In this chapter, I look at the role of memory in two distinctly different approaches to writing London. On the one hand, I consider the way in which, in a short memoir, John Berger unfolds personal and cultural alternative histories of Islington. The memoir, contrasting initially distanced observation of the present with personal knowledge and memory of the past, moves between the personal and the historical, recovering cultural memories of location as these are occasioned and evoked through the experience of a single location, the home of a friend. Thus, the memoir moves from the specific to the more general, in its articulation of a hidden, other London. On the other hand, I look at *Slow Chocolate Autopsy*, a collaboration between Iain Sinclair and Dave McKean, taking the text by Sinclair as exemplary of his own singular approach to the material and psychic inscription of the city’s other memories.

As my title hints, I read, at least implicitly, a difference between Berger and Sinclair’s reflections on the nature of the encoding of the city’s memories, and their respective uses of those traces. While Berger’s focus begins with and returns, repeatedly to the vital force of a living memory, and the survival of memory in however spectralized a form, Sinclair approaches the traits and marks of encrypted memory in a broader, more comprehensive fashion. Berger works in minute detail, to unravel the threads of experience and memory in all their singularity, as they are informed and touched by the threads of reminiscence and personal chronicle with which they come into intimate contact, by the occasion of place and all the flows and forces that intersect across time in that particular site. Sinclair, on the other hand, is not concerned with his own personal relation to the vibrations by which he is motivated, unless that relation be in its mediumistic or shamanistic role as some kind of tele-spectral receiver, the purpose of which is to record and decipher, and so generate counter-narratives of the city, from within the various sites of London that are his frequent haunts, and by which he
is himself haunted. The difference I perceive therefore to be at work in the authors' respective modalities has to do with a distinction between 'the living and the dead', to borrow James Joyce's well-worn phrase, as that distinction informs the approach to the memories of the city. In the example of Berger, what I read is his sense of what 'lives on', as it were, beyond mere existence, and which must, therefore, be accommodated in the personalized form and responsibility of the memoir. In Sinclair's approach to memory, the question becomes one of speaking for, to, and in the voices of the dead of a city he regards as a vast necropolis. Through this difference both writers produce anamnesiac texts that may be understood as manifestations of chorographical or ekistic discourse, the principal features of which I will discuss briefly, in order to highlight their significance to what is taken to be inventive and also responsible to the necessary recognition of the poetics of singularity, as this serves in the writing of place and event.

Chorography first: Though given relatively recent scholarly attention in the work of Gregory Ulmer, chorography\(^1\) is an Early Modern discourse giving to the spatial aspect of cartography a temporal dimension that reads the invisible within the visible, the past within the present, as contributing to the ever-changing identity of place. While the term chorography has been superseded by the terms geography and topography, the use of the word is suggestive for the reading of particular London texts that speak to the question of cultural and historical memory.

One of the most famous extant examples of chorography is Michael Drayton's self-styled 'topo-chrono-graphical' poem, *Poly-Olbion*, printed in 1613.\(^2\) Drayton's terminology draws to our attention the importance of understanding the relation between spatial and temporal features informing any structure, place or identity. The purpose of chorography for Elizabethan intellectuals was to map the various historical, folkloric and cultural resonances which could be unearthed in one location, specifically at the county level, as a means of producing an invented identity that acknowledged the singularity of place while showing analogically the resonance, both temporally and spatially, between local and national identity. Chorography was also, often, an act of writing aiming to generate complex and unanticipated relations in the reading of place, thereby performing vertiginous dislocations from within undifferentiated ideologies in the service of cultural mythologization and mystification. Furthermore, Early Modern chorography offered a symbolic alternative to the construction of a monolithic identity, thereby countering chronicle histories, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth’s, which asserted the hegemonic imperatives of family and dynasty related in a linear, progressive narrative at the expense of place and the cultural memory of location.

In effect, chorography served to open identity to its others, to those elements and traces that informed but had been forgotten or erased, thereby