression that the book and house are inseparable.

The metaphor of a tree connecting these leaves becomes important as the labyrinthine branches and roots join and separate allowing paths to be forged through the text. Quite literally, the textual labyrinth can be perceived as a 'house of leaves' where the significance is placed on the exit from the tangled insides of the house. Emphasis here is placed upon the plural nature of these exits, on multiplicity and instability. The title also implies the layered structuring of a house of cards which is both intricate and fragile. This house of cards clearly exhibits its structured composition of strata, built up level by level, whilst retaining its delicate and insubstantial nature, susceptible to the merest hint of wind or movement.

Truant describes his altering identity as a threat affiliated to the reading process and so the book is likely to exert the same fragmentation over subsequent readers:

Beyond any cause you can trace, you'll suddenly realize things are not how you perceived them to be at all. For some reason, you will no longer be the person you believed you once were. (xxii)

The shift of perception is marked and mirrors the investigations within the labyrinth where the ability to know an area is dismantled. The changes Truant experiences



are negative as the exposition of his beginnings highlight the illusory nature of a fixed identity. Fear also resides in the nature of Zampanò's death as Truant ponders whether his immortal destroyer is pursuing him:

...I'm not alone.  
Something's behind me.  
Of course, I deny it.  
It's impossible to deny. (26)

Despite the threat of the stalking beast in Truant's rumination of a dream, his ultimate apprehension is that he is the monster he most fears (403-404). In this way, Truant dreads Navidson's discovery whereby the photographer's nightmares concerning 'Delial', a girl he chose to photograph rather than save, form the labyrinth's central absence. Navidson's desire to purge himself of his guilt leads to his physical break-down in the maze before he confronts his monstrous act and identifies himself as the beast. The motif of the lurking 'other' is present in both the Record and in Truant's commentary. It is sense of being followed that is reiterated by Holloway Roberts:

There's something here. It's following me. No, it's *stalking* me. I've been stalked by it for days but for some reason it's not attacking. It's waiting, waiting for something. I don't know what. Holloway Roberts. Menomonie, Wisconsin. I'm not alone here. I'm not alone. (5; cf. 335)

Holloway stresses his name and origins like a mantra, lest they be forgotten. 'Menomonie' implies the mother of the muses Memory or Mnemosyne and so highlights the importance of memory within the labyrinth. When items are forgotten in the labyrinth they cease to exist; for example, both Jed and Wax lose buttons and shoe laces during an expedition (126).<sup>11</sup> Navidson's reappearance from Expedition Five seems to have been achieved through his focused thinking about his family (321) and suggests that the labyrinth is reacting to each of the individuals' mental states. During his final journey into the labyrinth, his loss of memory is firmly located in death and destruction:

Memories cease to surface. Sorrow threatens to no longer matter.  
Navidson is forgetting.  
Navidson is dying. (483)

His act of remembrance is mirrored by Truant's eventual method of finding solace in the concentrated recollections of his mother. It is the repression of her memory and the creation of an absence in her place that perpetuates his wanderings around the labyrinth and leads to the probable creation of the labyrinth at Ash Tree Lane as an elaborate psychological hoax. The repetition of converging stories prevents a singular rendition of the truth from surfacing. Instead, the narrative is suffused with a myriad of truths, as Truant explains: "memory mixes with all the retellings and explanations I heard later" (505). Truant has no way of separating the factual from the swirling fictions of his own, his mother's and Zampanò's making.



#### **5.4 Encountering the Textual Labyrinth: Truth, Unreliability and Missing Narrators**

*House of Leaves* is the embodiment of Ts'ui Pen's masterpiece where "the novel suggested to me that *it* was the maze" (Borges, "The Garden of the Forking Paths" 51).<sup>12</sup> The narrative play between different voices is intricately managed by the typesetting which reveals and reflects the labyrinth. An immense project, the knotted discourse is imbued with cyclical trends and self-aware interconnectivity as images are repeated, refracted and inked out. Footnotes dance *through* pages, are reversed and inverted, in a manner which serves to undermine the intended clarity and accessibility such academic mechanisms traditionally revere.

The overall effect of the novel is that of high artifice which ensures that the reader's part is active in fashioning a route through the narrative. The deft invented references and teasing misappropriations of sources are overwhelming in their entirety. Portions of the text are written in code while elusive footnotes cause the reader to double back, change direction or seek to connect intangible clues. In addition, the typesetting of the book is complex and unusual<sup>13</sup> as it adopts numerous techniques that impinge on the narrative flow and so forces the reading process to meander. By following often incongruent and non-cohesive pathways the reader is enthralled within a narrative labyrinth. The singular path offered by Ariadne's clue is illusionary and causes the reader to experience disorientation within the duplicitous corridors of discourse. In this reading environment, the reader is increasingly alienated from the text as the process becomes excessively arduous.

Truant collates and critiques Zampanò's labyrinthine writings into a manuscript.<sup>14</sup> The young raconteur's discourse is presented as an extensive series of footnotes that augment and, at times, dwarf Zampanò's critique of the Navidson Record. These footnotes detail his on-going editorial scheme, his personal history and his experience of the forming narrative. Truant's personal asides and insights into Zampanò's work are reminiscent of the excessive and inflated commentary-style annotations in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*: a comparison that Hayles also comments upon ("Saving" 780; see also Doug Nufer, "House of Leaves" 1). Unlike Nabokov's work, the extraneous comment is not contained in a remote endnote scheme but rather fully impinges on and repeatedly privileges its position over the body of the Navidson Record.

The narratives overlap and envelop one another to the extent that the authority and the relationship between sources of comment become increasingly blurred and their associations become more multifarious as the discourse progresses. Though it might be considered that Zampanò's voice with its academic vocabulary and credence could be thought of as a crucial portion of the text, the idea of a central text is subverted. Positioned initially as commentary on Zampanò's script, Truant's narrative is a vivid collection of witty, street-wise vignettes whose textured episodes counterpoint the predominately staid erudite observations made by Zampanò. His narrative acts as one of the main filters through which the Navidson Record is perceived. It is perhaps Truant's inherent improbity, his vernacular voice or the improbability of his continuation of Zampanò's script that gives his narrative a sense of unreliability. Truant's voice dramatically alters the way in which the reader discovers and interacts with the other discourses, whilst his overlapping of truth and fiction leads the reader to fundamentally question his trustworthiness.



Reliability and authenticity are probed throughout the text, principally through inquiry into the dependability of Truant's and Zampanò's narrative voices. As the novel involves multiple fictions, some of which purport to be factual and authentic, it becomes increasingly problematic to gauge the input of each one of these 'authors': "[p]resumably "Original" indicates an entry written in Zampanò's own hand while "A" "B" "C" etc., etc. indicate entries written by someone else. –Ed." (542). This editorial note implies that even the editor with the experience of the whole narrative is unable to confidently assign authorship of portions of the material. Fiction is represented as fact in the reporting of scientific endeavours within the Navidson expedition and Zampanò's analysis of their recordings. On a primary level, both Truant and Zampanò question the validity of the Navidson Record but Danielewski manipulates this further by introducing a wealth of contrary evidence through his latter appendices. Such illusions and game-playing originate from the first page as Danielewski extends conventional notions of discourse. Indeed, the title of the book appears to be more accurately rendered as *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, which both turns the author into part of the fiction and cedes ownership of the narrative to Zampanò, with Johnny Truant providing the introduction and notes (ii-iii). In keeping with this fictional play, the disclaimer that identifies the accompanying text as fictional and standard in many works of fiction is attributed to another of these fictionalised editors (iv). Moreover, the flyleaf allusion to a then fictive full-colour edition was later published by Pantheon in 2002, two years after its reported existence, and so extends this play with reality.<sup>15</sup>

These ideas of narrative ownership are an elaboration of the network of translators present in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* and taken to extremes by



Danielewski, who disturbs the traditional boundaries of where fictions begin and where they end. The proliferation of narratives of questionable authenticity reflects a core conceit of the novel whereby excessiveness threatens to transgress its physical boundaries. Lengthy digressions serve to delay reader comprehension and distance the proximity to the criticism of the *Navidson Record*, a technical decision that Nufer defines as “risky” as “Truant is a lot less interesting than the core story about the house” (“House” 1). Marked by his typing errors, humour and digressions, Truant influences and interrupts Zampanò’s project whilst his active dissembling accentuates his unreliability. Truant weaves elaborate allegorical stories and fictions that paradoxically seem to complement and at times contradict Zampanò’s narrative. Occasionally, teasing semantic meanders undermine the interpretive process and cause a degree of confusion and irritation:

Now I’m sure you’re wondering something. Is it just coincidence that this cold water predicament of mine also appears in this chapter?

Not at all. Zampanò only wrote “heater”. The word “water” back there-I added that.

Now there’s an admission, eh?

Hey, not fair you cry.

Hey, hey, fuck you, I say. (16)

This episode deftly highlights Truant’s vernacular voice, his authorial influence and his ability to change meaning, which he exerts over the multiple narratives. The editorial confidence that the reader is encountering Zampanò’s words in the ‘*Times New Roman*’ script is here refuted. The slightest adjustment and choice of wording critically alters the text as well as the reader’s perceptions. Truant’s awareness of this point is also evident and emphasises the deliberated nature of his word selection.

The framework of Truant’s unreliability is repeatedly observed as he claims to distance himself from the reading process in an apparent attempt to allow the reader to engage with the narrative without intrusion: “[t]he way I figure it,



if there's something you find irksome-go ahead and skip it. I couldn't care less how you read any of this" (31).<sup>16</sup> Again the statement is confrontational and somewhat fractious and epitomises Truant's desire to manipulate the text whilst conversely appearing to release authorial control. Truant's sentiments underscore the reader's task to create a personal route through the text, whilst his flippancy belies his mediation of the text which for the most part appears to intensify textual abnormalities. The detours that allay meaning are systematically made prominent by the complex typography, calligraphic elements and by the dense narrative voices.

Truant's attitude towards missing portions of dialogue and deleted material leads to an approximate representation of the physical space taken up by the letters. The absences left by the elusive Zampanò are rigidly adhered to; for example, "It[ ]s added f[ ]r em[ ]asis" (331) where partial meaning is preferred to the guesswork of a reconstituted phrase.<sup>17</sup> This method of parenthesis is a technique utilised by Guy Davenport in his translation and reconstructions of Sappho's poetry (Peter Jay and Caroline Lewis, *Sappho: Through English Poetry*). The painstaking representation and recovery of Zampanò's words and his silences highlight a pedantic quality within Truant's role as a preserver of the original manuscript. Although there can be little doubt about the intended meaning of the phrase, presumably 'italics added for emphasis', the use of brackets serves to delay the reader's comprehension. The adoption of brackets also serves the same purpose as the act of italicisation to accentuate a part of the text.

Truant's record of erased portions of text intermittently cover whole words and sentences and at other times merely a single letter. As the custodian of Zampanò's

manuscript rather than a creator in his own right, Truant claims to preserve the charred remains of some phrases: “[r]ather than try to reconstruct what was destroyed I decided to just bracket the gaps-[ ] . (323) Difficulties in reading such partially destroyed or partly realised elements are evident throughout the novel. Perhaps the most oblique of these sections is the description detailing the composition of the labyrinth wall. Some twenty-three pages in total are largely erased by Truant as the result of an accident with a broken inkwell which serves as a metaphor for his inability to effect written communication (372-377). Though the trace of technical jargon remains, the structure of possible sentences or words are obliterated. As a result the rescued scientific footnotes are stranded without the report, which renders the annotations disparate and complex (372-376). The lack of information precludes a scientific explanation and so documents another instance where science is unable to offer an elucidation of the labyrinth to the reader.

Effaced, censored and deconstructed passages exist in both Zampanò’s and Truant’s writing as another of the commonalities between the two men. Focus of the narrative moves intermittently between their voices, and shifts from the academic to the vernacular, causing an increased sense of textual disorientation and tension. The highly structured patterning of these opposing discourses is clearly labyrinthine, as obvious visual digression explores the differences between Truant and Zampanò’s narrative voices. Despite these narratives’ contrasted tone and approach, the editors’ indicate that a different type setting is needed to distinguish the two narratives: “Mr Truant’s footnotes will appear in Courier font while Zampanò’s will appear in Times” (4). These typographical determinations differentiate between the two characters and echo the motif of Truant as a carrier of information. In contrast,



Zampanò remains the giver of more erudite material, supplemented by the use of the 'Times' font common to academic publishing. Martin Brick discounts this ready distinction and argues that the courier font has more pressing and embedded economic application ("Blueprint" 6-7). Despite Brick's reticence to consider the suitability of these fonts he does note that the editors' script appears in Bookman (6) and, in doing so, would seem to support the relation of characters and their typological constructions.

Whilst the reader is repeatedly made aware of, and so is reasonably alert to, Truant's glib mistruths, Zampanò's conflation is less obvious as they are inserted within the camouflage of a narrative within narratives. Zampanò's academic voice lends his critique credence, whilst Truant's vernacular banter is more readily open to scrutiny. At the core of this debate is the reliability of the Navidson expedition a concern that is continued into "Appendix III: Contrary Evidence" (658-662). The extent to which Zampanò is aware of the fictive nature of the Navidson record is playfully unclear, although it does appear that he foregrounds its unreliability along with his own in the introduction: "[t]hey say truth stands the tests of time. I can think of no greater comfort than knowing this document failed such a test" (xix). It follows that Zampanò's confidence that the narrative will perish is based on his knowledge of its fabrication. He also seems to take pleasure in the annihilation<sup>18</sup> of his palimpsest as though time is able to destroy the narrative in a process of eradication that neither he nor Truant is able to complete. The questionable authenticity of Zampanò's discourse is highlighted as Truant claims to have failed in his task of dealing fully with the old man's "false quotes or invented stories" (xx). To compound this, Zampanò's disability which rendered him "as blind as a bat" (xxi) implies that he could never have seen the Navidson film. Crucially,

though Truant identifies Zampanò's capriciousness, he also highlights his own inability to weed out or accentuate all of these instances. Truant's exposition of Zampanò and his manuscript is compounded by the unreliability of his own narrative voice: a factor that perpetuates the untrustworthy determinations of Zampanò's influence.

As an active though absent narrator, Truant perpetually interweaves the dichotomy of truth and fiction, causing a distortion at the boundaries of each. Despite the abundance of discursive practice there is crucially a lack of a residual authoritative figure, which is clearly emphasised by Truant's name which implies absence and the destiny of the wanderer. The suitability of this correlation is accentuated by Pelafina, who ties Johnny to the meanings of his surname when she states: 'JOHNNY IS TRUANT!' (631). 'Truancy' is a word commonly used in conjunction with a child's absence from school, and such a link applied to Truant's position emphasises that he too is missing without leave from the system of the text. This idea of absence is pervasive and is documented in the commentary from the disembodied editors, the dead Zampanò, Truant's dead mother and in the dialogue from the Navidson Record. The labyrinth also represents an ultimate embodiment of the void as protagonists are 'eaten' by the space, whilst meaning is also pressurised and at times caused to break down resulting in an absence of meaning.

Although Truant's first-person narrative engages the reader, he is ultimately missing, a realisation accentuated by his concluding words: "[t]he child has gone" (521). This line marks the cessation of an anecdote that graphically depicts the power and ownership of a mother over her son and also signals Truant's surrender of the primary narrative to his mother. Although the text offers this phrase as Truant's parting words,



by tracing back through the chronological contortions of his diary it becomes clear that his final lines are more hopeful and mark the end of his journey: "I don't need to leave yet. Not yet. There's time now. Plenty of time. And somehow I know it's going to be okay. It's going to be alright. It's going to be alright" (515). The disintegration of the book caused by the remembrance of his past results in a transformation that is hopeful and complete. Although this rebirth is also utterly appropriate to the spiritual notions of the labyrinth's restorative powers, such a positive result is largely absent from late twentieth-century mediations of the trope.

Truant's absence does not negate the power he exerts over the narrative. As interpreter of Zampanò's text, he fails on occasion to locate quotations and offers little in the way of explanation: "*no idea*" (87).<sup>19</sup> In this instance the accompanying footnote results in a four-page digression until the editor offers a reading. Physically reticent, in keeping with his increasing agoraphobic tendencies, Truant participates in the protracted printed process from afar, a feature that is evidenced early in the text: "[w]e also wish to note here that we have never actually met Mr. Truant. All matters regarding the publication were addressed in letters or in rare instances over the phone. - The Editors" (4). While his action is in accordance with the strange effects of his disorientation caused by his encounters with the text, it also shields his identity and makes him appear even more enigmatic.

There are certain inconsistencies that point to Truant as a project of another writer's fabrications, not least because there are submerged narrative pointers that denote a relationship between his mother and Zampanò. This unlikely connection disturbs the apparent passage of the manuscript and effects further questions concerning the



narrative's construction.<sup>20</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters* extend this notion as Pelafina appears to make a playful reference to the disappearance of Zampanò's cats (56). There are instances where the use of a misspelt or deliberately manipulated word transcend the disparate narratives; for example, Zampanò's (41; 552) and Pelafina's (599) use of the word 'pisces', presumably in place of 'pieces', appears to denote an anachronistic tie between the protagonists. 'Pisces' in Zampanò's discussion of the Echo myth is reproduced from his application of the term in a scribbled annotation (552). Both of the episodes in Zampanò's script relate to the dismemberment of the female body,<sup>21</sup> where the term 'pieces' would be semantically appropriate. In Pelafina's letter, she uses 'pisces' as a metaphor for her disintegrated state after hearing the terrible news contained in Truant's letter (599). Truant as editor of Zampanò's writing had the opportunity to correct the old man's 'mistake' from his notes and so too would the editors; however, none of these participants comment upon its incongruence. The suggestion that 'pisces' might have been over-looked by the collator of Zampanò's words seems unlikely as, spelt without a capitalised first letter, 'pisces' would be corrected by a computer spellchecker.<sup>22</sup> By incorporating 'pisces' in a collage of Zampanò's further writings in appendix C, Danielewski ensures that the use of the term at least had a precedent in Zampanò's writing and so it is improbable that Truant is merely duplicating his mother's usage. The emplacement of 'pisces' in a collage of Zampanò's scribbled notations implies that it functions as one of the many instances of coded meaning.

The appendices serve as a useful reference point from which to view the preceding text and allow quick, but prejudiced, means to re-enter the main narrative body. The accessibility of these latter sections is eased by the discovery of an index, although the list purportedly incorporates some 99 words that do not appear in the



Navidson Record.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, textual navigation by means of the index is impaired.

## **5.5 “Strange colored words” (380): The Alienating Effect of Madness**

Appendix II prefaced by the editors of the collection and not by the perennially absent Truant, contains sketches and photographs alluded to in the footnotes of the Navidson Record. Within this assortment there is a compilation of letters written by Truant’s mother, Pelafina, during her final incarceration in the mental asylum known as the Whalestoe Institute. These final poems, letters and word games unsettle the chronology of the Navidson Record and imply that the labyrinth should be considered figuratively.

The slide into madness is examined within each of the main segments of the text, from the Navidson Report which details Holloway’s insanity, Truant’s dialectic angst with the text and Pelafina’s imprisonment. All of these journeys explore instability, both textual and mental. Madness appears as a recurrent theme as Holloway acts with increasing irrationality within the labyrinth, Truant wrestles with his genetic heritage as well as the oppressive manuscript, and we are told that Pelafina is mentally ill: “and now, without a doubt, you see your mother is mad” (597). These instances of madness are affiliated to the labyrinth as the structure detrimentally influences the protagonists’ mental states.

In his later journal, the anniversary of his mother’s death, deduced from the Director’s letter that concludes Pelafina’s narrative (643), is resplendent with the numerology of the labyrinth (503). Her removal from the family home ensnares Truant in a labyrinth of repressed memories. It is not until he claims Zampanò’s manuscript that Truant is forced to retrace his history causing him to enter the labyrinth and to rediscover his heritage. This labyrinthine return to his past is



predicted more explicitly by Pelafina in *The Whalestoe Letters* (15, 35-38, 55-56). Within the maze, Truant searches for his absent origin which he seems unable to locate. In his cyclical quests for a beginning, he acts as a metaphor for the lack which functions within language: a quest for an origin that is forgotten or lacking. Truant stresses the loss of original meaning through a process of inscription and forgetting that occurs with the advent of the written word:

It's not me.  
It cannot be.  
As soon as I write I've already forgotten.  
I must remember.  
I must read. (498)

As the character of Truant becomes more indistinct, he appears unable to remember instances that locate him and mark him as an individual; he forgets his birthday<sup>24</sup> and generally loses track of time. Truant is forced to re-read sections of his writing in an attempt to recall events and instances which have been utterly erased from his memory. The collated writings fall short of expressing or explaining his past:

A quick re-read of all this and I begin to see I'm tracing the wrong history.. I'm following something else. Maybe parallel. Possibly harmonic. Certainly personal. A vein of it inhabiting every place. (502)

Truant's navigation of a network of stories has inadvertently allowed him to travel along an alternative path and impresses that the process of re-reading alters meaning. Even his return home to trace his mother's heritage is defined by loss, a feature that Zampanò argues characterises Navidson's childhood (22-23):

Following a bunch of lefts [ ] The house gone. A bunch of houses gone. (505)

The combination of left turns is indicative of the passage taken by a walker confronted with a maze (Kenner, "Mazes" 248-249). Truant's adherence to the system of the labyrinth and its failure to reveal the object of the quest implies that there is no central space or resolution. The labyrinth in which Truant finds himself is a complex multicursal one which is mirrored by the intricacy of the textual path. The stable remembrance of his childhood house is corrupted, revealing the disguised void that lurked out of sight.

The more he becomes embroiled within the densely written narrative, partially of his own making, he becomes increasingly dislocated from his previous known reality:

Something's leaving me. Parts of me.

Everything falls apart.

Stories heard but not recalled.  
Letters too.

Words filling my head. Fragmenting like artillery shells. Shrapnel, like syllables, flying everywhere. Terrible syllables. Sharp. (71)

In this episode of delusional horror the words taken from Zampanò's and his mother's writing circulate in his mind and seem to attack him. The vocabulary acts like weapons and echoes his mother's advice that words "can be fatal [f]or the rare few, even immortal" (595). The power of the labyrinthine text creates a potent discourse that seems to affect those who come into contact with it. What is evident here is his inability to escape, as that which is truly fearful is within him.

Truant's dread is compounded through his recognition of the fragmentary and splintered nature of his own being, a discovery that is accompanied by an enormous



feeling of loss.<sup>25</sup> The perception of his identity is permanently unstable, like the language he uses and encounters. The creation of the subject through a composite of histories and stories is examined, and reveals illusionary foundations of stability and singularity which give way to plurality and chaos. As Truant shapes an assemblage of meanings from the found manuscripts he begins to lose his tenuous grip on reality. Like Zampanò before him, Truant becomes a prisoner of the book. Again this shows Danielewski's indebtedness to Borges, as Truant's journey into madness parallels the bookish obsessions of the main character of the "Book of Sand": "I felt that the book was a nightmarish object, an obscene thing that affronted and tainted reality itself" (91). At the root of Truant's angst is his repressed memory of his mother's forcible removal from the home and her body torn from his. The trauma of this five and a half minute event is significant as Truant suppresses and forgets the recollection, only later to wander through the house of his memory until he arrives at what he once knew. Also, the duration of her removal is physically encountered in Navidson's labyrinth, where the five and a half minute hallway is a crucial component of the video documentation of the labyrinth (60). Perhaps Truant has incorporated the terminology of Zampanò's script onto his personal record, or maybe the labyrinth, complete with its commentary, is the projection of his discovery of self. The suggestion here is that the documentation, whether fake or not, real or imagined, is a means by which Truant can unlock his history. Consequently, it is Truant's initial severance from his past that has to be remedied. To compound this, Truant explicitly plays with the idea that he is in fact nothing more than narrative, reinforced by the mispronunciation of his mother's name as "Ms. Livre [sic]" (643), a surname that translates as 'book' from the French.



Labyrinths have historically depicted a journey into wholeness through digressive pathways that ultimately unite (Carl Jung and Hermann Kern qtd. Jaskolski, *Labyrinth* 77-80). However, what happens to individuals who become lost along its multiple corridors? In *House of Leaves*, those who fail to return are abandoned by society, as can be evidenced by Pelafina's mental wanderings and anti-social actions that ostracise her from her family and her social sphere. Her distinctiveness and deviation from within social limitations leads to her segregation and removal from society and so intensifies her sense of uniqueness. Her insanity is equated with labyrinthine passageways because as a woman lost to society and her son she "live[s] at the end of some interminable corridor" (624). This is a fitting connection, as the brain has long been depicted as a labyrinthine matrix.<sup>26</sup> In *The Whalstoe Letters*, Pelafina's descriptions of anguish and unresolved trauma depict a labyrinth of "[r]ooms upon rooms upon hundreds of rooms" (19), and predict her son's imprisonment in the maze of his making.

Pelafina's correspondence is placed reportedly after the fictitious first edition to provide "additional material" (567), and so probe into Truant's history and the influence his traumatised past had on his annotations of Zampanò's manuscript. There is also created a strange link between Navidson's final letter in the labyrinth (389-393) and Pelafina's system of code (625): both correspondence use the same font and have the same 'check' mark. These unexplained similarities again question the validity, authorship and chronology of every discourse. The correspondences appear to trace a period of lucidity followed by the deterioration into increased dementia. The form of the letters alters over the duration of the section: from their beginnings within the structure of epistolary convention, each dated and written from left to right, through to a highly manipulated and stylised type indicative of



Truant's writing. This fluid transition coincides with Pelafina's descent into near incoherent madness.

The mental asylum into which Pelafina is forcibly taken performs an important sociological function as the imprisoned, confined nature of such an institution disconnects the patient from the nub of society and, in this instance, between a mother and her son. The stigma of madness functions as a classification of otherness, as that which is separate or made so by the expedient needs of the society, and causes the individual to be ostracised, revoking their right to belong within the homogeneous core of society. Michel Foucault describes these sites of incarceration as places where those "deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed" ("Of Other Places" 25). Within such 'treatment' centres, Foucault attempts to locate the voice of madness and repeatedly states that such experience cannot be described through the ordered, rational voice of the sane (*Mental Illness and Psychology* and *Madness and Civilisation*). Accordingly, he identifies the need to create, find or validate a language which is able to articulate madness. This linguistic quest is reiterated by Derrida who claims that in order to grant access to the voice of the mad the individual should "follow the madman down the road of his exile" ("Cogito" 26). The innovation, codes and erudition of Pelafina's vocabulary are possibly a means to construct such a voice.

As an intellectual and cultured individual, Pelafina appears aware of her status as one made low: she describes herself as "distraught and wrecked [...] tearful and terribly confused" (612, 606). Her intelligence is re-emphasised by Walden D. Wyrhta, the holder and publisher of her other letters, who claims: "few get brighter than [her]" (*Whales* xi). Explicit within these letters is a tone of excessiveness

which is intensified by the anguish of separation from her son and the paranoia of a perceived conspiracy. The extent of her motherly love, which underpins these letters, appears abnormally intense and extreme, and would seem to indicate an unbalanced lover rather than a mother. An unpleasant effect of this surplus of emotion is the strong intimation that their relationship is in some way improper; an incestuous tension that is comparable with the yearnings suffered by Phaedra.<sup>27</sup> Both the narrator and his mother suffer a descent into mental psychosis in a fate that echoes the doom of the house of Minos whereby Pasiphaë's humiliating and monstrous desire is replicated in her daughter's passion for her step-son Hippolytus (Euripides, *Phaedra*) and so results in disharmony and death. Minos' dynasty maintains a doomed propensity for inappropriate and limitless infatuation, whilst a similar strain of excessive familial love simmers in Pelafina's narrative. The strong bond between mother and child is repeatedly destructive, as Pelafina reports her attempts to murder her child in her delusional belief that he would be grateful. Truant eventually refutes this act as a fabrication; a myth intended to ease the pain of her removal (517).

The beauty of the young child is illustrated by Pelafina, who refers to the texture and luminosity of his skin and face, culminating in the elevation of the young Truant to the status of deity. In her dreamlike state she recounts "there were some gods who were jealous of you, but I shooed them away" (592). The deification of her son is accompanied by Pelafina's likeness to the mother of Christ: "I remain your only Mary" (611). These mythical and religious articulations accentuate Pelafina's place as the mother of a God and hence worthy of veneration. Similarly, Pasiphaë's protestations about the Minotaur's abhorrent conception function around



the premise of his divinity.<sup>28</sup> Like Pelafina, she too is contained within a bestial structure, albeit willingly.

There is no release for Pelafina, as she finally dies, as did the Minotaur, within the confines of her prison. Her physical internment within a maze of bureaucracy and no return is compared by Zampanò to the fate of Jonah (406):

An atrocity sinking into the waters of darkness; without order or bars of earth; where light must mean shadow and reason dies in the hold:

((((((((((((((Jonah in the belly of the beast))))))))))))))  
(545)

Through the use of brackets Zampanò is able to physically illustrate a sense of captivity as well as intimate the thickness of the whale's body. Truant also makes explicit reference to the whale when he describes Pelafina's incarceration: "[S]he's in The Whale. That's where she lives now. She lives in The Whale" (503). The mental asylum bears the improbable name of the "Whalestoe Institute" which further accentuates its fabrication. Although the biblical Jonah is allowed a second chance to reform and carry on God's will (*Jonah* 2:10), Pelafina dies within her 'Whale'. The utter despondency she experiences in the asylum is comparable to the unhappy Minotaur's extended incarceration in the labyrinth (Borges, "House of Asterion").

The words and stories which define Truant seem elusive, beyond his mental recall, and cause him to begin to lose the power over these narratives and hence himself: "there are so many stories [...] but I can't remember my own beginnings" (180-181). Truant appears lost in labyrinthine passages, built through the accumulation of stories and coincidence, which have bound him and

blinded him to his origins. This later disquiet is not apparent in Truant's initial zeal obvious in his creation of stories and fictions:

Made-up stories. I dodged, ducked, acquired a whole new vocabulary for bending, for hiding, all while beyond the gaze of them all.(325)

We all create stories to protect ourselves.(20)

Although Truant uses fiction to conceal and to safeguard himself, the fiction he creates is playful and knowing, continually undermining the perceptions of what is truthful (509). In doing so, his flippant narrative voice belies the more serious repercussions of the labyrinthine.

The fear that Truant suffers is exacerbated by the alienation and unfamiliarity of the language which fills his head as it becomes increasingly apparent to him that his memories have been contaminated: "the memories are not my own" (499). Seemingly his thoughts have been infiltrated by another, as he suggests:

My memory [ ] though not the same, a completely different story after all, built upon story after story, so many, how many?, stories high, but building what? And why? (297-298)

The motif of building reiterates the many constructions within the text from house to labyrinth, script to film, through to identity, personal history and the fabrication of the novel. The quotation advances the idea that memory and story can overlap and assemble a labyrinth of meaning.

Zampanò's labyrinthine writings ensnare Truant and begin to affect his health. The recovery of the manuscript instigates an insatiable fear (179) which instils the need in Truant to document and record his surroundings to ensure there is no trace of the labyrinth. His feverish annotations and observations accompany his downward



spiral into drug dependency and mental health problems. In accordance with the idea that the labyrinth is both the physical entity documented in the house and a metaphor for the text, language perpetuates the effects of the bodily sensations of the maze. The language of the manuscript has the ability to physically move Truant: "the more I focused in on the words the farther I seemed from my room" (43). The capacity of a 'good book' to transport the reader out of her/his reality into a world of the author's making is here mutated through the control attributed to language. As Truant makes prominent, words shape the individual:

I grew up on certain words, words I've never mentioned [ ] words orbiting around my mother mainly, sometimes whispered, more often written in letters[ ] these letters, always hand written and full of strange colored words (379-380).

The overt fabrication and manipulation of Zampanò's text and of his own experience and histories reinforce the idea that he is nothing more than a series of words that combine into stories. The construction of the text and its deconstructive properties cause the discourses at the core of his being to begin to unravel.

Truant's identity and emotional journey are described in labyrinth terminology whereby the labyrinth's guiding 'clue' unwinds to reveal disorientation and confusion. The residual turmoil is compared by Truant to the loss of the yarn: "I'm certain nothing's left. The thread has snapped. No sound even to mark the breaking let alone the fall" (327). The reader drops with the rope and experiences the slowing spacing of phrases denoting the void and enormity of the Great Hall with the explorers, as the typography graphically impresses the physical and emotional experience of the

labyrinth. The reader becomes lost like the protagonist in this “labyrinth without end” (Edgar M. Bacon qtd. Danielewski, *House* 136). The snapping thread represents the umbilicus, central to early readings of primitive labyrinths (Knight, *Virgil*), and is felt in the connection between Truant and his mother. The cord could refer to the reading process, which has become increasingly knotted and complex, affecting Truant’s sense of cohesion.

The dissolving of his outer defences breached by his contact with the Navidson Record, signal his loss of control over his own dissemblance and by implication his own histories:

What scenes? What scenes. Atrocities. They are unspeakable but still mine[...] I’ve lost sense of what’s real and what’s not. What I’ve made up, what has made me. (497)

He documents a cyclical threat caused by the narrative of the labyrinth and, like Zampanò before him, he alludes to the power of language to create and also to destroy. The command of linguistics to forge identities is made overt as is the continuum of these words to circulate, continually defining and modifying the individual. This highlights the influential nature of language that has the ability to transform an identity. Despite the often positive accoutrements of language, which are emphasised by Pelafina in her discussions of their potent powers, Truant is ultimately affected by their negative trappings. The accumulated effects of language upon Truant create a splintered definition of identity, achieved through a history of multiple, layered narratives. However, these personal narratives appear to have been infiltrated and transgressed, as memory is no longer his own sacred right: “[t]he memories are not my own. I’ve no idea whose they are or even where they came from” (499). Afraid that he has become



transformed into, or has always been, a product of the document's inventions (326),<sup>29</sup> Truant's sense of self is unfastened and deconstructed through a peeling taxonomy of stories that once combined to give a semblance of unity. The fissures within the text profoundly affect Truant and illustrate a fractured and tormented identity, whilst his Mother's voice captures the basis of his history, of a life lived in the margins. As Truant explores the elusiveness of language to articulate his transformation he claims he is "not what I used to be" (72). Change is imposed upon Truant's once cohesive sense of being and consigns him to a transitional state of becoming undone. It is unclear whether his mental deterioration is a result of his genetic heritage, the exploration of the manuscript or a combination of the two.

Truant's propensity to be overly influenced by Zampanò's narrative is evidenced in a short passage relating to the history of the house. The digression into a recovered diary from the seventeenth-century complete with historical publishing conventions (409-414) leads to the affectation of Truant's footnote 398 (410-413) and the report from the editors that he "has mistaken the long 's' for an 'f'" (413). His misreading of the publishing tradition is interesting as it implies that his adoption of the 'f' is not as a result of the capacity of language to alter him; rather it is an extension of the meaning that he believes the manuscript to hold. In this way, power lies not in the symbol but in the interpretative act. Either his use of the 'f' is another playful joke at the expense of the reader or is indicative of how enmeshed he has become in the narrative.

The journal details a game trip from a settlement at Jamestown where three protagonists stranded in a marshy bog without food or sign of animal activity are

faced with a silent environment that is given to occasional roars of wind, in a predicament that is eerily reminiscent of the exploration of Navidson's labyrinth. From the midst of the wilderness the three discover "[f]taires" (414), later considered to be a sign of dementia under extreme circumstances (414). However, their account with its isolation and alienation carries meaning for the Navidsons and the holders of the book. The paradoxical encounter with the stairs would seem to establish the permanence and history of the house and possibly also its indestructibility. The presence of stairs without the sense of being inside is uncanny whilst, as a metonymic extension of *the* house, they emphasise the size of the labyrinth. Here, as in *The Name of the Rose*, the labyrinth appears to be a means to consider a world view. After Truant's strange substitution of 'f' for 's' there is a cessation in his narrative until he reports the news of his friend Lude's death (491). Truant's absence ensures that the reader navigates the contorted textual layout of Navidson's labyrinth alone without his guidance or presence.

The re-emergence of Truant's voice is stylistically altered as it returns to mimic a journal with its use of dates and entries, possibly as a belated response to the historical narrative. The material is repetitious, out of chronological order and no longer constrained to the footnotes of Zampanò's text. These diary entries form an entire chapter (XXI) and are coded, recursive and, significantly, represent his final utterances.<sup>30</sup> In an important aside, implied by the fly-cover to be the only line in the collection to appear in purple (iv),<sup>31</sup> Truant remarks upon his only lasting story, the memory of "~~what I'm remembering now~~" (518). The narrative that he claims to be recounting is fictitious, told to him by a character of his own making (509), as is indicated by its partial erasure in a manner congruent with Zampanò's censorship. The correlation of struck-through passages with the Minotaur (336) suggests that



the fabled creature is in fact the beast of personal memory. Truant appears to contaminate his own reality with both his mother's experience inside the Whalestoe Institution and the imprisonment of the Cretan Minotaur, as he slowly transforms into the "Beast" (324, 497, 601).

Engagement with the struck-through passages concerning the Minotaur affect Truant negatively, possibly resulting from his identification with the beast (403-404), a correlation that N. Katherine Hayles concludes stems from an anagram of his name: "the phrase 'The Minotaur' is the anagram 'O Im he Truant'" ("Saving" 798). In the manner of cryptic crosswords the footnote points to the anagram through the use of the word "turn". Truant's close work with the passages about the Minotaur implies this discovery, as he writes obliquely: "that's what you get for wanting to turn **The Minotaur** into a homie" (337).

The reading and presentation of his journal accentuate Truant's movement towards the confrontation of his own past, evidenced through his dreams and his journey home. The self-destruction of the book, probably an invocation of the ash found in Zampanò's flat, signals the disintegration of the labyrinth and subsequently Truant's exit from the prison of his personal history. After the angst of the Navidson Record and Truant's suffering there is found a sense of calm and peace, which is in antithesis to the previous destruction attributed to the labyrinth. Ultimately, the negative attributes of both ancient labyrinths are suppressed, allowing Truant to escape his fate through the act of remembrance. Truant's proclamation that everything will be "alright" (515), the subsequent line break and the acknowledgement that the editors have dealt with a person they perceive to be Truant all emphasise the survival of the protagonist.

## 5.6 Coda

*House of Leaves* parallels the contorted passageways of the labyrinth and intimates a twisted pathway for the reader to follow in a movement that creates a further labyrinthine trail. The woven layout repeatedly exposes its intrinsic construction as a highly structured artifice and so suggests the importance of a creator, as architect of the labyrinth. Functioning as a site of crisis, the labyrinth becomes a mechanism for extreme transformation. Themes of fragmentation and repetition are emphasised, and foreground the negative attributions of the labyrinth: those of crisis, destruction, complexity and perpetual ellipsis. However, close decoding of the text discloses resolution and positive transformation, apparently at odds with the other textual examples brought together in this study.



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<sup>1</sup> This passage is reminiscent of the wardrobe portal in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

<sup>2</sup> See Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (qtd. Danielewski 359) for a reiteration of Freud's definition of the *unheimlich*.

<sup>3</sup> See for example such films as *Halloween*, *Aliens 3*, *House on Haunted Hill* and the satire of the motif in the *Scream* trilogy.

<sup>4</sup> See for example "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" and "Hansel and Gretel".

<sup>5</sup> See also "Ibn Hakkan al-Bokhari" (*Aleph* 123; qtd. Faris *Labyrinths*, 102).

<sup>6</sup> Faris identifies when discussing Borges that his writing though centred upon the idea of the labyrinth is not constructed in a labyrinthine fashion. It is this feature she claims that prevents him from being considered a postmodern writer (*Labyrinths* 110-114).

<sup>7</sup> N. Katherine Hayles ("Saving" 795) notes that footnote 182 (Danielewski 139-144) uses the page as though it were a semi-translucent projection screen, which causes the next page to display the back of the words written on the previous layer.

<sup>8</sup> William Faulkner and latterly Peter Carey have been thwarted in their use of typography to better illustrate their work, on economic and technological grounds. Martin Brick notes Faulkner's desire to adopt different font techniques coupled with his musings about coloured script ("Blueprint" 13 fn. 1).

<sup>9</sup> Although thematically this section of *The Waste Land* is strongly linked to the road to Emmaus, Eliot stipulates that the lines refer to Shackleton's arctic expedition, which would seem to parallel Navidson's explorations.

<sup>10</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters* contains Pelafina's correspondence from the appendix of *House of Leaves* with some eleven additional letters. The volume is introduced by a worker from the institute and so reprises Danielewski's use of fictional editors from his first novel.

<sup>11</sup> This happening recurs in Truant's reality as he becomes increasingly concerned about his own disappearing buttons (150).

<sup>12</sup> The translation (here taken from the Penguin edition) uses the term 'maze' as indivisible with 'labyrinth', as I have argued throughout. However, Borges has commented upon his personal distinctions between the two terms, and considers that the maze tends to be a construction of fun or a "toy labyrinth" whilst the labyrinth proper is an related to the Cretan type (qtd. Faris, *Labyrinths* 119, 202 fn. 2).

<sup>13</sup> After securing the publication of the manuscript for *House of Leaves*, Danielewski participated in the typesetting of his novel to avoid artistic compromise (cf. Brick, "Blueprint" 13 fn. 3).

<sup>14</sup> Truant's annotations are later parodied by his surprise discovery of a downloaded copy of his manuscript (513-514). This apparent anachronism could have been physically possible given the strange publishing history of Danielewski's book (cf. Wittershaus, "Profile" 5).

<sup>15</sup> See the flyleaf of the Anchor second edition (2000) for details and also Hayles ("Saving" 805 fn. 13) who identifies that subsequent publications have not been hampered by financial restrictions, resulting in a 2002 'red' edition. It is this copy that she claims reproduces the author's intended colour scheme.

<sup>16</sup> This manner of instruction and undermining authorial interruption can also be found on pages 92 and 100.

<sup>17</sup> Truant's use of brackets in this manner and the text's strange typographical layout leaves the critic of the text with a dilemma as to how best and most accurately represent it without imposing different meanings. Wherever possible, quotations have been reproduced using the same typeface and textual layout.

<sup>18</sup> This is physically realised through fire on pages 467 and 518.



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<sup>19</sup> The inadequacies of Truant's translation and collating can also be found on pages 252, 305 and 388. Errors in Zampanò's text which have been commented on by Truant can be found on pages 105, 151, 205, 252, 305, 373 and 401.

<sup>20</sup> Using a code that Pelafina identifies in her letter (27<sup>th</sup> April, 1987) an oblique fragment of a previous epistolary which reads "zealous accommodations, medical prescriptions, & needless other wonders, however obvious – debilitating in deed; you ought understand – letting occur such evil?" (615) may be deciphered as "zampano who did you lose?" (if it is given the symbol '&' is pronounced as 'and'). Hayles incorporates the words "many years destroyed. Endless arrangements – re." which would preface my deciphered phrase with the words "my dearest", hence establishing a more acute intimacy between the two ("Saving" 802, cf. also her debt to Erin Templeton, whom she acknowledges "pointed out this encoding and its implications" (805 fn 16)).

<sup>21</sup> One of Truant's failed translations is a quotation from Rilke (87) although the editors ultimately intervene (90). Given that Truant tends to be affected only by the phrases he understands, as in the instance of the *unheimlich* (25), the delaying of the translation protects him until he meets with Kyrie's edited translation, "utter dismemberment" or "dejected member" (404), which appropriately results in a spurned sexual advance and a dream of his dismantled body (405).

<sup>22</sup> Suitably, the spellchecker on Microsoft Office XP (2004) offers 'Pisces' or 'pieces' as alternatives to the misspelt word.

<sup>23</sup> This is based upon the premise that "DNE" stands for 'does not exist'. However, it becomes apparent that some of these terms do appear in the text and so the glossary can be viewed as another fiction.

<sup>24</sup> Truant's birthday falls on 21<sup>st</sup> June according to his final diary entries (503), though earlier he remarks that he failed to celebrate the date altogether having spent the evening in Hayley's arms (181). Perhaps this gives an indication of the level of time spent on the document (also evidenced by the two years of his diary entries). 21<sup>st</sup> June is a significant date as it denotes the summer equinox and hence is the longest day of the year with the most hours of daylight, a correlation that reinforces Truant's divine birth and his association with the light expressed by the clue-giver.

<sup>25</sup> This disintegration of self, and the terminology used to describe it, is reminiscent of W.B. Yeats' lines: "things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" ("The Second Coming" 3). Yeats' interpretation of the Second Coming is a grotesque and elliptical parody of the original.

<sup>26</sup> Ayrton's ("Meaning") and Kenner's discussion of his lecture ("Mazes") unite the labyrinth and the body. See Doob for medieval examples (*Idea* 84-85).

<sup>27</sup> David Berry's analysis of Ted Hughes' and Sylvia Plath's relationship achieved through the filter of Hughes's *Phaedra*, a translation of Racine's play, stresses the comparability of Phaedra's and Sylvia's fixation with a family member. Through repetitious references to the Minotaur and the Cretan labyrinth, the play emphasises the continued monstrosity within the Minoan dynasty.

<sup>28</sup> Ayrton addresses this in *The Maze Maker*.

<sup>29</sup> A similar manner of textual invention is alluded to by Wyrhta in his remembrance of Pelafina: "somehow she managed to make you feel as if she had invented you" (*Whalestoe* xv).

<sup>30</sup> Crucially, the final entry marked "October 31, 1998 (Later)" is written after the completion of the introduction (515) and so stands outside of the frame of his hysterical overview of the effect of the book (xi, xxii-xxiii).



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<sup>31</sup> From the index it would appear that although the copy used is the black and white version, as indicated by the box on the flyleaf (iv), the text is considered to be the two colour version as the index reports that the black versions of the words 'Minotaur' (686) and 'house/masion/haus' "DNE" (680, 685, 678). With the Minotaur reportedly in red and the variations of house in blue, this edition implies that it is the fictional (at the time of press in 2000) full-colour version, which again reaffirms the text's playful layers of fabrication.

## Conclusion

### 6.1 A Node in the Journey

The late nineteenth and early twentieth-century investigations at Knossos re-enlivened the labyrinth as a physical entity in the public imagination, and affirmed that the mythological narrative had a firm basis in archaeological 'fact'. Evans' research certainly impacted upon modernist writers and is most apparent in Joyce's manipulation of the myth. These literary usages reconceptualised the labyrinth's metaphorical potential (*Portrait, Ulysses*). Ironically, close scrutiny of Evans' methodology emphasised the misplaced nature of his interpretations and refuted the determined etymology of the labyrinth (from *labrys*).<sup>1</sup>

There are two substantive implications resulting from Evans' application of his preconceptions: firstly, there is the residual resistance of the form to definitive explanation; and secondly, the excavated site at Knossos appears incompatible with the purpose and intricacies of the labyrinth as described by ancient chroniclers and dramatists. Interestingly, Evans' use of narrative to confirm archaeological processes is inverted in these contemporary novels where truth is unsettled by the adoption of mythology. The complexity and threat inherent in each of these contemporary novelists' use of the labyrinth is to mark a determinable shift towards archetypal labyrinths; rather than dependence upon the 'factual' mediation of the form by Evans. Therefore, these postmodern authors' appropriation of the labyrinth demonstrates, as I have argued, a return to the early complexity of the ancient forms.

The idea of the labyrinth and its conceptual applications are central to these chosen authors' novels. These are intrinsically complex novels whose difficulties are



accentuated further by the deployment of the rich trope of the labyrinth. The concerns of the novels range from Eco's proclamation of the birth of contemporary man in the middle ages, to Ackroyd's experience of English culture as bound to Catholic ritual, to Winterson's enduring sense of Romanticism and modernism and through to Danielewski's examination of living space and identity. Fragmentation, intertextuality and repetition are paramount in these fictions and foreground the negative attributions of the labyrinth: those of crisis, destruction, complexity and perpetual ellipsis. The ritualised space that the labyrinth contains in its meeting of the mythical and the actual, results in a blurred movement between the fictive and the real, between the historic and the present.

The labyrinth as a metaphor for narrative construction and strategies is so apposite a vehicle that it is unsurprising that it has been employed so extensively. In particular, the labyrinth engages with all key areas of postmodern concern. Issues relating to identity, subjectivity, gender construction, uncertainty, reliability, polysemy, indeterminacy, history and space become inextricably enmeshed with the texts' narrative possibilities. From the repetitions of *Hawksmoor* and *The Passion* to the entangled narrative games of *The Name of the Rose* and *House of Leaves*, experience of these textual labyrinths confirms that reading these texts is a ludic act. Ackroyd and Winterson utilise the labyrinth to convey the textualised city, a spatial palimpsest that is fluidly re-written and re-envisaged. Ackroyd himself confirms this reading in his biography of London where he describes the city as an unknown and perpetually changing labyrinth (*London 2*). Re-appropriated textual fragments unsettle a linear chronology and suggest an elliptical movement through the labyrinth resulting in a transformative imperative.

Ackroyd and Danielewski both draw upon the mythological characters connected with the labyrinth in a manner that tends to unsettle the roles of each. Ackroyd's depictions of an architect combine the role of designer with that of the Minotaur, whilst Danielewski's Truant is variously cast as Theseus, Icarus and the Minotaur itself before he is finally exposed as the maze's architect. Eco's and Winterson's use of mythological parallels are apparently more straightforward as guide, invader and monster all behave to type. It is in the use of the architect that Winterson differs from the other writers because, although there are significant absences concerning the architect in the other novels, Winterson's city-labyrinth profoundly denies the role of the architect. Here as in the other fictions, the labyrinth engenders a sense of the monstrous beyond the control of a Daedalian figure.

The labyrinth's exaggeration of borders is reflected in narrative over-structuring. Danielewski's threatened disintegration of discourse reveals the importance of the author who is at once both paradoxically Daedalian creator and monstrous Minotaur. The organic and fantastical maze of Winterson's invention contrasts with Eco's, Ackroyd's and Danielewski's application of the labyrinth where the role of the designer of the structure is repeatedly investigated, in a manner that suggests the re-evaluation of the position of the author. Both Eco's and Winterson's dogmatic desire to engage with their work after publication has seen them cast as this hybrid character, halfway between divine architect and beast.

Despite the desire of recent critics to denote the 'labyrinth' as unicursal and so a structure that is easy to navigate (Kern, *Through*; Richardson, "Earth Works"), these fictional encounters with the labyrinth are drawn from the Egyptian and Cretan labyrinths, which document the distinctive detective qualities of the labyrinth, of



identity and doubling, of love and monstrosity, but which most importantly emphasise its very structure. The prominence of the Egyptian origins of the maze in Ackroyd's and Danielewski's novels partially unsettles the Cretan example as the archetypal labyrinth. A return to the Egyptian labyrinth is to envisage notions of rebirth, especially pertinent in Ackroyd's reincarnating victims, to emphasise the complexity and size of the structure and to imply its multiple uses. Explicit use of the Egyptian and Cretan models utterly refute the notion that the labyrinth was not a threatening structure. In these renewals of the classical examples, the novels highlight the threat of the structure as equal to the threat of the beast.

Despite referring to the city solely as a 'maze', *The Passion* utilises the overtones of the Cretan myth. Winterson's consistent terminology connects her work with an increased sense of the pastoral, through historical representations of the maze. At the core of her and Danielewski's narrative is the journey to discover the self. For both Winterson and Danielewski, this quest culminates in the ability to recognise oneself in a return to an origin. This transformation is achieved in *The Passion* through a love affair, whilst the labyrinth in *House of Leaves* inspires a return to the maternal through a remediation of personal history. Eco and Ackroyd are also concerned with the transformative properties of the labyrinth: Ackroyd's novel especially deals with narrative and personal change. Eco explores theological and cultural transition mediated through his definitions of labyrinths; from what he terms 'classical' through to rhizome. Ultimately, Eco rejects the simplicity of the ecclesiastical labyrinth and, as this thesis has demonstrated, the dominant model of the labyrinth that remains is akin to the Cretan form.

The enduring consequence from the experience of the labyrinth appears to be that of negative transformation. This final transformation is seen in William's disillusionment in the existence of God, Hawksmoor's decline into despair and Henri's acceptance of madness. In comparison, Danielewski's text appears to offer a more positive reading: Truant, though exhausted and riddled with guilt, finally, through the process of the labyrinth, remembers his mother, suggesting a return to his infant origins. This transformative power is portrayed in the ecclesiastical floor mosaics and is the facet of the labyrinth that remains popular in present-day spiritual usages. His journey through the labyrinth results in a sense of completeness where the threatening Egyptian and Cretan examples are superseded by the 'Christian' version. Resolution and positive transformation suggests that Danielewski's novel is, despite its gimmicky typography, rather conservative. This self-conscious re-investigation of the labyrinth in *House of Leaves* results in its near exhaustion, and so it follows that after Danielewski's text the labyrinth itself will be transformed.<sup>2</sup>

## **6.2 Transforming the Labyrinth**

The early electronic dissemination of parts of Danielewski's script on the Internet points towards this electronic medium as a means of transforming the novel, and by extension the labyrinth. The meeting of the novel and the Internet offers a further dimension for the discussion of the labyrinth. Such creative space is a fantastical medium whereby identity is recast and notions of reality and experience re-deployed. With an increased awareness of the new possibilities of textual production afforded by electronic advancements, it is notable that Eco, Winterson and Danielewski investigate the future of the book and explore the possibilities offered by cyberspace. The meeting of new technologies and the novel are



addressed in *House of Leaves* and in Winterson's *The PowerBook*. These narratives adopt labyrinthine modes of representation to speculate about guidance, journey and lost direction. From within this new medium, the labyrinth is set to continue as a prominent narratological and topographical theme in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rouse ("Double Axe") and MacGillivray (*Minotaur*).

<sup>2</sup> Two recent novels published after *House of Leaves* that draw upon the labyrinth do so in a markedly less substantial way. Despite their titles, Ruth Rendell's *The Minotaur* and Kate Mosse's *Labyrinth* use the labyrinth lightly. Rendell subverts the fearful idea of the Minotaur, recasting instead a misunderstood autistic protagonist who is wrenched from the sanctuary of the labyrinth, whilst Mosse uses the labyrinth as a symbol of bloodline and reincarnation. There is nothing to suggest that either author is familiar with Danielewski's work.

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