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**“I Never Did Find that Thou Hadst Pity”**  
London from Real City to Personified Entity in  
Renaissance Literature

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Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

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## Introduction

The capital city of a nation has always a particular importance in the literature of the country. From old legends celebrating the city when it was little more than a village to ballads and plays and later on novels set there, a whole intertwined net of stories is created. This contributes to construct a myth of the city which evolves throughout the ages while reflecting the changes in society. Often, this myth is however consistent and the city exercises the same attraction on people in very different years or even centuries.

London is no exception to this rule.

As capital first of a kingdom then of an a whole empire, London has had a city mythology constructed for it which spans centuries. Old Celtic legends mention places which are recognisably spaces belonging to London when London itself did not yet exist as a city, or just existed as a settlement. A complex series of literary works were created about the city during the Renaissance. They elevated London to a new height in literature, that of the capital city to Queen Elizabeth and the home of the theatres. This pattern continued throughout the centuries with the industrialisation of the city and the birth of the empire, and later on with the role London and the United Kingdom played during the two World Wars. The creation of the myth of London continues even nowadays, with novels of various genres being set there, from a century-spanning epic about the whole city like Edward Rutherfurd's *London* to the mention of a secret, magical part of the city in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and the creation of a whole underground London in Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere*.

This literary mythology constructed around the city of London however is not always positive, since several works of the literary canon deal with a social criticism of the city in various years. The oldest legends, whether already existing in the times they

were set in or expressly created in later years to give London a mythical origin, are the ones with the explicit tendency to glorify the city, or were later on used for this purpose. An interesting example of the latter is the Celtic legend of the head of Bran the Blessed, also called Bendigaid Frân. This mythological gigantic king dedicated his life to the defence of the kingdom against its enemies, and when he was fatally wounded during a battle he gave his soldiers a peculiar command: “And then Bendigaid Frân caused them to cut off his head. ‘And take you the head’, said he, ‘and bear it to Gwynfryn in London, and bury it there with the face towards France’”<sup>1</sup>. The legend explicitly mentions the site of Gwynfryn, which means ‘the white hill’, as the place to bury the head, thus giving a mythological importance to the site where later on the Tower of London itself would be built. The Celtic legend also gives the severed head a specific power of protection over the whole Isle of Britain: “And they buried the head in Gwynfryn; and that was one of the three good concealments when it was concealed, and one of the three unfortunate disclosures when it was disclosed, for no oppression came ever from across the sea to this island, while the head was in that concealment” (Ellis & Lloyd, p.70). The mythology of the city was therefore created primarily as a way to impose the image of London as a safe haven, magically protecting the city itself, and consequently its citizens and the whole island. The false legend of the foundation of the city under the name of Troynovant or Trinobant by a descendant of Æneas named Brutus also added to this magical aura a place for London in the mythological canon, side by side with Troy and Rome.

The more important the city grew, the more complex the stories about it became and the more articulated the representation of London was. Like several other cities, London started to be represented as human, thus getting in a way closer to the population. Peter

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<sup>1</sup> T.P. Ellis & John Lloyd, *The Mabinogion – A New Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p.67. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

Ackroyd notes in his work *London – The Biography* that there was a representation of the city and its streets as a human body, specifically of a young man with his arms open, and uses this vision as an explanation of the seemingly independent life a city appears to have in literary works: “Whether we consider London as a young man refreshed and risen from sleep, therefore, or whether we lament its condition as a deformed giant, we must regard it as a human shape with its own laws of life and growth”<sup>2</sup>. From a literary point of view, a city with a certain apparent independence in its growth and attitudes is indeed more interesting to write about. In the same way, representations of London as a classical personified figure, that is to say a female persona destined to be the mother of its citizens, started to appear in literary works, again using the fact that London in this representation had a human figure to often construct the text as a dialogue between the author and the city.

Literature being obviously linked to the society of the time when it is written, the depiction of London has been moving through the centuries changing from magical to realistic, from a heavenly perfection to an exaggerated Hell on Earth. The different literary takes on the city are indicators of how the city itself was perceived in different times. It is significant to remember that the importance of London in literature is also closely linked to the evolution London and the kingdom itself have had in the minds of the people. For instance, the concept of the English empire started to appear during the Renaissance, and thus laid the foundations for the idea of superiority of both England and London some texts heavily make use of. This particular concept was deeply connected to the consolidation of Elizabeth I’s power, and actually originated in the, at the time new, art of mapping the world: “Elizabethan geographers and cartographers, led by such important and influential men as Dee, helped develop a set of attitudes and

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *London – The Biography* (London: Vintage, 2001), p.2. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

assumptions that encouraged them to view the English as separate from and superior to the rest of the world. Geography supplied the many students and politicians who studied it with a belief in their own inherent superiority and their ability to control the world they now understood. Indeed, the study of geography helped the English develop an imperial world-view based on three underlying assumptions: a belief that the world could be measured, named, and therefore controlled; a sense of the superiority of the English over peoples and nations and thus the right of the English nation to exploit other areas of the globe; and a self-definition that gave these English students a sense of themselves and their nation. This message of superiority and the possibility of imperial expansion was aided by the iconographic images present in many geographical works. Through the constant repetition of such messages, students of geography began to envisage a world open to the exploration and exploitation of the English”<sup>3</sup>.

More specifically, those texts clearly mirror how their authors perceived London in that specific moment of their life. Obviously, different versions of the same cities can also be found in texts which do not span centuries but are much closer in time. Writers of the same period can therefore present diametrically opposite versions of the city depending on multiple variables such as their gender, their social status, the genre of the text, the presence or absence of a patron for the text they are writing, and the ultimate purpose of the text itself, be it to address important social issues or simply to make the readers laugh. Through their writings, the authors contribute to further the literary myth of the city of London and to create a series of images of the city through which a precise evolution can be traced. London can be transformed by a series of texts from a

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<sup>3</sup> Lesley B. Cromack, “Britannia Rule the Waves?: Images of Empire in Elizabethan England” in *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.45. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

background to some stories to a much livelier version of itself, even acquiring a fully-rounded persona.

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse nine texts spanning from 1558 to 1606 written by seven authors, quite different as to social and literary background, and through them follow the evolution of London from a 'real' city to its allegorical and personified version. In this way I hope to underline not only the many faceted versions of the city itself in literature, but also the appeal London had for those writers, to the point of making the city their own mother or even lover.

The first chapter will deal with the representation of London as a 'real' city, therefore in a non-allegorical way. This way of seeing London will primarily be based on John Stow's impressive cataloguing work *A Survey of London*. Through this text I aim to provide a first, real-life, map of Renaissance London with its main streets and buildings. Since Stow also mentions some interesting customs of the city or some important historical events, I will underline those more closely connected with both the period of time and the representation of the city. Furthermore, I will use the *Survey* as a primary text throughout the whole of the dissertation to cross-reference the other literary works analysed, since in some of those the mentions of specific places will not of course be as detailed as they are in Stow's work. Once the cityscape is set, I will move on to a version of London represented as a stage for literature. In this version, the city is presented as setting for the characters of the literary texts to move in, but it is not a heavy presence. To underline this version of the city and the fact that London had several typologies of lives in it, from the honest to the less honest ones, I will use two of Robert Greene's social pamphlets to take into account the presence of an underworld of thieves and other outlaws in the city. On the other hand, London being primarily a city where people led busy lives, I will introduce Ben Jonson's play *Bartholomew Fair* to



further the presence of London as a stage for characters and as a representation of everyday life.

The second chapter of the dissertation will deal with London moving from a 'real' city to an allegorical one, and with the first example in this study of a personified London. The first instance of the use of London as allegorical city will be found in an account of the procession Elizabeth I did the day before her coronation. This account has been recorded by Richard Mulcaster and literally presents London as a set for the pageants which were presented to the Queen that day, offering a glorious vision of the city. I will then analyse Thomas Dekker's work *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* to show how the city can become a setting for completely allegorical figures to walk in, with several of its features like specific gates in the walls and streets deeply connected to the various personified allegories presented in the text. As a contrast with Mulcaster's vision of London, the one in this text presents personified sins who contribute to demonise the city rather than elevate it. Moreover, since Dekker as the speaking persona of the text addresses London directly, I will examine how the representation of the city is made in this specific literary work, and how this personification of London is connected to the personified sins and to the author and the citizens as well. To underline the fact that the representation of London as an abode of evil was indeed a trope already present in literature, I will then introduce Thomas Nashe's work *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* as a way of underlining both the fact that London could be seen basically as the hometown of evil, and the presence of similarities between Nashe's satirical pamphlet and Dekker's *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*.

The third chapter will concentrate on London as a personified entity, and analyse to this end the long poem *Wyll and Testament* written by Isabella Whitney, who was a Renaissance poet and one of the first English women writers to be published. This

chapter will introduce the struggles women writers had to face in Whitney's time, mostly based on the strong gender roles of the Elizabethan society. With these views as a background, I will then move on to analyse the ways in which Isabella Whitney overcame and reversed those gender roles in her poetry and particularly in the poem taken into account in the chapter. This poem will be dealt with as the summary of the previously analysed versions of London, since it takes and anticipates elements from all the other texts, presenting a personification of London as well as a mapping of the city and a social analysis and criticism of the society of the time. The presence of London as a personified entity will be closely examined, underlining the originality of its figure and contrasting it with the other versions of personified London previously mentioned.

In the fourth and final chapter I will present some of Lawrence Manley's ideas on the city in Renaissance literature, first underlining the growing importance of London in literature from the Tudor age onwards. Then I will analyse some of the ideas specifically concerning the personification of the city, presenting them with examples taken from the previously analysed texts and trying to draw a pattern of representation and personification of the city of London.

The purpose of this study is therefore to create a map of the literary evolution of the city from its 'real' version as a setting for stories to its unreal and therefore both metaphorical or personified version, and the roles each different version can have in the variety of texts presented.

## 1. London as Real City

### 1.1 John Stow and the Mapping of the Capital

Cities in literature generally tend to first appear as concrete, real and non-metaphorical places. The people, the characters in literary works, are the focus of the writings. The city is merely a place, a stage on which to perform stories. London is no exception: places such as streets, squares, palaces and mansions and especially taverns are mentioned in late Renaissance literature as the background scenes on which characters move and evolve. What happens between two common people in a tavern in London could, after all, happen in any tavern in any other town.

Nevertheless, there is a man who dedicated a considerable amount of time and effort to a literary and historiographical work completely centred on the city of London itself. In 1598, John Stow, Londoner and member of the Merchant Taylors' Livery Company, published the first edition of his study on London, *A Survey of London*. As Antonia Fraser points out in the introduction to the 1994 edition, it was the first comprehensive study of London and thus has a particularly important place in the bibliography of British history<sup>4</sup>. The *Survey* is a meticulous and thorough study of the city of London, explored ward by ward by its author who describes streets, bridges, gates, churches, summarises their history, and notes down the names of the most important houses and of the notable people who lived there, along with their status and their trade.

Halfway through the sixteenth century, London had begun its systematic and inexorable growth. From 120,000 inhabitants around the 1550s it rapidly increased to

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<sup>4</sup> Antonia Fraser, introduction to *A Survey of London Written in the Year 1598 by John Stow* (Guernsey, Channel Islands: Sutton Publishing, 1994), p.5. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

reach 200,000 inhabitants in 1600. It was the first time a city in England reached that number of inhabitants. This was a fact that understandably worried the authorities who tried to convince to no avail the nobles to move to their country houses so as to leave the city along with all their servants, and the merchants to stop building new houses<sup>5</sup>. London as a city was however destined to grow even more, both in population and in importance. Its centrality to the kingdom of England was obviously given by its status as the kingdom's capital, but the fact that it was quickly becoming the country's most densely populated city and a place where opportunities seemed to be much more accessible than anywhere else gave it an even more particular aura. This was perceived so much that seeing the wealth and variety of life concentrated in the city when he visited it in 1599, a Swiss tourist named Thomas Platter wrote in his personal journal that "London is not in England, but England is in London"<sup>6</sup>.

Stow himself was aware of the importance of the city he was describing in his work. Fond of going beyond mere geographical descriptions of places, he often added some important historical reference or in some cases some legendary one. It is in these instances that he somehow acknowledges the importance of London as something going beyond political or geographical matters.

Historically, London was built by the Romans on a strategically placed outcrop of the river Thames. This was the perfect place for building the bridge the Roman army needed to cross the river and reach the northern shires (Picard, p.xxi). At the very beginning of his *Survey*, Stow dutifully describes the foundation of the city of London quoting the Welsh historian Geoffrey of Monmouth who "reporteth that Brute, lineally descended from the demi-god Æneas, the son of Venus, daughter of Jupiter, about the

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<sup>5</sup> Liza Picard, *Elizabeth's London* (London: Orion Books, 2004), p.xxiii. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Mortimer, *The Time Traveller's Guide to Elizabethan England* (London: Vintage, 2012), p.25. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

year of the world 2855, and 1108 before the nativity of Christ, built this city near unto the river now called Thames, and named it Troynovant, or Trenovant” (Stow, p.33). Stow is however pragmatic, and immediately interrupts the retelling of the mythological origins of London, obviously based on the legendary foundation of Rome, quoting the Roman historian Livy and noting that “antiquity is pardonable” and that it was expected of historians of past ages to render the foundation of cities more sacred with the intervention of gods and demi-gods (Stow, p.33).

The name of London itself is noted as an important issue by Stow, who reports that Geoffrey of Monmouth bestows on King Lud the honour of being the city’s namesake. Lud is mentioned as the king who repaired the city, increased the number of its towers and walls and named it Caire-Lud, which meant ‘Lud’s town’. One of the oldest gates is also named Ludgate after him (Stow, p.33). Despite Monmouth’s affirmations, Stow gives to the Roman historian Tacitus the privilege of being the first one to call the city Londinium (Stow, p.36). He also records the different variations of the name throughout the centuries and by different authors, although he does not give an etymological or linguistic explanation: “Now to return to our Trinobant (as Cæsar hath it), the same is since by Tacitus, Ptolemæus, and Antonius, called Londinium, Longidinum; of Ammianus, Lundinum and Augusta, who calleth it an ancient city; of our Britons, Lundayne; of the old Saxons, Lundenceaster, Lundenbrig, Londennir; of strangers, Londra and Londres; of the inhabitants, London” (Stow, pp.39-40). Some versions of those names will however remain known to other writers besides Stow, and, as will be shown further on in this dissertation, will be used as names for the personification of the city of London itself, such as ‘Madame Troynovant’ or, in a more modern way, ‘Lady London’.

*A Survey of London* is obviously not what would be defined a narrative text, but as mentioned above, it is of a more historical and geographical nature. As M.J. Power points out in his analysis of Stow's work, the author proceeds in a very precise and almost scientific manner with his description of the city: "Stow's *Survey* tackles London in two distinct ways. The early and late chapters describe features of London as a whole, the wall, rivers, institutions, government and so on. The large middle chunk of the survey, 29 chapters long, contains a descriptive perambulation of each Ward of the City, and of the suburbs and Westminster, with the boundaries, monuments and history of each small area closely examined"<sup>7</sup>. The beginning of the *Survey* is in fact dedicated to the mythological foundation of the city, followed by its more historical counterpart, then, after some summarised History of the times, moves on to the description of the early features of London.

The first of these features is actually the most important for a city's defence and security: the wall which encloses the city. Stow professes to be sure that the city was walled as far back as the Roman occupation, since it was the standard procedure for their settlements, but notes that it could not have been walled in 296 AD since the Franks ransacked it and were only stopped by a cohort of Roman soldiers coming along the river (Stow, p.37). Researching the first mentions of a wall around London, Stow notes the restoration of the city by King Alfred in 886 and the fact that several historical incidents show London as a walled city at least from 994 (Stow, p.40). He then proceeds to describe the wall itself, thus giving the reader a first mapping of the shape of the city and the first mentions of the gates, namely Cripplegate and Aldersgate, before listing meticulously the repairs the wall had had and why they were needed (Stow, pp.40-42). From the external wall, Stow focuses his attention on the city and

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<sup>7</sup> M.J. Power, "John Stow and His London" in *Journal of Historical Geography*, 11, 1 (1985), p.2. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

particularly, as Power notes, on the City proper rather than Westminster or the suburbs (Power, p.2). The Wards, which included four to eight parishes and were distinguished by their election of an Alderman, are what is mostly important to Stow's work, while Westminster and the suburbs, despite their governmental importance for the former and the outnumbering the inhabitants of London itself for the latter, are relegated to considerably shorter chapters. Southwark itself, regardless of the fact that it technically was outside the city, is dealt with as one of the city Wards and called Bridge Without, because of its importance being the sector leading up to London Bridge, the real main door to the city from the South.

The first part of the *Survey*, before Stow begins to describe each ward, could be defined upon closer reading as a circular vision of the city. After an historical introduction, Stow starts his descriptions of the rivers of London, from the Thames to those smaller and flowing inside the city wall, of the ditch "which partly now remaineth, and compassed the wall of the city" (Stow, p.50), thus perfectly surrounding the wall of the city, before moving to its gates and other accesses, namely the bridges. As every Londoner of his time, he is particularly proud of London Bridge and dutifully lists its first building in wood before the year 1000, the various repairs and the conversion to stone it underwent through the ages and the most important historical moments it was concerned with, such as the various Kentish rebellions, when the rebels used the bridge to enter the city, since it was the only way in for them (Stow, p.56). Conversely to what a modern reader expects, Stow only mentions hurriedly the main feature of the bridge: "upon both sides be houses built, so that it seemeth rather a continual street than a bridge" (Stow, p.56). London Bridge was actually used as a primary building site for more than five hundred years and was the residence of several London merchants who had houses built sometimes up to four storeys high and, in the

particular case of Nonsuch House, prefabricated in Holland and brought to England to be put together directly on the bridge (Picard, p.25). Stow also fails to mention in his description of the Bridge that the first gateway on the Southwark side was where the heads of traitors were displayed, to warn people approaching the city not to cross the authorities (Picard, p.24).

Continuing with his circular vision of London, Stow describes the Gates of the city, which will later on become an important feature for instance of Thomas Dekker's work, *The Seven Sinnes of London*. The *Survey* dedicates fourteen pages to the gates, with a precise description of their location, the materials they are built from, their repairs and embellishments and of course some historical anecdotes regarding them. The main gates of the city, not considering the water gates he describes in the same section, are eight according to Stow. This contrasts with the theory that they were actually in the classical and symbolic number of seven. The one more likely to be forgotten to reassess the gates to the number of seven is possibly the very first Stow mentions, the Postern by the Tower of London, which "served for passengers on foot out of the east, from thence through the city to Ludgate in the west" (Stow, p.58). This gate is actually already described by Stow as having been destroyed in 1440 and never rebuilt by the citizens, since the city wall in that point had already been broken down to be enlarged around the Tower and make space for the ditch. In the description of the negligence to rebuild the Postern, one of the examples of social criticism that are sometimes to be found in the *Survey* is present: Stow writes that not only the citizens did not have the Postern rebuilt, but also that "they suffered a weak and wooden building to be there made, inhabited by persons of lewd life" (Stow, p.59). It is evident that the London Stow describes in his work was not only seen from a descriptive point of view, but that he also took the opportunity to sometimes comment on the effect some decisions such as poor



conservation or bad building would have both on the city as an aesthetic landscape and on the life of its citizens.

To a modern reader, the notions of 'gates' is quite different from what Stow and people living in Elizabethan times meant. The gates were not simple openings or doors in the walls of the city, but rather multi-storey buildings pierced by large archways (Picard, p.27). Quite a few of them were in fact used as prisons for crimes of different orders and gravity, such as Cripplegate being mentioned by Stow as a debtors prison. Moreover, on most of them were displayed the parts of the bodies of criminals who had been hanged usually at Tyburn, then bowelled and quartered conformingly to the custom of the time, the heads being put on London Bridge and the quarters on various gates as a warning (Picard, pp.27-28). The oldest gates of the city were Aldgate, Aldersgate and Ludgate, which had been built in the Roman era, but not one of them has survived to the present day, since they apparently were all demolished in the eighteenth century (Picard, p.26).

If Stow allows himself to be critical about the aforementioned wooden building by the Postern, he somehow does not make any critical accusation to any part of one of London's most notorious buildings, the Tower. Despite the long history of imprisonments, trials, torture and royal beheadings accounted for in the register of the chapel so many times that the clerk modified the initial notation of 'hanged, drawn and quartered' to the more expeditious 'h d q' (Picard, p.270), Stow deems it more interesting, or possibly politically wiser, to just describe the building and its history. He writes about the fact that the Tower was the official mint of the crown since Edward III established it in 1344, noting that "this is the first coining of gold in the Tower whereof I have read, and also the first coinage of gold in England" (Stow, p.80), and gives a thorough account of the different types of coins that have been minted in the Tower

since then. The more recent historical accounts are, as is usual with Stow, written mainly as one-sentence notes, even those concerning the current monarch from quite close, with the beheading of Anne Boleyn, Queen Elizabeth's own mother, for alleged witchcraft, adultery and incest, soberly summarised as "in the year 1536, Queen Anne Bullein was beheaded in the Tower" (Stow, p.87). The anti-censorship of Stow, probably due to political reasons, regarding the Tower is even more evident in his summary of it: "the Tower is a citadel to defend or command the city; a royal palace for assemblies or treaties; a prison of state for the most dangerous offenders; the only place of coinage for all England at this time; the armoury for warlike provision; the treasury of the ornaments and jewels of the crown; and general conserver of the most recent records of the king's courts of justice at Westminster" (Stow, p.87). The fact that Elizabeth herself spent some time imprisoned in the Tower under the reign of her half-sister Mary is discreetly omitted.

As with the gates, other buildings are mentioned by authors beside Stow who write about London or simply set their stories in the city. Another such place is the Royal Exchange, also described in one of Robert Greene's pamphlets. The Royal Exchange was one of London's best-known public buildings and the idea of its planning and construction had first been submitted to the City by Sir Thomas Gresham, a merchant in the Netherlands who saw the potential of a commercial exchange in London to attract traders from everywhere in the continent and thus replace the Bourse of Amsterdam (Picard, p.53). The idea was agreed upon, houses in Cornhill Ward were taken down and the ground made even at the City's expense "and then possession thereof was by certain aldermen, in name of the whole citizens, given to Thomas Gresham, knight, agent to the queen's highness, thereupon to build a bourse, or place for merchants to assemble, at his own proper charges" (Stow, p.202). The finished building could

apparently contain 4,000 merchants at the same time in its courtyard and there were 150 small shops such as apothecaries, bookshops and goldsmith shops in a gallery, along with armourers selling both new and second-hand armours (Picard, p.53).

Along with the shops in the Royal Exchange, Stow lists further on the trades and merchants present in the city and the streets in which they mainly gathered and to which they sometimes even gave the name, such as the hosiers who used to trade in the appropriately named Hosier Lane then moved to Cordwainer Street, originally the street of shoemakers and curriers, the “poulterers” moved from the Poultry to Grass Street while the “paternoster makers of old time, or bede-makers and text-writers, are gone out of Paternoster Row” (Stow, pp.107-108).

In a city so cosmopolitan and mercantile for the time, it was obvious one could find many foreigners who, as always happen in those cases, tended to regroup in some specific places. For instance, foreign craftsmen who were quite notorious for counterfeit jewellery were known to dwell in the Liberty of St Martins le Grand, where a visitor would hear more Flemish, Italian and French being spoken than English (Picard, p.30). At the same time, French would be the main language being spoken in a paved way in Bishopgate Ward that Stow mentions as being known as Petty France, “of Frenchmen dwelling there” (Stow, p.179). Many foreigners living in London for a limited amount of time were quite expectedly sailors, and stayed in places not far from their ships, such as the sailors from Genoa Stow notes to be living in Mincheon Lane, along with other sailors and merchants living near Galley Quay, where “the merchants and owners procured the place to build upon for their lodgings and storehouses, as the merchants of the House of Almaine were licensed to have a house, called *Gilda Teutonicorum*, the Guildhall of the Germans. Also the merchants of Bordeaux were licensed to build at the Vintry, strongly with stone, as may yet be seen, and seemeth old, though often repaired”

(Stow, p.158). Elizabethan Londoners were actually quite used to foreigners of various origins, including the so-called 'blackamoors' from West Africa introduced into the capital by the slave trade started around the mid 1500s. These were apparently soon turned into the latest fashion, since by the end of the century many gentlewomen, as well as the Queen, were attended by 'blackamoors' servants (Picard, p.123). It appears that, while it was certainly fashionable to be fair-skinned, the Elizabethan did not have any specific antipathy towards darker skin tones, an attitude also demonstrated by Shakespeare's play *Othello*, in which, according to Liza Picard, the playwright did not make any particular point about his protagonist's skin colour: she explicitly points out that "if there was a popular prejudice to be exploited, surely Shakespeare would have done so in *Othello*? There was no political correctness to be observed in those days" (Picard, p.124).

A rather small but quite interesting part of the *Survey* is the one where, taking a pause for some pages from the description of the city, Stow writes about the pastimes of its citizens. He firstly copies from the accounts of William Fitzstephen, a clerk who died in 1190 and who prefaced his story of the life of Thomas Beckett with a *Description of the Most Noble City of London*. Following these accounts he mentions the representations of miracles and other holy plays, cockfighting, ball playing and war playing the schoolboys and other students were fond of, water battles on streams during the Easter holidays, and of course dancing, wrestling, shooting and other activities during the summer months and even an early version of ice skating on those occasions when the river froze during winter (Stow, pp.117-118). Stow writes that such activities have not changed much since Fitzstephen's own times, but dutifully notes that, regarding the holy plays, "of late time, in place of those stage plays, hath been used comedies, tragedies, interludes, and histories, both true and feigned; for the acting

whereof certain public places, as the Theatre, the Curtain &c., have been erected” (Stow, p.119). It is quite surprising to find that Stow only dedicated these few lines to the theatres, which were a rising phenomenon at the time, but there is actually no mention at all of them in the rest of the *Survey*. The usual impartiality of Stow leaves modern readers without any commentary on what a man of his stance thought of theatre-going. We know from Picard’s work that it was indeed very popular but also so disapproved by the City to provoke an irascible exchange of correspondence between the Lord Mayor, who wanted to close all the playhouses down deeming them only places of meeting for vagrants and horse thieves, and the Privy Council who actually encouraged them for honest recreation, using as a powerful argument the fact that the Queen herself enjoyed those kinds of pastimes (Picard, p.249). The two playhouses mentioned by Stow, the Theatre, the first one to be built in 1577, and the Curtain, along with the other theatres probably grouped under Stow’s ellipsis of ‘&c.’, such as the Rose, built in 1587, and the Swan, built in 1595, were built in Shoreditch and on Bankside, actually out of the City’s jurisdiction, where the most famous of them all, Shakespeare’s Globe, would follow just one year after the publication of the *Survey* (Picard, p.249).

Surprisingly enough, given the few sentences about theatres and plays, Stow writes quite extensively for his standards about the celebrations of ‘May-day’ or ‘mayings’ describing the parishes joining together two or three at a time to provide citizens with maypoles, warlike shows, morris dancers and other pastimes for the whole day, the celebrations then continuing on into the night with stage plays and bonfires in the streets (Stow, p.124). It is actually from this passage about May-day that the meaning of the name of the church of St. Andrew Undershaft is disclosed, coming from the principal maypole of the city which was set in Cornhill right in front of the aforementioned

church (Stow, p.124). Stow's political correctness surfaces again however at the very end of the part dedicated to pastimes in the city, when he mentions the fact that because of an insurrection of young people against 'aliens' in 1517 under the reign of Henry VIII the mayings had not been as free as before, and abruptly ends the passage with "therefore I leave them" (Stow, p.125).

As mentioned before, Stow's *Survey* does not take any particular stance on more or less political issues, and this pattern continues even on the topic of city watches, where Stow notes the historical motivations such as the alarmingly frequent house robberies at night in the city of London and in other cities as well as the primary motivation for Henry III to establish city watches "for the better observing of peace and quietness amongst his people" (Stow, p.126). Stow relates that the city watches even had their own parade during the summer festivals, when the citizens had bonfires and set out tables in the streets to invite their neighbours and people passing by to eat and celebrate with them (Stow, p.127). This particular city watch had more than two thousand members, mainly soldiers using a variety of weapons, and during the parade the Lord Mayor himself rode on horseback at the front (Stow, p.128). Stow also mentions that during the feast of St. Bartholomew in August several officers of the city set up a tent and spent some days practicing wrestling and archery before the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen, a practice which happened in Stow's time as well, although "of late years the wrestling is only practiced on Bartholomew's Day in the afternoon, and the shooting some three or four days after, in one afternoon, and no more" (Stow, p.129). The conclusion of the passage on city watches is also one of the few with a slight criticism of some specific practices, with Stow mentioning that the city archers, not willing to go far from their homes to practice, are known to "creep into bowling-alleys and ordinary

dicing houses nearer home, where they have room enough to hazard their money at unlawful games” (Stow, p.129).

With this quite brief overview of the way in which *A Survey of London* is constructed and written, it is clear that it can be used as a mapping of the city at the time of Elizabeth I and that while not being a literary text it can be particularly useful to trace the exact placement and significance of places in the London of the time mentioned in other works of literature. As J.M. Power writes, “Stow’s view of London represents an amalgam of what was visually arresting to an observer who perambulated the city streets and his particular concerns and prejudices. Though less comprehensive in his survey of housing than a cartographer would be Stow’s noting of occupations, elite residents and rebuilding make his record of the city more three-dimensional” (Power, p.6).

## **1.2 Robert Greene’s Social Pamphlets and the Elizabethan Underworld**

A significant portion of Elizabethan literature is dedicated not only to the ‘common’ people, which was already a substantial change from the tradition of describing the lives of nobles, monarchs or heroes, but also to the people living with no regards for the law be they thieves, prostitutes or beggars, the so-called ‘underworld’ of Elizabethan London.

As it often happens, several mentions of this underworld are to be found, when not in works purely of literature and entertainment, mainly in laws and orders explicitly against the persons belonging to this category. Even John Stow, notoriously inclined not

to mention unpleasant historical moments or people in his *Survey of London* surprisingly writes more than the one or two usual sentences about the underworld of prostitution in his chapter describing Southwark, or as he calls it Bridge Ward Without. Southwark, the borough just south of London Bridge, was out of the legal jurisdiction of the City and therefore, along with the previously mentioned theatres, had a proliferation of taverns and inns and also of brothels, at the time called alternatively 'trugginghouses', 'whorehouses' or sometimes 'stew-houses' because of the existence in the establishment of a room used for hot air or vapour baths (Picard, p.192). Stow mentions the existence of the main one of those stew-houses, simply known as the Stews or Bordello, while describing the buildings on Bankside, and contemptuously notes down its function as being "for the repair of incontinent men to the like women" (Stow, p.370). As every respectable citizen of the time was bound to do, or at least pretend to do, he disapproves of both prostitution and brothels, so much so that he even copies down a Parliament act reaching as far back as 1158 in which legislations for the brothels had first been made (Stow, pp.370-371). He reports the attempts made by Henry VII to close the stew-houses, only for them to reopen just a year later. He describes the signs which were not hung on the doors like in inns but directly painted on the front walls of the houses and the existence of a plot of ground called the Single Women's Churchyard where prostitutes were buried, since "I have heard of ancient men, of good credit, report that these single women were forbidden the rites of the church so long as they continued that sinful life, and were excluded from Christian burial if they were not reconciled before their death" (Stow, p.371). Prostitutes seemed therefore to follow in death the same fate that allegedly awaited their male neighbours, the actors of the various theatres on Bankside. Both ideas appear quite absurd to a modern reader, particularly because while Southwark was indeed out of the City's



jurisdiction it was actually under direct control of the Bishop of Winchester, and Stow describes his house as being just one or two buildings away from the Stews (Stow, p.372). In the introduction to an anthology of works specifically about the Elizabethan underworld, A.V. Judges mentions the principal punishment awaiting women for prostituting themselves as being a light one, particularly at that time in which whipping, imprisonment for months on end while awaiting trial, pillory and hanging were quite common: prostitutes were carted through the streets of the city and had to do a public penance<sup>8</sup>. However, women of the Elizabethan underworld were not only prostitutes, despite the fact that when they were a part of one of the criminal fraternities of the city they often were the sexual partners of the men and their role was essentially that of lookouts and temptresses (Mortimer, p.300). Apart from being paid for sexual intercourse, women often blackmailed their clients or stole from them. There were different kinds of women who accompanied themselves to groups of criminals, each type in a way specialised in a particular 'trade'. One was for instance the case of the so-called 'demanders for glimmer'. They were young and apparently innocent women who found themselves on the streets maybe because they were orphaned or because they had left service, and they seduced travellers in alehouses demanding a precious token from them and then led them to a secluded place where the rest of the company robbed them (Mortimer, pp.299-300).

Thieves are also cited by Stow, besides the fact that they probably were the major part of those "trespassers" mentioned to be imprisoned in gaols such as those at Newgate and Cripplegate, as the real motivation behind the closing down of a street in Langbourne Ward through which people went to go into Lime Street Ward and

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<sup>8</sup> A.V. Judges, introduction to *The Elizabethan Underworld* (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1965), p.lix. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

particularly to its tennis-court “for suspicion of thieves that lurked there by night” (Stow, p.208). Thieves of various sorts were part of the criminal ‘fraternities’ mentioned above, which were organised in such a way that they handled their contributory pension fund, lived together in some mainly ruined buildings and even had a ‘school’ for pickpockets and cutpurses near Billingsgate (Picard, p.278). While thieves outside of London mainly haunted the roads to rob travellers, those who were present in the very heart of the city robbed people of their valuables in fairs and alehouses (Mortimer, p.299). Pickpockets and thieves were especially to be found in places where a crowd gathered, for instance playhouses, the Royal Exchange and its shops and even the nave of St. Paul’s Cathedral, which was also a general meeting place where men conducted their business deals, servants went in search of jobs and, quite surprisingly, prostitutes went looking for clients (Picard, p.277).

Author Robert Greene seemed to take a liking on both the aforementioned categories of the Elizabethan underworld. Some of his social pamphlets deal with what he calls ‘Conny-catching’, an Elizabethan slang word for theft through trickery, the kind the cutpurses would do during busy market days or in alehouses, and generally pretending to befriend their potential victim. This is described in great detail in Greene’s first pamphlet on the subject, *The Art of Conny-catching*, written in 1591, where it becomes evident how well the brotherhoods of thieves were organised. According to Greene, there were three figures of capital importance to make a robbery work, the ‘Setter’, the ‘Verser’ and the ‘Barnackle’, each one with his specific role: “The nature of the Setter, is to draw any person familiarly to drinke with him, which person they call the Conie, & their methode is according to the man they aime at”<sup>9</sup>. It appears from the pamphlet that the

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Greene, ‘The Art of Conny-catching’ in *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, M.A.*, Volume X, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964),

potential victims of pickpockets were mainly country gentlemen who had come to London for business and would stay only for a short amount of time, thus being not familiar with the city itself and its dangers. The Verser stepped in if the Setter, after having gathered vital information about the victim such as where he lived at the moment, did not manage to take him to an alehouse where they would drink and then rob the gentlemen of everything he owned. The Verser's role appears to be that of using the information the naïve victim had told the Setter and make himself pass for a distant friend or relative so to try and bring him to the aforementioned alehouse. If he failed as well, the Barnackle stepped in with a similar method, and apparently very few people resisted three of these 'attacks' in a row (Greene, pp.16-18). From Greene's writing we can gather not only the organisation of the criminal fraternities and the kind of victims they preferred, but also that some specific places of London were well-known as the abodes of thieves: "Paules, Fleet-street, Holborne, the sttrond, and such common hanted places, where these cosning companions attend only to spie out a praie" (Greene, p.16). Stow himself mentions St. Paul's as having been a place of robberies and murders for centuries, even writing that king Edward II tried to build a wall surrounding the church as far back as 1317 but was stopped in his intent by the citizens themselves who wanted to maintain the place open for meetings and assemblies (Stow, p.308), while he makes no mention of the Strand, Holborn or Fleet Street being ill-reputed places.

Greene explicitly reunites the two worlds of cutpurses and prostitutes in *A Disputation betweene a Hee and a Shee Conny-catcher*, written in 1592, where Laurence, a cutpurse, and "faire Nan", a prostitute, discuss whether men or women are more able and dangerous in their unlawful trade. The discussion is well-articulated by both parties, who have made a bet according to which the loser will pay the winner

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p.203. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

dinner, and proceeds with examples of their ‘trades’ and accounts of episodes in which people they know managed to conclude epic robberies. The two meet in an unnamed point of London, but in their accounts mention several locations where their thieving took place and even where companies of pickpockets and people alike met. When praising the art of conny-catching itself, Laurence mentions the cutpurse must be familiar and often “walk Paul’s, Westminster, the Exchange, and such common-haunted places”<sup>10</sup> to hunt for his ‘prey’, thus confirming the fact that thieves of his kind mainly operated in crowded places. Later on, while telling an account of a well-done robbery, Laurence also mentions one of the companies of pickpockets meeting at Lambeth, which Stow does not mention in the *Survey* as a place suspected to be a dwelling of thieves, or at Laurence Pickering’s, a man sometimes known as “the King of London” or “the King of Cutpurses” who held open house in Hackney for thieves to swap tips and information<sup>11</sup>.

It is interesting to notice that while Stow, in mentioning the presence of prostitutes in the city, writes about them with contempt and certain of their being ‘fallen’ and sinful women, the way Greene’s Nan is presented could almost be that of a businesswoman. She does not feel sorry for herself or her condition but is actually quite proud of her charms and abilities. In the very beginning of the pamphlet, when Laurence greets her, he mentions her “vine court” and her husband (Greene, p.204), which makes the reader suppose that she probably also makes an honest living besides her pickpocketing. It is obvious that it is the author who puts words in her mouth, but Nan also appears as an

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Greene, ‘A Disputation Betweene a Hee and a Shee Conny-catcher’ in *The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, M.A.*, Volume X, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p.203. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

<sup>11</sup> Catharine Arnold, *Underworld London: Crime and Punishment in the Capital City* (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd., 2012), p.52. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

educated woman, mentioning mythological figures such as Circes and Calypso and saying that not even they have the charms and tricks she uses to seduce and steal (Greene, p.204). The discussion between the two protagonists could also be termed a debate about gender, and it appears that women have a fierce supporter in Nan, since she clearly states “I will prove that women, I mean of our faculty, a traffic, or as base knaves term us, strumpets, are more subtile, more dangerous in the commonwealth, and more full of wiles to get crowns than the cunningest foist, nip, lift, pragges, or whatsoever that lives at this day” (Greene, p.205-206). While Laurence defends the cunning of cutpurses, who must know perfectly well the places to go, have a keen eye for the kind of victim they are looking for and especially for the place said victim hides his purse, Nan tells him that country gentlemen or other potential victims can anyway be very suspicious of strangers approaching them with an excuse, while they are much less suspicious of pretty women who know how to lure them: “He that is most chary of his crowns abroad, and will cry: *Ware the cony-catchers*, will not be afraid to drink a pint of wine with a pretty wench, and perhaps go to a trugging-house to ferry out one for his purpose. Then with what cunning we can feed the simple fop, with what fair words, sweet kisses, feigned sighs, as if at that instant we fell in love with him that we never saw before” (Greene, p.210). Nan’s endorsing of women as the best at conny-catching goes from natural charms to cunning to even much more practical aspects, such as the fact that, due to the dresses, hats and handbaskets they wear or carry, they have more places to hide the purses they steal (Greene, p.227). One of her strongest arguments is that pickpockets only steal a man’s purse, while prostitutes steal a lot more, since men can become so drawn to those women that they spend huge amounts of money on them, even leave their wives and children and are thus brought to complete ruin (Greene, p.231). Towards the end of her speech, she also mentions Tyburn, the

place where thieves and other criminals were brought to be hanged, and says that thieves themselves are not safe from the cunning arts of prostitutes: “I pray you, Laurence, when any of you come to your confession at Tyburn, what is your last sermon that you make: that you were brought to that wicked and shameful end by following of harlots, for to that end do you steal to maintain whores, and to content their bad humours” (Greene, p.231). In the end, the debate is won by Nan and the supper gallantly offered by a quite frightened Laurence, who utters this strange compliment as a conclusion: “I confess it, Nan, for thou hast told me such wondrous villanies as I thought never could have been in women, I mean of your profession. Why, you are crocodiles when you weep, basilisks when you smile, serpents when you devise, and devils’ chiefest brokers to bring the world to destruction. And so, Nan, let’s sit down to our meat and be merry” (Greene, p.235). Neither party says the name of the tavern where they sit down to eat the famous supper, but it might be the one of St. John’s Head within Ludgate, since right after concluding the debate, Robert Greene himself steps into the picture and writes he has met both Laurence and Nan in real life at that tavern.

With his social pamphlets, of which only a couple could be mentioned here, Greene manages not only to describe the underworld of Elizabethan London with specific indications of places haunted by thieves, some of which Stow wrote about himself and others confirmed by contemporary historical studies, but also to give a description of thieves and prostitutes which is not limited to the fact that they were outlaws. Greene’s underworld characters are actually well-constructed and, while still being a part of a world honest citizens would have rather forgotten, in a way likable and interesting people.

### 1.3 Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* and the Representation of Common People

Even though Robert Greene mainly wrote about thieves and prostitutes as living in Renaissance London, they were clearly not the majority of the inhabitants. When Stow describes public places such as the Royal Exchange or even the ill-reputed nave of St. Paul's, the crowds that gathered there might have contained some cutpurses, but certainly the majority were honest citizens going about their business, buying groceries or trinkets and meeting friends. The common people of London were also featured in writings about their city, for instance in Ben Jonson's play *Bartholomew Fair*, which was first staged in 1614. Stow, as already mentioned above, writes about St. Bartholomew's Day as the holiday during which the city watches practiced wrestling and archery (Stow, p.129). This holiday occurred on the three days around August 24<sup>th</sup> and during those days, sometimes extended to a full fortnight, a great fair took place in Smithfield, outside Aldersgate. Stow describes the origins of the name quoting from the accounts of William Fitzstephen that "without one of the gates is a plain field, both in name and deed, where every Friday, unless it be a solemn bidden holy day, is a notable show of horses to be sold" (Stow, p.106), thus explaining the transliteration from 'smooth field' to the actual name 'Smithfield'.

A fair, as can be imagined, is the perfect place not only for common people but also for the underworld to gather. Bartholomew's Fair was no exception, and on one particular occasion attracted not only just the usual cutpurses, but also a whole regiment of stray soldiers. These are mentioned by Judges as being one of the great dangers of the Elizabethan underworld, since they were composed by men who were destitute, quite desperate and most importantly, trained at using weapons (Judges, p.xvii). Judges describes the threat of one of those regiments as causing a panic in the whole city: "On

one occasion, at least, London was threatened with something like a siege. The expedition taken by Norris and Drake to Portugal in the summer of 1589, soon came back after having suffered great loss of life, and with no success to its credit. The returning soldiery was landed on the south coast. Each man kept his arms and uniforms, and these he was expected to sell to make up the deficit in his pay. When large numbers of them drifted up to London, and a band of five hundred threatened to loot Bartholomew Fair, martial law was proclaimed. Two thousand City militiamen were called out on one occasion to scatter a horde which was menacing the capital. A proclamation of 24 August threatened all mariners, soldiers and masterless men who did not procure passports to their homes within two days with summary execution. It was at least six months before the panic abated” (Judges, pp.xvii-xviii).

It is in this place of both common people and underworld that Ben Jonson sets his comedy appropriately entitled *Bartholomew Fair*. Jonson himself was a Londoner, having been born in the City of Westminster, at the time separated from the City proper, working in London for theatre plays and masques for all his life and being one of the few writers of his time to acquire residency in the City. Because of this his plays and particularly *Bartholomew Fair* are principally set in London and more precisely are permeated with the rhythms and structures of the city, as Martin Butler writes: “Jonson was a writer who, however extensive his engagement with wider spheres, could not disengage himself from the city. His drama is deeply invested in the rhythms, meanings and structures of the metropolis, and his works are imbued with and shaped by urban topographies: the urban experience was the single most determining factor of his career”<sup>12</sup>. The London described by Jonson is slightly different from the two versions of the city already discussed, although it does contain elements both of Stow’s and Greene’s London. It is also, being present in a play

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<sup>12</sup> Martin Butler, ‘Jonson’s London and its theatres’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Ben Jonson* ed. by Richard Harp and Stanley Stewart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.15. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.



and not in a prose text, rather shown on stage or discussed between characters than expressly described.

As in Stow's *Survey*, specific places such as taverns or other gathering places are named in *Bartholomew Fair* and it is obvious that both the author and his audience of the time would have known exactly not only the location but the reputation of such places. At the very beginning of the play, for instance, Littlewit, a proctor, exclaims against the people pretending to be smart calling them "your Three Crane, Mitre and Mermaid men!"<sup>13</sup> thus referring to the alehouses these people were known to be seen in, the Mermaid Tavern being in Cheapside, at the very centre of commercial London (Butler, p.16). In the same way, a bit further on, he brags about his wife's fine dress and says "I challenge all Cheapside to shew such another: Moorfields, Pimlico-path, or the Exchange" (Jonson, p.184), giving the audience a short list of places where people were known to go well-dressed for a walk or, in the case of the Exchange, to buy what the shops offered there.

There are some elements which are also similar to the London described in Robert Greene's works from the moment the characters of the play move into Smithfield to the real Fair of St. Bartholomew's day. As well as the common people, a Puritan and a Justice of the peace in disguise, the Fair is filled with people belonging to the Elizabethan underworld also described by Greene, such as cutpurses, a 'bawd' or procurer and a madman. The presence of such characters allows the playwright not only to build on several comedic moments but also to describe his city from another point of view quite opposite to that of the commercial city with honest hard-working citizens,

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<sup>13</sup> Ben Jonson, 'Bartholomew Fair', in *Ben Jonson's Plays*, Volume Two, introduction by Felix. E. Schelling (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1953), p.183. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

since “For Jonson the city was a vast reservoir of folly and crime, a panorama of enterprise and overreaching endlessly suitable for satirical dissection” (Butler, p.16).

Smithfield, where the Fair proper was, is the main setting described in the play. As a veritable melting pot of different people coming from completely opposite backgrounds, it is the perfect place for the author to describe the city and its morals through the words of his characters. Some interesting aspects of the city can be gathered from the second Act of the play, such as the fact that apparently London was becoming a city of tobacco-smokers since Jonson makes the character of Justice Overdo argue against that practice which seems to be a characteristic of the Fair: “Hark, O you sons and daughters of Smithfield! and hear what malady it doth the mind: it causeth swearing, it causeth swaggering, it causeth snuffling and snarling, and now and then a hurt” (Jonson, p.207). Overdo is at the Fair to denounce its evils as Justice of the peace, but Jonson does not present him as the righteous character, he actually is beaten up a few lines after his speech against tobacco. Another character presented as the opposite to the Fair is treated more or less in the same way by the author. Zeal-of-the-Land Busy is a Puritan and Jonson uses this particular character to speak in an even harsher way of the evils of the Fair and this time in a sermon-like speech which includes the whole of the Fair as sinful: “Look not toward them, hearken not; the place is Smithfield, or the field of smiths, the grove of hobby-horses and trinkets, the wares are the wares of devils and the whole Fair is the shop of Satan: there are hooks and baits, very baits, that are hung out on every side, to catch you, and to hold you, as it were, by the gills, and by the nostrils, as the fisher doth; therefore you must not look nor turn toward them – The heathen man could stop his ears with wax against the harlot of the sea; do you the like with your fingers against the bells of the beast” (Jonson, p.211). The description of the city which can be seen in this part is a rather harsh one, basically describing the people of the Fair as

devils and warning honest citizens to steer clear of them and of the place itself. Jonson uses the character of a Puritan to underline the chaotic aspects of the city, but without endorsing his opinions, having himself his antipathies towards certain aspects of London such as puritanism itself, economic accumulation and even gossiping, while “The ideology of thrift, industry and godliness held few attractions for him” (Butler, p.21). His London is an unapologetic mixture of good and bad people, legal and illegal trades, where even the most honest people can be caught up in the underworld, as happens with Justice Overdo at the end of the play, when he reveals himself and proceeds to list every thing and person which are wrong in the Fair itself: “Now, to my enormities: look upon me, O London! and see me, O Smithfield! the example of justice, and Mirrour of Magistrates; the true top of formality, and scourge of enormity. Hearken unto my labours, and but observe my discoveries” (Jonson, p.261). The Justice’s discourse proceeds to denounce Puritan Busy as a “superlunatical hypocrite” and call out a toy seller, a procurer and his prostitutes but ends abruptly when he discovers his own wife has been dressed up as one of the prostitutes. He then agrees to forgive all parties involved and all the characters are invited to the Justice’s house for supper, thus giving the idea that the city seen by Jonson and described in this play in particular is inevitably made of all this set of characters from various backgrounds. Jonson’s London is in this instance of *Bartholomew Fair* closer to the London of our time, already at the time being a melting-pot of social classes and trades.

## **2. London as Set for Allegories**

### **2.1 Richard Mulcaster and the Royal Entry Pageantries**

London has been so far analysed as a ‘real’ city, described in its concrete and historical characteristics by Stow and inhabited by the people Greene and Jonson wrote about. The element of imagination in these works is somehow ‘limited’ to the characters mentioned in the pamphlets or plays, while the city is merely the frame of the narratives, the background for the characters’ stories. There are however some other types of works in which London itself takes in a way a more ‘active’ role in the narrative, and where its streets and buildings are not just a setting but an essential part of the said narrative. This is particularly the case of allegories, where the characters presented in specific places of the city are not common people but personified representations of virtues, sins or even geographical places such as the river Thames. These kinds of characters are much more connected to the city than others, since they normally represent the essence of the city itself, of its good and bad sides.

Allegorical figures were for instance present in the pageantries held during the so-called Royal Entries, the solemn processions with which the new monarch paraded through the streets of London on the eve of his or her coronation. The parade traditionally began from the Tower of London and the monarch, accompanied by a large party of officers, bishops, ambassadors and lord and ladies in waiting, proceeded through the city to Ludgate, the gate leading to Westminster where the coronation would then take place the following day. During this progress, the citizens presented the monarch with symbolic and allegorical pageants to underline his or her virtues and thus display their hope for a great and peaceful new reign.

The Royal Entry of Queen Elizabeth I in 1558 was recorded by a teacher and writer named Richard Mulcaster with great precision in the description of the Queen's parade and of the pageants she saw. Like the men who were commissioned to write the pageants, it can be said that Mulcaster recorded in his pamphlet a mainly flattering account of the Royal Entry, praising the settings of the pageants and especially Elizabeth's queenly reactions to them, possibly because the pamphlet itself was published only nine days after the Entry and a copy was delivered to the Queen herself<sup>14</sup>. In his description, the city of London itself begins to acquire a life of its own as essential part of the Royal Entry and of the pageants as well. It is still an elaborately prepared and even decorated stage, as Mulcaster himself recounts at the beginning of his pamphlet: "if a man should say well, he could not better term the city of London that time than a stage wherein was shown the wonderful spectacle of a noble-hearted princess toward her most loving people, and the people's exceeding comfort in beholding so worthy a sovereign"<sup>15</sup>.

The progress of the Queen through the city is meticulously recorded by Mulcaster in his pamphlet. Through this detailed work we learn that shortly after leaving the Tower of London the royal party stopped at Fanchurch, where the Queen was officially greeted on behalf of the whole city by a child reciting a poem. The first lines of this poem in English, as opposed to others which would be recited in Latin, give the indication that, at least on such an occasion as a Royal Entry, the city of London acquired a personified character:

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<sup>14</sup> William Leahy, "Propaganda or a Record of Events? Richard Mulcaster's *The Passage Of Our Most Drad Sovereigne Lady Quene Elyzabeth Through The Citie Of London Westminster The Daye Before Her Coronacion*" in *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 9, 1, 2003, pp.1-20, p.3. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Mulcaster, "The Queen Majesty's Passage through the City of London to Westminster the Day before Her Coronation" in *Renaissance Drama: An Anthology of Plays and Entertainment* ed. by Arthur F. Kinney (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), p.22, vv. 51-57. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

O peerless sovereign Queen, behold what this thy town

Hath thee presented with at thy first entrance here.

Behold with how rich hope she leads Thee to Thy crown

Behold with what two gifts she comforteth Thy cheer (Mulcaster, p.22, vv.78-81).

In these few verses London is presented first as Elizabeth's own property as "thy town", since it is the capital of her kingdom, and also as an entity capable of the action of presenting something to the Queen. The meaning of this entity could be that of the town as a union of its citizens and thus of the people in the whole kingdom acclaiming their new sovereign, but the third verse includes a "she" as subject. London is therefore here personified as a female figure, following the classical personification of cities and countries, welcoming her new Queen and presenting her gifts upon her arrival. After recording the welcoming oration, Mulcaster then writes that the Queen thanked "most heartily both the city for this her gentle receiving at the first, and also the people for confirming the same" (Mulcaster, p.23, vv.96-99), consequently enforcing the perception of the city as personified as different from the entity composed by its citizens. This idea of the personification of the city fades however in the background of the pageants presented on Elizabeth's way to Westminster, where none of the historical or allegorical figures presented on the various stages is a personification of the city.

As the Royal Entry progresses, it comes upon the first real pageant, set in a place Mulcaster calls Gracious Street, but which Stow records as Grass Church Street "of the herb market there kept" (Stow, p.218). It is interesting to notice that for the first solemn representation the Queen stops not only in a somehow common place as a market can be, but also, according to Mulcaster's recording, "at the upper hand before the sign of

the Eagle” (Mulcaster, p.23, vv.131-132) which was a well-known inn. The first pageant was a representation of Elizabeth I’s grandparents and parents in royal garments and was meant to show the citizens of London, and consequently the world, that her right to the throne was legally issued from important sovereigns. Staging significant royal figures right in front of an inn near a marketplace furthers the idea that London can be seen, and was probably seen at the time, both as the royal capital and the centre of power and important History such as the War of the Roses, but also as a common place, maintaining this idea even during such a sumptuous procession.

The duality of the city continues with the second pageant, representing the Eight Beatitudes. The stage for this pageant was interestingly set in a junction of streets near the Great Conduit of Cheapside, the commercial centre of London, which were all named after various trades. It has to be noted though that the proper stage for the pageant was erected in Sopar’s Lane which, according to Stow’s research “took that name, not of soap-making, as some have supposed, but of Alen le Sopar, in the 9<sup>th</sup> of Edward II. I have not read or heard of soap-making in this city till within this fourscore years” (Stow, p.249). It appears that for the Royal Entry the whole of Cheapside had been cleaned and decorated, and that the traders and customers who were usually seen there had given their place to music players: “At the Standard in Cheap which was dressed fair against the time was placed a noise of trumpets with banners and other furniture. The Cross likewise was also made fair and well trimmed. And near unto the same, upon the porch of St. Peter’s Church door stood the waits of the city, which did give a pleasant noise with their instruments as the Queen’s Majesty did pass by” (Mulcaster, p.27, vv.488-495).

The third pageant, while still not representing London itself, has however a very strong connection to the city. Set near the Little Conduit, it was an elaborate stage made

of two hills, one barren and one thriving, to represent respectively a decayed commonwealth and a flourishing one as a warning to the future Queen of the consequences a bad government had on both land and people. From a cave between the two hills emerged the personification of Time leading the personification of Truth, which was represented by a young girl who would give the Queen the *Verbum Veritas*, the word of truth, in the form of the Bible in English. This was obviously a way to underline to the people and the foreign ambassadors present at the procession the fact that Elizabeth would follow her father's Protestant religion and thus change England's course from the one the previous monarch, her Catholic half-sister Mary, had imposed. As Richard DeMolen relates, "Following the un-happy reign of Mary, Mulcaster perceived the need to ennoble his monarch's character by emphasizing her virtues and to secure her acceptance by stressing her Protestant leanings. Surely, Elizabeth's rule would be safely grounded if Englishmen were convinced that their monarch was as able as Henry VIII and as Protestant as Edward VI. In effect, Mulcaster took the basic ingredients of each pageant, explained them clearly, and then interpreted their meaning to the reader in the light of his purpose"<sup>16</sup>. The personification of Truth as a young woman has various connotations. It is a classical representation, since Truth has appeared in several works of art as a female, often naked to emphasise the fact that she's not hiding anything. The Elizabethan pageant represents her however as wearing a fine robe of white silk and the child charged with reciting the explanatory verses of the representation to the Queen at her approach says

This old man with the scythe, old Father Time they call,

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<sup>16</sup> Richard L. DeMolen, 'Richard Mulcaster and Elizabethan Pageantry' in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1600*, Volume 14, No. 2, Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama (John Hopkins University Press, Spring, 1974), p.212. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.



And her his daughter Truth, which holdeth yonder book

Whom he out of this rock hath brought forth to us all

From whence this many years she dare not once look (Mulcaster, pp.28-29, vv.616-619).

The parallel between Truth and Elizabeth I, who had to keep a low profile under her sister's rule and even was imprisoned for some time in the Tower of London, is therefore made clear by the versified explanation. Truth could also be seen as a representation of London, welcoming and directing the new Queen towards a religious and political course that would principally benefit the capital. This can be seen in the fact that the pageant is staged in the city, and that Truth gives the English Bible to the Queen, consequently marking the moment in which London and therefore the kingdom can finally forget about the persecutions against Protestants ordered by Mary.

The various aspects of London, both as a rich city and as a city housing less fortunate people, are also noted by Mulcaster towards the end of the Royal Entry when, after the final richly set pageant representing Deborah of Israel as an example of just woman ruler for the Queen to follow, the procession comes across the children of the Hospital at St. Dunstan's Church. The orphans remind Elizabeth that after having seen the sumptuousness of the representations she must not forget the poor, to which the Queen replies "graciously both with words and countenance, declaring her gracious mind toward their relief" (Mulcaster, p.32, vv-863-864). The city as a union of people of various classes then seems to return to the city as personified with the last poem Elizabeth listens to right before the procession leaves London from Ludgate to march towards Westminster. In the lines summarising the various meanings of the pageants, the city as personified is present again in a couple of verses:

So now since thou must needs depart out of this town

The city sendeth thee firm hope and earnest prayer (Mulcaster, p.33, vv.922-923).

The prayers could obviously be recited by the citizens, but the verses give once again, as with the initial poem, the idea of a personification of the city of London who addresses herself to the Queen in the hopes of a glorious and peaceful reign, hopes certainly shared by the people attending the Royal Entry and both the writers of the pageants and Richard Mulcaster himself. The city as personified is therefore present in the Royal Entry of Elizabeth I from the beginning, with its welcome, to the end, with its good wishes upon the Queen's departure. In the same way the real version of the city is present from the beginning of the procession, with the starting point at the Tower, to the end with Ludgate as the place from where the Queen marches on to Westminster to officially acquire her royal powers. It can therefore be said that in the spirit of allegorical representation, along with classical figures such as Time and Truth, London starts to appear as an entity more 'human-shaped' than just a set for stories and pamphlets.

## 2.2 Thomas Dekker and *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*

The idea of London as combined representation of both the richest and poorest aspects of the city, which was only slightly hinted at by Mulcaster and the authors of the Royal Entry pageants in 1558, obtains a much more thorough degree of consideration in 1606 with Thomas Dekker's work *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*. In this allegorical representation of the cardinal sins who come to London and drive through it with their attendants, the personification of the city is reinforced as well and London is directly addressed by the author. In Dekker's work, the various versions of London seem to come together offering a faceted representation of the city from several points of view. The seven sins depicted are personified allegories similar to the ones presented in the pageants for Elizabeth I, but their entrance and exit from the city happens through existing posterns and gates, and the choice of which Sin comes through which gate is not casual at all but deeply connected to the use and reputation of the gate itself and the streets surrounding it. In this way, the presence of the city is essential as a setting for the whole allegory and as a general identity of the people choosing to follow some of the Sins in their parade, but as mentioned above, also as a personified figure for Dekker to address.

Dekker's own introduction to *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*, intended to explain the damages caused by Sin both to countries and particularly to cities, already contains references to personified visions of cities, set as examples of places destroyed or attacked by the one he calls with the Biblical name of 'Leviathan'. In some of the passages those cities are so strongly personified as females that the effects of war and destruction on them are almost disturbing in their description: "Anwerp (the eldest daughter of Brabant) hath falne in her pride, the Citties of rich Burgundy in theyr

greatness. Those seventene Dutch Virgins of Belgia, (that had Kingdomes to theyr dowries, and were worthy to be courted by Nations) are now no more Virgins: the Souldier hath deflowered them, and robd them of theyr Mayden honor: Warre hath still use of their noble bodyes, and discovereth theyr nakedness like prostituted Strumpets”<sup>17</sup>.

As already mentioned, Dekker also uses the device of personification not only for cities but also for nations, using the classical trope of nation as a sort of mother to its citizens. The description of the damages caused by war on personified countries can therefore be quite poignant. In the introduction, Dekker laments the various French wars and their consequences: “France lyes yet panting under the blowes which her owne Children have given her. Thirty yeeres together suffred she her bowels to be torne out by those that were bred within them: She was full of Princes, and saw all lye mangled at her feete: She was full of people, and saw in one night a hundred thousand massacred in her streetes: her Kings were eaten up by Civill warres, and her Subiects by fire and famine. O gallant Monarchy, what fate hadst thou that when none were left to conquer thee, thou shouldst triumph over thy selfe! Thou hast Wynes flowing in thy veynes, but thou madest thy selfe druncke with thine owne bloud” (Dekker, pp.9-10). Here France appears both as a personified entity almost destroyed by her ‘children’ and also as a general entity created as a sum of her people, since the author asks her why she turned against herself, implying that she is in a way responsible for the way her citizens act.

Dekker’s principal focus in the introduction to *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* is anyhow on London, and his work is intended as a sort of warning to the personified city of what could happen if she doesn’t fight the Seven Sins who come to parade in her

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Dekker, “The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London” in *The Non-dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Volume II, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), p.9. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

streets. To make his point clear, he first takes as example the other cities and nations that have fallen to Sin, then he directly addresses London. His speech seems quite flattering at the beginning “O London, thou art great in glory, and envied for thy greatnes” (Dekker, p.10) but he then proceeds to methodically write down, along with each important quality, a fatal flaw, for instance describing her as better and wealthier than her neighbours but also too proud and too wanton. The description takes a harsh turn as if the author was severely scolding the city for her attitude: “Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest: for thou art attir’d like a Bride, drawing all that looke upon thee to be in love with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes” (Dekker, pp.10-11).

The personification of London created by Dekker’s words in his work seems to resemble in a way a sort of young, certainly beautiful woman with a pronounced taste for luxuries. This version of London also apparently has no tendency to modesty, a virtue that was above all those asked of women at the time, and London being personified as female had to conform to those standards. The probable connection made by the Royal Entry pageants and Mulcaster between London and the personification of Truth is here completely lost, particularly because one of the Sins present in the narrative, the second one to appear in the city, is the personification of Lying.

It has to be noted that what still exists in both works, however, is the strong connection between London and Elizabeth I. The Queen had died only three years before the publication of Dekker’s work, and with the great achievements of her long reign and the much loved public persona, the ‘Virgin Queen’, she had created it was quite normal for an author of the time to dedicate at least some lines lamenting her death. Dekker writes about London and the Queen’s relationship as a very close one and describes Elizabeth first as a nurse who dedicated herself to the city and then as a loving

mother whose principal concern was to take good care of London and who loved her completely and better than anyone else: “She that wore thee always on her brest, as the richest Jewell in her kingdome, who had continually her eye upon thee, and her heart with thee” (Dekker, p.11). If Elizabeth’s attitude in this short passage is modelled on that of a mother, also London’s reaction to the Queen’s death is constructed following the mother-daughter relationship. The fact that London is a city and the capital of England is however still carefully included in her reaction, thus merging the personified figure with the capital even more: “she was taken from thee, when thou wert most in feare to lose her: when thou didst tremble (as at an earth-quake) to thinke that blood should runne in thy Channels, that the Canon should made way through thy Portcullises, and fire rifle thy wealthy houses, then, even then wert thou left full of teares, and becamst an Orphan” (Dekker, p.11). This passage combines the idea of being orphaned, which is proper to human beings, with the fear the city itself has of a possible civil war since the Queen died leaving no direct heirs to her throne. With this fear, London can be seen both as a representation of the government and the common people in the wake of Elizabeth’s death, and as a personified entity.

The idea of London as daughter of kings rather than their guide or mother continues when Dekker dutifully mentions James I, certainly not wanting to leave the present king out of a work dedicated to his capital. He briefly describes James I as being a fatherly figure who adopted London as his own and turned her sadness into joy. This feeling of joy is however regarded rather suspiciously by the author, since he lists it as the main cause of distraction in the city, which leads her not to be careful enough and to have “in a short time more diseases (then a common Harlot hath) hanging upon thee; thou suddenly becamst the by-talke of neighbors, the scorne and contempt of Nations” (Dekker, p.12), a reference to the plague of 1602 which killed more than 30,000 people.

Faced with such a dreadful plague, the motherly character of the city now makes its appearance, since Dekker depicts London trying to hold the dead in her arms and shuddering at the recalling of the recent disaster. But London then quickly returns to the role of an unruly daughter as the author writes she has not learnt that lesson and immediately after the plague returned to bad companies. The resuming of these bad habits is exactly the reason prompting Dekker to write his allegory, to warn and protect London as his way of thanking her for his existence: "O thou beawtifullest daughter of two united Monarchies! from thy womb receaved I my being, fro thy brests my nourishment; yet give me leave to tell thee, that thou hast seven Divels within thee, and till they be cleane cast out, the Arrowes of Pestilence will fall upon thee by day, and the hand of the Invader strike thee by night" (Dekker, pp.13-14). Again in this passage London is presented both as a daughter of the two united kingdoms of England and Scotland and as a mother, this time specifically as the mother of the author himself, which uses the fact that London has given him life and nourishment as the reason why he will try to help her realise how high the peril of the Seven Sins freely roaming her streets is. The final call for London to listen to the author's plea uses the motherly side of the personification as well and focuses on the duty she has towards her children, her citizens, to protect them from sin: "Lift up therefore thy head (thou Mother of so many people:) awaken out of thy dead and dangerous slumbers, and with a full and fearlesse eye behold those seven Monsters, that with extended iawes gape to swallow up thy memory" (Dekker, p.14).

The parade of the Seven Sins through London is methodically divided into seven days, with each Sin coming into the city through a different gate, the exposition of the kind of damage they bring and of what kind of people they are followed by and finally their exit along with their attendants and the description of their chariots. It is interesting

to notice that while London and all the cities and nations mentioned by Dekker in the introduction are female, as the classical connotation wanted, the Seven Sins are all male. Their arrival into the city is not presented as a casual and spontaneous happening, but as an important occasion carefully prepared by the citizens, exactly as a Royal Entry would be. Dekker ironically describes the Sins at the very beginning as people of a great importance who have the same social status as princes and lords, and because of this the custom to welcome them in triumph is maintained by the whole city: “because London disdaines to come short of any City, either in Magnificence, State or expences upon such an occasion, solemne order was set downe, and seven severall solemne dayes were appointed to receive these seven Potentates” (Dekker, p.17). It is important to mention that in writing *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* Thomas Dekker does not write an allegorical representation of the classical seven cardinal Sins and their effect on the population of London. He instead changes most of the Sins to adapt them perfectly to the vices he thinks are the most present in and damaging to the city. The classical personifications of Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Wrath, Envy and Pride do not appear at all in Dekker’s work, and are substituted by the more ‘local’ personifications of Fraudulent Bankruptcy, Lying, Deeds of the Dark, Change of Fashion, Cheating and Cruelty. The only Sin which appears in both the classical seven and Dekker’s own seven is the fourth one in both interpretations, Sloth. Dekker’s warning to London and its citizens about what they must prevent from happening is therefore almost tailor-made with this new series of capital Sins.

The first Sin to come to London is “Politick Bankruptisme”, Fraudulent Bankruptcy. Having to describe the procession, Dekker now reverts London to a real city of buildings and people. The first Sin enters through Ludgate, which meaningfully was the gate through which the monarchs left London for Westminster for their coronation, thus



making the parade of Sins the complete opposite of a Royal Entry even geographically. Also significantly, Ludgate was a prison for minor offenders such as debtors, as Stow notes in his *Survey*: “all freemen of this city should, for debt, trespasses, accounts and contempts, be imprisoned in Ludgate” (Stow, p.68). The prisoners are thus mentioned by Dekker as the first ones to welcome the Sin, and curiously the officers of the prison join them in their welcoming pageant: “to receive whom, the Master, the Keepers, and all the Prisoners of Ludgate in their best clothes stood most officiously readie: for at that Gate, his Deadlinesse challenges a kind of prerogative by the Custome of the Citie, and there loves he most to be let in” (Dekker, p.17-18). Only in the description of the entrance of Fraudulent Bankruptcy there already are several references to the way Royal Entry pageants were set. The prisoners and guards of Ludgate are shown in fact to be standing on a scaffold covered with threadbare carpets “for prisoners have no better” (Dekker, p.18) in a detailed reversal of the stages built for the pageants and richly covered with brocades. The Sin as a parody of a monarch also has a welcome speech addressed to him and made by a citizen of Ludgate not chosen, Dekker points out, for his being a respected mayor or a schoolmaster as happened with the official pageants, but rather because he had the loudest voice of all. And exactly like Elizabeth I in Mulcaster’s account answers the reminder of the poor of the city with a promise to do her best to help them, the Sin answers the speech made in praise of the Ludgate prison in a parodic opposite way: “The poore Orator having made up his mouth, Bankruptisme gave him very good words, & a handful or two of thanks, vowing he would ever live in his debt” (Dekker, p.19). Dekker’s low opinion of London’s morals already mentioned in the introduction is now showed to the reader with the feast following Fraudulent Bankruptcy’s settling in Ludgate prison, during which the prisoners and the guards get drunk together. The warning the author has promised to give about the Seven Sins is

made explicit with his description of the various forms the Sin takes to deceive people, be it a disguise as a tradesman, a merchant, a politician or even a puritan, since “Politick Bankrupt is a Harpy that looks smoothly, a Hyena that enchants subtilly, a Mermaid that sings sweetly and a Cameleon, that can put himselfe into all colours” (Dekker, p.21). Dekker also warns about Fraudulent Bankruptcy’s attendants, Conscience, “raggedly attired, ill-fac’d, ill-coloured, and misshapen in body” (Dekker, p.30) and Beggary, and his coachman Hypocrisy, who drives the beautiful but counterfeited chariot the Sin travels in, again a probable parody of the sumptuous chariot Elizabeth I was driven in during her Royal Entry.

The personified version of London, along with its representation as buildings, resurfaces with the description of the second Sin, Lying. He comes into the city through Moorgate, which according to Stow simply led into the fields outside the walls (Stow, p.62). Lying presents himself dressed as a city captain with a company of soldiers following him into Coleman Street, significantly the building place of the Armourers’ Hall (Stow, p.275). There is a strong criticism of Lying, since it appears that the people, upon recognising him, welcome ‘Monsieur Mendax’ with even more enthusiasm than the interest the prisoners of Ludgate had shown in the first Sin. It is actually this eagerness towards Lying which prompts Dekker to address himself once again to the personification of London: “Looke up then (Thou thy Countries Darling), and behold what a divelish Inmate thou hast intertained” (Dekker, p.34). He even writes down the entire genealogy of Lying, with his son Falsehood, his grandson Perjury, his daughter Fraud and his kinsman Treason to underline the frightening importance of this Sin and the apparent apathy London has towards both him and his whole family: “But is it possible (Thou leader of so great a Kingdome) that heretofore so many bonfires of mens bodies should be made before thee in the good quarrell of Trueth? and that now thou

shouldst take part with her enemy? Have so many Triple-pointed darts of Treason bin shot at the heads of thy Princes, because they would not take Truth out of thy Temples, and art thou now in League with false Witches [who] would kill thee? Thou are no Traveler; the habit of Lying therefore will not become thee, cast it off” (Dekker, p.35). One of the interesting points of the chapter on Lying is that evidently Dekker had decided to base it mostly on allegories since after the family of Lying he introduces the personification of Pride ‘queen of Sins’ and all her daughters. London stays personified throughout most of this chapter, since after mentioning Pride the author proceeds to accuse London of sleeping with her: “Pride by thy lying with her, is growne impudent: She is now a common Harlot, and every one hath use of her body” (Dekker, p.36). A few lines further on he also tells her he knows she has been sleeping with another personified sin as well, to once again explicit the amount of corruption present in the city: “Thou doest likewise lye with Usury: how often hast thou bin found in bed with her! How often hath she bin openly disgraced at the Crosse for a Strumpet! yet still doest thou keepe her company, and art not ashamed of it, because you commit Sinne together, even in those houses that have paynted posts standing at the Gates. What ungodly brats and kindred hath she brought thee?” (Dekker, p.36). The parade of allegories continues until Lying leaves the city on a chariot made of whetstones and significantly driven by a fool.

It could be argued that Dekker follows in Greene’s footsteps in describing a part of the Elizabethan underworld in the presentation of the third Sin, even though Dekker’s description firmly stays in the allegorical realm as opposed to Greene’s realistic presentation of his characters in the pamphlets dedicated to cutpurses and prostitutes. The third Sin who comes to London is in fact “Candle-Light” or ‘Deeds of the Dark’, meaning everything that happened in the city at nightfall, once the streets were dark. As

his name indicates, this Sin comes into the city only when the night has already fallen: “this Tallow-fac’de Gentleman (cald Candle-light) so soone as ever the Sunne was gon out of sight, and that darknes like a thief out of a hedge crept upon the earth, sweate till hee dropt agen, with bustling to come into the Cittie. For having no more but one onley eye (and that fierie red with drinking & sitting up late) he was ashamed to be seene by day” (Dekker, p.40). Already the personification of the Sin emphasises the fact that London at night was definitely not a safe city, as Stow’s however impartial description of the city watches mentioned in the previous chapter indicates. London is briefly described in this passage as a city closing down as soon as the sun sets which is still surprisingly in line with the disposition William the Conqueror imposed, as related by Stow: “William Conqueror commanded that in every town and village a bell should be nightly rung at eight o’ clock, and that all people should then put out their fire and candle, and take their rest” (Stow, p.125). This description of the city is made as soon as Candle-light passes through Aldersgate, indicated in the *Survey* as one of the gates on which side were the most buildings (Stow, p.64), and in Dekker as the borough which turns darker at night: “He makes his entrance therefore at Aldersgate of set purpose, for though the streete be faire and spatious, yet few lightes in mistie evenings [...] No sooner was he advaunced up into the moste famous Streetes, but a number of shops for ioy beganne to shut in: Mercers rolde up their silks and Velvets: the Goldsmithes drew backe their Plate, & all the Citty lookt like a private Play-house, when the windows are clapt downe, as if some Nocturnall, or dismall Tragedy were presently to be acted before all the Tradesmen” (Dekker, pp.40-41). While in the previous passages the criticism Thomas Dekker makes towards the ‘sins’ of the citizens of London, and thus of personified London herself, is heavily based on the presentations of allegories, in the Candle-light part the criticism is also presented with examples of real life, taking once

again London from her allegorical presentation to her real form of city with its inhabitants. As Stow himself had noted in the *Survey*, also Dekker's criticism is particularly against hypocrisy and the squandering of money: "The damask-coated Cittizen, that sat in his shop both forenoone and afternoon, and lookt more sowerly on his poore neighbors, then if he had drunke a quart of Vineger at a draught, sneakes out of his owne doors, and slips into a Taverne" (Dekker, pp.41-42). The same social criticism is against young shopkeepers who leave their wives alone every night to go to the tavern, and apprentices marrying their master's daughter only for her dowry money (Dekker, pp.42-43 and pp.46-47). Personified allegories or speeches directed to London are less present in this passage until towards the end, when Candle-light leaves the city with his several allegorical attendants, all followed by the personification of Ingratitude (Dekker, p.48).

The description of the London underworld continues with the following Sin, the only one taken from the classical ones: Sloth. Sloth is the central Sin in the parade, and again significantly enters the city through Bishopsgate, the gate which lead to Shoreditch, building site of the first theatres of London, the Theatre and the Curtain. London was very well known as a merchant and industrial town, where markets and shops flourished, and Dekker acknowledges this fact wondering "How then dares this nastie, and loathsome sin of Sloth venture into a Cittie amongst so many people? who doth he hope will give him entertainment?" (Dekker, p.50). He thus underlines the fact that a similar Sin and his company would certainly need to sleep while the city is always busy and noisy, and writes a detailed description of the people working in London at his time, the several coaches passing noisily in the streets, the children playing, "hammers are beating in one place, Tubs hooping in another, Pots clinking in a third, water-tankards running at tilt in a fourth: here are Porters sweating under

burdens, there Marchants-men bearing bags of money, Chapmen (as if they were at Leape-frog) skippe out of one shop into another: Tradesmen (as if they were daucing Galliards) are lusty at legges, and never stand still: all are as busie as countrie Attorneys at an Assises: how then can Idlenes thinke to inhabit there?" (Dekker, p.51). The answer is to be found in the underworld of the city, where Sloth soon takes his quarters, giving licence to those selling wine to keep their shops open. The same dicing-houses and bowling alleys which Stow disapproved of are significantly ordered to be built by Sloth himself, as well as the alehouses, managed by the personification of Drunkenness, and curiously the alms-houses, to which Sloth is said to be a good benefactor (Dekker, p.52). In this way, the Sin of Sloth could be viewed as the real builder of a whole part of the city, the mainly recreational one. Among the people praying for the passage of the Sin in the city are the players, mentioned as having their theatres full of people once Sloth is in London. Once again, the shift from London as city to the personification is abrupt and starts with the author's invocation to the usual resistance of the city to that Sin, as he had already demonstrated with the description of the activity present in the city proper: "But alas! if these were the sorest diseases (Thou noblest City of the now-noblest Nation) that Idlenes does infect thee with: Thou hast Phisick sufficient in thy selfe, to purge thy bodie of them" (Dekker, p.53). In describing Sloth's exit from the city, Dekker also notes down as the Sin's personal pages two figures that could then usually be seen in the city begging: Irish Beggar and One that Says He Has Been a Soldier, apparently a common scheme to inspire pity in passers-by (Dekker, p.56).

If with Sloth and Candle-light there is a strong criticism of the underworld of London and generally of the middle- and lower-class such as the merchants squandering their money and the beggars, with the fifth Sin Dekker moves to a criticism of the

upper-class and their need for appearance over substance. This fifth Sin is called “Apishnesse” or ‘Change of Fashion’. To confirm his having created a completely new pantheon of capital sins to better suit the city of London, the author first wonders if his readers know this particular sin. He then dedicates the first part of his chapter to the description of the Sin’s appearance and attitudes: “hees a feirse, dapper fellow, more light headed then a Musitian: as phantastically attired as a Court Ieaster: wanton in discourse: lascivious in behaviour” (Dekker, p.57). For the first time since the introduction, Dekker mentions the world outside London and England and adds to his evident criticism of the amount of money spent by the nobles for their clothes the English prejudice about the French dedicating themselves exclusively to fashion. This criticism is immediately present with the description of the birth of Apishnesse: “yet much about the yeare when Monsieur came in, was hee begotten, betweene a French Tayler, and an English Court-Seamster” (Dekker, p.57). It is also quite revealing and in line with the aforementioned prejudice about the French that Dekker writes that the birth of the Sin of Change of Fashion was connected with the coming to London of Monsieur, the formal title of the Duke of Anjou, who came to England to court Elizabeth I. This Sin enters the city through Cripplegate, which appropriately was the gate through which Elizabeth herself first rode into the city in state, thus connecting the significance of the Sin to the certain splendour in which the Queen and her attendants first appeared to the people of London. London is here mentioned again not as personification but as a union of people when the population of the city, particularly the puritans, resist the Sin’s entrance, thus making Apishnesse the first Sin not to be openly welcomed: “The Grauer Browes were bent against him, and by the awfull Charmes of Reverend Authoritie, would have sent him downe from whence he came, for they knew how smooth soever his looks were, there was a divell in his bosome” (Dekker, p.58).

This modest and orderly faction is pinned against a mutiny supporting Change of Fashion, underlining the difference between not only the fashion morals, in a way, but the different classes of citizens, since those letting the Sin inside the gate are young fashionable men. They possibly are the same ones who were so intent, some years before, on wearing every single piece of the rather exaggerated Elizabethan clothes that the Queen herself had to issue laws against certain garments: “There was a feeling in high places that these exaggerated garments should be discouraged [...] Almost annually, Elizabeth forbade them, by proclamation, but fashion is not ruled by legislation. In 1562 she, or rather her Privy Council, tried another expedient. Nine tailors in St Martin le Grand and fifty in Westminster had to undertake not to put more than  $1\frac{3}{4}$  yards of jersey into any pair of hose” (Picard, p.145). Those gentlemen, who seem not to have changed attitude even if the monarch ruling in Dekker’s time is James I, are the ones responsible for forcing the hands of the population of the city opposed to the Sin and opening him the gate: “But who brought him in? None but richmens sonnes that were left well, and had more money given by will, then they had wit how to bestow it: none but Prentises almost out of their yeers, and all the Tailors, Haberdashers, and Embroderers that could be bot for love or money” (Dekker, p.58). To contrast with the representation of London as illegal place of dicing and poverty from the chapters regarding the previous Sins, the part about Apishnesse criticises the dependence of high society on the costliest clothes and the latest fashions. The whole chapter basically depicts the city as merely a set for rich people to flaunt this richness, even though Dekker dutifully warns London and his readers that the Sin of Change of Fashion is just counterfeiting (Dekker, p.58). As mentioned above, other nations are drawn into the picture as the places where some specific pieces of clothing are tailored. A certain sense of nationality and of shame in the face of other countries is thus presented as the result



of capitulating to Apishness: “For an English-mans suites like a traitors bodie that hath beene hanged, drawne, and quartered, and is set up in severall places [...] And thus we that mocke everie Nation, for keeping one fashion, yet steale patches from everie one of them, to peece out our pride, are now laughing stocks to them, because their cut to scurvily becomes us” (Dekker, pp.59-60). Because of this, it could be said that the part about the fifth Sin does not only underline the warning Dekker issues about Apishness both to London as a personified entity and as a community of people, but extends the meaning of the city as a feeling of pride of being English.

In his introduction to *The Elizabethan Underworld*, Judges mentions the danger caused both on the streets of the kingdom and inside the walls of London by the stray companies of soldiers or mariners, citing the panic caused by the tentative of looting on Bartholomew Fair (Judges, pp.xvii-xviii). Dekker as well mentions this important problem in the passage about the sixth Sin, which he calls “Shaving”, or Cheating. Revealingly, immediately after having mentioned the name of the Sin he calls for an army to stop him, while at the same time admitting it will be impossible: “If therefore you, and Five companies greater than yours, should chuse a Colonel, to lead you against this mightie Tamburlaine, you are too weake to make him Retire, and if you should come to a battel, you would loose the day” (Dekker, p.63). As in the episode related by Judges, troops of soldiers immediately abandon the standard of the city and join Cheating as the Sin enters the gate. The choice of Newgate for the sixth Sin’s entrance is justified by its being “a gaol, or prison for felons and trespassers” (Stow, p.65). The Sin himself is mentioned as being well aware of this fact and planning on making the convicts of the prison of Newgate join his army. This actually happens as soon as he walks inside the prison: “All of them that had once served under his colors (and were now to suffer for the Truth, which they had abused) leaping up to the Iron lattaces, to

beholde their General, & making such a ratleing with shaking their chaines for ioy, as if Cerberus had bin come from hell to live and die amongst them” (Dekker, p.63). Cheating is however another criticism of the majority of the population of London, not only of the stray soldiers: landlords, usurers, barbers, vendors at the market are mentioned as cheating their customers and thus hosting the personification of the Sin in their own houses. Shaving seems to be such a powerful and well-spread entity that Dekker soon renounces writing about all the people devoted to him, and reverts to warn London, using once again an honorific to refer to her personified version: “Onely (which is worst) bee it knowne to thee (O thou Queene of Cities) thy Inhabitants Shave their Consciences so close, that in the ende they grow balde, and bring foorth no goodnesse” (Dekker, p.66).

For the first six Sins London is seen as a place openly welcoming each one of them in its version as community of people, and occasionally sleeping with them or their kin in its personified form. However, the city turns out to have a completely different attitude towards the last and worst one of the Seven Sins. The seventh Sin is Cruelty, and immediately after naming him the author exclaims “O strange! mee thinks London should start up out of her solid foundation, and in anger bee ready to fall upon him, and grinde him to dust” (Dekker, p.67). The main characteristic of Cruelty, confronted with the other six Sins, is that he does not disguise himself as a pleasant and attractive person as the others did, but comes to London in his true, horrible, shape: “But Cruelty is a hag, horred in form, terrible in voice, formidable in threates, a tyrant in his very looks, and a murderer in all his actions” (Dekker, p.68). This personified Sin is so horrible-looking that London in comparison is praised as good. Also the city’s welfare system, which since Elizabeth’s time for instance compelled parishes to care for their poor and obligated the parents of illegitimate children to raise them (Picard, p.291), is praised in

the form of a personified London who is good at heart and who now assumes once again the role of mother to her citizens: “For what Cittie in the world, does more drie up the teares of the Widowe, and gives more warmth to the fatherlesse then this ancient and reverend Grandam of Citties? Where hath the Orphan (that is to receive great portions) lesse cause to mourne the losse of Parents? He finds foure and twentie greate Senators to bee his Fathers instead of one: the Cittie it selfe to be his Mother” (Dekker, p.68). The praise for the welfare is noticeable in the description of the hospital system, where the rent was low, allowing also the poor to be cured, and of the “thirteen houses of sorrow” where, while admitting the harsh conditions, Dekker focuses on the fact that poor people still had a place to live (Dekker, pp.69-70). The city is therefore not cruel, but in this particular instance the author separates the city from its citizens and declares that while London is good-hearted, her citizens are actually the ones to be cruel in their actions, particularly in their attitude towards arranged marriages. Dekker writes against marriages arranged between a young girl and a much older man with contempt and disgust, calling Londoners out on this practice: “will you bee carelesse in coupling your Children? he into whose bosome three score winters have thrust their frozen fingars, if he be rich (though his breath bee rancker then a Muck-hill, his bodye more drye than Mummi, and his minde more lame than Ignorance it selfe) shall have offered unto him (but it is offered as a sacrifice) the tender bossome of a Virgin, upon whose fore-head was never written sixteene yeares” (Dekker, p.71). Another example the author makes of the cruelty of London’s citizens is that they kept men for too long in prison to starve and fall ill, and warns them that “We are most like to God that made us, when we shew love to one another, and doe most looke like the Divell that would destroy us, when wee are one anothers tormenters” (Dekker, p.72). The cruelty of her people prompts Dekker to wonder about how London could have such people in her walls, with a recall to her

legendary ancestry, already mentioned by Stow: “What Gallenist of Paracelsian in the world, by all his water-casting, and mineral extractions, would iudge, that this fairest-fac’de daughter of Brute, (and good daughter to King Lud, who gave her her name) should have so much corruption in her body?” (Dekker, p.75). But the criticism focused only on the citizens suddenly turns against the city itself again, when Dekker decides to mention the fact that during the plague the dead were quickly removed from the houses and streets without any funeral ceremonies and buried in mass graves: “There is a Cruelty within thee (faire Troynovant) worse and more barbarous then all the rest, because it is halfe against thy Dead Sonnes and Daughters” (Dekker, pp.75-76). The Sin of Cruelty himself does not appear much in the chapter dedicated to him, but the description of his actions through those of the citizens build on the previous descriptions of the six Sins’ actions to climax in the exhortation of the author to London to take up arms against all the Sins who have come to her, so as not to end like the other cities ravaged by Sin he had mentioned in the introduction: “If thou (as thou hast done) kneelest to worship this Beast with Seven Crowned Heads, and the Whore that sits upon it, the fall of thee (that hast out-stood so many Citties) will be greater then that of Babylon. She is now gotten within thy walls: she rides up and downe thy streetes, making thee drunke out of her cup, and marking thee in the forehead with pestilence for her owne. She causes Violls of wrath to be powred upon thee, and goes in triumph away, when she sees thee falling. If thou wilt be safe therefore and recover health, rise up in Armes against her, and drieve her (and the Monster that beares her) out at thy Gates” (Dekker, p.79).

As indicated, throughout *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*, the city of London appears in various forms, and Thomas Dekker goes from one to another in a quick succession while recounting the entrance of the Seven Sins in a similar and at the same

time parodic fashion to that of the Royal Entrances. There is therefore in this particular literary work a presentation of the city as stage for the allegorical characters presented and as allegorical personification itself, acting both as mother and bane for her citizens.

### **2.3 Thomas Nashe and the Devil in London**

If Dekker wrote about a whole new army of capital Sins coming to London to illustrate the vices of the city and its citizens, a few years before in 1592 Thomas Nashe had already presented the idea of the canonical Seven Sins being inserted in the city with a classical figure which embodied them all in one character: the Devil. In Nashe's satirical pamphlet *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil*, the protagonist and narrator Pierce walks through London in search of the Devil. Being a penniless writer who has noticed a high number of idle people have money, he tries to find the Devil to convince him to take their souls so that the amount of money they would leave could be redistributed to worthier people. Therefore, he writes down his complaint and starts to walk the city in search of the Devil. Nashe does not, as Dekker did, immediately give a personified entity to the city, so in his work London is again mainly seen as the setting for the story, or the background both for Pierce and the Devil.

The pattern London is set in as stage for the characters is quite similar through both Nashe's and Dekker's works. If the Capital Sins of Dekker made their entrance through specific gates connected to their nature, Nashe's Pierce wanders in similarly specifically chosen places in search of the Devil. Once he has written his supplication, Pierce actually wonders where he is more likely to meet the Devil: "But, written and all, here

lies the question: where shall I find this old ass, that I may deliver it? Mass, that's true, they say the lawyers have the devil and all; it is like enough he is playing Ambodexter amongst them. Fie, fie, the devil a driver in Westminster Hall? It can never be"<sup>18</sup>. The satire on the lawyers is very evident in this passage. Their connection both to the Devil and to Westminster Hall, where they worked because of the many Parliamentary sessions which were held there (Stow, p.419), is elucidated further on when it becomes clear that the Devil does not hide in Westminster Hall to, for instance, spy on the lawyers, but that he is one of them: "To Westminster Hall I went, and made a search of enquiry, from the black gown to the buckram bag, if there were any such sergent, bencher, counsellor, attorney, or pettyfogger, as *Signor Cornuto Diabolo* with the good face. But they all, *una voce*, affirmed that he was not there" (Nashe, p.57). The setting of Westminster Hall can therefore be connected to the gates mentioned by Dekker as corrupted places in which the Sins or the Devil feel at home with no difficulty. It is furthermore to be noted that the lawyers of Westminster Hall do not deny the presence of the Devil among them, but candidly say he is not there at the moment, as they would with any other colleague. They therefore normalise in this way the evil presence, exactly as the citizens of London did when they followed the Sins in Dekker. The lawyers even kindly inform Pierce about where he could find the Devil, setting the course for his search and at the same time indicating they are not the only ones familiar with him: "whether he were at the Exchange or no, amongst the rich merchants, that they could not tell; but it was likelier of the two that I should meet with him, or hear of him at the least, in those quarters" (Nashe, p.57). Pierce therefore goes to the Exchange and asks around for the Devil, but there, on the contrary, nobody seems to know him

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas Nashe, "Pierce Penniless his Supplication to the Devil" in *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works*, ed. by J.B. Steane (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p.57. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

(Nashe, p.58). What is to be underlined is that Nashe mentions the multiculturalism present in that building briefly writing about the several different languages spoken at the Exchange: “thither came I; and, thrusting myself, as the manner is, amongst the confusion of languages, I asked, as before, whether he were there extant or no” (Nashe, pp.57-58). More than Dekker or Mulcaster, who only described the Royal Entry pageants, Nashe manages also to include in his story some traditions which give his contemporary readers more insight in the London of his time. For instance, when Pierce is told that indeed the Devil is not at the Exchange he walks “to Paul’s to seek my dinner with Duke Humphrey; but when I came there, the old soldier was not up. He is long a-rising, thought I, but that’s all one, for he that hath no money in his purse must go dine with Sir John Bestbetrust at the sign of the Chalk and the Post” (Nashe, pp.58-59). The names of the apparently noble men actually are two ways of saying that someone had no money to buy himself or herself a meal: Duke Humphrey was the tomb of the Duke of Gloucester in St. Paul’s cathedral and the saying ‘at the sign of the Chalk and the Post’ apparently meant to say that something was taken on credit (Nashe, p.59). In what he terms as a waste gallery, so possibly still in St. Paul’s, Pierce is then approached by a man who claims to work for the Devil, to whom he gives the written supplication which is reported in the pamphlet (Nashe, pp.59-60).

The pamphlet which follows is divided in several sections, each one a satirical critique of an aspect of the life in Renaissance London. It is interesting to notice that, despite the fact that Nashe’s pamphlet was written several years before Dekker’s *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*, there are a number of similarities between the two works. Nashe’s London, as already mentioned, is present in the pamphlet more as the setting of the story rather than as a personified entity. There are anyway a couple of passages where the author seems to address a personification of London as well. In the

same way, though less detailed and precise, cardinal Sins also appear in Nashe, although they are much closer to the canonical Seven Sins than Dekker's. The Sins organized as a community similar to a family leaving in London is a trope to be found in Nashe's pamphlet from the very beginning. He describes Greediness and his wife Dame Niggardize and the house in which they live, guarded at the door by the personifications of Famine, Lent and Desolation. The role of these three personifications is significantly that of driving the personifications of Hunger and Poverty who come to beg at the door away (Nashe, p.62). There is however no precise indication of where this house might be in the city of London, and the whole city seems to turn into a homogenous background. As mentioned above, in Dekker the personification of Pride is presented as a female who is sleeping with London herself. Conversely, in Nashe Pride appears not only to be personified as a male, but also to be more concerned with the citizens of London, particularly merchants and traders, than with a representation of London itself: "Pride, the perverter of all virtue, sitteth apparelled in the merchant's spoils, and ruin of young citizens; and scorneth learning, that gave their upstart fathers titles of gentry" (Nashe, p.64). The unnamed streets of London seem to be roamed by a cohort of allegorical and real characters, such as the corrupt politician, a figure which Dekker mentioned as well as one of the followers of his first Sin, Fraudulent Bankruptcy, of which Pierce asks "I pray ye, good Monsieur Devil, take some order, that the streets be not pestered with them so as they are" (Nashe, p.65) and the prodigal young master, so spoiled by his mother that "if he have played the waste-good at the Inns of Court or about London, and that neither his student's pension nor his unthrift's credit will serve to maintain his college of whores any longer" (Nashe, p.66), making these characters part of the general image of London. The trope of London as mother of her citizens does not appear explicitly but could be seen as



opposition to the Devil's own fathering of some of those citizens, particularly atheists and people who mock religion. Interestingly, the latter appear not only to be the Devil's children but denying the Devil's own existence. These people are mentioned in the section titled *The Pride of the Learned*, one of the many declinations of the Sin of Pride present in the Pamphlet: "Hence atheists triumph and rejoice, and talk as profanely of the Bible, as of *Bevis of Hampton*. I hear say there be mathematicians abroad that will prove men before Adam; and they are harboured in high places, who will maintain it to the death that there are no devils. It is a shame, Signor Beelzebub, that you should suffer yourself thus to be termed a bastard, or not approve to your predestinate children, not only that they have a father, but that you are he that must own them" (Nashe, p.68). Since London is never quoted as being an evil city or entity it could be argued that in the balance between good and evil with evil represented by the Devil, the city still retains somehow a positive motherly status. Moreover, the Sins are mentioned repeatedly in the pamphlet, along with their familiar connections and sometimes their abode in the city.

The last paragraph of the complaint Pierce Penniless addresses to the Devil is *The Seventh and Last Complaint of Lechery*. It is one of the few where specific places of London are named as spaces where Lechery as a personified allegory is present, as well as streets where the citizens of London practice this particular sin: "The child of Sloth is Lechery, which I have placed last in my order of handling: a sin that is able to make a man wicked that should describe it; for it hath more starting holes than a sieve hath holes, more clients than Westminster Hall, more diseases than Newgate. Call a leet [an official inquiry into the affairs of a ward or district] at Bishopsgate, and examine how every second house in Shoreditch is maintained; make a privy search in Southwark and tell me how many she-inmates you find; nay, go where you will in the suburbs and

bring me two virgins that have vowed chastity, and I'll build a nunnery" (Nashe, pp.116-117). Contrary to Dekker's Sloth, for instance, Nashe's Lechery is not shown as actually walking the streets of London. The effects of his presence are however shown in some specific boroughs or streets, as well as the reputations of other public spaces such as Newgate which was known to be a prison where diseases often spread out (Stow, p.65). Lechery being the sin of sexual promiscuousness, it was quite obvious for Southwark and Shoreditch, the notorious brothel-filled boroughs, to appear in this strong criticism of society. Along with the mention of these areas, there also is the mention of the social prejudice that all women living in those borders were bound to be prostitutes, despite the fact that the Bishop of Winchester himself had his residence not far from there (Stow, p.372).

As a simple setting of streets and building, however, London is also quoted as the place walked by the Devil in his physical and not allegorical form: "It is said, Laurence Lucifer, that you went up and down London crying then like a lantern-and-candle man" (Nashe, p.78). In this short passage the Devil's first name being Laurence is explained as St. Laurence's day being August 10<sup>th</sup>, one of the hottest days of the year. Furthermore, in the passage dedicated to the defence of the plays and playhouses, Nashe precisely notes down the places of the city from where the spectators came the afternoons in which there were plays in the theatres: "For whereas the afternoon being the idlest time of the day, wherein men that are their own masters (as gentlemen of the Court, the Inns of the Court, and the number of captains and soldiers about London) do wholly bestow themselves upon pleasure" (Nashe, p.112).

Personified London appears, as anticipated, only in a couple of passages or invocations. She is referred to with honorifics before its name, conversely to Dekker who addressed them directly to the city. In the first instance, London is being addressed

with its mythological name, but it also appears as the modern city it was becoming at the time: “I warrant we have old hacksters in this great grandmother of corporations, Madame Troynovant, that have not backbited any of their neighbours with the tooth of envy this twenty year” (Nashe, p.78). It is interesting to notice that while personified London has been analysed so far as the mother of her citizens or the daughter of her monarchs, Nashe decides to point in a completely different family direction, making her a great grandmother. This choice of an older generation fits logically in with the denomination of ‘Madame Troynovant’, since this was thought to be the old name of the city, going back to the year 1108 BC according to Stow’s recording of the mythological origins of the city (Stow, p.33). The topic is however just mentioned by Nashe and the concept of London personified as a great grandmother never cited again in the pamphlet. The personification both of London and of, surprisingly, Westminster, appear however again in the last part of the supplication, the already mentioned complaint about Lechery. Westminster was at the time still a city in its own right as Stow himself wrote down dedicating a whole chapter of the *Survey* to the City of Westminster (Stow, p.404). Following the complaint about the ill-reputed Southwark and Shoreditch, the author addresses directly the two cities: “Westminster, Westminster, much maidenhead hast thou to answer for at the day of judgment; thou hadst a sanctuary in thee once, but hast few saints left in thee now. Surgeons and apothecaries, you know what I speak is true, for you live, like summoners, upon the sins of the people; tell me, is there any place so lewd, as this Lady London?” (Nashe, p.117). Despite the appellative of ‘Lady’, London is here defined as a city which is not ladylike at all, completely opposing the classical image of great grandmother proposed some pages earlier. Westminster, on the contrary, appears as a much more saintly city, which had a sanctuary based on the fact that the cathedral had been used to shelter people in need of

political asylum. The contrast between the two personifications is evident and presents the ever-growing importance of London, which would soon englobe Westminster, as an attitude London has that makes Westminster lose her former sanctity. Unfortunately, Nashe himself does not build on this possible conflict of cities and thus personalities, leaving the possible commentary as the sentences quoted above.

In Nashe's pamphlet, London is therefore explored in a less systematic way than in Stow's *Survey* or Mulcaster's account, and also appears as a less allegorical setting than in Dekker's work, since the Devil and the other Sins mentioned do not actually walk through the city in a precise itinerary. Nashe's London in *Pierce Penniless His Supplication to the Devil* is therefore more a blurry setting for the pamphlet and the complaints of its protagonist and author than a precise setting in which every single street or corner has a meaning or the city itself takes a living form and acts or reacts to the story.

### **3. London as Personified**

#### **3.1 Renaissance Women and Last Wills as a Way to Express Themselves in Writing**

London has so far been analysed as three different presentations of the same city: the one concretely made of buildings and streets, the one seen as the collective conscience of the citizens and the one, allegorical, of a personified entity. It has been seen that, when two or all three of these interpretations can feature in the same text, the shift from one version of London to another is often abrupt and completely changes the focus of the work. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Thomas Dekker often interrupts his allegorical descriptions of the capital Sins and their effect on the citizens to address the personification of London with a sudden exclamation or complaint. Moreover, the texts presented so far have an evident tendency to point out the flaws of the city as a personification or as a union of citizens, be it with the fantastical notion of it being home to personified Sins or the Devil, or more realistically a perfect place of work for cutpurses and prostitutes, thus underlining the notion that London was not, in fact, a safe place to live in. The due exception to this tendency amongst the previously mentioned works is of course Richard Mulcaster's account of Elizabeth I's Royal Entry, which on the contrary tends to be biased in the other sense, presenting a Queen who is the flawless incarnation of royalty and kindness and a vision of London as covered in flowers and brocades and filled with happy citizens whose only concern is to praise their new sovereign.

There is however a text which analyses from a seemingly neutral point of view the different aspects of the city as a community, describing both the pleasant and the less

pleasant ways of living there and addressing at the same time and in a much smoother way the city as a geographical, human and personified entity. This text is the long satirical poem *Wyll and Testament* by Isabella Whitney, published in 1573 as last part of the collection *A Sweet Nosegay or Pleasant Posy: Containing a Hundred and Ten Philosophical Flowers*. This poem is constructed as a sort of hybrid between a letter or poem of complaint to a lover, in this particular case personified London, and a last will or testament in which the speaking persona leaves her possessions to other people in the event of her untimely death. It tackles several social issues of Renaissance London while not falling into the often present trope of demonising the whole city and its people for that.

The particular form of this poem structured as a testament stems directly from the fact that the author was a woman. Though male authors in Renaissance times could achieve certain success and reputation, they were still branded as part of an un-elite, since writing for a living was not seen as an honourable or respected activity. Women writers of the same period, specifically because of their gender, were even more ill-considered by society. The place of a woman was still seen as her home despite the fact that “London was of course full of the enterprising activity of wives and daughters of shopkeepers, assistants, prostitutes, and servants. And certainly women crowded the streets for the public activity of hearing sermons, visiting churches, attending fairs, and buying goods at the Royal Exchange”<sup>19</sup>. The particular case of the kingdom not having a king but a queen in Whitney’s own time did not have any concrete effect on the social traditions of the Renaissance. Notwithstanding this, writing put a woman’s public reputation basically at the same level of that of a prostitute. Women writers were

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<sup>19</sup> Jill P. Ingram, “A Case for Credit: Isabella Whitney’s ‘Wyll and Testament’ and the Mock Testament Tradition” in *Idioms of Self-Interest* (New York, Routledge, 2006). All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

therefore doubly stigmatised in Renaissance society, as Wendy Wall notes in her study on Whitney: “the female writer could become a ‘fallen’ woman in a double sense: branded as a harlot or a member of the un-elite”<sup>20</sup>. There was however a loophole to this stalling situation, even if it has to be underlined as a particularly perverted one. Since the only honourable ‘profession’ for women was the one of wife and mother, a woman dying in childbirth who would have written a text of advice directed to her children would of course not have been branded as a harlot, but instead praised as a commendable and pious mother, faithful to her motherly duties until the very end. Knowing the risks of pregnancy and childbirth of their time, some Renaissance women exploited the aura of wisdom and counsel putting their lives in jeopardy for the sake of giving an heir gave them. This aura, magnified by the sacrifice they were ready to make to further the generation of their family, gave them a different and somewhat ‘higher’ status than that of a non-pregnant wife. They therefore used the magnitude of this risk to write (Wall, p.38). Those texts, penned in the form of a last legacy and generally a letter of advice to the surviving members of the family, were sometimes published by the grieving husband and consequently gained respectability as examples of lives well led by worthy women (Wall, p.37). An Act of Parliament in 1544 had reinforced the already existing law that certain groups of people such as persons under twenty-one, idiots, madmen and wives were prohibited the legal writing of their will. The last legacies of those mothers dying in childbirth, written as last wills were legally written, acquired therefore another dimension, in which women who legally could not give away any of their physical properties bestowed on their loved ones intellectual properties in the form of advice, thus creating a proprietorship which was really accessible to them

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<sup>20</sup> Wendy Wall, “Isabella Whitney and the Female Legacy” in *English Literary History*, 58, 1, 1991, pp.35-36. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

(Wall, p.45). Almost as a reaction to the reinforcement of the law, women-written wills started to be published quite frequently, creating “a tradition of female legacy, a form not crucial for its feminine difference, or for its marking of a female consciousness, but for its provision of a stance from which women could publicly challenge cultural demands for their silence” (Wall, p.46).

### **3.2 Isabella Whitney, the Mock Testament and London as Addressee**

In Isabella Whitney’s case, the seriousness of a text written with the possibility of dying in mind is reversed and changed into what is called a mock testament. What usually was a serious text written by a dying woman is, in her version, turned into a fake will in which the speaking persona of the poem is forced to leave London and therefore decides to write a testament in which to bestow her earthly possessions. Since wills were written by married women who were not allowed to have private properties, and basing her writing on the fact that she herself was destitute, Isabella Whitney takes on the idea of bestowing what were not concrete properties and literally gives away as her inheritance the whole city of London.

Whitney is actually not new at reversing classical poetic roles. Her first publication *The Copy of a Letter lately Written in Meeter, by a Yonge Gentilwoman: to Her Unconstant Lover* (1567) takes the classical male trope of the poet spurned by a lover and describes it from the point of view of a woman whose male lover has been unfaithful, adding the canonical mythological figures representing male unfaithfulness as a reference and thus also giving a voice to legendary abandoned women (Wall, p.46).



In the same way, she changes the theme of the literary will written by a dying mother into the one written to a city by an evicted citizen. At the same time she also intertwines the testament tradition with two other literary canons. She addresses the personification of London as the cruel lover who rejected her and therefore places her *Wyll* in the literary tradition of the complaint poem, in which “a lover mourns desertion, abandonment or infidelity” (Wall, p.50). The detailed descriptions of the streets of London and the life in the city also place the poem in the classical tradition of the blazon, in which details of the body of the poet’s mistress were described. In Whitney’s work the city of London is in fact analysed like a loved one: “In her complaint, London becomes the erotic Other on display, the thing dissected, anatomized and described. Through the combined operations of mourning and celebration, Whitney produces an intricate blazon of the city’s streets, activities and landmarks” (Wall, p.52).

The central presence of London in the poem *Wyll and Testament* is evident very early on, from the note at the beginning of the text which connects it to the aforementioned tradition of the last will while explicitly admitting the reversal from a dying woman to an evicted citizen:

The author (though loath to leave the city) upon her friend’s procurement is constrained to depart, wherefore she feigneth as she would die and maketh her will and testament, as followeth, with large legacies of such goods and riches which she most abundantly hath left behind her, and thereof maketh London sole executor to see her legacies performed.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Isabella Whitney, “Wyll and Testament” in *Renaissance Women Poets* ed. by Dannielle Clarke (London: Penguin Books, 2001). All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

The initial note also immediately introduces the presence of London as a personified entity whose role in the fake death of the author is crucial, since it is London which is to be implied in the execution of the testament, as normally the lawfully wedded partner of the writer of the will would be. There is therefore in this text, right from the very beginning, a personal and intimate connection between the author and the city in its various forms. London is at once both the city the poet will need to leave and will walk while bestowing her legacies and describing the life of its citizens, and the cause of her leaving, personified as a cruel and pitiless lover, a literary device which reconnects the poem to the tradition of the love complaint. Drawing both on the law and the previously mentioned traditions of mothers' wills, London is here presented as executioner of the testament, a role taken by the widower in real-life instances of women wills. While addressing London as a person, however, Whitney does not use any specifically gendered pronouns throughout the poem, limiting herself to talk to the city as a 'thee' or a 'thou'. Since the role of London in the *Wyll and Testament* is that of lover and possibly spouse of a young woman it is logical to say, given the time period, that London is for the first time here personified as a male instead of the classical female figure attributed to cities and countries. The writing of this masculine persona of London thus reinforces the gender role reversals Whitney was prone to do in her writing.

The poem proper begins with what is penned by the author herself as a message she wanted to get to London before starting to write her testament. This part is a quite lyrical letter which can be analysed as being at once a love and a hate letter to the city. Personified London is here strikingly present, a figure hovering in the first part of the poem as a shadowy lover but also unmistakably as a city cruel to its citizens:

The time is come I must depart  
 from thee, ah famous city.  
 I never yet, to rue my smart,  
 did find that thou hadst pity (Whitney, vv.1-4).

The amalgamation of city and personification is perfect: Whitney names London as a “famous city” right in the second verse but attributes it human feelings, or rather the lack thereof, in the fourth one. London is the addressee of the poem precisely as a conglomerate of streets and buildings and at the same time “as an ungrateful lover who has treated her with cruelty and contempt” (Wall, p.50). Just after having attributed a human shape to London, however, the city proper resurfaces in the poem, when the speaking persona spitefully writes that because of this cruel treatment

small cause there is that I  
 should grieve from thee [to] go (Whitney, vv.5-6).

These verses thus reinforce the parallel between the figure of the poet leaving her former lover and the figure of the citizen leaving the city. The latter appears conflicted, at once constrained to leave by the circumstances and also trying to convince herself that because of the treatment she has received from her lover and city her departure is for the best. The to and fro between city and lover is closely knitted in the first part of the poem, with references to the city immediately followed in the next verse by sentiments which could only derive from a human relationship. Whitney compares London the lover to many other unfaithful or cruel lovers, and deplores the fact that women would fall in love with such undeserving men:

But many women foolishly,  
     like me, and other mo'e,  
 Do such a fixèd fancy set  
     on those which least deserve (Whitney, vv.7-10).

The cruelty of London is underlined quite explicitly, turning the city from the classical motherly figure into the other part of the dichotomy normally reserved to cities and countries, the one of the monster. Again, the personification and the city as geographical and social space are here closely intertwined:

And now hath time me put in mind  
     of thy great cruelty,  
 That never once a help would find  
     to ease me in distress.  
 Thou never yet wouldst credit give  
     to board me for a year,  
 Nor with apparel me relieve  
     except thou payèd were (Whitney, vv.17-24).

The “great cruelty” Whitney writes of is both a feature of the fictional lover London embodies, furthering the tradition of the poetic love complaint, and a strong criticism of the city as a society. The social criticism is evidently directed at the welfare, which Whitney accuses of not being attentive enough to the needs of the destitute and therefore responsible for her leaving the city. It is interesting to notice that this kind of

criticism is present at the very beginning of the poem and will reappear throughout the whole *Wyll and Testament*, always with a bitter tone, while on the other hand, some years later, Thomas Dekker praised his own personification of London as a loving mother for her good care of the same poor (Dekker, p.68). As Ingram underlines, “The will implicates a ‘London’ refusing credit to those in need, but at the same time the speaker envies those in debt, members of the lending community from which she’s barred. This ambiguity (and Whitney’s use of the mock testament to best express not only the relationship of debtors to creditors, but also the consequences of exclusive credit channels) illumines conflicting attitudes toward debt in London’s growing credit economy” (Ingram, p.2).

The introduction to the poem shifts then again to the love letter, since the speaking persona resumes addressing herself to the personification of London and appears to fit in the tropes of the spurned lover who despite everything does not hate the person who has caused her pain:

No, no, thou never didst me good,

nor ever wilt, I know;

Yet I am in no angry mood (Whitney, vv.25-.27).

As a sort of demonstration of her good will to forgive the lover and therefore the city, Whitney finally writes she will then pen her own testament and leave the treasures noted in it to the city, who will then make sure that no one will contest her last will. The mockery of the whole style of poetry is here evident in the fact that Whitney has already declared to be a destitute woman, forced to leave the city, and then she presents herself some lines further as a bountiful lady ready to leave precious goods to the addressee of

her will. Furthermore, she will be leaving parts of the city to the city itself, thus leaving London with goods London already possessed as a last form of petty revenge on a cruel lover (Ingram, p.2). The idea of leaving London to London also is the perfect melting and joining together of the two main versions of the city present in the poem, the concrete one made of buildings which are left as inheritance to the personified one whom the speaking persona loved. As Wendy Wall notes, “Because it catalogues the speaker’s non-property, Whitney’s ‘Wyll’ directly contradicts the claims made by the legal will, a contradiction complicated even further by the fact that the goods she leaves are those of the public domain. In this sense, her poem pushes the paradox of loss and fulfilment central to Petrarchan discourse to its extreme limit.” (Wall, p.54).

The testament proper begins only at the thirty-seventh verse, after a title declares once again the poet’s intention of writing it. The strong roots this poem has in the mock testament tradition are however evident from the beginning, since the classical formula with which the will opens is overthrown with a satirical comment in the next verse:

I whole in body and in mind,  
                   but very weak in purse,  
 Do make and write my testament  
                   for fear it will be worse (Whitney, vv.37-40).

The verses which follow this beginning, with their invocation to God and Jesus Christ, retain however a certain aura of a real testament. In this part of the poem, the poet follows the sentences proper to the religious genre, commending her soul to God and putting her faith in a Judgment Day with the reference to the dead rising again and a hope of seeing her friends now released from mortal sadness. After this further

introduction, the proper will begins, with London as the first one to receive the inheritance:

I first of all to London leave,  
 because I there was bred,  
 Brave buildings rare, of churches store,  
 and Paul's to the head (Whitney, vv.61-64).

The note that Whitney was “bred” in London and therefore names the city as sole executor of the will furthers the detachment from the classical wills, since not only is the dying mother turned into a leaving citizen, but the Londoner is here turned against her will into an outsider. The figure of the outsider thus describes the city which rejected her with the inner knowledge of a citizen, but also with the detachment of someone who is aware of the fact that she will not come back and therefore also tries in some ways to overcome the budding nostalgia. Ingram thus analyses the speaking persona of the poem: “Instead of reflecting from the realm of private domesticity, however, the speaker is positioned as a departing outsider: first as an exile according to the poem's dramatic narrative; and secondly as a dying or dead speaker, in line with generic requirements of the mock testament. Owing to her ultimate exile from domesticity, her familiarity with London's street life, and her public disposal of her ‘goods,’ her voice can be interpreted as more public than private” (Ingram, p.10). The first recognizable place mentioned as a legacy in the *Wyll* is St. Paul's Cathedral, but it has to be mentioned that despite the classical religious introduction to the testament, “the poem all but ignores the important spiritual or aristocratic structures we expect in city encomiums or travel literature. Despite the conventional placement of St. Paul's

Cathedral at the beginning of her lists, she says nothing else about religious institutions anywhere in her poem'<sup>22</sup>.

London as a community of people now appears in the picture, with Whitney recognising the existence of the people of the city and of their struggles and naming them heirs alongside London in her testament:

Between the same, fair streets there be  
 and people goodly store;  
 Because their keeping craveth cost,  
 I yet will leave [t]hem more (Whitney, vv.65-68).

From those verses starts the meticulous mapping of the city and its goods Whitney records in her poem, depicting London as a cluster of streets and shops. Bearing in mind the difficulties she herself has lived and thus other citizens might experience, she distributes useful goods to help them, therefore creating a new image of herself, as Bartlett describes: "Whitney figures herself as a creative redistributor of goods, the architect of fairer and more symmetrical exchanges of labor, commodities, and cash than the city historically offered. As poet, she reconstructs herself from a pauper into a populist Lady Bountiful with the verbal power, at least, to build a city more hospitable to disempowered groups: the young, the poor, the second sex"<sup>23</sup>. Whitney's first thought on how to relieve her fellow citizens is of course plenty of food and drink:

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<sup>22</sup> Marilyn Sandidge, "Urban Space as Social Conscience in Isabella Whitney's *Wyll and Testament*" in *Urban Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. by A. Classen, (Boston:De Gruyter, 2009), p.602. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

<sup>23</sup> J.L. Bartlett, *Lady Bountiful or Fallen Woman? Conflicted Poetic Narratives in Whitney's "Will and Testament"*, May 2000, p.2. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.



First for their food, I butchers leave,  
     that every day shall kill;  
 By Thames you shall have brewers stores,  
     and bakers at your will (Whitney, vv.69-772).

In these few verses the mapping is already evident, since Whitney indicates that most alehouses were by the river, such as the well-known Mermaid Tavern which was between the Thames and Cheapside and would also be mentioned by Ben Jonson in *Bartholomew Fair*. The progression of this distribution of goods then passes from food to clothing, first with the mention of Watling Street and Canwick Street where to buy wool (Whitney, vv.77-78), which Stow would note down in his *Survey* as “The drapers of Lombard street and of Cornehill are seated in Candlewick and Watheling Street” (Stow, p.107). Then comes the description of Friday Street where, contrary to Stow mentioning it as “so called of fishmongers dwelling there, and serving Friday’s market” (Stow, p.328), Whitney places linen stores (Whitney, vv.79-80): “Her first bequests, therefore, drawn from a neighbourhood she knows first-hand, provide the basics of food, bread, meat, fish and beer, and wool and linen clothing for those who need them, presumably from the poorest to the wealthiest citizens” (Sandidge, p.603). The theme of clothing is then furthermore expanded with a lively description of the places where the upper classes bought their garments, accessories and jewels, thus in a way moving up on the social ladder of the citizens of London from those who needed food to those who had money for various trinkets:

In Cheap, of them they store shall find,

and likewise in that street

I goldsmiths leave, with jewels such

as are for ladies meet (Whitney, vv.85-88).

The main place mentioned for such purchases is “Cheap”, which was actually Cheapside, main commercial centre of the city and correctly home of the goldsmiths who even gave the name of their trade to a magnificent street: “Next to be noted, the most beautiful frame of fair houses and shops that be within the walls of London, or elsewhere in England, commonly called Goldsmith’s Row, betwixt Bread Street end and the cross in Cheape” (Stow, p.324). Whitney notes down in a quick succession all the different and extravagant accessories the upper class bought, thus giving not only a very vivid image of her time and the fashion of the time, but also, it could be argued, a touch of severe irony putting “hoods, bongraces, hats, or caps” (Whitney, v.93) and “French ruffs, high purls, gorgets, and sleeves” (Whitney, v.99) right after she had written about people needing butchers and fishmongers to survive. This irony is also evident, along with a useful example of how shopping happened in Renaissance London, in the following verses:

For purse or knives, for comb or glass,

or any needful knack

I by the Stocks have left a boy

will ask you what you lack (Whitney, vv.101-104).

The contradictory definition of “needful knack” clearly expresses the opinion of the poet on this kind of shopping in the Stocks, a market in the centre of the city. The

mention of a boy asking “what you lack” is a reference to boys employed by shopkeepers who would approach customers to try and convince them to buy. This figure who also implies a social division among Londoners, since the boy is a worker employed to bring customers into the shop and not a customer himself (Sandidge, p.604). The accuracy of Whitney’s description of the places in which certain shops such as hosiers in Birchin Lane (Whitney, v.105) were present are corroborated by Stow himself, with his description of “Birchover lane, so called of Birchover, the first builder and owner thereof, now corruptly called Birchin Lane, the north half whereof is of the said Cornhill Ward; the other part is of Langborne Ward. This lane, and the high street near adjoining, hath been inhabited for the most part with wealthy drapers, from Birchover’s Lane, on that side the street down to the stocks, in the reign of Henry VI, had ye for the most part dwelling Fripperers or Upholders, that sold old apparel and household stuff” (Stow, p.207). The focus of the poem then shifts from clothes to weaponry. The author thus leaves to the same men she had left fancy clothing and accessories some verses before various sets of weaponry in different places of the city. She mentions artillery at Temple Bar, pistols at Tower Hill, probably because of the soldiers guarding the Tower, and swords near to Fleet Street (Whitney, vv.121-124), which was indicated by Stow as the place where the Sergeant’s Inn, reserved to sergeants and judges, was (Stow, p.103).

London as personified and the theme of the speaking poetic voice addressing the city is then reprised when Whitney moves from the ‘essentials’, thus “confirming her intention to focus on the items most people need, or think they need, first” (Sandidge, p.605) to other aspects of both shopping and day-to-day life, again calling to the personification of London to witness her poem and therefore her will:

Now when thy folk are fed and clad  
with such as I have named,  
For dainty mouths and stomachs weak  
some junkets must be framed.  
Wherefore I 'pothecaries leave,  
with banquets in their shop;  
Physicians also for the sick,  
diseases for to stop (Whitney, vv.125-130).

The social concern is again evident in this part of the poem, where the author depicts London as a city where things such as diseases and quarrels happened frequently and, out of concern for her soon to be ex fellow citizens, she decides to leave them doctors and surgeons to cure and patch them up. There is however no hint of criticism in those verses, rather a matter-of-fact tone which acknowledges that those things did happen and that it was better to be prepared to counteract than not to have the proper people able to do it. Whitney then adds a new list of useful things such as soap or candles and declares to Londoners she leaves the shops of the city full with "I left you nothing scant" (Whitney, v.144), underlining once more her genuine concern with how the people lived and ate.

The social criticism however becomes more important the further detailed the description of London and its citizens gets, and more precisely from what the scholars call the second part of the poem, roughly around verse 150 where a description of the underworld of the city begins. This new part of the poem is nevertheless not clearly separated, both visually and stylistically from the previous one, and furthers the idea of London as a melting pot of classes. This is underlined by the fact that the poorest

boroughs were very close to the richest ones, and the juxtaposition of poor and rich was perfectly normal, with the rich described buying clothes just a couple of streets away from the poorest alleys. This mingling would however not go on eternally, as Marilyn Sandidge points out: “By the end of the sixteenth century, Londoners will have segregated themselves into rich and poor neighbourhoods, but Whitney’s text points to quite different classes of people and commodities intermingling in the heart of the city. This juxtaposition of wealth with poverty in her text makes the injustices described even more disturbing” (Sandidge, p.605). This part of criticism begins with the subtly mentioned notion that not everyone had the same amount of money and the same opportunities in life:

If they that keep what I you leave  
     ask money, when they sell it,  
 At Mint there is such store it is  
     unpossible to tell it.  
 At Steelyard store of wines there be,  
     your dullèd minds to glad,  
 And handsome men that must not wed  
     except they leave their trade.  
 They oft shall seek for proper girls  
     and some perhaps shall find (Whitney, vv.145-154).

It is important to notice that while Whitney mentions the stores of wine and the use the people made of them, she does not seem to apply a moralistic view to either this scene or this use, limiting herself to be an observer of the life of the city and not commenting

on it. The reference to the “handsome men” forbidden to get married is another social criticism of the way apprenticeships were dealt with in London, where apprentices were forbidden to marry before the end of their apprenticeship, which was normally of seven and a half years (Picard, p.229). Being also forbidden from frequenting dicing houses and brothels they however contributed largely to the business of prostitution or part-time prostitution, with which some young women tried to increase their meagre income (Sandidge, p.605). As Ingram puts it, “Referring to the formal indenture of apprenticeship to a master, she touches on one of the promises apprentices made in return for instruction, room and board. But the indenture agreement also included refraining from fornication, gambling, and the haunting of alehouses. Here the apprentices break the promise” (Ingram, p.3). Once again, when the topic comes to prostitutes, there is no harsh judgment from Whitney’s part on the underworld of London and she even demonstrates some notion of elementary hygiene necessary to lives such as those of the prostitutes leaving to them houses in which to take baths to prevent “Infection of the air” (Whitney, v.160). London therefore appears as a cluster of different people from every social class and with diametrically opposed needs, from frills and clothes to baths and food. The substantial difference in social lives is also made clear, since Whitney wishes for those who had menial works during the week to bathe and dress clean for Sunday (Whitney, vv.161-164). From this cluster of citizens, the personification of the city rises once again, acting as a mute and probably accusing observer, since the speaking voice makes clear once again that she has nothing and has taken nothing from the city:

If any other thing be lacked

in thee, I wish them look;

For there it is: I little brought,  
 but nothing from thee took (Whitney, vv.165-168).

Here again, the tone of the poet is not exactly angry towards London as lover, but has a mixture of sadness and resentment, underlining once more the ability of Isabella Whitney to convey London as an almost real lover as well as a city and a community of people without shifting from one version of London to the other too abruptly. From the assurance she has taken nothing that was not hers, the poet cleverly moves to the topic of prisons, another one of the possible social criticism: “For Whitney’s ‘legacy’ is portrayed alternately as a generous endowment and as a mere statement of what is and what will be. She offers both a celebration of abundance and an ironic compilation of social deprivation within London society, a documentation of poverty and plenty. This duality is particularly marked when the text shifts from its catalogue of the fashion and food of the city to its long description of the various prisons. There is a striking difference, for instance, in leaving food for the hungry and the criminal to the gallows” (Wall, p.53). The shifting of the topic is once again very smooth, as if it was the following of the conversation with London, and does not appear forced at all, using again the tones of the testament to further the notion that the poet means to leave gifts to various kinds of people:

Now for the people in thee left,  
 I have done as I may,  
 And that the poor, when I am gone,  
 have cause for me to pray,  
 I will to prisons portions leave,

what though but very small,  
 Yet that they may remember me  
 occasion be it shall (Whitney, vv.169-176).

London as city shifts now in the perception of the poem into the darker city home to various prisons and particularly, in Whitney's exposition, to a flawed system of justice. It has to be noticed that the poet does not leave to debtors money to pay their debts, as would seem logical, she leaves them the Counter, a notorious debtors' prison. Therefore, despite her own destitution, Whitney does not set herself as a saviour, however only on paper, for the paupers. She instead presents herself as someone who perpetrates the system already established: "In short, to the dispossessed, she leaves their raw, unmitigated fate. These mock bequests disclose a social world harshly indifferent to the desires of its individual citizens" (Wall, p.53). She does not challenge London on the very existence of the prisons, but merely on the running of those institutions. Her anger is also more directed to the friends of the prisoners, than to the prisoners themselves:

And such as friends will not them bail,  
 whose coin is very thin,  
 For them I leave a certain hole,  
 and little ease within (Whitney, vv.181-184).

It thus appears that, knowing well how one could fall in fortune, she expresses a sense of solidarity towards those in debt. The fact that the justice system of the city did not seem to work properly can be deduced from the fact that the inheritance Whitney leaves



to the prison of Newgate, which was specifically marked as a prison for ‘felons’ (Stow, p.65), is made of court hearings at least once a month. In this way the poet makes it clear that people were often imprisoned and had to wait several months for their trial (Picard, p.283). Moreover, the overcrowding of the prison is presented as a direct consequence of the few official trials possible and an imprecise “infection” is listed by Whitney as the direct result of the excess of prisoners in the prisons (Whitney, vv.187-188). The poet also mentions Holborn Hill, where the road to the place for executions at Tyburn ran, precisely as the road from where those condemned to death would be drawn up, and she somehow ironically leaves them a way to die quicker:

Well, yet to such I leave a nag  
 shall soon their sorrows cease,  
 For he shall either break their necks  
 or gallop from the preace (Whitney, vv.197-200).

The irony continues in the fact that she leaves the figure of “some papist old” (Whitney, v.205) to the prison of the Fleet, underlining the ridiculousness of imprisoning an old man only for his religious beliefs. In those verses London is therefore presented as ruthless towards those who do not follow its law, and certainly not kind towards those imprisoned, but except for the papist and the criticism towards the slow legal system, Whitney does not seem to challenge the city in its dispensing justice. A different tone is reserved to Ludgate, which according to Stow was “in the year 1382, John Northampton being mayor, by a common council in the Guildhall; by which it was ordained that all freemen of this city should, for debt, trespasses, accounts, and contempts, be imprisoned in Ludgate” (Stow, p.68). To this particular prison Whitney reserves some rare verses of

spite, disclosing the fact that to be able to remain in London she would have willingly gone into debt and therefore moved to Ludgate prison. She was however not allowed that, and thus the explanation as to why she leaves no inheritance to Ludgate as a whole appears quite bitter:

I did reserve that for myself,  
     if I my health possessed  
 And ever came in credit so  
     a debtor for to be,  
 When days of payment did approach,  
     I thither meant to flee,  
 To shroud myself amongst the rest  
     that choose to die in debt  
 Rather than any creditor  
     should money from them get (Whitney, vv.215-224).

In these verses the theme of the spurned lover comes back in a different form, in a way disguised by the declaration of willingness to be in debt. It is evident that the fact that the poet would rather live and die in Ludgate with no money at all than leave London can be compared to a lover who would rather die than leave her beloved. Personified London is therefore an underlying presence throughout the poem, even when it would be evident from the verses that the speaking voice is talking about buildings and real people and not addressing London directly. Moreover, as a spurned lover can in her turn spurn someone else and then realise it only later on, Whitney seems to understand she has treated Ludgate exactly like London has treated her, so she changes her mind and

leaves to the prison “some bankrupts to his share” (Whitney, v.228). As already mentioned, Whitney does not act as a sort of benevolent goddess to those in prison, she respects the law in the fact that she does not free them or even give them the means to free themselves.

Whitney’s roaming of the city shifts again from the sad world of the debtors’ prison to the free world and more specifically to presenting London as what the city was importantly becoming in those years: a high functioning marketplace. She moves to St. Paul’s Churchyard, where all the printers and booksellers had their shops and leaves them in a way a gift to sell all their books for good money, and particularly:

Amongst them all my printer must  
 have somewhat to his share;  
 I will my friends these books to buy  
 of him, with other ware (Whitney, vv.233-236).

This self-promotion contributes to reinforce the idea of London as a marketplace, but would not actually have been financially useful to the poet herself, since writers did not earn much from the selling of their books. In this case, however, London returns to be a positive city for Whitney: “But hers is not a London only bleared with trade and smeared with toil: in her vision of a supply of buyers for her printers’ books, for example, she paints a marketplace that works. That notion of a workable capitalist society, however, necessitates open credit channels. Whitney is original in her specific treatment of credit. Her critique, less than assailing a failed system, more urgently asks of London’s citizens a certain civic responsibility” (Ingram, p.12). The theme of money continues to be present in a section about marriage where the speaking voice leaves

doting partners for poor young people, underlining the fact that with a rich husband or wife they will not go hungry:

For maidens poor, I widowers rich  
do leave, that oft shall dote  
And by that means shall marry them,  
to set the girls afloat.  
And wealthy widows will I leave  
to help young gentlemen,  
Which when you have, in any case  
be courteous to them then (Whitney, vv.237-244).

It is probable that, because of her failed 'love affair' with London and more realistically because of a pragmatic approach to partnership and even more to money, the poet has the tendency to leave rich partners for poor young people instead of an inheritance along the lines of finding their true love. In the London of debtors' prisons and particularly of the beginning of the economic marketplace, it is the sensible, if less romantic, choice to make, and Whitney does not refrain from making it on behalf of her fellow citizens so they will not starve.

Contrary to Stow, Mulcaster and later Dekker, Whitney does not give much importance to the gates of the city, simply acknowledging their existence without naming them specifically but only as a series of nameless gates. It is quite probable she was able not to worry about naming the gates because she was well aware that the readers of her time would have known what she was meaning with no difficulties:

To every gate under the walls  
 that compass thee about  
 I fruitwives leave to entertain  
 such as come in and out (Whitney, vv.249-252).

The afflux of people through the gates and therefore out of the city for business and travel and, more importantly, into the city possibly as immigrants is only touched upon. It is however quite impossible to believe that Whitney, as someone who lived in London, would be unaware of the large amount of people coming into the city to find work, roughly 5600 each year from year 1560 on, according to Marilyn Sandidge (2009, p.600). The path the speaking voice walks after naming the gates is actually outside the walls, since she names Smithfield as the place where her parents lived and leaves it as inheritance a market of horses and oxen three times a week (Whitney, vv.257-258), the same market for which Smithfield was well-known. She then mentions Smithfield hospital and Bedlam, the lunatic asylum, to which she respectively leaves ill people and madmen to be hosted there indefinitely. This once again confirms the already mentioned theme of giving London not only what London does not need but what Whitney cannot give, since madmen and ill people are not anyone's property to give. This thus furthers the idea of the strong satire present in her mock testament: "her mock-testament provides London's asylum with the insane who are already patients there. The paradox is double: her bequest fills, with a bounty of sickness and insanity, a hospital already full; and the lunatics are not hers to give. Thus she bestows an impossible, impractical gift to a recipient – Bedlam – that in turn is implicated through her satiric offering" (Ingram, p.1). A new instance of civic concern and another confirmation of the fact Whitney did not ignore either the presence and the effect of immigration in the city is

the mention of Bridewell, which gives once again concreteness to a London turning into a quite peopled city and also into a somehow heartless city. Bridewell was a workhouse for the poor notorious for the old women who taught the young ones how to spin. To this particular place Whitney appropriately leaves matrons still able to see to those handiworks (Whitney, vv.265-269). This underlines Whitney most probably knowing how most of those arrested for vagrancy and then sent to poorhouses such as Bridewell were actually young people, the direct result of London's immigration (Ingram, pp.607-608). The social concern is very evident in this part of the poem, since she then names the Inns of Court, which along with the Inns of Chancery trained and housed lawyers and were still out of the walls of the city proper:

For such as cannot quiet be,  
     but strive for house or land,  
 At th' Inns of Court I lawyers leave  
     to take their case in hand.  
 And also leave I at each Inn  
     of Court of Chancery,  
 Of gentlemen a youthful rout  
     full of activity:  
 For whom I store of books have left  
     at each bookbinder's stall,  
 And part of all that London hath  
     to furnish them withal.  
 And where they are with study cloyed,  
     to recreate their mind,

Of tennis courts, of dancing schools,  
and fence they store shall find.  
And every Sunday at the least  
I leave, to make them sport,  
In divers places players that  
of wonders shall report (Whitney, vv.269-288).

This is a fairly long mention of a place for the poem's standards, and the young lawyers who lived outside the city also get quite an important part of inheritance. This is quite a particular case: London has been described as poor, and crowded, and cruel in the previous verses, while in the Inns just outside the walls the new generation of lawyers seem not to have any important worry and, in Whitney's testament, will even benefit of new books and everything the city has to offer, including recreational activities both physical such as fencing and intellectual such as theatrical performances. They actually inherit all this despite them not being in the city proper, and therefore a part of London, since the poem tends to consider the 'true' London as being within the walls. It has been argued that this could be a social critique to the difference of the living standard according to the class the people belonged to, since it is obvious that the young lawyers had money at their disposition and therefore could afford the recreational activities mentioned in the poem as well as the study of the law. But another interpretation, possibly based on the mention of the books that are left to the lawyers, deals with the fact that in giving people living outside the walls all the means to reach their goal of entering the tribunals as well-trained lawyers, the city itself could benefit from a new generation of men of law who would be more socially conscious than those present in Whitney's own time. They would therefore help the city to change the aura of cruelty

towards the poor and the destitute which was mentioned in the previous verses of the poem and experienced first-hand by the poet herself (Sandidge, p.610). With this particular passage, Whitney can be now seen as someone who would actually try and change London into a socially better city, if presented with the real possibility she gives herself with the fantasy of the lady bountiful freely distributing her mock inheritance. This can also obviously be reconnected to the duality between evicted citizen and spurned lover, with the evicted citizen trying, or at least trying to imagine, to change to city into one where living could be easier paralleled to the spurned lover trying to change the loved one into someone different, able to love her back.

In the last hundred verses of the poem, London as personified entity reappears more clearly, from the very beginning in which the author addresses the city directly again:

Now, London, have I (for thy sake),  
     within thee and without,  
 As comes into my memory,  
     dispersèd round about  
 Such needful things as they should have  
     here left now unto thee:  
 When I am gone, with conscience  
     let them dispersèd be (Whitney, vv.289-296).

The poem therefore returns to its main aim, that of being the last will of the speaking voice, and to the presence of London as direct interlocutor of the poet. It is important to notice as well the references to the element of the love letter to the city, since the distributing of the goods is reported to be for the city's own sake, and not, for instance,



out of the sheer goodness of the poet's heart. The element recalling the fact that London personified is a cruel lover is also present in the call for the city's conscience to be present when the time to distribute the inheritance will come. Another element of the close, and in a way not entirely healthy, love relationship between the poet and the city is expressed in the requests she makes for her own burial:

And let me have a shrouding sheet  
to cover me from shame,  
And in oblivion bury me  
and never more me name (Whitney, vv.301-304).

The now fictionally dead body of the poet is here treated by the poet herself as something to be ashamed of and to be forgotten, therefore prompting a complete erasure of the self and forgetfulness on the part of the lover and city. The figure of the spurned lover now comes to its climax, erasing its very existence outside the relationship and dying and asking to be forgotten precisely because the loved one has never felt the same. In a similar way, the evicted citizen created by Whitney expresses the will to die and be buried and completely forgotten rather than having to leave the city to which, despite the flaws several times described in the poem, she feels undeniably and unbreakably bound. This denigration of the self and of the self-worth is even furthered by the following verses, in which the speaking voice asks London not to spend money on ceremonies or feasts for her burial, since the money would be lost on such a thing (Whitney, vv.305-308), again erasing every important thing both of the lover and of the citizen. The love letter continues with the explanation of the reason why the poet has chosen London as executor of her testament, prompting a direct and very simple

declaration of love, followed by some humble advice and the first mention of other personified allegories in the whole poem:

I make thee sole executor, because  
 I loved thee best.  
 And thee I put in trust to give  
 the goods unto the rest.  
 Because thou shalt a helper need  
 in this so great a charge,  
 I wish Good Fortune be thy guide, lest  
 thou shouldst run at large.  
 The happy days and quiet times  
 they both her servants be,  
 Which well will serve to fetch and bring  
 such things as need to thee.  
 Wherefore (good London) not refuse  
 for helper her to take:  
 Thus being weak and weary both,  
 an end here will I make (Whitney, vv.313-329).

The mention of Good Fortune and her servants, to whom the poet wants to recommend London so that it will be helped with the distribution of the inheritance, can also be read as an expression of distrust. The speaking voice, despite the declaration of love some verses above, does not trust London completely to be honest and give the right inheritance to the right people. She therefore asks for the help of the allegorical figures

to make sure the people and places she named will actually receive what she left them. The bitterness of being forced to leave, or in the version of the love poem the one of being betrayed by a loved one, is therefore still present and resurges very civically in the moment the wellbeing of the speaking voice is no more important, but that of her fellow citizens still is and could be improved by her inheritance. The appellative of “good London” in brackets can thus be interpreted not only as one of the last times the poet talks to her beloved but also as one of her last examples of irony, meaning that she well knows that London is not “good” and giving to the idea of the allegorical figures an appearance of guards destined to control the city. The alleged bitterness towards London does however not last long. The author proceeds, as real testaments were prone to do, in telling her farewell to the people she knew and dispensing both words of comfort for London to tell those who will sincerely miss her to “cease/ my absence for to moan” (Whitney, vv.335-336) and more bitterly:

And tell them further, if they would  
     my presence still have had,  
 They should have sought to mend my luck,  
     which ever was too bad (Whitney, vv.338-339).

London here acquires a new status, given to the city by the poet, of a messenger from the dead author to those friends who did not help her when she was in need. London can be seen as swiftly moving, in the last verses of the poem, from true love to unhealthy love, to untrustworthy former lover to finally avenging messenger, who will carry to some people what is very short of a curse from a dead one. From this cluster of emotions, however, the one which prevails on all is still love. This expression of love

can be seen very clearly in the last verses directly addressed to London, a tender farewell and a benediction, as would have been suitable for the dying wife the testament was inspired from, and a last declaration of the fact that, despite everything the city has done either to the poet or other citizens, the speaking voice still loves London:

So fare thou well a thousand times,  
     God shield thee from thy foe,  
 And still make thee victorious  
     of those that seek thy woe.  
 And though I am persuade that I  
     shall never more thee see,  
 Yet to the last I shall not cease  
     to wish much good to thee (Whitney, vv.341-348).

As it is probable that the benediction was inspired from the classical ones penned in testaments and directed to the dying person's loved ones, the one directed by the author to London once again includes perfectly the two faces of the city which have been more presented in the poem. The personified version is the one to which the farewell proper is dedicated. The poet here appears as convinced that she still loves her London and will never stop wishing the city well. There is however a strong presence of London as city and capital of a kingdom in the benediction, namely the part in which the poet wishes the city to always be victorious of her foes, a classical benediction for a city.

The very last part of the poem still draws heavily on the mock testament tradition, since Whitney dutifully writes the date she penned her will as the twentieth of October

1573 and, as a legal document would require, also records the presence of her witnesses in an ironical turn typical of the mock testament tradition:

In witness of the standers-by,  
 whose names if you will have,  
 Paper, Pen, and Standish were (Whitney, vv.355-357).

She finally concludes her three hundred and sixty-four verses poem, exactly one verse short of the number of days in a year, with a plea to Time to reveal her will in haste before her family start to quarrel over her property. The two final verses are still inspired by what would have been a proper end to a real dying will:

So finally I make an end,  
 No longer can I tarry (Whitney, vv.363-364).

The description of London in its various versions in Isabella Whitney's *Wyll and Testament* is, as noted, a much more complete one than those analysed so far. London appears in various roles, not only as personified city or city made of people, but also as pleasant presence and cruel personality. Even if the poet seems, because of a civil sense and also because of a personal feeling, to draw more on the cruel persona of London, in the end she admits herself through the last verses that she would rather lose everything, including her name which is explicitly to be forgotten, than leave the city. More importantly she underlines the fact that, despite everything London has done to her, she still loves it, both as a personified entity and as a city. London is therefore presented in a

very much realistic way, with both good and bad sides, as Marilyn Sandidge writes: “Ultimately, Whitney is an intelligent middle-class woman who, during Queen Elizabeth’s reign, can walk freely throughout the city of London, observing the range of interactions in its public spaces, wary but not afraid, ambivalent about parts of the city’s makeup, but not a prophet of future doom. Her insights into the human character, whether it be about the ruffians who quarrel for no reason or the Saturday bathers who want to look good in church on Sunday, give us a more balanced view of early-modern London than either the scripted acclamations of praise found in the lord mayors’ pageants or the scathing sermons and popular pamphlet that demonized the city” (Sandidge, p.612).

In this work, London obtains a persona none of the Londons presented in the other works analysed so far had: the city acquires in the *Wyll* all the charm, sometimes good sometimes maybe even quite devilish, of the lover, the free, cruel lover who has people dying for him and still loving him for it. Whitney manages to give the city a fully-formed role in a love story without even having to tell exactly what happened. She only keeps the point of view of the spurned one in the relationship, the person who probably wishes she could get rid of London and everything the city and lover means to her but cannot, and while dying still pens a desperate and loving will for her loved one. With Whitney, London gets the first role in what is very short of a tragedy about greed, poverty, justice, social criticism and most of all cruel and desperate love.

## 4. The Gendering of London

### 4.1 Lawrence Manley and the Importance of London in the Imagination

With its status of capital, London was bound to become a prominent presence not only in the political and social life of the kingdom but also in the literary one. Its growing economic importance was therefore paralleled by the centrality it acquired in various forms of literature. As Lawrence Manley points out in his study *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, “London came into focus gradually in early Tudor literature”<sup>24</sup>. The city was acquiring a series of different aspects and thus in a way different ‘personalities’ which would then be exploited in written texts of various genres.

As seen in the texts presented in this dissertation, the various versions of the city were used as themes of poems, plays, descriptions and political and social pamphlets, and each author focused on one or in some cases many of them. While London as a city was not actually the largest in Europe, Manley notes that the approach people and consequently authors had to London was quite different, particularly because of the rise of its industrialisation. He points out that the citizens of, for instance, Madrid and Naples were mere spectators of industrialisation, while those of London were implicated in the process and started to view, and in some cases to describe, their capital as an engine of growth (Manley, p.11). This evident shift in the perception of the city affected literary texts as well, with a substantial difference between those written in the

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<sup>24</sup> Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.125. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

London of the Elizabethan age, in which the primary focus was the Queen and religion, and those written after 1620, where the theme of emerging metropolitanism begins to appear (Manley, p.12).

Manley notes that in the Tudor times literature started to be a representation of the expanding urban settlement and at the same time an instrument of that same process (Manley, p.126). In some of the works presented in this study, London can be perceived as the background, though essential, to the stories and the characters the authors want to write and show to their public. Moreover, with the insertion of a social dimension in the stories when writing about Elizabethan underworld characters, the authors also give a social fulfilment to literature in general, and London writings in particular. These texts serve the purpose of raising a social conscience in the public of the time and of presenting a new kind of literature: literature as socially functional and as a means of reproducing the socio-economic relationships in the city which were essential to urbanisation (Manley, p.127). They also prove the new approach to London as a city, intertwining the fictional characters with the real background and more importantly with the real issues and lives which were led in those times by Londoners of different classes and extractions. The presence, for instance, of merchants in the writings underlines the growing importance of London as a rising economic power, and highlights the fact that “London and the emergent state were bound in symbiosis” (Manley, p.128) . London in literature therefore becomes a demonstration on the one hand of the power of industrialisation, immigration, and good ruling particularly in the times of Elizabeth I. On the other hand, the city is used as an example of receptacle of people and lifestyles which are frowned upon. These are the same problems signalled in social pamphlets as the consequence of the dismal state of the welfare, or as the result of the heavy immigration Manley writes London was exposed to from the 1560s, stating that in 1590



one out of eight Englishmen was a Londoner (Manley, p.126). The focus on a new generation of Londoners who had immigrated to the city was also importantly based on the law declaring that a person who had officially lived in London for a year and a day could not be forcibly removed anymore. This had as consequence the fact that other towns in England progressively grew emptier and that even King James I noticed the flux of immigration to the capital and was reported in 1616 to have said “With time, England will onely be London, and the whole country be left waste” (Manley, p.133).

The elitism of the city also appears in literature, not only with the descriptions of the Royal Entries, since monarchs were an incontestable elite, but also with the inclusion in literature of the ‘un-elites’ such as thieves and prostitutes. Manley underlines this elitism, noting that London as a community was deeply connected to its citizens: “In London itself, the pursuit of status, honor, and authority by citizens was sustained by an elaborate *cursus honorum*, in which ceremonies, feasts, regalia, and oathtakings distinguished each degree and achievement in guild and civic life. The solidarity and privilege of the elite was enhanced, even as the expanding mass of artisans and laborers was indoctrinated, when the exemplary benefactions of prosperous Londoners were celebrated in ballads, sermons and epitaphs, or when the dignity of the City’s leaders was publicized in works” (Manley, p.129). He seems however to forget that, while the upper classes and the military achievements were in fact celebrated in the city squares by people singing ballads about them, the underworld also had its place in this kind of popular celebrations, since the ballads about drunkards and prostitutes were equally present.

The prominent presence of London in the imagination of its citizens, and probably also in that of the people living away from the capital, was also built around the mythical idea of the creation of the city, snubbed by Stow with his notorious rebuke

“antiquity is pardonable” (Stow, p.33), but loved by its citizens. Pageants about the mythical foundation of London, or rather Troynovant, by Brutus were represented along with new pageants appealing to popular myths of the time, particularly those eulogising London’s merchant-heroes, such as the one created by the Fishmongers for the celebrations for a mayoral inauguration which glorified the stabbing of a rebel by an earlier Fishmonger mayor (Manley, p.129). The sense of community which was meant to be instilled in the population by the pageants became however less and less communal and quickly turned out to be subjected to the social differences which were acquiring importance in the city. Manley notes that “As London came to play an increasingly important role in the national economy and polity, communal identification developed side-by-side with social differentiation, so that community in the sense of people of different status doing things together was eroded even when mythology and pageantry became more prominent” (Manley, p.130). The revival pageants and the tendency to elitism created a quite complex neofeudal situation. In this context, writings were submitted to a new framework of interpretation which tried to accommodate the industrial and material growth of London and the potentially divergent interests of the citizens. At the same time it also contributed to pose London as a crucial symbol in what was a process of national self-definition (Manley, p.131). It was in this complex context that the new fictions of urban settlement were elaborated.

Most of the texts analysed in this dissertation present London as personified, and all of these save one present it in the form of a woman. The female gender of the city is justified by the fact that it was the classical personification pattern: cities, nations and ships were, and still are, all considered female. This tendency could be explained by the fact that, the ruling class being completely male-centred, even when there was such an exception as a Queen being on the throne of England, the self dubbed protectors of the

cities and later of the whole nation would probably be more willing to fight their enemies if the idea of their city was in the form of a possibly beautiful woman. Manley goes even further in this explanation, pointing out that “Although the models for description came from different sources – from Aristotelian ideas adapted to the needs of statecraft, from Ramist dialectic and from ancient rhetoric – they reinforced each other in their tendency to harmonize the facts of urban culture with the laws of nature. This naturalization of cultural fact contributed, furthermore, to the procedure of personifying the city as feminine, as a symbolically submissive intermediary between nature and the higher claims of political culture, between the bourgeois community and the neofeudal state” (Manley, p.133). The representation of the city as female then shifts from the classical trope of men fighting to defend a woman to the idea, rooted in several customs and laws, of the woman being submitted physically and legally to the man. This was underlined during the Renaissance by the previously mentioned laws which prevented wives from penning a testament of their own and consequently barred them both from possessing any kind of private property and bestowing it to whoever they wanted upon their death. A city which was female was thus submitted to its male government exactly as a wife was submitted to her husband. Therefore, the idea of internal rebellion, which was considered to be more masculine than feminine at the time, was eliminated from the concerns the said government had: “The attribution of a feminine persona to the city diminished these concerns ideologically, providing not only a gender-based model of obedient submission but also a transhistorical identity which absorbed and suppressed the spatial divisions and discontinuities which manifested the city’s historical dynamism” (Manley, p.134). Consequently, according to Manley, the personification of a city in general and of London in this specific case as female contributed to instil in the men governing and possibly in the soldiers the sense of

fighting, whether on the field or by the means of laws and treaties, for a fragile woman who needed their presence and protection and who, like a well-behaved wife of the time, would never dream of rebelling against their authority or their wishes.

The various representations of London in the texts analysed here however do not always present only one attitude, specifically that of the submitted woman. In many instances they have a faceted ‘personality’. The personification of London can therefore be seen as a collection of attitudes and narrative contributing to form a unity to which tradition gives the form of a woman: “By subordinating to a transhistorical, transindividual identity the viewpoint of observers historically situated in space and time, and by stretching this identity over millennia, the personification of London unified in one body the city’s discontinuous spaces and naturalized the erratic development of its culture” (Manley, p.135).

While personifying a city as female gives it the more familiar and in a way reassuring traits of human nature, it also, as has already been pointed out, subjects the city to the ideology of gender and its consequences. The tradition indicating women as being closer to nature also offers an explanation of the choice of gender for cities, which according to Sherry B. Ortner are personified as female because culture “recognizes that women are active participants in its special processes, but at the same time sees them rooted in, as having more direct affinity with, nature”<sup>25</sup>. The growing wealth created by the city in the form of its merchants, artisans and other citizens thus acquires the status of the progeny of the personified city, rationalising the birth of prosperity in a biological key based on the role of women in reproduction (Manley, p.142). But even in this perspective, the role of the city as a woman was subjected to the male presence: “the

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<sup>25</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 1974), p.73. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

subjection of feminine to masculine in family life could justify the subordination of domestic loyalties to the higher claims of public life. In the case of England, the feminine gender of London placed implicit limits on the power of the city in relation to other groups and communities in the kingdom. By analogy to the rule of exogamous marriage, the subordination of the London commune to the neofeudal state prevented it from being seen as a self-sufficient, closed community and stressed its bonds of alliance – and thus loyalties – to the whole kingdom” (Manley, p.142).

The subjection of the city personified as female to the male government and more specifically to the male king is also evident with the naming of the city itself: “By the logic of personification, the changes in the city’s name reflected her loyal submission to a series of royal masters” (Manley, p.143). According to the already mentioned myths about the origins of London, the first name of the city was Troynovant, meaning ‘New Troy’, and was given to it by the descendant of Æneas who founded it. This act of creating and naming reinforces the idea that the city is subjected to her creator precisely by the means of her name, which in this specific case is not even an original name but a new version of another city’s name. London as Troynovant is therefore stripped not only of the independence a new city was bound to have, but also of a ‘real’ beginning. Troynovant is not a new city, but a new version of Troy, destined by the way of its name to right the wrongs done by and done to its namesake. This mythological naming is justified by the fact that Brutus, as the direct descendant of Æneas, would obviously try to recreate the glorious city which was burnt down, and consequently try to recreate its power. Moreover, the naming of a city implied a series of consequences in the imagination, which “ties the name together with the founder, and there is more involved here than the sanction of antiquity, for the notion of a founder implied that the city was not the product of organic growth but the result of a single decisive act performed on

one day. Through the foundation ritual, in theory, a sacred geometry was laid out at the moment of the city's foundation and fixed its identity for all time" (Manley, pp.143-144). The city named and created by a single person therefore implied a destiny fixed either by the namesake, in the case of Troynovant, or by the naming person himself in the case of London as the name given to the city by King Lud, since a city named after a king could not but be glorious.

The representation of the city as a mother also reinforces the idea of community between its citizens, since the very fact of them being children of the same city makes them brothers, another way of trying to avoid internal quarrels and most importantly riots. As Manley puts it, "In many descriptions the treatment of the city's offspring extends the role of gender to include the nurturing of an elite whose loyalties ultimately reach out beyond the city" (Manley, p.154). Therefore, not only were the citizens treated as brothers for internal peace purposes, but the elitism of the urban society contributed to create a feeling of superiority of Londoners compared to citizens of other cities and, London being the capital, a well welcomed tendency to protect not only London but the whole country from enemies. The identity of the city as female is furthered by the various styles of personification she undergoes in different texts: a daughter to kings, a mother to its citizens and the archetype of the prostitute. The last one appears mainly in social pamphlets, justifying the bad conditions of life and the failure of the welfare by the tendency of the city not to follow the rules. It is important to point out that the negative image of the city is linked to an image of sexual freedom: "Insofar as it is a history of gender-typing, the history of personification is also a history of sexual ambivalence, and the Book of Revelation's contrast between Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, and Rome, the whore of Babylon, attests" (Manley, p.142). The dual archetype of nymph and harlot is even doubled by the archetype which reverses the one

in which the city has a motherly attitude by pointing out the monstrosities the personification is capable of. In the case of London, these perfectly counterbalance her motherly gestures: the presence of hospitals and of a system which takes care of the orphans is reversed by the image of the plague and the accusation that the city brought it on herself with her bad companies. From this dual representation stems the name-calling the city is subjected to: “Such images drew upon traditional antifeminist archetypes, and in many respects they formed but the ideological obverse to the heroic matron of encomiastic description. The more potent sense of monstrosity lay not, however, in the devouring ogress of satire – who was an *alter-ego* of the civilizing mother – but in the completely dehumanized metropolis, the polymorphic creation threatening its human creators” (Manley, pp.142-143). This ambivalence of the city is possibly one of the main reasons why the personification of London is present in several works: while a city whose only characteristic is that of being beautiful and dutiful, therefore of fitting the archetype of the nymph or bride, would be of little literary and social interest, the duality of London makes it an interesting topic and character to write about.

#### **4.2 Applied Personifications**

In Lawrence Manley’s approach, a significant difference between Elizabethan and later representation of London is underlined. In the specific case of the texts analysed in this study, this is evident in the substantially different approach people like Richard Mulcaster and Ben Jonson had to the depiction of London. The style and purposes of

the texts they wrote are diametrically opposed, with on one hand a description of a Royal Entry destined sooner or later to be read by the Queen herself, and on the other hand a play written to make Londoners laugh at themselves. But as already noted, Mulcaster's version of London is in a way a false one, a description of the city in a specific and very peculiar moment, and a possible way of propaganda. Some studies have hinted at the possibility of Elizabeth herself having provided for the pageants to be staged in her honour, and maybe even chosen their contents, thus giving an entirely different aspect to Mulcaster's emphasis on the Queen's perfection and especially on her spontaneity during the procession (Leahy, p.1). London therefore does not only appear as an unrealistically perfect and decorated version of itself in this account, but the very description of the city as such is used to convey to all those who could not attend the pageants and to future generations a sense of fairy-tale-like ensemble of city, citizens and sovereign coming together on a day where nothing could go wrong. It is interesting to underline that even the Queen's own parents are represented together on the stage of one of the pageants, despite the gruesome end to their marriage and the consequent accusations in later years of Elizabeth herself being an illegitimate child. It is impossible to even try and believe that no one in the adoring crowds described by Richard Mulcaster remembered those times and Elizabeth's own imprisonment in the same Tower from which the procession started. Even more, her own mother had followed the exact same path through London from the Tower to Westminster when she was crowned Queen, and the Tower was later the place where she was imprisoned and beheaded. The London represented in this document is therefore not only a stage for the representations both of the pageants and of the Royal Entry as a whole; it is also an imaginary London, described for the sake of propaganda as a perfect, almost caricatured version of the city as it really was.



On the contrary, the London portrayed years later in Ben Jonson's play *Bartholomew Fair* appears much more realistic. As already mentioned, Jonson was a Londoner, a part of the writing 'un-elite' as it was perceived at the time, which was starting to express itself in texts regarding the very city in which they had been born, a contrast with several important authors who had moved to the capital in later life, such as William Shakespeare. It is true that the genre of the two texts examined in this passage are different, from an account whose purpose expressly was that of describing a procession and several pageants to a play which has the aim not of describing a situation, or even a city, but which shows it directly to the spectator, following the 'show, do not tell' principle of plays. Contrary to Manley's idea of London as a representation of the expanding urban settlement (Manley, p.126), the London represented in Jonson's play draws a picture of the people it was common to meet in the streets of the city. London is certainly in this case an expression of the expansion of the city, presenting in the play various characters belonging to the lower class and a couple of characters such as the Justice and the Puritan to represent the nobler and the viler aspects of the city, respectively. Jonson's realistic presentation of London however does not indicate a more rational approach to the presence of the city in his works. As Martin Butler notes, Jonson constantly referred back to London in his works and also when travelling: "while away from the city, his imagination harked back to it. In Scotland, he dubbed Edinburgh 'Britain's other eye', implying that England's capital was eye number one" (Butler, p.15). Jonson was actually one of the few authors to acquire city property, in Blackfriars precisely, and was reported to be seen at the Devil's Tavern near Temple Bar, possibly because of the proximity to the theatres he worked in and to the court (Butler, p.16). London was therefore a heavy presence in Jonson's personal and professional life, and it was thus normal that this presence would seep into his

writing. It is interesting to notice that Jonson does write extensively about London but maintains the city as a stage for his characters, and does not represent it as a personification, even if he did write a personification of the river Thames in his first masque *The Coronation Triumph*, written in honour of the coronation on King James I.

As opposed to Jonson's presentation of the city only as a setting, two of the texts analysed in this dissertation deal not only with London as a city of buildings and people, but also, more specifically, with London reimagined as a person to whom the works are directly addressed. In Isabella Whitney's *Wyll and Testament* London is personified as a cruel lover and as the executor of the author's testament. In Thomas Dekker's *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* the city is personified more like a classical allegorical figure the author tries to warn about the seven sins lurking in its streets.

In Whitney's poem the gender of the personification of London is never specified. It could be assumed to be male from the simple fact that the speaking voice is female and has a romantic relationship with the city itself, but since the poem is addressed to the city the only pronouns referring to London are 'thee' and 'thou'. Inversely, Dekker's London is openly and with no possible doubt personified as female, thus reprising the classical personification pattern of cities. As mentioned above, Lawrence Manley ascribes the gendering of the city as female to the 'natural' condition of submission a woman of the time was in, thus making London an obedient wife to her male-centred government and erasing the possible problem of internal rebellion. But it is interesting to notice that the personification of London created by Thomas Dekker could not be more different from the London depicted by Lawrence Manley's theory. There is nothing, in this particular personification of London, of the helpless girl or woman who needs the protection of men. Dekker's London appears as a fiercely independent woman, perfectly able to wield weapons herself as is evident from the fact that Dekker,

in the concluding chapter of *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*, urges her to take up her weapons and fight the Sins which lurk in the city and drive them away (Dekker, p.79). Dekker's London also definitely has no attitudes of those which were proper to a modest wife. She is besides never named as married to any of the city's major male personalities, not even James I who is instead briefly referred to as London's "loving Father that adopted thee to be his owne" (Dekker, p.11). Moreover, her morals are not at all what was expected from women, married or unmarried, at the time: she is reported to sleep around quite often and specifically with the personifications of Pride and Usury, not with personifications of positive qualities. The only instance of helplessness Dekker's London shows is when Elizabeth I dies, when the city is portrayed as shocked by the news and fearful of the future (Dekker, p.11), but even then the attitude the city has does not seem to stem from a weak personality or from the fact that she is female, but from a genuine love for her Queen, an attitude which would certainly have spoken to many of Elizabeth's subjects at the time of her death. As already analysed, Dekker's London is not a completely positive figure, but it is substantially different from the image Manley's theory creates both of the city and of the men in the city, since Dekker himself while addressing London directly does not act as a protector of the city in virtue of his being a man, but instead praises and scolds London almost as if the two of them were on the same terms, socially and sexually.

In Whitney's poem, the attitude attributed by Manley both to the city and to the government is reversed if the assumption is made that since the author is a woman the personification of London must be a male. As a man, London does certainly not need the protection of a woman, even though fictional. From the alleged attitude of submission, London turns into the dominant one in the relationship, and specifically into the cruel lover who has broken the poet's heart. In this work, London is addressed

in the testament, but never actively present as a personification in the poem, so we see it only through the eyes or the memories of the speaking voice. As opposed to Dekker's later warrior, Whitney's London is a domestic figure in the sense that the city is here the protagonist of a badly ended love story, possibly a marriage because of its role as executor of the testament, normally reserved to the husband. Still, even in the hypothesis of it being female in this work as well, the city does not conform to Manley's ideas of submission. If Whitney's London was indeed personified as a woman, she would still retain a notable independence from both the author herself and everyone else, particularly underlined by the fact that in one of the last lines of the poem the author recommends the personifications of Good Fortune and her servants 'happy days' and 'quiet times' to make sure the city will respect her last wishes (Whitney, vv.319-324). This independence of the city actually reflects the independence its citizens, and consequently the authors living there, had or felt they had, drawing on the status of capital of their city. It also mirrors, both in Dekker's and Whitney's works, the various attitudes, sometimes positive and other times definitely negative of the citizens of London: the various Sins Dekker describes London being prone to submit to are obviously a summary of the bad attitudes Dekker noticed in his fellow citizens.

Manley also links the submission of a city to a king by the means of naming. This is explicitly present in a work by Thomas Dekker entitled *The Dead Tearme*. This text is constructed in the form of a dialogue between the personifications of Westminster and London, and the author gives London herself the power of speech through which she dutifully explains the origins of her first mythological name: "Kno[w] the[e] (because Time who alters all things, may perhaps hereafter as hee hath done already, give me some other new upstart name) that Brute from whom I took my byrth, after he had brought me (as thou seest to this day I abide) close to the Ryver of Thames, did there

bestow a Name on me, & called me Troynovant, or Trinovant, and sometimes Trinobant, to revive (in me) the memory of that Citty, which was turned into Cinders, and that for all the spight of those Gods who hated it, there should be a new Troy, which was my selfe”<sup>26</sup>. The presence of this myth in popular culture in Stow’s time was also a way of creating a national, or at least civic sense of pride in Londoners, who were by association led to believe that London would have a glorious future.

The second naming of London has again a mythological connotation and still follows the trope of the name given to the city by a king. In this case, the name ‘London’ is imagined coming from the name of King Lud, as Stow reports from Monmouth, with the king naming the city ‘Caire-Lud’ which meant ‘Lud’s Town’, from which name the modern ‘London’ was derived (Stow, p.33). The city is therefore placed into the king’s submission like an obedient daughter, as Thomas Dekker writes: “good daughter to King Lud, who gave her her name” (Dekker, p.75). The dynamics are similar to those of the naming of Troynovant, with the naming figure being an authoritative male one who poses as the city’s ‘father’ thus making implicit the obedience the city as personified and consequently the obedience its citizens were bound to pledge to their king. The personified London of *The Dead Tearme* however explains her change of name in a different way, connecting it to the change of surname women underwent when married: “Lud Challenging me as his owne, tooke away none of my dignities, but as women married to great persons, loose their old names, so did I mine being wedded to that king, and (after him selfe) was crowned with the Title of Laire-Lud, that is to say, the Citty of Lud” (Dekker, pp.73-74). Dekker’s London explicitly makes King Lud the creator of her glory and of her status as a capital in the

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Dekker, “The Dead Tearme” in *The Non-dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Volume IV, ed. by Alexander B. Grosart (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), p.73. All further references to this text are from this edition and are given parenthetically in the dissertation.

form of a crown of towers in *The Dead Tearme* by telling of her ‘infancy’ as a city: “In my Infant-rising was I but of base and meane estimation amongst other Citties, and was scarcelie knowne for all I was the Daughter of a king. But Ludde lifted mee uppe to high honours and great advauncementes; for hee set a Coronet of Towers upon my heade: and although it were not beautifull for Ornament, yet made he for me a Gyrdle, strong for defence; which being made of Turffe and other such stuffe, trenched rounde about, served in the nature of a Wall or Rampyre, to keepe and defend off the assaulting enemies” (Dekker, p.74). The city personified as female therefore has as little to say about her destiny as the women of the Renaissance. The trope of London as daughter of kings is also reprised by Dekker in *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London*, when he underlines the orphaned condition London was submitted to when Elizabeth I died, implying the Queen was a motherly figure for the personified city: “even then wert thou left full of teares, and becamst an Orphan” (Dekker, p.11). Though in this case, specifically because of the gender of the monarch, the relationship between the Queen and the city looks less patronising and the city seems to feel a genuine attachment to Elizabeth, the mention of James I adopting London as his own daughter upon his coronation re-establishes the original dynamic of the city subjected to her king, even if Dekker makes no mention of London’s feelings about the new king.

If London is represented and theorised as the daughter of its kings, another important archetype which appeared mainly in Dekker’s text represents the city as mother of its own citizens. This is a logical image, in which the city, mostly because of the opportunities given to its citizens such as hospitals or work appeared as a benevolent and caring mother, as Dekker writes addressing the personification of London: “thou Mother of so many people” (Dekker, p.14). In *The Deadly Tearme*, London takes on this motherly nature when complaining about the ‘sickness’, namely the plague, which

took away her children: “Shee (with her Ill Company) infecteth my Sonnes and Daughters, and leades them dayily into such daungers, that (in hundreds at a time) doe they souse theyr lives” (Dekker, p.77). The image of the mother is contrasted by the image of the city as a harlot, as is the case with Dekker’s London in *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* when she is mentioned as sleeping around with other personifications. This reinforces the male-centric view of the city, since the moment the personified city is doing something of her own volition, such as having a relationship, the consequences on the citizens and therefore on the whole kingdom are almost always tragic. Even Dekker, who presents a vision of London as independent and able to take up arms on her own, consciously or unconsciously follows this line of thinking: “Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest: for thou art attir’d like a Bride, drawing all that looke upon thee to be in love with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes” (Dekker, pp.10-11). In this case, the bad behaviour of the city, who is described as willingly sleeping with a number of personifications of sins and often not caring enough about her citizens is made even worse by the appearance of yet another gendered trope: reputation. Since the reputation of a woman of the Renaissance was her primary value and if lost could never be retrieved, with bad consequences for the woman’s personal life, the reputation of a city followed basically the same guidelines. Dekker shames London with the same accusation which would have shamed a woman, namely calling her a harlot, and uses the same device to try and make her feel ashamed, that of the endangered reputation. Instead of the scorn of neighbours and family, as a woman would have, London has the scorn of whole nations: “thou suddenly becamst the by-talke of neighbors, the scorne and contempt of Nations” (Dekker, p.12). This double and opposed imagery turns the polished and beautiful image of the personified city into something darker, filthier and less trustworthy. In a

similar fashion, the luminous representation of London as a warrior is undermined in Dekker's *The Seven Deadly Sinnes of London* by the fact that the city never intervenes actively against the personified Sins who walk through her gates. This is an idleness the author ascribes to the fact that the city is indulging herself in the aforementioned bad companies and cares more about her own pleasure than about her citizens' safety. The archetype Manley presents as the opposition of 'civilising mother' and 'dehumanised metropolis', or the opposition between the nymph figure and the harlot one are very explicit in Dekker, since his London is at the same time a mighty matron and mother and a woman of lowly interests and guilty passions. However, various versions of London presented in this dissertation fit this duality.

Stow notoriously describes the city only in a historical and geographical way, but the two archetypes can however be seen in the fact that he easily moves from positive descriptions of rich buildings and respected citizens to the social criticism explicitly present in his account of the brothels of the South Bank and of the people both inhabiting and visiting them. In these descriptions, however realistic, the archetype of the noble and wealthy matron is undoubtedly present in the richest parts of the city, whereas its opposite of the harlot is to be found quite literally in the whorehouses. The monstrosity of the city is not to be found here in its personification, given the realistic tone of the *Survey*, but in the methodical ward by ward description of a city which was expanding and had changed radically in a few decades, not only because of the massive immigration and of the beginning of its raise as merchant city, but also because of the closing down of the convents and their reconversion into storehouses. Despite the fact that is no personification of London in the *Survey* Manley notes that "By focusing on London's recent history, and especially on the changes in his own lifetime, Stow appropriated to himself the privileged human status that had once belonged to the



personified city, and the result was to defamiliarize, depersonalize the latter. To take the measure of the city from the individual human perspective was implicitly to violate the rubric of personification, where the metaphoric scale of time was the millennial life-span of the city” (Manley, p.163).

The duality of the mother and the monster is completely erased in Mulcaster, since the city had to mirror both the magnificence of the royal pageants and the virtuosity of the new Queen. Even the only hint at the existence of another kind of London, the London of the poor, is presented to Elizabeth by children as a plea to her good heartedness and charity. In this way, underlining the fact that the children of the hospital are well taken care of, London still appears as a mother-like figure for the poor and the orphans. If one parallels London and the personification of Truth in one of the royal pageants, it becomes even more clear that the city in Mulcaster’s description could not have any kind of evil traits, a political stance which easily underlines the propagandistic tones of the Royal Entry account.

A completely different circumstance is London’s condition in Whitney’s *Wyll and Testament*. If the personification of the city in the poem is assumed to be a male, the duality and the other archetypes so far listed immediately lose their meaning. A male-identified city could obviously never be a ‘mother’ to its citizens, but even in the hypothesis of changing the gender assigned to the archetype, the implications of a city being a ‘father’ are quite different. Whereas a city as mother is supposed to be caring and loving, a city as father would be protective and, especially considering the Renaissance era, stronger. A male city would thus be expected to fight battles on his own, and therefore would not need the presence of soldiers or of a king to be protected. Because of the classical traits attributed to male figures, a male London would completely change the perception citizens and authors would have of their city. It is

easier to imagine a warrior-like personification of London sitting by the king as his equal, or even giving advice to the king and the government in virtue of the fact that he is centuries old and therefore supposedly wiser than them, than being in the background while they decide how to protect the country.

Conversely, while the negative archetype of the harlot works for a female London because of the notion that everything sexual connected to a female figure is generally branded as bad, the shift in the gender of the city would render the whole archetype inexistent. While the male version of the archetype of mother implies a change in its meaning and thus in the attitudes the city would have, there is simply no reversal of the archetype of the harlot. This is strictly connected to the largely misogynistic view that a high amount of sexual partners makes a man a 'player' while the same amount makes a woman a 'slut'. In this perspective, a male version of London would not sleep with several Sins, but would probably have as partners other personified cities or even nations depending on the political situation of the time, and would therefore submit them with the allegorical sexual act standing for a war or an invasion.

As already pointed out, the personification of London in Whitney does not act independently, but is simply addressed to and reported by the speaking voice. The indifference of the city towards both the author and the destitute which are depicted as living in the debtors' prisons is here the indifference of a lover, not of a mother. The difference is substantial, since a lover's indifference is more likely to be thought of as possible, whereas a mother's indifference towards her own children would be deemed as completely unnatural, and therefore seen as even more dreadful. If London was depicted as female in the *Wyll and Testament* she would fit the archetype of mother and monster in a way that would be even more terrible than the one presented by Dekker. Given the heavily allegorical descriptions in Dekker, somehow the image of London

holding her dead children after the plague has less impact than what a female version of London would have in Whitney. If, instead of being a lover, London was a mother, the abandonment and rejection of the author would perfectly fit the archetype of the monster. The realistic descriptions Whitney writes of the city would give the reader the impression of witnessing an unnatural mother spending her time only in listing her prized possessions such as jewels and clothes instead of taking care or even loving her daughter. As it is, the poem certainly gives a heartless personality to the male-gendered London, but inserts it into a love story which makes his attitude in a way less monstrous. Even the description of the city, which does not shy away from the expansion of the city and the differences of wealth both in its citizens and in its streets, does not represent London as an urban monster similar to the one depicted by Stow. Whitney merely takes note of London as the city it is, with very few harsh comments, thus furthering the idea of the city being a lover still stirring feelings in the author's heart.

While the monstrosity of personified London is a heavy presence in Tudor and Stuart literature, as Manley notes, the humanised identity of the city is a characteristic the city still retained in later literature (Manley, p.167), thus possibly making the last plea London makes to Westminster in Dekker's *The Deadly Tearme* come true: "besides the time growth on, wherein wee are both to be full of buisines: least therefore by our example, those over whom we are bound to have a care, shoulde neglect their estates, and followe their owne pleasures as we two do now in gossiping thus long together, let us here be silent, yet not part from one another, but decke up our bodies ot give entertainment to that worthy and dearest" (Dekker, p.84).

## Conclusion

This dissertation focused on trying to find a pattern of evolution of London in the Renaissance era, therefore from the moment when the city started to acquire a substantial importance in literature. This importance has never diminished since, and some of the archetypes of the city presented in this study and applied to Renaissance texts can still be found in contemporary literature about London.

The three main versions of London highlighted here move from the more realistic to the less realistic. The first one presents the use of the city in literature which is the most common throughout the ages: the city appears as a setting, a stage, a background for the characters. However, even in this way, different aspects of the city can be underlined. John Stow's *A Survey of London* principally gives a thorough account of the city as a series of buildings and streets, and occasionally adds some historical anecdotes. This can be termed as being the plain skeleton of everything London-related in Renaissance literature: Stow's London is the real city, the one people and by extent authors walked through, the one it was necessary to know to construct any other kind of story about the city. This version of London does not give any kind of emotion to the reader. It is not meant to do so, it is only the real, emotionless structure of the city. It falls to the writers to then add a dimension of emotion and feelings to the cold structure mapped by Stow.

As seen in the first chapter of this dissertation, the literary dimensions given to a city can be infinite and each one seen from a different point of view. The city is filled with characters, but it is the writer who dictates his or her purpose and thus the light in which the city is to be seen. Robert Greene underlined the social dimension of the capital by the means of writing about its underworld. Thus not only did London come to life as an inhabited city in his work, but a new version of the city was highlighted to the

eyes of the reader, that of the thieves and prostitutes. In a similar way, through his play *Bartholomew Fair*, Ben Jonson showed the theatre-goers of his time that London was not only the city of kings and queens, but their own city, as common people. The London these works present acquired the real-life dimension of the time. It was a city which was bustling with people of different classes and extractions and, in the specific case of Greene's characters, of different approaches to the law. The characters presented in these texts are fictional, but, with their presence in specific and real squares and streets, they contribute to present the city as it actually was in those times.

The second version of London I have chosen to analyse roots itself in-between the real and the unreal. The streets and buildings are still the real ones, but the city is no longer a realistic one, since it is roamed by personified allegories. This version overlaps frequently both with the first version and with what is to be the third, the one where London is turned into a person.

In Richard Mulcaster's account of the Royal Entry of Elizabeth I the city described is the real-life London, decorated for the procession. It is however filled with pageants staged in honour of the future queen featuring several allegorical representations, and the tone of the whole account is evidently propagandistic. London is here in-between its real version as the actual streets Elizabeth I rode in for her Royal Entry and the fact that no city could have been so perfect even on such an occasion. Thomas Dekker's *The Seven Sinnes of London*, on the other hand, features both the version of the city walked by allegorical figures and a personified version of London. The social dimension of this literary text is handled in quick succession in two very different ways. The problems of the city are signalled to the reader in the form of personified sins who enter London at their leisure to tempt its citizens into falling for bad habits. At the same time, the urge to fight these attitudes is addressed directly to the city in the form of a woman, at times

mother of the citizens and daughter of the sovereigns and at other times the very reason why the Sins have come there. The personification of London gives the city a more familiar dimension, and thus draws it closer to the author, who can address her directly, and to the reader, who starts to see her as an important character and presence. At the same time, London as a woman stands for a character whom both author and reader could directly blame for the mismanaging of the city without the risk of directly criticizing the monarch or the government. It could thus be said that, even in its unreal, personified form created precisely to take the blame, London in a way protected its citizens.

Giving a human form comprehensive of a personality to a city, and then inserting the character in writing, opened a whole range of possibilities. The city was thus personified at times as a loving mother and in other moments as an inhuman monster. Obviously, the love of a citizen and author for the urban city could turn into a 'real' love story should the city be personified, as it happened in Isabella Whitney's long poem *Wyll and Testament*. The city, this time allegedly transfigured into a male figure, is drawn into a love story with a bitter ending as a metaphor for the author's departure from London in real life. The fascination of writers with London here acquires a completely new dimension, and the city itself acquires the features of a lover, with all the possible undertones of it. London can therefore be equally a kind and gentle lover or, as is the case in Whitney's work, a cold and cruel one. The ties between author and city here reach a deep level of intimacy, and at least in the *Wyll and Testament* there is a thorough representation of the various versions of the city, from the description of the streets to the presence of a couple of allegorical figures to the addressee being personified London. Social criticism is also present, but this time with no blame on the city itself but instead on the citizens.

Through these texts and the list of archetypes presented in Lawrence Manley's study, I wanted to present the various ways in which a city such as London, with its historical and political importance, can be described and directly or indirectly implied in literature. Cities having been, and still being, a source of major inspiration for writers, it is interesting to notice the various ways in which love, hate or a simply critical analysis of the city can feature in a work of literature. London has assumed several different identities throughout the centuries, and possibly millions of different characteristics in all the literary works it has been made a part of, but the real starting point of its prominent presence in literature will always be the Renaissance.

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