UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Thomas De Quincey's Theatric Prose: Theater, Rhetoric, and Literature after the British Enlightenment

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in English

by

Gerald Maa

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Jerome Christensen, Chair
Professor Ellen S. Burt
Professor Martin Harries
Professor Orrin N.C. Wang

2018

DEDICATION

To

Thomas De Quincey, as I near midlife,

Who says

"A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank the institutions and departments at the University of California, Irvine that have made the completion of this project possible. I am also grateful to Wayne State University Press for allowing me to include "Thomas De Quincey's Stage-Work" in this manuscript.

Acknowledging my debt to actual people is harder. Not only are they more, but they are also more encompassing, less monetized and contractual. What I've learned from my PhD education is that academic work can only be sustainable when it is collegial work, which has only bolstered my commitment to the profession. Friends, family, and colleagues have provided me intellectual and emotional support, and I could not have gotten to this point without them. Please forgive this blanket statement of thanks. I will make it up to each of you when we meet in person.

Although providing a comprehensive list of thanks is an impossibility, I cannot not name names, though. Being a formalist by trade, I choose to stick strictly to those who have read previous versions of chapters:

Thank you Ian Litwin and Erin Sweeney. I knew I could turn to our regular meetings on campus to keep my spirits up and my thinking sharp whenever I felt myself flagging. Thank you Brianna Beehler, Mike Bennett, Rebecca Ehrhardt, and Darby Walters for our nineteenth-century writing group. This past year I heard a midcareer academic say that his only blanket advice to graduate students is to find a group to think with, in as formal a process as possible, and for an extended amount of time. When I heard this, I knew immediately that I have had it, and could verify the worthiness of his advice. I cannot think without thinking with others, not only on the page, but over drinks, across a table, and, in short, in conviviality too.

The sociality of it all starts, of course, with mentorship. I would like to thank Jerry Christensen for showing me how to think with history and audacity, Ellen Burt for teaching me how to write expository prose, Martin Harries for helping me to navigate between discourses and disciplines, and Orrin Wang for guiding me through the field of Romantic writing and criticism. I cannot think of having a better committee, because my sense of academic criticism and scholarship have been shaped over these years with your collective guidance.

And the one exception: thank you Mary, love of my life, and little Drury, another to come.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Gerald Maa

EDUCATION

PhD in English Literature, University of California, Irvine, California, expected June 2018.
Committee: Jerome Christensen (chair), Ellen S. Burt, Martin Harries, Orrin Wang
MFA in Creative Writing, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 2008.
Committee: Joshua Weiner (chair), Michael Collier, Stanley Plumly
BA in English Literature, Rice University, Houston, Texas, 2003.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

Romanticism, Nineteenth-Century British Literature, Theater and Theatricality, Literary Prose, Asian American Literature, Creative Writing.

PUBLICATIONS

JOURNAL ARTICLES AND ESSAYS:

Peer-Reviewed

"Thomas De Quincey's Dramaturgic Criticism: Theater, Reading, Body, Affect." Forthcoming in *Criticism* 60.3 (summer 2019).

"Keeping Time with the Mail-Coach: Anachronism and Thomas De Quincey's 'The English Mail-Coach'." *Studies in Romanticism* 50.1 (spring 2011): 125-144.

- Bibliographic citation: "Select Bibliography" in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, edited by Robert Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Edited Collections and Others

"Helena Modjeska: California's Stage Star." *Los Angeles Review of Books*. 4 November 2017.

"Arthur Sze's Tessellated Poems." *A Sense of Regard: Essays on Poetry & Race* (University of Georgia Press, 2015): 243-251.

"The World Doesn't Stop for Derek Walcott, or An Exchange between Co-Editors." (Co-Authored with Lawrence-Minh Bùi Davis) *The Little Magazine in America: A Contemporary Guide* (University of Chicago Press, 2015): 83-96.

"An Occasional Reading of 'Twenty-Six Ways of Looking at a Blackman'." *Asian American Literary Review* 5.2 (fall/winter, 2014): 200-205.

SELECTED POETRY, TRANSLATIONS, AND INTERVIEWS:

"The Blighted Star Fruit," *Poetry*, special issue on Asian American poetry (July/August 2017): 324-327.

"Dress, Score, Tether." *Haunt Journal* 3 (2016): 13-17.

"'Initial of Creation, and / The Exponent of Earth—'" on *Zócalo Public Square* (fall, 2015).
"Suburban Eclogue" on *Zócalo Public Square* (winter, 2015).
"Casaubon's Blood" as a part of "Telephone Project" on *At Length* (2014).
Interview of Brenda Hillman on *Los Angeles Review of Books* (2014).
Translations of "Asian Bronze," "A Poem Dedicated to the Dark Night," and "A Poem Dedicated to the Final Night and the First Day" (author: Haizi) as well as "A Drawing of Mother" and "A Scene of Mother and Daughter" (author: Huang Canran) in *Push Open the Window: Contemporary Poetry from China* (Copper Canyon Press, 2011): xvii-xviii, 119-121, 151-155.
"Elegy Written at Yuangtong Temple." *American Poetry Review* (January/February, 2011).
Translation of "The Poet I Most Love—Hölderlin." (author: Haizi) *Chinese Writers on Writing* (Trinity University Press, 2011): 183-4.
Translation of "The Elders." (author: Haizi) *Common Knowledge* 15.2 (spring 2009): 221-223.
Translation of "For Kafka." (author: Haizi) *Poetry Northwest* (spring/summer, 2008).
Translation of "Misfortune." (author: Haizi) in *Calque* (May/June 2007): 98-108.

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS

MLA Connected Academics Career Development Fellow	2018
MLA Graduate Travel Grant	2018
UC Irvine Humanities Commons Summer Public Fellow	2017
- Project: Helena Modjeska Digital Performance Map	
UC Irvine Humanities Commons Graduate Student Research Grant	2016
UC Irvine Humanities Conference Travel Grant	2016
UC Irvine Summer Dissertation Fellowship	2015
UC Irvine Dissertation Fellowship	2014
Vermont Studio Center Artist Writer Grant and Work Exchange Scholarship	2012
UC Irvine Summer Fellowship	2011, 2012
UC Irvine Humanities Pre-Doctoral Fellowship	2010
USC Provost's Fellowship (declined)	2010-2016
Bread Loaf Writers' Conference Work Study Scholarship	2008, 2009, 2010
Translation Grant, UCI International Center for Writing and Translation	2008
Florence Tan Moeson Fellowship, The Library of Congress Asian Reading Room	2008
Academy of American Poets Prize, University of Maryland	2008
Distinguished Teaching Assistant Award, University of Maryland	2007
President's Honor Roll, Rice University	1999-2002

SELECTED CONFERENCE, POETRY, AND PAPER PRESENTATIONS

"The First African American Novel and its Victorian Audience: William Wells Brown, Harriet Martineau, and Illustrations of the Political Economy of Slavery," the North American Victorian Studies Association annual conference (St. Petersburg, FL), October 2018.

Poetry reading, Smithsonian Asian American Literature Festival, Library of Congress, July 2017. Invited.

"Thomas De Quincey's Embodied Rhetoric," the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism annual conference (Berkeley, CA), August 2016.

"An Occasional Reading of 'Twenty-Six Ways of Looking at a Blackman'," Ragged Claws: Poetry and Poetics Lecture Series, (Art and Culture Outreach, Hong Kong), July 2015. Invited.

"Thomas De Quincey's Theatrical Body," UCI English and Comparative Literature Dissertation Colloquium (Irvine, CA), May 2015.

"De Quincey's Intercalary Time," UCI English Graduate Student Symposium (Irvine, CA), May 2014.

"Waverley's Castle: The Concept of History in Sir Walter Scott's Historical Novels," UCI English Graduate Student Symposium (Irvine, CA), May 2013.

"Asian Pacific Islander Festival: Fact to Fiction: API Authors Panel," moderator, Japanese American National Museum (Los Angeles, CA), May 2012. Invited.

"Edgar P Richardson Symposium: Asian American Portraits of Encounter: Between Image and Word," moderator, the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute (Washington, DC), April 2012.

"'We, the Collective Mail': Anachronism and De Quincey's *The English Mail-Coach*," the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism annual conference (Park City, UT), August 2011.

"Citizens as Editors: 9/11 and Its Legacies in Public Discourse," the Association for Asian American Studies annual conference (New Orleans, LA), May 2011. Invited.

"Roundtable with Editors of APA Journals," the Association for Asian American Studies annual conference (New Orleans, LA), May 2011. Invited.

"The Demurring Subject: Revolution, Happiness, and Self-Writing in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*," New Directions in Critical Theory conference, University of Arizona (Tucson, AZ), April 2011.

"Asian American Political Participation: Librarians, Media and Advocacy," the American Librarian Association annual conference, Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (Washington, DC), June 2010. Invited.

"The Distant Place has Nothing but the Faraway: The Poetry of Haizi," Florence Tan Moeson fellowship presentation, The Library of Congress Asian Reading Room (Washington, DC), May 2008. Invited.

TEACHING

COURSES TAUGHT:

University of California, Irvine

Writing 39B: Rhetoric and Composition (winter & spring 2012)

Writing 39C: Argument and Research (spring 2013, winter & fall 2017, winter 2018)

English 28A: Introduction to Poetry (fall 2012)

- Self-designed seminar for sophomore English majors.

English 28B: Introduction to Drama (winter 2013)

- Self-designed seminar for sophomore English majors.

Humanities 1C/1CS: Humanities Core (2015-2017)
- Multi-section interdisciplinary course teaching critical thinking and writing to prospective humanities students.

University of Maryland, College Park
English 101: Introduction to Academic Writing (2005-2006, 2008-2010)
Asian American Studies 498N: Asian American Material Cultures (spring 2010)
- Self-designed, upper-level lecture.

Asian American Studies 498E/LGBT448E: Asian American Sexualities (fall 2009)
- Self-designed, upper-level lecture.

English 379G: African American Short Stories and Oral Traditions (fall 2009)
- Upper-level seminar.

Asian American Studies 398L: Asian Americans in Film (spring 2009)
- Self-designed, upper-level lecture.

Arts and Humanities 318A: Creative Writing Across Languages and Cultures (spring 2009, 2010)
- Self-designed, upper-level poetry workshop.

Arts and Humanities 319: Poetic Form and Theory (fall 2008, fall 2009)
- Self-designed, upper-level seminar.

English 297: Beginning Poetry Workshop (fall 2007)
- Self-designed, beginning workshop.

COURSES ASSISTED:
University of California, Irvine
Asian American 117: Sexuality in Asian and Asian American Film and Video (fall 2011)
Asian American 50: Asian American Histories (fall 2013)
Asian American 52: Asian American Communities (winter 2014)
Asian American 53: Asian Americans and Comparative Race Relations (spring 2014)
European Languages and Studies 12: The Origin of Language (spring 2017)

University of Maryland, College Park
English 243: Introduction to Poetry (2006-2008)

SERVICE

PROFESSIONAL:
Founding Editor-in-Chief, *Asian American Literary Review* (AALR) 2009-present
- Literary non-profit that publishes the only print publication dedicated to literature by and about Asian Americans.

Director, *AALR Synchronous Teaching Program* 2013
- Classroom initiative that put our special issue on mixed race into over 80 university classrooms in over 5 countries. Collaborated with SUNY Binghamton to provide a digital platform on which these classrooms can interact with each other remotely.

Organizer, *Edgar P Richardson Symposium: Asian American Portraits: Between Image and Word* 2012

- AALR collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery in DC. Commissioned ekphrastic writing on portraits in their Asian American Portraits exhibit, then held a day-long symposium of readings and discussions around the work.

Organizer, *8+1: Voices from the Asian American Literary Review* 2011

- Day-long symposium at the Japanese American National Museum (LA), which featured Viet Nguyen, Hiromi Ito, Joy Kogawa, among others.

Organizer, *8: Voices from the Asian American Literary Review* 2010

- Day-long symposium at the University of Maryland, which featured Karen Tei Yamashita, Srikanth Reddy, among others.

Advisory Panel, PBS, *The Great American Read* 2017-2018

- Advisor for two-year, multi-media initiative by PBS that celebrates and promotes the power of reading, which includes an eight-part series and national campaign to promote reading in the United States.

Editorial Committee Member, Kaya Press 2013-2017

- Independent press dedicated to experimental writing from the Asian diaspora.

Curator, "Invito Spectatore: Four Collaborations between Poet and Performance Artist," Greene Exhibitions (Los Angeles, CA), June. 2014

- Two-day program of performances, which featured Wu Tsang, Fred Moten, David Lloyd, Brandon Som, among others.

UNIVERSITY:

Organizing Committee Member, Annual English Graduate Symposium, UCI 2013-2014
Events Chair, CLCWEGSA, UCI 2013-2014
Coordinator, English Graduate Colloquium, UCI 2012, 2014

AFFILIATIONS

Modern Languages Association
North American Society for the Study of Romanticism
North American Victorian Studies Association
Association for Asian American Studies
Chinese / American Association for Poetry and Poetics

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Thomas De Quincey's Theatric Prose:
Theater, Rhetoric, and Literature after the British Enlightenment

By

Gerald Maa

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Irvine, 2018

Professor Jerome Christensen, Chair

This dissertation argues that periodical essayists in late Georgian and early Victorian England appropriated techniques from the theater to invent an empiric literary style that I call "theatric prose." The central argument here is that Thomas De Quincey is an exemplar of theatric prose, who built a formative theory of literature underwritten by dramatic principles and instigated by a reproof of the Enlightenment principles that eventuated a crisis of legitimacy for rhetoric and theater in the nineteenth century. I demonstrate that De Quincey forges theater and rhetoric together into an anti-Enlightenment category that he calls "literature" and use De Quincey as a test case to determine the political power of this emergent mode of writing.

My first chapter sets the foundation for the dissertation by providing a comprehensive account of the dramatic principles that underwrite De Quincey's general theory of literature. The second chapter starts the argument that his concept for literature, "the literature of power," is an anti-Enlightenment category, by showing that it is built in large part out of a disapproval of the anti-rhetorical manner of language prescribed by Sir Francis Bacon. The third chapter continues by demonstrating that John Locke is also a

crucial point of contention. The type of subjectivity associated with De Quinceyean literature is fundamentally opposed to that which is defined by British Empiricism. The final chapter concludes the dissertation by reading the central scene of De Quincey's corpus as a scene of reading that promulgates literature of "theatric prose." The first three chapters reconstitute his theory and situate it within its intellectual context. The last one studies how it is meant to persuade and circulate amongst others. These chapters discover that theater and literature, spectacle and reading, can be intimately entwined, and that, in fact, this spectacular mode of literature has been important to the history of British literature, philosophy, and culture.

Introduction

No matter young or old, all the females at Dove Cottage called him Quince. Lop off the first and last syllables and you have the name of the rude mechanic in charge of the play within the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This, indeed, is, as his recent biographer Frances Wilson puts it, "an insightful joke," for play-acting was at the heart of Thomas De Quincey's very nature.[1] The second chapter of his conventional autobiography, *Autobiographic Sketches*, recounts nothing but his childhood education in play-acting, under the tutelage of his elder brother William, who "for the rest of his life dedicated himself to the intense cultivation of the tragic drama."[2] As the chapter's titled baldly proclaims, it was his "Introduction to the World of Strife," and De Quincey is renowned for a fraught life of letters, if anything else, recognized most for the night terrors and the no less ghastly travails that make up his autobiographical drug narratives: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845), and *The English Mail-Coach* (1849).

What has gone unnoticed, though, is that for De Quincey opium makes of the sensorium a theater. When he begins to divulge for the first time the effects of his opium addiction in *Confessions*, he says, "a corresponding change took place in my dreams; a theater seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain" (II:64). The last verb conclusively defines theater here not as literary genre, but as the theater house, a social site for public entertainment. The theater subsequently provides the platform for passages central to these drug narratives, the autobiographies for what he calls "impassioned prose,"

[1] Frances Wilson, *Guilty Thing: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016), 188-189.
[2] Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey,* ed. Grevel Lindop, et al. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999-2003), volume IXX:30. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from De Quincey come from this edition, and are hereafter cited in the text by volume and page.

the texts that make up the backbone of his corpus. *Suspiria* plumbs the depths of "the dream-theatre of [his] childhood" (XV:169), *The English Mail-Coach* figures the eponymous vehicle as a mobile theater central to the project of British nationalism, and the central scene of *Confessions,* the Malay scene, takes place in a Dove Cottage that De Quincey presents as a domestic theater. De Quincey's time at Dove Cottage was the source for his literary career. Moved so much by *Lyrical Ballads* to write perhaps literary history's most effective piece of fan-mail, De Quincey was able to reside with his literary idol, William Wordsworth, and Wordsworth's attendant family members and company. The years spent in the Lake District provided De Quincey with not only the substance for a lifetime of essays, but also the practical means to start his literary career. In short, I want to show that the women of Dove Cottage are fundamentally correct in their characterization of De Quincey, as writer-director, as impresario and play-actor, the little actor that built a career conning part after paying part. This dissertation argues that his literary practice is theatrical in its operation.

The larger argument here is that what I call "theatric prose" emerged in late Georgian and early Victorian England as an important medium for the formation of British national character. Scholars have long insisted that revolutions in print during the first half of the nineteenth century were important to the development of British identity. Yet little attention has been paid to how periodical writing drew on the most popular form of culture in the day, the theater, in order to participate in debates about national identity. In general, I am trying to argue that a number of formative periodical writers appropriated techniques from theater in order to establish the periodical's dominant role in defining the terms of British identity in the nineteenth century. Practitioners of "theatric prose" harnessed the

sensorial nature of the stage to produce an empirical mode of literary representation and an embodied reading practice. The result was a literary mode familiar to the theater-going public, and thereby central to the shaping of popular discourses about British national identity.

The central claim of the dissertation is that the Romantic essayist Thomas De Quincey is the most formative writer of theatric prose, which makes him a singular figure by which one can map out the cultural and intellectual context for this emergent literary mode. Moreover, he is a strong test case for determining the political power of theatric prose. In essence, this is a genealogical study of a literary tradition in which theater and writing are enmeshed, a prominent, but under-studied, lineage of a spectacular type of textuality that has been ever-present since the nineteenth-century, one indexed in our time by concepts like "visual literacy" and "the cinematic novel." De Quincey originates this literary mode out of a rejection of standard Enlightenment beliefs about subjectivity and representation that had dominated professional and lay understandings of truth since their inception in the early modern period. In particular, De Quincey targets Sir Francis Bacon and John Locke by refuting the Enlightenment method of scientific inquiry, as established by Bacon; the ideal process of British empiricism, as determined by Locke; and the philosophy of objective language that binds the two. The central point of contention is the body. As De Quincey sees it, the Bacon-Locke line of Enlightenment knowledge requires a recusal of the body, which, as we will see, results in a strong dismissal of theater and rhetoric. This De Quincey will not concede. Out of the Opium-Eater's prolonged engagement with Bacon and Locke comes a theorization of literature that is pointedly rhetorical, unabashedly theatrical, and embodied in its sensibility.

Since the linguistic turn, there has been a strong, sustained renaissance in De Quincey studies. And, rife with words and tropes pulled from theater, recent De Quincey scholarship seems to deem "Introduction to the World of Strife" a chapter aptly titled. Margaret Russett's definitive reading of De Quincey's impersonation of "We Are Seven" all but explicitly says "play-acting," while forcefully arguing that his modus operandi shapes the Romantic canon by incarnating, through his self-representation, the literary texts that he exalts. John Barrell's book-length study draws from the theater house (albeit cinema's, but brought in, still, for theatrical purposes) to chime in its dramatic end.[3] Recent studies have pointed out the theatrical world of De Quincey's "Murder" essays.[4] And as the formation of English nationalism has grown over the past half-century into a fundamental topic of inquiry in the British nineteenth century, *The English Mail-Coach* has increasingly drawn the attention of critics.[5] Although theater surfaces momentarily in study after study, only a single chapter on De Quincey, found in John E. Jordan's *Thomas De Quincey: Literary Critic*, has provided a comprehensive account of his dramatic writings. And even that, although admirably thorough, is limited in scope, confining the exploration of the De Quinceyean theatrical to his dramatic criticism. The determining force of the theater to De Quincey's work has yet to be examined. This renaissance in De Quincey scholarship has repositioned him as a major figure for understanding literature of the nineteenth century

[3] Margaret Russett, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 14-51. John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 182-195.

[4] Nigel Leask's "Toward a Universal Aesthetic: De Quincey on Murder as Carnival and Tragedy" and Charles Rzepka's "The 'Dark Problem' of Greek Tragedy: Sublimated Violence in De Quincey" are noteworthy pieces.

[5] To start to get a sense of this bulk of work, one could do worse than starting with the following: Ian Balfour's "On the Language of the Sublime and the Sublime Nation in De Quincey: Toward a Reading of 'The English Mail-Coach'," Mary Fairclough's *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture*, Ivan Ortiz's "Nostalgia and Trauma in Thomas De Quincey's *The English Mail-Coach,*" John Plotz's chapter on the *The English Mail-Coach* in *The Crowd*, and Arden Reed's "'Booked for Utter Perplexity' on De Quincey's *English Mail-Coach*."

and beyond. A number of critics, scholars, poets, and novelists have proven that his theory of literature, constructed around his concept "the literature of power," is a fundamental source of influence to its contemporaries and to future generations of writers. To prove the theatrical essence of this conception of literariness muddles the line that is typically drawn between theater and literature, performance and writing, text and spectacle.

It is likely easier for a professional literary critic to seriously consider De Quincey's theatricality now than thirty years ago. It has been reported, at least into the 1990s, that theater languished into an ignoble death during the British nineteenth century. The headnotes for both Romantic and Victorian periods in the 1993 *Norton Anthology of English Literature* declare quite curtly that "literary conditions in the early nineteenth century were unfavorable in the extreme to writing for the stage" and, even more disdainfully, "in the 1890s appeared the lively dramatic masterpieces of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw; no apologies are thereafter required."[6] Twelve years prior, Jonas Barish published a compendious history of "the antitheatrical prejudice" that characterizes the nineteenth century as the most stridently antitheatrical era in the Western intellectual tradition. Twenty years before that, George Steiner gives what in my estimation is the most eloquent eulogy to theater. *Death of Tragedy* basically locates the terminal point where the Norton Anthology does. But, in the middle of all this, a mere two years after Barish's book, Martin Meisel made the first great effort to overturn this prejudice with his intellectually (and physically) massive book *Realizations*, which assiduously accounts for the ways in which pictorial, theatrical, and narrative arts determined each other's generic conventions throughout the nineteenth century. If literature and arts thrived in nineteenth-century

[6] M.H. Abrams, et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume* 2 (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 14, 907-908.

Britain, it was thanks in large part to what the readers and art-goers accessed from their texts and objects by way of what they know from the theater.[7]

So one way to prove the vital importance of theater to nineteenth-century culture is to lay bare theater's presence across genres and mediums. Conversations about theater did not start in earnest in Romantic studies until the 1990s and 2000s, and the core of the nascent subfield used the momentum that Meisel provided, which is to say that they were mainly literary studies that worked between genres. Cultural historians like Jeffrey N. Cox and Michael Gamer studied how genres like tragedy and the gothic served as conduits between drama and poetry.[8] Another group of critics like Alan Richardson, Reeve Parker, and William Jewett forced Romanticists to admit that each of the six canonical poets, save William Blake (the earliest of the bunch), had ardent, and ardently, dramatic aspirations in order to recognize that the dramas that they wrote are central to the poetic development of each individual career and, thus, to Romantic poetry as a whole.

In one way this work effectively overturned the antitheatrical prejudice in Romantic studies, but, in another way, it reinforced it. If, in the words of Richardson, romantic poetry can be described as "dramatic in its emphasis on confrontation, seduction, and rhetorical struggle, lyric in its emphasis on self-consciousness," the injunction against theater's "gross and violent stimulants" still remained, especially for those who focused exclusively on the closet drama. Taking the poets for their word—or at least selectively, which is to say scouring away the ambivalence toward the stage that each of them exhibited throughout

[7] Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1981). George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
[8] Jeffrey N. Cox, *In the Shadows of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in Germany, England, and France* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987). Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

their careers, Richardson and others enlisted the closet drama as a genre that spurns the stage in order to position drama as a "legitimate form" in "literary history." These critics read the figure of the "mental theater…as an enactment of the poet's struggle with his textual past."[9] A similar, but more surreptitious example of this literary diminishment of the stage comes from an influential work on the second half of the nineteenth century. Peter Brooks' *The Melodramatic Imagination* shows that melodrama is the fundamental mode of narrative disclosure for major novelists, but, as Jacky Bratton points out, Brooks' study relies on a psychologization of melodrama, a term that is in reality a corporeal practice. In targeting Brooks' key phrase, Bratton insists: "In melodrama we should not seek 'an interior conflict, the "psychology of melodrama,"' because melodrama exteriorizes conflict and psychic structure, producing instead what we might call the 'melodrama of psychology'."[10] Not all writers of the Romantic era were interested in the mental theater. Some, like De Quincey, were more keen on rendering "the melodrama of psychology" into written form.

The line here is not between genres, but between high and low cultures, the very line around which Wordsworth situates poetry and theater. Georgian and early Victorian theater is truly exceptional in that it was built and bureaucratically maintained around a line that officially designates high culture from low culture. Between the Licensing Act of

[9] Alan Richardson, *A Mental Theater: Poetic Drama and Consciousness in the Romantic Age* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1988), 4. William Jewett, *Fatal Autonomy: Romantic Drama and the Rhetoric of Agency* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997). Reeve Parker, *Romantic Tragedies: The Dark Employments of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Richardson, *Mental*, 1, 17. Although Richardson is not cited therein, the first chapter argues implicitly that Richardson's take on De Quincey's internal theater in his introduction (pp. 7-19) is elementally wrong in its occlusion of the material.

[10] Jacky Bratton, "Romantic Melodrama," in *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, eds. Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 119. Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

1737 and the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843, the Lord Chamberlain policed what could and could not be staged at London's two patent theaters, Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Rules for the official repertoire were severe, specific, and aesthetic—often centered around the body. The licensing office prohibited singing and pantomime, among other sensational acts, constituting an expansive field of what Jane Moody dubs "illegitimate theater," a category of performance characterized by "corporeal dramaturgy."[11] Wordsworth's attack on theater's "gross and violent stimulants," then, targets illegitimate theater, if nothing else. The work of those like Richardson, Jewett, and Brooks tacitly disparage theater in their exaltation of a purely literary drama, and therefore amplify the antitheatrical prejudice that has defined the age for so many. It should come as no surprise that the work on Romantic drama and theater at this early stage focused almost exclusively on recuperating work in the canon, and, when not, it worked to canonize others, like Joanna Baillie, strictly through the genre of the closet drama. De Quincey is interested in play-acting, not drama—and, as we will see in the first chapter, his theatric prose runs very much on what can be called "corporeal dramaturgy." Margaret Russett has proven that De Quincey is a "minor author" vitally important to the emergence of a Romantic literary tradition. To this, I would like to add the appellation "illegitimate" as well.

This dissertation, then, aims to demonstrate the importance of the theater *house* to Romantic-era reading and writing practices by making the case from *outside* of theater studies. In the wake of trailblazing work on Romantic drama done in the 1990s, there has been substantial work on Romantic theater that has grown out of a response to the shortcomings that I have highlighted above, work that is historical, theoretical, cultural,

[11] Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 86-88, 242.

and literary in its considerations, as should be the case with any true study of *θέᾱτρον*.[12] On the other hand, there has been recent remarkable work on the influence of stage-work on literary style in the British nineteenth century, but these studies have come from Victorianists, like Meisel, David Kurnick, and Carolyn Williams.[13] To this end, my work on De Quincey's theatric prose starts to sketch out a history that precedes and informs, as I see it, the work in Victorian studies, showing that theater has reshaped conventions of and invented new possibilities for literary prose since at least the late Georgian period. Moreover, this dissertation widens the scope on what we can say about this medium. As illuminating as Kurnick's *Empty Theaters* is, its purview is confined to the literary. Meisel's is dilated a bit, but it is still a purely cultural study. By taking what is now an unconventional tack for a dissertation, the single-author study, I am able to trace out the intellectual sources and historical contexts for theatric prose while determining the political efficacy of this literary style. With the polymath De Quincey as my stabilizing element, I am able to reconstruct how politics, rhetoric, aesthetics, philosophy, and criticism are all interwoven into a linguistic category known as literature with writing and theater as shuttle and beam.

The one connection that I focus on above all else is the one De Quincey makes between theater and rhetoric. De Quincey developed a powerful theory of rhetoric that has not gotten the attention it deserves. This is all the more noteworthy because rhetoric has also allegedly died a tragic death in the nineteenth century. The second chapter includes a

[12] In particular, I think of the work of Gillian Russell, Daniel O'Quinn, Jacky Bratton, Tracy C. Davis, Jane Moody.
[13] Although *Realizations* covers the entire breadth of the nineteenth century, his literary examples are consummately Victorian: Dickens, Thackery, the Pre-Raphaelites, and even a very Victorian Byron. David Kurnick, *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). Carolyn Williams, "Moving Pictures: George Eliot and Melodrama," in *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion,* ed. Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 105-144.

fuller account of the death of rhetoric narrative, but, suffice it to say now, the death knell rings just as loudly for rhetoric as it does for theater in the nineteenth century. One of the dissertation's overall arguments is that De Quincey astutely recognizes these purported deaths as homologous, both collateral damage from British Enlightenment's general recusal of the body. De Quincey rescues the sibling arts and shelters them in something called "literature."

The first chapter, "Thomas De Quincey's Stage-Work: Theater, Reading, Body, Affect," provides a comprehensive account of De Quincey's theatric prose by unifying his general theory of literature with his dramatic theory and his groundbreaking investigations into the subconscious (a word he coined in its nominative case). The chapter establishes the general argument that De Quincey aspires to create an embodied reading practice by underwriting his general theory of literature with his writings on drama. De Quincey values the theater as a place for phenomenal effect, and his literary criticism attempts to formulate a mode of textuality that can replicate, or at least approximate, the material effects of stage-work, thereby implicating the reader's perceptive body in the reading process. He however arrives at the impasse between the sensorial body and literature, an aesthetic medium completely mediated from the empirical world. In order to make the sensitized body the primary target of literature, De Quincey has to invent an interior space that obviates the problem that the body puts to reading, and he calls this the "subconscious." This chapter not only demonstrates how De Quincey creates his literary theory of dramatic writing in conversation with William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and contemporary discourses about the stage. It also proposes that De Quincey fashions a formative critical practice that enlists techniques of the stage to sensitize and

spatialize the reader's body. The problems, inventions, and solutions that he discovers prove that embodied reading can be possible only when supplemented by a notion of depth psychology. Embodied reading can only be possible in the age of modern psychology, and, conversely, depth psychology was born out of an effort to make reading literature immanently sensational.

The middle two chapters piece together De Quincey's attack on the British Enlightenment, following the line that De Quincey draws between Sir Francis Bacon's inductive method of natural science to John Locke's discourse on language and epistemology. Each of the two most substantial accounts of the literature of power, De Quincey's category for literariness, includes antagonistic outbursts directed at one of these two pillars of the British Enlightenment. By taking these eruptions seriously, these chapters demonstrate that De Quincey conceptualizes literature as an anti-Enlightenment category.

Chapter two, "Thomas De Quincey's Inventive Prose (contra Bacon): Rhetoric, Style, Ideology," argues that De Quincey invents in literary form what is recognizable to us as aesthetic ideology. It begins with De Quincey's contention with Bacon's proto-notion for ideology, the Idols of the Mind. Bacon founds the Idols of the Mind at the beginning of *Novum Organum* to mark off the terrain for all false knowledge, a swath of interdicted land that Enlightenment thinkers must avoid in order to attain scientific truth. We find De Quincey building his theory of literature here, and even with the resources harvested from this heretic land. He is particularly close to the Idols of the Marketplace and the Idols of the Theater, the ones that seduce thinkers into admitting cultural context, intellectual history, and, all in all, one's rhetorical situation, as meaningful elements. The chapter starts by

piecing together the implicit critique of rhetoric established by the Idols of the Mind and ends by showing how De Quincey creates a neoclassical theory of persuasion out of the material that Bacon prohibits. By melding his conception of literariness to his practicable system of rhetoric, De Quincey invents a sense of literature that is built on standard aesthetic principles like non-utility and subjective pleasure, but constructed as a means of persuasion.

The following chapter, "Thomas De Quincey's Opiate Theater (contra Locke): Two Perceptive Icons for the Mind," focuses on De Quincey's opposition to Locke. Locke lays bare Bacon's anti-rhetorical sentiments and renders them into the texture of the process for empirical understanding, and De Quincey's complaint with Locke rests on this Baconian inheritance. By using the father of British Empiricism as a point of reference, De Quincey elaborates literary language into a resource for a subject's reckoning of and with the empirical world, making autobiography not just a literary genre, or a mode of writing, but, even more generally, a wherewithal for empirical understanding. The chapter ends with a comparative reading of Locke and De Quincey's respective figures for the mind. Although De Quincey's palimpsest does not directly come from Locke's camera obscura, the comparison is apropos, because the palimpsest crystallizes the theory of language that De Quincey' builds in response to the Enlightenment valuation of language. The camera obscura dominated the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries as the operative trope for subjectivity. So the comparison in effect nominates De Quincey's palimpsest as the foremost icon for a post-Enlightenment subjectivity. The comparison is all the more appropriate because the shift occurs on the stage. The chapter attempts to make much of the fact that both camera obscura and palimpsest are fundamentally theatrical figures for

writing. The radical difference between De Quincey's manner of spectatorship and Locke's underwrites the break from the Enlightenment valuation of perspicuous language to a Romantic exaltation of a pointedly figurative and subjective mode of linguistic expression and exchange. By this time, how we see and what we say are interdependent, and a shift in one entails a shift in the other.

De Quincey is a special subject for the study of literary prose. His innovations in prose style are the most formative for the age, if not only for being the most coherently defined (i.e., as "impassioned prose").[14] Moreover, he built a distinctive prose style by writing in just about any conceivable type of prose essay. Autobiography, literary criticism, political economy, astrology, classical history, and current events, among others, were all topics undertaken by the essayist. No one wrote on such a wide array of topics with so much self-assumed authority as De Quincey. Each genre contributes to his theory of literariness, and every type of essay, in turn, exhibits the capacity for literary flourish. De Quincey wrote on innumerable topics, but theater is not merely one of the bunch, more than just a topic, or even a literary form. Theater was the means by which he could invent a transdiscursive style. The importance of romantic theater is not confined merely to a certain location, genre, or even medium. Romantic theater works itself into the very texture of prose, impacting matters of rhetoric, signification, and eloquence. Josephine McDonagh deems De Quincey the preeminent Foucaldian organizer of knowledge.[15] What we can add is that De Quincey prides himself as an impresario in this panoptic world. De Quincey is able to write about countless topics because he mobilizes theater as a mode of

[14] Grevel Lindop ends his biography: "[De Quincey's] literary influence has been inconspicuous but remarkably pervasive, a vein of fantasy, introspection and unease tingeing the work of Poe, Stevenson, Dickens, Baudelaire, Proust, Dostoevsky, Borges and many others" (392).
[15] Josephine McDonagh, *De Quincey's Disciplines* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

inquiry, a mannered method of invention, representation, and communication, which is to say of rhetoric. De Quincey's neoclassical theory of persuasion is part and parcel of his general theory of literariness, and it relies on the theater as a means to delight, persuade, and instruct. His essays are theatrical, but that is because theater becomes essayistic in De Quincey's hands, and since then the prosaic has been histrionic, to say the least.

CHAPTER ONE

THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S STAGE-WORK: THEATER, READING, BODY, AFFECT

Since what has been called the "affective turn," a number of critics have been invested in recovering the primacy of the body to reading. Perhaps the single move most responsible for springing open the door to current affect theory is the one that starts Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual*. As its title clearly signals, the first, seminal chapter clears the ground for subsequent chapters, and for affect theory in general, by establishing the "autonomy of affect." Massumi takes Baruch Spinoza's term for corporeal thought, affect, and decouples it from the body to make the moving body—and not the emoting body, or the thinking body—the central site for knowing in the world. The goal is to establish affect independent of, and prior to, signification.[16] That affect belongs below the threshold of meaning puts literature in a particularly antagonistic relationship with this current notion of affect. Performance, visual, and media arts lend themselves to emerging discourses on the role that aesthetics plays in stimulating the autonomic, physiological register of the affective body. But writing, the realm of representation purely mediated from the empirical world, poses a problem. Affect studies has recast the corporeal body into an object surface that encroaches upon zones of intensity that exist between bodies. So what then is the intensity one supposedly feels when one is moved by a book? And, the more basic question: where is the body's place in the imaginative act that is reading? Does it even have a place at all?

[16] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 23-45.

If one of the important tasks after the affective turn is to determine what role body and affect have in the act of reading, then literary criticism is the genre that can teach us most directly about this question, because the main charge for literary criticism is precisely to study, and some would say, to prescribe, reading practices. And literary criticism from the Romantic era can be particularly illuminating. For one, Marjorie Levinson has proven that Spinoza is a primary source for Romantic thought. Moreover, in the field of Romanticism—a field whose discourse is characterized by, in Paul Hamilton's words, "major writers [who]…generalize their practices"—one sees not only what is read, but also how one reads.[17] It is in the latter way that Thomas De Quincey has been firmly established as a writer formative to the practices, values, and blind-spots that have become common to literary criticism of the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. (And, as this chapter will propose, it is in the former way too that De Quincey matters.) Margaret Russett's *De Quincey's Romanticism* broke ground in De Quincey studies by demonstrating how he invents the modern method of canon-making, which predicates the author's canonical position on the professional critic's presentation of that writer. Deidre Lynch has elaborated Russett's argument by showing that De Quincey's biographical and critical sketches of William Wordsworth animate the critic-text conjuncture into an interpersonal relationship. De Quincey transfuses his critical practice with personal sentiment, thereby making the life *and* work of the critic indispensable to the literary history he champions and creates. Literary criticism in these terms has become "the intersubjective domain of

[17] Marjorie Levinson, "A Motion and a Spirit: Romancing Spinoza." *Studies in Romanticism* 46.4 (2007), 367-408. Paul Hamilton, *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1.

relations between persons," making every encounter with a text implicitly a "restaging of the acolyte-author encounter too."[18]

"Restaging" is profoundly accurate, because theater is central to De Quincey's writing process. De Quincey, as I aim to show, is interested in inventing a mode of literature that directly involves the body, and the theater is instrumental to his efforts. He theorizes a literary practice that not only runs on Spinozist affect, but also conceptualizes literature as a medium for intensity between bodies. The problems that he runs into, and the inventions wrought out of an attempt to work through the problems, should be very instructive to us as we consider the viability of embodied reading.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MACBETH:

LITERARY EFFECT, THE THEATRICAL OBJECT, AND PHENOMENAL READING

It is noteworthy that "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" is De Quincey's best-known piece of literary criticism. This brief, but powerful study of the play that Joseph Donohue declares definitively Romantic is motivated by a question that had been plaguing De Quincey since his "boyish days": why does the eponymous knock produce an "effect" that "reflect[s] back upon the murder [of Duncan] a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity"?[19] The essay, of course, answers this "great perplexity." The knock is the aesthetic means by which Shakespeare enables the reader to sympathize with the

[18] Margaret Russett, *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998). Deidre Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 250, 255.

[19] "These two Shakespearean characters [i.e., Macbeth and Richard III] elicited from eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century actors and critics a response that comes as close to any to epitomizing the attitudes of their age, not only toward Shakespeare and his plays, but toward the nature of man and of his reactions to the world outside himself." Joseph Donohue, *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 191.

murderers. In the "ordinary cases" of murder, the witness sympathizes with the victim. But identification with the murderer makes a murder scene more suitable for literary representation, because, according to De Quincey, it is only in the murderer that one can find the amplitude of feelings necessary for development worthy of a truly dramatic character. The identification with the victim "little suit[s] the purposes of the poet" because the source for the sympathy is "an instinct which, as being indispensable to the primal law of self-preservation, is the same in kind (though different in degree) amongst all living creatures." "But in the murderer," he continues, "such a murderer as a poet will condescend to, there must be raging some great storm of passion—jealousy, ambition, vengeance, hatred,—which will create a hell within him; and into this hell we are to look." In order to allow—compel, even—the reader to sympathize with lady and lord Macbeth, Shakespeare must suspend the "ordinary" world so that "a new world may step in" that is hospitable to this extraordinary sympathy. When the knock interrupts and concludes the regicide scene, signaling "the recommencement of suspended life," the reader realizes, only post hoc, the "retiring of the human heart" necessary for "the entrance of the fiendish heart" (III:151-3). The knock exposes how dramatic effect targets the reader's feelings first to create a scenario that one would ordinarily find irrational.

This is the consummate piece of De Quinceyean criticism, because it is the clearest and purest example of "dramaturgic criticism," criticism that restages the effects with which the critic characterizes the literary text at hand. In what is still the only book to survey De Quincey's literary criticism, John E. Jordan introduces the term "dramaturgic criticism" in his reading of "On the Knocking at the Gate." First, like all of De Quincey's dramatic writings, it focuses merely on the "effectiveness of stagecraft." When writing

about drama or theater, De Quincey does not focus on the conventional matters of character or plot, Jordan observes. Rather, De Quincey focuses on matters of stagecraft: the properties of the stage, how a play would look and sound, the technicalities of staging, and the way cultural context informs stylistic decisions.[20] The present essay, for instance, proposes to unlock the mystery of the entirety of *Macbeth* by focusing on a single stage effect (i.e., the knock), proposing that once a reader understands the process of this mere effect, she can adequately comprehend the entire play—character, plot, and all. In "Theory of Greek Tragedy," he traces all the differences between English and Greek tragedy to the limitations that the Greek amphitheater imposes on Attic drama. His interest in *Hamlet* lies not in any philosophical quandary raised in the discourse of the characters, as we will see, but rather in the technical considerations entailed by staging its mise en abyme, *The Murder of Gonzago*. Unlike his contemporaries, De Quincey prizes in Hamlet not the melancholic prince, but the actor-manager (XI:490-1). And in his review of an Edinburgh production of *Antigone*, De Quincey's principal aim, to assess "the comparative fitness of the Antigone for giving a representative idea of the Greek Stage [on the British stage]," results in the conclusion that "the great hindrances to a perfect restoration of a Greek tragedy lie in peculiarities of our theatres that cannot be removed, because bound up with their purposes" (XV:331).

"On the Knocking at the Gate" is dramaturgic in its process too, as Jordan implies through his description of the basic structure for the *Macbeth* essay, which is "a feeling of the effect [of the murder scene], an awareness and a localization of that feeling, an analysis of the causative principle involved in its production, and finally a descriptive recapturing of

[20] John E. Jordan, *Thomas De Quincey: Literary Critic* (New York: Gordian Press, 1973), 98.

the effect for the benefit of the reader."[21] Like the regicide scene, De Quincey's four-page essay is a brief lyric moment so impassioned as to suspend time. Just as the temporality of the murder scene—what De Quincey calls "a deep syncope," a medical term for aposiopesis—is "cut off by an immeasurable gulph from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess," "On the Knocking at the Gate" starts with short remarks about the "ordinary" world in order to suspend that world for the impassioned account of the fiendish world hospitable to Duncan's death (III:153). Even on the most local scale, we can see De Quincey attempting to reduplicate the effect of the knock:

> From my boyish days I had always felt a great perplexity on one point in Macbeth: it was this: the knocking at the gate, which succeeds to the murder of Duncan, produced to my feelings an effect for which I never could account: the effect was—that it reflected back upon the murder a peculiar awfulness and a depth of solemnity: yet, however obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend this, for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect.— (III:150)[22]

The chain of colons parcels out the sentence, actively advancing the sentence forward part by part as a succession of scene breaks would a dramatic production. Whether or not one judges it vulgar, the aposiopesis enacted by the m-dashes clearly mimics the effect under investigation. The intensity, bafflement, and shock that De Quincey recognizes in the murder is registered into the very style of the study. This is criticism that is literary in both its object of inquiry and its mode of investigation. Like Hamlet, the spectator is an actor;

[21] Ibid., 97-8.
[22] Emphasis in the original; all emphases in the original.

the critic is a writer too. And if the dramaturgic critic is to be capable of replicating the literary effect that he sees in the piece of criticism that he writes, then reading must be an empirical experience, not of the words on the page, but rather of what the words represent.

The *Macbeth* essay draws out a precise definition of literary effect that is the building block for a phenomenal reading practice. Furthermore, this method of reading imbricates reader with theater-goer in order to produce a reading method that is affective in its mode of recognition. Jordan titles his chapter on the *Macbeth* essay "Literary Effect," but he misrecognizes the opening passage on the "understanding" and "effect" as a needless digression. If we look at the passage with stage-work in mind, we can see that De Quincey actually starts with this passage to describe—albeit obliquely, I'll admit—the phenomenality of his reading practice. A gap between understanding and effect occasioned "On the Knocking at the Gate." "However obstinately I endeavoured with my understanding to comprehend [the startling nature of the knocking]," he begins, "for many years I never could see *why* it should produce such an effect" (III:150). He had not been able to clarify the process of the effect because he had been apprehending it with the wrong faculty, i.e., the understanding. We know this because he quickly follows by warning the reader away from the understanding whenever the mental faculty opposes phenomenal apprehension. In an anti-Cartesian passage, he offers optical illusion as evidence by spotlighting the fact foreshortening distorts right angles and horizontal lines in order to chide an utterly rational reader whose "understanding, which includes no intuitive knowledge of the laws of vision, can furnish him with no reason why a line which is known

and can be proved to be a horizontal line, should not *appear* a horizontal line."[23] "Accordingly he makes," De Quincey adds, "the line of his houses a horizontal line, and fails of course to produce the effect demanded" (III:150-1). Reading purely through the understanding, then, is to read the text as mere abstraction, without any sensorial wherewithal. This passage prepares the reader to follow De Quincey as he reads the murder scene and directs the reader on *how* to read "On the Knocking at the Gate," that is, with a critical practice that brings aesthetics back to its etymological root in sense perception.

It is not haphazardly that De Quincey appropriates theater for his embodied reading practice. Theater's basic phenomenal nature makes dramatic theater the privileged literary space for studying the affect, emotion, and bodily response that underlie the apprehension, interpretation, and consensus of the reading process. As Elizabeth Dillon puts it, "the signifying economy [of the stage]…operates in two registers: one that is *ontic* (thingly, material, resolutely present) and one that is *mimetic* (referential, immaterial gesturing toward a scene located elsewhere)."[24] We can say then that De Quincey wants to retain the ontic-mimetic register of the staged object in his literary prose. Indeed, a knock is nothing but two objects bumping into each other. This essay will end by studying the inventions born out of De Quincey's stubborn insistence against the impossibility of a resolutely present literary object. But, for now, we need to see that the shimmer of the thingly, material quality of scenic display is what makes a text like *Macbeth* writing that is,

[23] "Intuitive knowledge" is a sly reference to John Locke. Chapter three touches upon Locke's conception of intuitive knowledge as the primary type of knowledge for the human understanding.
[24] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 50.

as Carolyn Williams says of *Daniel Deronda*, "concerned with producing the illusions of empirical experience."[25]

By insisting that stage-work can operate in writing, De Quincey invents dramaturgic criticism within the contemporary page-versus-stage debate. Like Charles Lamb's well-known thesis on the fitness of Shakespearean tragedy for the stage, De Quincey implicitly claims that tragedies are best experienced when read, not seen. The two agree in this way, but for diametrically opposing reasons. Lamb disparages stage productions of the English Bard because, as the argument goes, theater's scenic quality de-naturalizes the dramatic text. On the other hand, De Quincey exalts the reading of the dramatic text above all else precisely because the scenic quality of its staging is inscribed within the text. Lamb's stance is paradigmatic of Romantic antitheatrical prejudice: "what we see upon a stage is body and bodily action; what we are conscious of in reading is almost exclusively the mind, and its movements: and this, I think, may sufficiently account for the very different sort of delight with which the same play so often affects us in the reading and the seeing."[26] The two contemporary essayists agree on the general effect of theater's scenery, but oppose each other in their respective assessments of the theater-goers' embodied experience. De Quincey rejoins Lamb not by questioning the sensorial experience entailed by a stage production, but rather by questioning whether one should read exclusively conscious of the mind (i.e., the understanding), at the expense of the sensate body. De Quincey, who considers the classical essence of theater as Greek, quips in "Recollections of Charles Lamb": "Shakspeare, or anything connected with Shakspeare, might have proved too much

[25] Carolyn Williams, "Moving Pictures: George Eliot and Melodrama," in *Compassion*, edited by Lauren Berlant (New York: Routledge, 2004), 134.
[26] Charles Lamb, *Selected Prose*, edited by Adam Phillips (London: Penguin, 1985), 57.

for [Lamb's] Roman virtue" (X:243). De Quincey revels in spectacle, and he endeavors to make the sensationalism of seeing a play the sensationalism of reading a text.

"Redoubled and Redoubled": Coleridge and De Quincey Reading the Boy of Winander

To clarify De Quincey's method, we should turn to what he says about William Wordsworth, his primary object of criticism throughout his writing career. In a contest with Samuel Taylor Coleridge over the interpretation of "There Was a Boy," De Quincey generalizes dramaturgic criticism beyond dramatic criticism. In what is his most powerful and sustained criticism of Wordsworth, De Quincey renders the essential process of dramaturgic criticism—repetition and sensation—into the basic workings of literature writ large.

"There Was a Boy" is a touchstone passage for critics of Wordsworth, because the poem stands out as a self-contained, succinct text (a "deep syncope," if you will) that baldly allegorizes how the Wordsworthian poet derives poetry from the natural world. The poem is an elegy to a boy from Winander who died at the age of twelve. He has been immortalized for blowing "mimic hootings" to owls that would eventually respond in like. During pockets of silence in this call-and-response, all of nature would flood his sensibility:

> Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
> Would enter unawares into his mind
> With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received

Into the bosom of the steady lake.

De Quincey starts his commentary on this exemplary passage by highlighting the single word to which Coleridge objects: scene. In his reading of "There Was a Boy," found in *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge judges Wordsworth's denomination of the Winander Boy as a "visible scene" inaccurate, because it does not clearly refer to actors, stage, or scenery. De Quincey, on the other hand, finds "scene" appropriate, emphasizing the theatrical spectatorship implicit in "scene," which makes "scene" a matter of stage-work not strictly confined to the theater house. "There Was a Boy" is a scene insofar as it stages an episode according to the workings of theatrical spectatorship. So when De Quincey introduces Wordsworth's lines with an unacknowledged citation of "visible scene," and sentences later calls it "complex scenery," he means that the "visible scene" of Wordsworth's Windermere is a world to be seen and heard. As Coleridge sees it, Wordsworth diminishes the poem's effect in calling it a scene, because scenery implies an avowed falsity. In the terms of De Quincey's dramaturgic criticism, though, a scenic depiction is precisely what generates and amplifies a phenomenal effect for the reader. In "The Nightingale" Coleridge cautions his reader away from "hot theatres" because they draw one's attention away from nature's poetry, a caution which his commentary on the Winander Boy essentially repeats. Like Coleridge, De Quincey sees theater as a place in which to bathe in sensation, but it is in this way, the Opium-Eater avers, that all the world is a stage.

De Quincey distances himself further from Coleridge by venerating repetition as a basic aspect of theatrical production. He recognizes Coleridge's fear of theatrical reduplication and contrarily celebrates the act of restaging. The allusion in *Biographia* that

ends Coleridge's wary footnote on "scene"—"Prepare thou for another scene"—signals a fear of the iterative, interchangeable, and disjunctive quality of the theatrical scene that rose to prominence by the early nineteenth century.[27] As Mary Jacobus argues, Coleridge fears the repetition of the stage specifically because theatrical staging entails a "doubling whereby mimesis usurps what it represents." Julie A. Carlson demonstrates that Coleridge values the theater as a place to stage abstractions, noting that "Coleridge's plays portray antitheatricalism as the ideal state of mind, stage, and state" by critiquing theater of its histrionics and actions—which is to say of its phenomenality.[28] Thus, we can say that Coleridge fears the doubling whereby the phenomenality of scenic display compromises the autonomy of the abstraction that the stage is meant to present. For Coleridge theatrical repetition abides by the law of diminishing returns, in terms of vitiated abstraction.

On the other hand, De Quincey finds "There Was a Boy" moving precisely because of its theatrical repetition, which replicates, multiplies, and proliferates a penetrating instance that arrests the senses. He cites Francis Jeffrey's opinion that Wordsworth stands by the boy's grave for the sole reason of, in De Quincey's words, "mimicking the Windermere owls so well that not men only…might have been hoaxed, but actually the old birds themselves…were effectually humbugged into entering upon a sentimental correspondence of love or friendship" (XI:75). De Quincey mocks Jeffrey not because Lord Jeffrey considers the mimic hootings complete, efficacious replications of natural sound. The two agree that the mimic hoots are duplicate, "redoubled and redoubled," as Wordsworth describes the

[27] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, edited by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), II:103. Donohue, *Dramatic*, 32-41.
[28] Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference: Essays on* The Prelude (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 55. Julie A. Carlson, *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108.

echoes in his poem. De Quincey takes offense at Jeffrey's insinuation that Wordsworth's achievement is menial and attributes Jeffrey's shortcoming to a failure at recognizing the doubly replicated nature of Wordsworth's verse. De Quincey notes that if the boy's mimic hoots are complete replications of the owl's, then the poet's words mimic those mimic hoots. "For it is very evident," De Quincey writes, "that the very object of the poem is not the first or initial stage of the boy's history—the exercise of skill which led him, as an occasion, into a rigid tense effort of attention—not this, but the second stage, the consequence of that attention." "Even the attention was an effect, a derivative state," he notes without disparagement, adding, "but the second stage, upon which the poet fixes his object is an effect of that effect." Whereas the boy mimics nature's sound, the poet mimics the human mimicry. And each is an act of verisimilitude leaning into verity. The reader needs the boy there to recognize Wordsworth's achievement, for dramaturgic writing teaches us, through the mimic hoots, what to see in the verse: "else, and but for this circumstance upon the boy's power of mimicry, it is evident that the [poem's] 'accomplishment'…never would have been noticed" (XI:76). The perfect reduplication of the mimic hoots makes the sounds—like the knock—a scenic effect both phenomenal and representational. De Quincey presents a Wordsworth that is unfamiliar to us, a theatrical one whose repeated reduplication deepens poetic impression. Wordsworth's poem, in other words, is dramaturgic recollection.

By describing "There Was a Boy" as dramaturgic in its process, De Quincey transmutes the poem from a text that merely reflects nature to an episode in a chain of episodes in which each restages the one before it. If the Winander poem is "a sketch…of Wordsworth's attachment to nature in her grandest form" done dramaturgically, then it

must replicate, in nature, a prior text. To illustrate how Wordsworth reads nature as a text, De Quincey prefaces his reading of the Winander boy with an evocative anecdote of Wordsworth listening to the earth and watching the sky. De Quincey recounts a midnight walk with Wordsworth to wait for an English mail-coach's delivery of the *Courier*. While waiting for his daily copy of the newspaper, Wordsworth would, from time to time, put his ear to the ground with hopes to catch the sound of mail-coach wheels in the distance. When rising from one of these instances (doubtlessly "hung listening" in a "gentle shock of mild surprise"), he catches sight of a star for a deeply moving moment that, in the poet's words, "penetrated [his] capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the infinite, that would not have arrested [him] under other circumstances" (XI:74). Pathos, as Mary Favret reminds us, is the affective term in the rhetorical canon, which underscores "suffering" and "experience" in the act of reading.[29] According to De Quincey, the anecdote "illustrate[s] the same psychological principle" from the Boy of Winander (XI:75). The psychological principle that bridges anecdote and poem is dramaturgy. "There Was a Boy" issues forth as something to be seen and heard because Wordsworth had seen and heard with such pathos. In effect, De Quincey esteems Wordsworth's poem because the world inside is a mise en scène, encouraging its reader to, as Elizabeth Dillon says of the theatrical audience, "attend to a world mediated by the relation between materiality and figurality, and to the deeply political nature of this mediation."[30]

De Quincey ends his account of the Winander Boy by aligning the poem with the *Macbeth* essay in order to widen the distance between him and Coleridge. De Quincey contrasts "Christabel" with "There Was a Boy" to argue that the latter, like the *Macbeth*

[29] Mary Favret, "The Pathos of Reading." *PMLA* 130.5 (2015), 1319-1320.
[30] Dillon, *Drama*, 29.

example, produces a literary effect that makes the poem impossible to comprehend through the understanding. "There Was a Boy" retains the very tension between understanding and effect that occasioned "On the Knocking at the Gate." He scrutinizes Coleridge for reconciling such a tension in "Christabel" for the sake of understanding. Citing the last handful of lines, he states, "*That* is Coleridge's solution; and the amount of it is—first, that it is delightful to call up what we know to be mimicry of evil, in order to feel its non-reality, to dally with phantoms of pain that do not exist." In other words, Coleridge conjures phantasmal straw men to stage a conflict easy for the understanding to resolve, leaving the contradictory case "not so much solved as further illustrated and amplified." Anticipating Jacobus and Carlson, De Quincey sees Coleridge divest phenomenality from his poem so that the understanding can dominate in an abstract world of unreality. Coleridge's failure De Quincey calls "mere mimicry," a reconciliation that *dis*solves the tension, leaving the case *un*solved. According to De Quincey's standard, Coleridge's verse fails by striving to be literature that is ultimately understandable, exclusively of and for the mind, a poem that, per Coleridgean organic form, "explain[s] itself" (XI:76).

The Winander scene, however, baffles its readers just like the regicide scene does precisely because it is not mere mimicry; the scene is fraught with thingly, material phenomenality, which impedes any attempt at complete rationalization. With Wordsworth's case solved, in this counterintuitive and convoluted sense, the Winander scene is "one of what [De Quincey] denominate[s] the antimonies of passion—cases of self-conflict in which the understanding says one thing, the impassioned nature of man says another thing." "Finally," De Quincey adds, "if solved completely, this case [of Wordsworth's] is but one of multitudes which are furnished by the English drama" (XI:77).

Drawing from what we have learned from *Macbeth*, we see that the "impassioned nature of man" is sensitized and stirred up by literary effect. Put another way: De Quincey judges "Christabel" ineffective because Coleridge mimics an abstraction, not a phenomenon, deeming it facile precisely because it is not staged enough.

This reading practice leads to De Quincey's claim that a text's organic unity is sensorially, not formally, determined. The bardolatry that ends the *Macbeth* essay characterizes the best literature as texts that sensitize its reader. "Oh! mighty poet!," he trumpets, "Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature…which are to be studied with entire submission of our faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert" (III:153). He formulates the workings of supreme literature through Shakespeare, as so many other Romantic thinkers do, and just like them, in terms of the organic unity of the work. However, De Quincey defines organic unity not by literary form, per se, but rather by the text's ability to demand *entire* submission of the human faculties, which means the understanding and the senses together, governed by the laws of vision and sound. In other words, organicism for De Quincey is not determined by "multeity in unity," by the necessary and constituent nature of a work's every part. Rather, any element in a text that demands sensorial attention is useful and indispensable ipso facto. The resultant text does not aspire to unity, but rather to disjunction; not for the efflorescence of a tree, but for the shock of a scene staged for all to see and hear.

The literalization of stage-work is, of course, a utopic horizon. To endow the literary object with ontic weight is an impossibility, because, as Georges Poulet reminds us, "by definition, [interior objects] are condemned to lose their materiality. They become images, ideas, words, that is to say purely mental entities. In sum, in order to exist as mental objects, they must relinquish their existence as real objects."[31] This fact De Quincey does not ignore. In trying to account for this brute reality of writing, he encroaches upon the fundamental problem that the sensorial body puts to writing, and vice versa. As we will see, De Quincey discovers that embodied reading is always already mediated by some sort of interior space—he calls this the "subconscious," and the mediated sensation produced by the circuit between text, subconscious, and body we will be able to call affect. De Quincey's theatric prose relies on a self-invented psychologism—the "psychological principle" of dramaturgy—as the means to obviate the problems entailed in making the sensorial body central to reading.

The starting point for the reading subject, as De Quincey sees it, is Spinozist affect. Affect, as Spinoza's general definition goes, is "a confused idea, by which the mind affirms of its body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the mind to think of this rather than that."[32] Affect is a category of thought that is stimulated by the body in flux. In an essay titled "Madness," De Quincey comes to the same conclusion independent of Spinoza, using personal experience as evidence to disprove the common notion that madness is a product purely of the mind.

[31] Georges Poulet, "The Phenomenology of Reading," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* edited by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2001), 1321.
[32] Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley (New York: Penguin, 1996), 112.

His bouts of madness, courtesy of his opium addiction, prove that madness "takes its rise in some part of the apparatus connected with the digestive organs." He shares: "it is sufficient to say that the power of thinking according to the degree in which [the digestive organs] were themselves affected was prodigious." Therefore it is more accurate to redefine thought so that the mind does not have, per Spinoza's phrase, "absolute dominion over its affects": "if we must use the phrase 'organ of thought' at all, on many grounds I should be disposed to say that the brain and the stomach-apparatus through their reciprocal action and reaction jointly make up the compound organ of thought" (III:180-1).[33] Thus, the antimonies of passion that we encountered at the end of the previous section result from a thoroughly active organ of thought, and the bafflement that the reader experiences due to the productive tension between the understanding and literary effect is precisely the "confused idea" of affect.

What we see, then, is that De Quincey enlists the phenomenality of the theatrical object to stimulate the body for affective reading. He builds a theory out of this practice of theatric prose, one that creates a concept for literature that Jonathan Bate, among others, considers the beginning of literariness as we know it today.[34] De Quincey introduces the concept the "literature of power" in "Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected" (1823). He starts by correcting what he sees as a common mistake: the conflation of "book" with "literature." There are books such as spelling books and almanacs that have no purpose other than informing its reader, which should not be considered literature. There are other books, though, that are valuable—indeed more valuable than

[33] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 69.
[34] Jonathan Bate, "The Literature of Power: Coleridge and De Quincey," in *Coleridge's Visionary Languages*, edited by Tim Fulford and Morton Paley (London: D.S. Brewer), 137-150. Bate: "he is, if you will, the inventor of Literature with a capital 'L'" (150).

the didactic "books of knowledge"—even though "there is no instruction in it." Indeed, he considers the absence of didacticism the mark of true literature: "all that is literature, seeks to communicate power; all, that is not literature, to communicate knowledge." Although this might seem a commonplace distinction now, it would surprise many to read that the body is the crux for this distinction. "Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power," he continues, "I in my turn would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unawakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness" (III:70-1). By now, we know to read "vividly" and "vital" as corporeal terms. He aligns the distinction between knowledge and embodied power with the one between the understanding and phenomenal literary effect when he revisits the literature of power at the end of his writing career, first in an essay on Oliver Goldsmith: "literature—provided we use that word not for the mere literature of knowledge, but for the literature of power—using it for literature as it speaks to what is genial in man, viz.—to the human *spirit*, and *not* for literature, (falsely so called,) as it speaks to the meagre understanding is a fine art" (XVI:323). And then in an essay on Alexander Pope, written three months after that:

> There is first the literature of *knowledge,* and secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is—to *teach*; the function of the second is—to *move*…The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding or reason; the second speaks ultimately it may happen to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. (XVI:336)

The literature of power "moves" in physiological terms, reaching the understanding *through* affect. Literature of power is meant to induce in the reader's body a "greater or lesser force of existing than before," which prompts "the mind to think of this rather than that." This is the distractive, surreptitious quality of affect of which Wordsworth speaks (most certainly ventriloquizing De Quincey's words) when he lifts his ear from the ground: "if under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances" (XI:74). And, as we should remember with the *Macbeth* essay, it is the phenomenality of the literary effect that stimulates the body to redirect sensory perception. Affective reading in these terms is sensuous apprehension that is stimulated by the literature of power to impact thought.

Even though it starts with Spinoza's general definition of affect, the literature of power ultimately finds the Spinozist model inadequate for its conception of the body, pointing out a contradiction in the philosopher's content and form. In *Ethics*, Spinoza declares the geometric method that he uses to argue for the legitimacy of affective thought: "I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes, and bodies."[35] According to the passage in "Letters," this abstract understanding of the body is precisely what literature targets. I quote at length and in piecemeal to show how De Quincey makes dramaturgic criticism and the subconscious constituent parts of the

[35] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 69.

literature of power. We begin with De Quincey describing the communication of power as embodied thought:

> Now, if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I in my turn would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting, and which had previously lain unawakened, and hardly within the dawn of consciousness—as myriads of modes of feeling are at this moment in every mind for want of a poet to organize them?—I say, when these inert and sleeping forms *are* organized—when the possibilities *are* actualized,—is this conscious and living possession of mine *power*, or what is it?

Power involves a direct causal link between embodied thought and the subconscious, a word that De Quincey, for all intents and purposes, coined. This link already defines the gap between emotion and affect that current affect theory has purportedly discovered. Because of its nascent, ethereal, and pre-signified nature, the "modes of feeling" anticipates what we now consider affect. That the poet "organize[s]" and "actualize[s]" these forms means, in current affective terms, that literature is an aesthetic means by which language is used to conceptualize affect into emotions. The key difference from affect theory is that, without the break from Spinoza's general definition, the affective zone is interior to the subject, which makes the powerful process immanent in the reader, for reasons we will come to see shortly. For evidence, De Quincey follows with a dramaturgic account of *King Lear*. Note how the storm of m-dashes throttles the passage back and forth for antiphon, reverb, reflection, the antimonies of passion.

> When King Lear, the height and depth, and breadth of human passion is revealed to us—and for the purposes of a sublime antagonism is revealed in the weakness of an old man's nature, and in one night two worlds are brought face to face—the human world, and the world of physical nature—mirrors of each other, semichoral antiphonies, strophe and antistrophe heaving with rival convulsions, and which the double darkness of night and madness,—when I am suddenly startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me, is this power?

M.H. Abrams' seminal study *The Mirror and the Lamp* has defined Romanticism's major aesthetic revolution as the shift from reflection to projection, which entails a newfound sense of interiority. One way to characterize De Quincey as a transitional figure at the end of Romanticism is to see that he redirects the projection fully inward, making his work not so much a lamp's as a magic lantern's show. The reenactment of the cliff scene prepares the reader for De Quincey's critique of subjective space understood through geometric method.

> Or what may I call it? Space, again—what is it in most men's minds? The lifeless form of the world without us—a postulate of the geometrician, with no more vitality or real existence to their feelings, than the square root of two. But, if Milton has been able to *inform* this empty theatre—peopling it with Titanic shadows…so that, from being a thing to inscribe with diagrams, it has become under his hands a vital agent on the human mind; I presume that I may justly express the tendency of the Paradise Lost, by saying that it communicates power; a pretension far above all communication of knowledge. (III:71)

To understand the compound organ of thought through lines, planes, and geometric body is inadequately corporeal. Massumi states, "in Spinoza, it is only when the idea of the

affection is doubled by an *idea of the idea of the affection* that it attains the level of conscious reflection."[36] Instead of exploiting this contradiction to disarticulate affect from the body for a surface experience of affect, which makes literature an impoverished candidate for affective thought, De Quincey wants to keep affect immanent in the body and make literature a supreme agent of corporeal thought. Like opium, his operative figure for literature, literary power enters the body as a vital agent of embodied thought because it spatializes the subject's interiority, and this is where the theater proves supremely instrumental. De Quincey's underscore—*inform*—pronounces a pun. He conceptualizes interior space not in terms of geometric extensivity, but rather as an aesthetic space for phenomenal signs such as shadows and diagrams that are chiseled into matter. Indeed, when he details the effects that opium has on his imagination, he says, "a corresponding change took place in my dreams; a theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain" (II:64). The last verb conclusively defines theater not as literary genre, but rather as phenomenal space for a public imagination. So when De Quincey emphasizes that the power of "There Was a Boy" resides in the fact that the poem reaches *far* into the reader's heart, the distance that the poetic shock travels is measured more accurately by Doppler effect than geometry. That is, the distance modulates the effect, and the effect is meant to be empirical.

We have come to the central problem: in order for dramaturgic criticism to work as intended, something in textuality, as well as in the subject's interiority, must replicate, or at least estimate, the phenomenality of the stage. De Quincey is not blind to this problem; nor

[36] Massumi, *Parables*, 31.

does he shy away. He turns to the technical consideration for what we know as mise en abyme, for which he coins the term "introvolution":

> Every person remembers the remarkable instance of this in Hamlet. Sometimes the same thing takes place in painting. We see a chamber, suppose, exhibited by the artist, on the walls of which (as a customary piece of furniture) hangs a picture. And as this picture again might represent a room furnished with pictures, in the mere logical possibility of the case we might imagine this descent into a life below a life going on *ad infinitum*. Practically, however, the process is soon stopped. A retrocession of this nature is difficult to manage. The original picture is a mimic—an unreal life. But this unreal life is itself a real life with respect to the secondary picture; which again must be supposed realized with relation to the tertiary picture, if such a thing were attempted. Consequently, at every step of the *introvolution*, (to neologize a little in a case justifying a neologism,) something must be done to differentiate the gradations, and to express the subordinations of life; because each term in the descending series, being first of all a mode of non-reality to the spectator, is next to assume the functions of a real life in its relations to the next lower or interior term of the series.

His interest lies in the intermediate stages, specifically in how each must be at once an ideal ("unreal") stage for a prior stage as well as a "real life" for a subsequent one. *Hamlet* is a paradigmatic play because it is at once a representation for its viewer as well as a material world for *The Murder of Gonzago*. De Quincey insists that even language can evoke the stage's ontic register, which "differentiate[s] the gradations, and [] express[es] the subordination of life." Shakespeare achieves the differentiation of introvoluted worlds

through prosody. The *Mousetrap* players "unrealized" the world of the internal theater with stiff meter, hard rhyme, and lofty diction: "the secret, the law, of the process by which [Shakespeare] accomplishes [the differentiation between introvoluted worlds] is to swell, tumefy, stiffen, not the diction only, but the tenor of the thought—in fact, to stilt it, and to give it a prominence and an ambition beyond the scale which [Shakespeare] adopted for his ordinary life" (XI:490-1). Thus we can say that the knock that punctuates the suspension of "ordinary life" is a pointedly literary effect and the power of the regicide scene relies on the suspension of the ordinary world of the play so that a "new [introvoluted] world may step in" (III:153). Introvolution is a literary technique that attempts to preserve the ontic-mimetic quality of stage-work in the textuality of the drama on its own, which makes any play like *Macbeth* immanently staged.

But this only defers the problem of embodied reading. As De Quincey himself admits in the introvolution passage, the problem with the abyssal structure ("the human world, and the world of physical nature—mirrors of each other") is how to stop the infinite regress. Furthermore, there is a chance that when it stops there was no object there to begin with. Introvolution interiorizes the promise of materiality, but then the phenomenality characteristic of the literature of power requires some introvoluted version of phenomenal apprehension for affective reading to take place. If dramaturgic criticism ultimately invents a second-order realm of phenomenality nested within the one that we consider the material world, what must we need for sensory apprehension to work with a world swelled, tumefied, and stiffened beyond the scale of "ordinary life"?

Herein lies the occasion for De Quincey's groundbreaking psychologism. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, he coined the term "subconscious," and he did so, I argue,

as a way to obviate the problems of embodied reading. As Fredrick Burwick has demonstrated, the subconscious draws together De Quincey's desultory comments on the literature of power, and, conversely, finds its provenance in literary criticism.[37] On the one hand, the first two citations for "subconscious" come from texts of historical and literary criticism. On the other, he labels the *Macbeth* essay "psychological criticism" and his entry on Shakespeare for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* "psychological biography"; recall also the "psychological principle" that motivates "There Was a Boy." What is of interest to us now is the depth of the neologism. He coins the word with a mere prefix that gives depth to a word attributed to Coleridge, "unconscious" (in its nominative form). The "sub-" gives the zone other than consciousness an abyssal structure, courtesy of introvolution, which will be apparent after studying De Quincey's most well-known figure for the subconscious.

The palimpsest appears in *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845) as the figure for the subconscious. *Suspiria* is the prequel to *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. Whereas *Confessions*, as the author sees it, focuses on the "grandeur which belongs *potentially* to human dreams," *Suspiria* explores what furnishes the particular content to De Quincey's visions by plumbing "the dream-theatre of [his] childhood" (XV:129, 169). After a long opening section comprising a string of childhood anecdotes, he dedicates an entire section to the palimpsest, which serves as a hinge for the whole. He starts by assessing the current status of the writing instrument. Recent technological advances had redefined the value of the palimpsest to the nineteenth-century subject. One change involves the spatial depth and materiality of the instrument. Although a palimpsest's present manuscript can only be legible due to the erasure of all previous manuscripts, recent advancements in chemistry

[37] Fredrick Burwick, *Thomas De Quincey: Knowledge and Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

have proven that the material presence of past manuscripts are erased imperfectly and have enabled the nineteenth-century reader to bring the material traces of obsolescent texts back to light: "the traces of each successive handwriting, regularly effaced, as had been imagined, have, in the inverse order, been regularly called back." And it is with this figure that De Quincey declares, "a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain." This results in a figure of the mind quite opposite to John Locke's camera obscura, with its endless series of discrete, immaterial representations: "everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet in reality not one has been extinguished." Within something as sheer as a membrane, De Quincey has invented depth, infinite, striated depth, of which each level has its own materiality.

The palimpsest is actually a figure that compounds writing with theater. First, there is the introvoluted structure of the palimpsest. "Even the fable of the Phoenix," he states, "is but a type of what we have done with Palimpsests. We have backed upon each Phoenix in the long *regressus*, and forced him to expose his ancestral Phoenix, sleeping in the ashes below his own ashes." Furthermore, the palimpsest's base layer is theatrical. The exemplary palimpsest in *Suspiria* adumbrates the epochs of literary history, each indexed by a representative genre: "the Greek tragedy, the monkish legend, the knightly romance, each has ruled its own period." De Quincey then yokes literary history to the stages of a person's life: "in some potent convulsion of the system, all wheels back into its earliest elementary stage…The romance has perished that the young man adored. The legend has gone that deluded the boy. But the deep deep tragedies of infancy…remain lurking below all, and these lurk to the last." It is crucial that De Quincey renders the beginning stage of

one's life, "deep deep" infancy, through what De Quincey considers the beginning of literary history, Attic tragedy, which transfers its essentially material, phenomenal character to infancy so that the subconscious traces of childhood can anchor the process of embodied reading.

The materiality of childhood events stored in the subconscious is the "practical" way to stop the infinite regression of introvolution and ground the process for embodied reading. This means that the subconscious works through dramaturgic criticism and that, like literary criticism, the subconscious is theatrical in its operation. A powerful shock to the body ("some potent convulsion to the system") forces the mind to think of that, i.e. what lies in the subconscious, instead of this, i.e. what is in the consciousness. For evidence, he returns to the figure of the mental theater to reference a lady who recounts seeing her life's events in a limelight flash during a near-death experience: "at a certain stage of this descent, a blow seemed to strike her—phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eyeballs; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain" (XV:172-176). The physiological reaction to the sudden appearance of an incipiently material projection shows that the literature of power is phantasmagoria in literary form, which formalizes the eighteenth-century link between the subconscious and phantasmagoria into a nineteenth-century writing practice.[38] Literature of power convulses the body, enabling the reader to access her subconscious. (It is noteworthy that opium—the figure for the literature of power—and the near-death experience—which finds its literary form as the "deep syncope"—are designated the two supreme agents for accessing the subconscious.) The projection of past events stimulates the affective confusion of idea that, in turn, embodies

[38] The locus classicus is Terry Castle's brilliant cultural study *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Inventions of the Uncanny*.

the reader, making the reading body all the more sensitive to the literature of power. There is no hitch with this relay when you consider it going forward. The problem lies in the inaugural instance. It appears that a reader requires something external like opium, a near-death experience, or perhaps conviction enough in the efficacy of dramaturgic criticism to jumpstart the alternating current between literature and the subconscious that powers embodied reading. Stephen Shapiro shows that cultural workers in eighteenth-century Britain and France grew print culture out of its nascent stage by placing stimulation at the site of reading, like in the coffeehouse, for instance.[39] De Quincey has made the text itself the site of stimulating consumption, unmooring it from any other commodity, making literature autonomously sensational. Literature, in fact, becomes an aesthetic medium for intensity between bodies.

It is clear why De Quincey would want to theorize the "gross and violent stimulants" that Wordsworth deplores into the very process of Romantic recollection. It would grant the Opium-Eater supreme authority and privileged access to the sublime truths of literature. But getting the body involved in writing is tough work. About De Quincey's indelible contributions to literary style, Virginia Woolf writes, "he altered slightly the ordinary relationships. He shifted the values of familiar things. And this he did in prose, which makes us…ask further whether the prose writer, the novelist, might not capture fuller and finer truths than are now his aim if he ventured into those shadowy regions where De Quincey has been before him."[40] Woolf is, of course, commenting on the psychologism of De Quincey's writing. Woolf is not aware—at least not here—that the

[39] Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2008), 71-82.
[40] Virginia Woolf, "Impassioned Prose," in *Selected Essays*, edited by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

shadowy regions are in fact the shadows of the theater, not only those in the wings, but also those on stage, made by the limelight and the objects on the boards. Embodied reading can only be possible in the age of modern psychology, and, conversely, depth psychology was born out of an effort to make reading literature immanently sensational. In order to conceptualize literariness so that it involves the body, De Quincey had to invent the subconscious and enlisted the theater's help.

CHAPTER TWO

THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S INVENTIVE PROSE (CONTRA BACON): RHETORIC, STYLE, IDEOLOGY

Just pages ago I mentioned ever so briefly that I see a fundamental difference between the process of representation as figured by Locke's camera obscura and De Quincey's palimpsest. These middle chapters culminate into an attempt to substantiate this assertion and consider the consequences of this opposition. The current chapter establishes the context for De Quincey's counter-image by attending to his stated objections to Sir Francis Bacon. There is a strong line between Bacon and Locke, which, although obscured somewhat by twentieth-century scholarship, was readily apparent to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers of the British Enlightenment.[41] De Quincey saw this line and attacked each of its ends with each of his direct statements on the "literature of power," what we know from the previous chapter as the De Quinceyean category for literariness. He introduces the literature of power at the beginning of his career in "Letters to a Young Man Whose Education has been Neglected" (1823). The section therein titled "Outline of the Work" ends by upbraiding Locke's *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* as utterly impractical (III:56). Only at the end of his career does De Quincey talk directly about the literature of power again, giving the fullest account in "The Works of Alexander Pope" (1848). This passage he starts by declaring, "the *idola theatri* affect us all," a dismissal this time of Francis Bacon. Chapters two and three will follow these leads. By the end of these middle chapters, we will be able to see that De Quincey creates the literature of power as

[41] Neal Wood, "The Baconian Character of Locke's *Essay*," in *John Locke: Critical Assessments: Volume IV*, edited by Richard Ashcraft (London: Routledge), 333-373.

an anti-Enlightenment category. If William Wordsworth transvalued poetry by pitting it against not prose, but science, shifting the defining characteristic of poetry from literary conventions to effect, De Quincey after him did the same with literature, creating literariness in opposition to the scientific method invented by two of the founding fathers of the British Enlightenment.

De Quincey's retort to Bacon questions the very efficacy of the Baron's innovative method for natural science. The *idola theatri*—the Idols of the Theater—is the last of the four Idols of the Mind, which Bacon stakes out at the beginning of *Novum Organum* to mark off the appropriate field of inquiry for his method. Bacon clearly considered *Novum Organum* the most important and consequential of his works, occupying the crucial stage in the six step process that he lays out for the "Great Instauration" of natural science and philosophy. As the title explicitly declares, *Novum Organum* proposes a new method of inquiry meant to usurp the Aristotelian one that had been long dominant up to Bacon's day. This was the main impetus for his life's work, and, indeed, with *Novum Organum* Bacon established the inductive method for general truth that started Enlightenment philosophy. Early on in the text, Bacon lists out the Idols of the Mind, the categories of specious truth that Bacon implores thinkers to avoid. He maps out the interdicted terrain with these four idols, which obstruct one from true knowledge attained by "simple sensuous perception."[42] In ascending order of obstructiveness, they are the Idols of the Tribe (i.e., human physiological nature), the Idols of the Cave (i.e., personal history), the Idols of the Marketplace (i.e., cultural knowledge), and the Idols of the Theater (i.e., systems of

[42] Francis Bacon. *The New Organon and Related Writings,* edited by Fulton H. Anderson (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960), 34.

knowledge passed down through intellectual history). The introductory description of the *idola theatri* follows in full:

> Lastly, there are Idols which have immigrated into men's minds from the various dogmas of philosophies, and also from wrong laws of demonstration. These I call Idols of the Theater, because in my judgment all the received systems are but so many stage plays, representing worlds of their creation after an unreal and scenic fashion. Nor is it only of the systems now in vogue, or only of the ancient sects and philosophies, that I speak; for many more plays of the same kind may yet be composed and in like artificial manner set forth; seeing that errors the most widely different have nevertheless causes for the most part alike. Neither again do I mean this only of entire systems, but also of many principles and axioms in science, which by tradition, credulity, and negligence have come to be received.[43]

According to Bacon, in order for the Enlightenment thinker to arrive at inventive and natural truths, he must first turn his back on systems of thought received from the past. The Idols of the Theater is a proto-notion of ideology, and De Quincey's rejoinder—"the *idola theatri* affect us all"—is an Althusserian critique that questions the possibility of any position outside of ideology.[44]

Even though Bacon is directly responsible for the emergence of ideology as a theoretical concept and as a field of study, to call the Idols of the Theater ideology is of

---

[43] Ibid., 49.

[44] Cf. Chapters one and two in Hans Barth *Truth and Ideology*. From which*:* "Just as Condillac and de Tracy honored Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* as the work that prepared and in part anticipated the critique of ideas, so Helvetius and Holbach resorted to Bacon's *Great Instauration* as the arsenal to equip themselves for their battle against all forces that resisted the effort of making knowledge fully effective" (18).

In *The Ideology of Imagination*, Forest Pyle reads the work of canonical Romantic poets (including T.S. Eliot) to leverage a critique of Romantic Ideology, as defined by Jerome McGann, upon this same Althusserian fulcrum.

course an anachronism. To call De Quincey's response ideology is not, though. In 1796, Destutt de Tracy proposed a new "science of the mind" called *idéologie*. That very year, on the other side of the English Channel, William Taylor translated the newly minted field of knowledge as "ideology." Initially, ideology simply demarcated a field of study inspired by the British Enlightenment, comprising epistemology and linguistic theory. De Tracy sought simply to continue the work of John Locke vis a vis Étienne Condillac, who, in his turn, expressly resumed Bacon's project to mark off all possible means for false ideas. Ideology did not attain its overtly political and derogatory connotation until Napoleon Bonaparte complicated the term. The popular notion of ideology arose when Napoleon attacked the Enlightenment principles and institution that founded the very term:

> It is to the doctrine of the ideologues—to this diffuse metaphysics, which in a contrived manner seeks to find the primary causes and on this foundation would erect the legislation of peoples, instead of adapting the laws to a knowledge of the human heart and of the lessons of history—to which one must attribute all the misfortunes which have befallen our beautiful France.[45]

In a turn of irony consummately Jacobin, the field of knowledge directly indebted to the Baconian principles of Enlightenment philosophy stood accused of the very accusation that gave it legitimacy.[46]

---

[45] Quoted in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 108.

[46] Perhaps due to the limits of space, Williams implies that Napoleon's derogation of ideology on political and moral grounds is purely circumstantial. The first chapter of Hans Barth's *Truth and Ideology* proves otherwise. Barth:

> Though not all ideologues were men of political action, their philosophical labors nevertheless acquired a political character when they attempted to make their ideas effective through public education and enlightenment...Bonaparte's ruthless behavior toward the ideologues showed only too well that he was anything but indifferent toward these "sinister metaphysicians" who, he disdainfully remarked, crept about him like vermin. His persecution of them made it evident that their faith in reason was a power to

De Quincey does not engage with the work of the French ideologues directly. Nor does he ever use the term ideology, at least to my knowledge. But, as Orrin Wang notes, "Romanticism arguably constitutes a thought experiment about ideology—about its scope, implications, and very theoretical efficacy as a working concept." The history of ideology starts in Romanticism. Ideology emerges during the turbulent 1790s. William Taylor is an early translator of and advocate for German Romanticism. Napoleon's transformation of the term works ideology all the more into the texture of Romanticism. Understanding ideology through its "truly dialectical" relationship with Romanticism is necessary for an accurate, complete sense of the sets of concerns that have driven the debates over and confusions about ideology—and Romanticism, for that matter—throughout the ages.[47] What I mean to argue is that De Quincey invents in literary form a concept that is recognizable to us as aesthetic ideology. Ideology accrued the connotations of political domination, metaphysics, empiricism, and persuasion through historical happenstance, but various moments in intellectual history, like *The German Ideology*, knotted these disparate threads together into what we now recognize as ideology. What I wish to show is that De Quincey also knots these elements together, but he uses literature to do so. By tying a theory of literary aesthetics, an innovative, Romantic notion of rhetoric, and a

---

> be reckoned with. Enlightenment has always had a political potential, and in this case it proved effective because it provided a measure of the original intent of the Revolution and its consequent destruction by Bonapartist despotism. (8)

It is in this way that the beginning of part five of Louis Althusser's "Reply to John Lewis" sounds particularly Napoleonic: "'Speculative philosophies have a political *interest* in making believe that they are *disinterested* or that they are only 'moral', and not really practical and political" (91). James Chandler also provides a persuasive account on similar lines in *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 217-230. In terms of the intellectual tradition, just about all of Hans Aarsleff's *From Locke to Saussure*, but in particular the chapters titled "The Tradition of Condillac," "Wilhelm von Humboldt and the Linguistic Thought of the French *Idéologues*," and "Wordsworth, Language, and Romanticism."

[47] Orrin N.C. Wang, "Ideology," in *A Handbook of Romanticism Studies*, edited by Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 245.

groundbreaking account of depth psychology all together, De Quincey naturalizes what was then tenuously connected elements into a concept of literariness capable of propagating a coherent notion of what we today would call ideology.

RHETORIC: THE DEATH OF RHETORIC NARRATIVE, RICHARD WHATELY'S LOGIC, AND DE QUINCEY'S CASE

If anything, De Quincey understands rhetoric. He was a life-long essayist. Nobody wrote as successfully as he did for periodicals across the whole political spectrum, jump-starting his career with *London Magazine*, spending decades hopping between *Blackwood's* and *Tait's*, and ending with publications for the Catholic-minded *The North British Review* and *Hogg's Instructor*. And he did so without ever compensating his high Tory line. De Quincey fancied himself a rhetorician too. With "Elements of Rhetoric" (December 1828) and the four essays that compose "Style" (July, September, and October 1840 and February 1841), he fashions a rhetorical theory which, as I will argue, is part and parcel of his general theory of literature. In order to do so, we will have to first reconstitute the crisis in the British rhetorical tradition that occasioned De Quincey's foray into rhetoric. The root cause of the crisis is Bacon, which De Quincey recognizes. De Quincey's Romantic experimentation with rhetoric attacks the sort of perspicuous language that Bacon values in order to define the key terms for his theory of persuasion, "rhetoric" and "eloquence." Bacon's aversion to classical rhetoric is symptomatic of his general aversion to not only systems of knowledge (and an Aristotelian one at that), but also language as dictated by the vulgate world, which is to say that rhetoric stands out as both an Idol of the Marketplace and an Idol of the Theater. Therefore, we will end our chapter by turning to an example in

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater in which De Quincey wanders through the shops and theaters of a low-end London district to see De Quincey's anti-Enlightenment rhetoric in action.

In what is a characteristic move, De Quincey starts "Elements of Rhetoric" by announcing its own originality and importance, this time by declaring the obsolescence of the tradition within which he proposes to work. "No art cultivated by man has suffered more in revolutions of taste and opinion than the art of Rhetoric," he begins, continuing:

> There was a time when, by an undue extension of this term, it designated the whole cycle of accomplishments which prepared a man for public affairs. From that height it has descended to a level with the arts of alchemy and astrology, as holding out promises which consist in a mixed degree of impostures wherever its pretensions happened to be weighty, and of trifles wherever they happened to be true. (VI:156)

Midway through the essay, the death knell rings more loudly: "No; the age of Rhetoric, like that of Chivalry, has passed amongst forgotten things; and the rhetorician can have no more chance for returning than the rhapsodist of early Greece or the troubadour of romance" (VI:163).

This end of rhetoric narrative is commonly accepted even to this day. It is generally accepted across many fields and communities of knowledge that the British rhetorical tradition died in the nineteenth century. Historian of rhetoric Lois Agnew establishes exigence for her book on De Quincey's rhetoric by simply pointing to this "gap in rhetorical history" as self-evident truth.[48] The gap is conspicuous in the Wikipedia entry for "Rhetoric" (as accessed on 11 April 2018), drawing a timeline that hops from the

[48] Lois Peters Agnew, *Thomas De Quincey: British Rhetoric's Romantic Turn* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012), ix.

eighteenth century to a "revival of rhetorical study" "at the turn of the 20th century."[49] In the classroom anthology *The Rhetorical Tradition*, the headnote "Nineteenth-Century Rhetoric" contains a paragraph titled "Romanticism and Rhetoric" that starts with the summary statement that "the central themes of Romanticism are…fundamentally antirhetorical."[50] John Bender and David Wellbery have made a project out of creating an elaborate thesis for this account of the history of rhetoric by convening a conference, collecting the papers, and writing an introduction for the essay collection. According to their introduction, the essays in *The Ends of Rhetoric* prove that the Enlightenment begins a centuries-long lapse that ended with Romanticism, an era in which rhetoric was devalued across all fields of knowledge and displaced by a purportedly objective standpoint, establishing an "arhetorical" bent in the arts of learning. "What the Enlightenment accomplished in the domains of theoretical and practical discourse," they continue, "Romanticism achieved in the aesthetic domain." When the concept of the genius author cohered and was instituted as the basic element of literature, values like expressiveness, originality, and authenticity thoroughly evacuated rhetoric's canons from literary production, "set[ting] the paradigm for the postrhetorical production, interpretation, and historiography of literature."[51] Because a complex set of discoveries like the Heisenberg principle and Foucauldian analysis compromised the authority of transparency, neutrality, and objectivity, rhetoric revived at the turn into what they call Modernism in a more flexible form: "*Modernism is an age not of rhetoric, but of rhetoricality,"* they propose, "the

[49] *Wikipedia*, "Rhetoric," accessed April 11, 2018.
[50] Patricia Bizell and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present.* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1990), 665.
[51] John Bender and David E. Wellbery, "Rhetoricality: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric," in *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice,* edited by John Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 7, 15.

age, that is, of a generalized rhetoric that penetrates to the deepest levels of human experience."[52]

Even though all these authoritative accounts from such disparate communities of knowledge are congruent in locating the terminal point of the rhetorical tradition in Romanticism, "postrhetorical" is surely a step too far. For one, Jerome Christensen has long ago proven that Samuel Taylor Coleridge's innovative conception of the genius in *Biographia Literaria* is a textually-specific and -reliant mode of rhetoric that endows the literary critic with ethos and provides him with a mode of literary invention.[53] Moreover, and on a more basic level, it is hard for anyone, needless to say a Romanticist, to see Romantic literature as a collective project for the "postrhetorical production, interpretation, and historiography of literature." This is, after all, the age commonly defined as starting with the polemics around the French Revolution, the period of political organs and the birth of partisan politics, the years in which English arts and letters were preoccupied with debates over British national character.[54] This is a time in which a writer like John Keats, whose poetry has been cited en masse throughout the generations as the epitome of apolitical poetry, was attacked on class lines.

De Quincey is still singular, though, as a writer within the Romantic tradition who works directly and expressly within the British rhetorical tradition. The Aristotelian art of persuasion was indeed generally disparaged in the nineteenth century. But classical rhetoric's absence in public practice is more like a game of hide and seek than a case of

[52] Ibid., 25.
[53] Jerome Christensen, "The Genius in the 'Biographia Literaria,' *Studies in Romanticism* 17.2 (1978), 215-231. "The rhetoric I have in mind would read," Christensen says, "like *a* rhetoric functioning rhetorically, a performative taxonomy, a rhetorical machine" (216-7). Additionally, there was far from a consensus on what "genius" meant in the Romantic era. *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics*, by David Higgins, is a cultural study that surveys the debates over the term "genius" during this time.
[54] Cf. Linda Colley, *Britons* and Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*.

death and resurrection. G.A. Kennedy's seminal history of rhetoric, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, marks out the history of rhetoric as an oscillation between eras in which what he calls "primary rhetoric" dominates and those in which "secondary rhetoric" does. Primary rhetoric is the classical tradition of canonical rhetoric: techniques of oral persuasion for specific situations. On the other hand, secondary rhetoric deals primarily in the textual, "refer[ring] to rhetorical techniques as found in discourse, literature, and art forms when those techniques are not being used for an oral, persuasive purpose." Periodically, secondary rhetoric mutes primary rhetoric out of the common understanding of rhetoric, leaving secondary rhetoric the presiding denotation for the term, which shrinks the rhetorical canons down to just one canon, elocution.[55] (Throughout this chapter, "rhetoric" will refer to primary rhetoric, and "eloquence" will refer to secondary rhetoric, as consistently as possible.) Romanticism, then, is not a postrhetorical age, per se, but rather the apogee of what is arguably the current age dominated by secondary rhetoric.[56] So when De Quincey stands out as one looking to salvage canonical rhetoric at the end of the Romantic era, we can avoid using Bender and Wellbery's clumsy term and just describe his success—if it is one—as a turning point after which literary discourses start to turn back to primary rhetoric.

Kennedy's schema allows us to see that secondary rhetoric triumphed in the Enlightenment period due not to any "arhetorical" tactic at all. In "Mercury's Words: The

[55] G.A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 2-3. "Analytic Speech: From Restricted to General Rhetoric" by Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen in *The Ends of Rhetoric* is relevant.

[56] One would only have to look at Paul de Man's work to evidence Romanticism as an age of secondary rhetoric. His definition of rhetoric, which has brought rhetoric out of the wings of Romantic studies and into the spotlight, is nothing but a study of tropes, which makes invention and arrangement matters determined merely by intertextuality and allegory. Moreover, his literary theory is comprehensively textual, making *memoria* and *pronuntiatio* moot in his sense of (an archly literary) history.

End of Rhetoric and the Beginning of Prose," John Guillory proves that a very specific sort of eloquence, the modern notion of "plain style," emerged triumphantly by the eighteenth century because a group of early modern writers and thinkers "circulated [the doctrine of plain style] in sermon theory and in natural philosophy as an internal critique of the rhetorical system."[57] Guillory too acknowledges that there was a collective effort across science, literature, religion, and philosophy during the early modern period that successfully besmirched classical rhetoric as (using De Quincey's words) "ostentatious ornament" or "an art of sophistry." He keeps his focus more closely on what is happening with language, though, noting that this campaign was carried out by advocates for the superiority of "plain style," what Demosthenes coined *genus humile*, perspicuous language that ostensibly says just what it means.[58] The doctrine of plain style delegitimizes canonical rhetoric by asserting that one uses language properly only when one simply expresses oneself clearly. "Style is no longer defined by a deliberate choice between rhetorical levels or *genera dicendi*, but emerges out of the psyche or character of the individual," Guillory notes. This campaign was—or has been—resoundingly successful because the great vulnerability of the systematic understanding of rhetoric is that the *genus humile* "could be deployed as an antirhetorical principle within rhetoric itself," a tactic we see prominently even today: "The plain style functioned as a critique of rhetoric internal to the rhetorical system."[59] The components of the rhetorical situation were desystematized and written out of codes of intellectual, literary, and even persuasive practices. But they

[57] John Guillory, "Mercury's Words: The End of Rhetoric and the Beginning of Prose," *Representations* 138.1 (2017), 70.
[58] A seminal account of the rise of *genus humile* during the early modern period is Morris Croll's "'Attic Prose' in the Seventeenth Century."
[59] Guillory, "Mercury's," 77, 71.

were only obfuscated, displaced, and dispersed—not obliterated. To think of the Enlightenment-Romantic age as one dominated by secondary rhetoric (*elocutio*) rather than an arhetorical one is to remember that eloquence is indeed a canon of rhetoric, and that it took a fair amount of persuasion to turn discourses of the arts and sciences away from the remaining canons of rhetoric. And when De Quincey proposes to build a system of rhetoric within the ruins of the classical art of persuasion, the contradictory move is but a reversal of the internal critique that brought about the nineteenth-century crisis in rhetoric, but pulled off baldly.

De Quincey positions himself squarely in the purported end times of rhetoric by publishing his essay as a contemporary review of Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* (1828), the book commonly designated, in Kennedy's words, "the last important British neoclassical treatise."[60] The historical arc that I.A. Richards sketches out at the beginning of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* has been virtually uncontested: "[rhetoric begins] of course, with Aristotle, and may perhaps be said to end with Archbishop Whately."[61] First published in 1828, Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* had immediate, long-lasting, and wide-ranging success. Whately too hears—and sounds, ultimately—the death knell of rhetoric. The expressed goal of *Elements of Rhetoric* is to preserve the health of the "systematic" theory of rhetoric through a pedagogic treatise for "unpracticed" writers. He seemed to have succeeded, at least for a couple of decades. By 1846, the book was in its seventh edition, having been revised and expanded throughout the years. It was popular on both sides of the Atlantic and the last text to be used so commonly as a textbook for

[60] Kennedy, *Classical*, 285.
[61] I.A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, edited by John Constable (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.

rhetoric and composition that it could be safely designated the authoritative work on classical rhetoric in the Anglophone world.[62]

Although "Rhetoric" is presented as a review of *Elements of Rhetoric*, it in fact lays the foundation for a practicable theory of rhetoric. And even though De Quincey minimally references Whately's work, *Elements* is the fundamental point of departure for De Quincey's art of persuasion. At the very end of the essay, De Quincey admits giving short shrift to Whately, but commends him with "the very highest respect for [Whately's] talents by the acuteness and originality which illuminate every part of his book" (VI:189). This misleads the reader, though. For one, "Elements of Rhetoric" fully responds to Whately's treatise throughout, as we will see. And, on closer inspection, we can see that De Quincey does not think so highly of the Archbishop. Unfortunately, Whately's acuity failed him in defining the very term "rhetoric":

> All of [the formal teachers of rhetoric] agree that Rhetoric may be defined *the art of persuasion*. But, if we inquire what *is* persuasion, we find them vague and indefinite or even contradictory. To waive a thousand of others, Dr. Whately, in the work before us, insists upon the *conviction* of the understanding as "an essential part of persuasion"; and, on the other hand, the author of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric* [i.e., George Campbell] is equally satisfied that there is no persuasion without an appeal to the *passions*. Here are two views. We, for our parts, have a third which excludes both. Where conviction begins, the field of Rhetoric ends; that is our opinion: and, as to the passions, we contend that they are not within the province of Rhetoric, but Eloquence. (VI:156)

[62] Kennedy, *Classical,* 285-286. Bizzell & Herzberg, *Rhetorical,* 828-831.

What we have here can serves as a roadmap for the central sections of this chapter. We can note now that De Quincey follows the contemporary trend of separating rhetoric (i.e., primary rhetoric) from eloquence (i.e., secondary rhetoric), which is the main consequence of the triumph of plain style. But we will have to wait for the following section to investigate what De Quincey means when he states that "passions…are not within the province of Rhetoric, but Eloquence." First, we must continue with De Quincey and Whately, and the definition of rhetoric itself.

De Quincey is absolutely right in pinpointing conviction as the defining goal of Whately's system of rhetoric, and thus, as we will see, *Elements of Rhetoric* accomplished a task antithetical to the one it proclaims: Whately did not maintain the livelihood of classical rhetoric, but rather dealt its deathblow. In her diagnosis of the plummet in the popular esteem for canonical rhetoric during the early modern period, Hannah Dawson notes that one of the main causes is "the rhetoricisation of logic by Agricola, Ramus and Talon, whereby *inventio* (discovery of arguments) and *dispositio* (judicial arrangement of arguments) were moved from rhetoric to logic."[63] This is precisely what happens in *Elements*. Whately titles the part of the book dedicated to *inventio* and *dispositio* as "Of the Address to the Understanding, with a View to Produce Conviction (Including Instruction)." In it, and in a paragraph titled "Proper province of Rhetoric," no less, Whately declares, "The finding of suitable arguments to prove a given point, and the skillful arrangement of them, may be considered as the immediate and proper province of Rhetoric, and that alone." (To my ear this is certainly the passage that De Quincey cites in the above block quote.) Indeed, the paragraph titled "Object of the present Treatise" states his defining goal

[63] Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66.

as "considering Rhetoric (in conformity with the very just and philosophical view of Aristotle) as an offshoot from Logic."[64] Indeed, Whately never considered himself first and foremost a rhetorician, and *Elements of Rhetoric* was written as a supplement to his *Elements of Logic*, which was published just two years prior to the text at hand.

De Quincey contends that subsuming rhetoric under logic leads to a definition of probable truth that ultimately opposes Aristotle's definition of rhetoric, turning to the enthymeme to substantiate his claim. As we know, Aristotle defines the enthymeme as a "rhetorical syllogism" and makes it the very substance of rhetoric.[65] The enthymeme is the deductive method for persuasion, which means that it is a syllogism—or at least a method of proof-making in the structure of a syllogism—that is built on the provisional nature of its premises. A syllogism proper is devised to produce irrefutable conclusions. Enthymemes, though, generally account for what is probable. As Aristotle states in *On Rhetoric*:

> Since few of the premises from which rhetorical syllogisms are formed are necessarily true…and since things that happen for the most part and are possible can only be reasoned on the basis of other such things, and necessary actions [only] from necessities…, it is evident that [the premises] from which enthymemes are spoken are sometimes necessarily true but mostly true [only] for the most part.

Although Aristotle qualifies it here, he proceeds through *On Rhetoric* with the enthymeme generally defined as a syllogism built on probable knowledge. "Moreover, enthymemes,"

[64] Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric* (Oxford: J. Parker, 1828), xiii, 29, 6.
[65] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse,* translated by George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40.

Aristotle follows, "are derived from probabilities [*eikota*] and signs [*sēmeia*]," both of which are forms of contingent knowledge.[66]

It is the very nature of probable knowledge that is the crux of De Quincey's critique of Whately (and of Locke too, as we will see in the following chapter). Rhetoric cannot hold "conviction" as its standard, because, as De Quincey reminds the reader, "[the matter] of the syllogism proper [is] certain and apodeictic; that of the enthymeme simply probable" (VI:159). Whately does not deny that the enthymeme is defined by the probable status of its proposition. The problem, though, is that they disagree on the very nature of probability. Like many throughout the ages, Whately relies on the definition of the enthymeme as a truncated syllogism (which, as I would like to point out, Aristotle explicitly says, and implicitly maintains, that an enthymeme is only sometimes an elided syllogism). Thus Whately sees nothing essentially different between logic and rhetoric when it comes to argumentation: "every one would allow that the *same* Argument may be either stated as an enthymeme, or brought into the strict syllogistic form; and that, either categorically or hypothetically…every one would call the *same* Argument differently stated."[67] The enthymeme, then, is probable only insofar that it is a proposition midway on its teleological arc toward eventual proof or disproof, as Whately readily summates. Thus, every proposition in Whately's world is either true or false in an objective sense. Persuasion is only a mid-station to logical proof; rhetoric is an offshoot of logic. The enthymeme in these terms is an apodeictic proof in waiting.

This sense of the enthymeme is anathema to Aristotle's general definition of rhetoric, "the faculty of observing in any given situation the available means of

[66] Ibid., 42.
[67] Whately, *Elements,* 32.

persuasion."[68] "Given" cannot exist as such in a theory of persuasion that defines the enthymeme in logical terms. Whately is elementally wrong in defining the term "rhetoric," because, as De Quincey stresses, "absolute certainty and fixed science transcend opinion and exclude the probable" (VI:160). G.A. Kennedy's translation of *On Rhetoric* uses "case" instead of "given situation" ("[rhetoric's] function is…to see the available means of persuasion in each case"), which helps us unpack De Quincey's sense of probability that anchors his art of rhetoric, because De Quincey defines the enthymeme in terms of the case in another text, "Letters to a Young Man Whose Education has been Neglected" (1823).[69] Speaking to his fictitious interlocutor, the eponymous man in need of formal education, De Quincey says: "I believe that you are so far acquainted with the structure of a syllogism as to know how to distinguish between the major and minor proposition: there is, indeed, a technical rule which makes it impossible to err; but you will have no need of *that.*" De Quincey, rather, is interested in rhetorical syllogisms. The topic at hand—morality—compels him to note how culturally determined premises force syllogistic argumentation to unfold in a particularly rhetorical way:

> In every syllogism one of the two premises (the major) lays down a rule, under which rule the other (the minor) brings the subject of your argument as a particular case. The minor is, therefore, distinguished from the major by an act of the *judgment*, *viz.* a subsumption of a special case under a rule. Now consider how this applies to morals: here the conscience supplies the general rule, or major proposition; and about this there is not question; but to bring the special case of conduct, which is the subject of your inquiry, under this general rule—here first

[68] Bizzell and Herzberg, *Rhetorical,* 153
[69] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* 36.

> commences the difficulty; and just upon this point are ethical treatises for the most part silent. Accordingly no man thinks of consulting them for his direction under any moral perplexities; if he reads them at all, it is for the gratification of his understanding in surveying the order and relation amongst the several members of a system; never for the information of his moral judgment. For any practical use in that way, a *casuistry, i.e.* a subsumption of the *cases* most frequently recurring in ordinary life, should be combined with the system of moral principles;—the latter supplying the major (or normal) proposition; the former supplying the minor proposition, which brings the special case under the rule. (III:55-56)

We will attend to this passage on two separate occasions, now, and again in the following chapter, when we talk about John Locke, who serves as De Quincey's direct point of contention here. For now, we should focus on the fact that De Quincey speaks specifically of a rhetorical syllogism. Morality is the major premise, and to the credit of the English Opium-Eater, he acknowledges that it is culturally determined. It is the conscience, not the understanding, that supplies the major premise, which converts the judgment between major and minor premises in moral cases into a process other than the one recognizable in logical/ethical syllogisms. This is the difficulty. The minor premise is not a geometrically similar claim telescoped out of the major premise, as it is in logical/ethical syllogisms. This argument aimed at "conviction" is impractical, because the minor premise does not account for any "given" case at all.

For any practical purpose, the minor premise must be determined not as a derivative of the major premise. Rather, the minor premise should be "the *cases* most

frequently recurring in ordinary life,"[70] and we can define the case with Aristotle's words: "Since the persuasive is persuasive to someone…, and since no art examines the particular…neither does rhetoric theorize about each opinion…but about what seems true to people of a certain sort, as is also true with dialectic."[71] The difficulty in moral judgments lies in assessing the fit between the major and minor premises. The ineluctable incongruity between abstract rule and the particularities of any case "in ordinary life" requires judgment to be more than just determining the logical soundness between major and minor premises. The case is not a mere protraction of the general rule. Moral judgment assesses to what extent a situation lies within the lines of a general rule. The aspects of "ordinary life" that are now primarily important for judgment put the elements of the rhetorical situation at the very center of enthymematic persuasion.[72] Although I have been suggesting that I agree with De Quincey in this debate, it is not in this paper's scope to provide a full account of the accuracies and inaccuracies of De Quincey and Whately's interpretations of Aristotle. Aristotle's definition of the enthymeme is still up for debate, even among the experts, who are far from a consensus. As Robert N. Gaines has shown, the general debate over the enthymeme, whose party lines can be drawn quite congruently with the one between De Quincey and Whately, has defined the way *On Rhetoric* has been received in numerous academic disciplines throughout the twentieth

[70] In 2007, Lauren Berlant has edited two consecutive issues of *Critical Inquiry* with essays that reconsider the relevance of the "case" to current discourses.
[71] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 41.
[72] De Quincey has written extensively on casuistry. And, the two-part essay "Casuistry" (1839, 1840) is the one other essay necessary for a comprehensive understanding of De Quinceyean casuistry. The major achievement that is James Chandler's *England in 1819* argues that Romantic historicism emerged when writers and thinkers collectively recast casuistry from what was then a scientific term to a historical term.

century.[73] What is important for us is that De Quincey critiques Whately for divesting rhetoric of any ability and compulsion to consider the rhetorical situation of a proposition. At the heart of De Quincey's rhetoric are Aristotle's words that declare:

> It is possible to form syllogisms and draw inductive conclusions either from previous arguments or from statements that are not reasoned out but require a syllogism…because they are not commonly believed; but the former of these [i.e., a chain of syllogisms] is necessarily not easy to follow because of the length [of the argument] (the judge is assumed to be a simple person), and the latter is not persuasive because the premises are not agreed to or commonly believed. Thus, it is necessary for an enthymeme and a paradigm to be concerned with things that are for the most part capable of being other than they are…and drawn from few premises and often less than those of the primary syllogism; for if one of these is known, it does not have to be stated, since the hearer supplies it.[74]

People are not simple, De Quincey avers. And this is a fact a true rhetorician must keep at the forefront of his or her mind. Enthymemes are often (but not always) in the form of a redacted syllogism, because a rhetorician knows fully well what "a certain sort of people" take as their own truth. We elide a premise not to skip steps in solving a problem. We leave it out, because we know very well what the audience will furnish in its place from its very own conscience.[75]

---

[73] Robert N. Gaines, "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the Contemporary Arts of Practical Discourse," in *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric, edited by Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008).

[74] Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* 41-42.

[75] In "Aristotle's Enthymeme as Tacit Reference," Thomas B. Farrell argues that the line Aristotle draws between the real and specious enthymemes can be maintained due to this very point.

With De Quincey's help, we can see that when one considers Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* as the end of the British neoclassical tradition, one should not take Whately's words and consider the treatise a martyr for the cause of preserving the relevance of Aristotelian rhetoric into the nineteenth century. Whately is in fact the conquering spirit, because he circulates so effectively a system of conviction that delegitimized considerations of rhetor, audience, and rhetorical context under the very name of "rhetoric." De Quincey's counter-critique fundamentally opposes Whately's system of conviction by fashioning a canonical theory of rhetoric that defines the contingency of any rhetorical statement on the specificity of the context for the case—the "given situation"—within which a proposition is made.

ELOQUENCE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE, SUBJECTIVITY, AND THE BACONIAN MEDIUM OF WORDS

Now eloquence. To point to Guillory's title, "Mercury's Words: The End of Rhetoric and the Beginning of Prose": the "end" of rhetoric is the beginning of the field known as prose style, because when rhetoric is understood merely in terms of secondary rhetoric, the available means of persuasion can only be determined in terms of composition, or, to use the term for the age, Eloquence. So, when De Quincey declares that "passions…are not within the province of Rhetoric, but of Eloquence," his readers would readily recognize the fault line between rhetoric and eloquence. The division between eloquence and canonical rhetoric preoccupied all the major rhetoricians of the nineteenth century. Whately, for one, declares in the opening pages of *Elements* that his main goal is to "adopt a middle course between the two extreme points [of 'Composition in Prose' and 'Persuasive Speaking']."[76]

[76] Whately, *Elements,* 6.

De Quincey attends to Eloquence too, as should be the case for a comprehensive theory of rhetoric. He defines eloquence even more directly against the Enlightenment than he does rhetoric. The main source of contention here is Francis Bacon, which means that De Quinceyean Eloquence is the very style of the literature of power.

Although never named, Francis Bacon looms in the background of "Mercury's Words." To cite natural philosophy and the Royal Society as the primary vehicles for the popularization of plain style is to implicitly designate Bacon the father of the movement. Guillory speaks directly about the ways in which Bacon affected a sea-change in terms of literary style in another essay that should be read as a companion piece to "Mercury's Words." In effect, "Genesis of the Media Concept" surveys the terrain from which plain style comes. This genealogical study locates the emergence of the current concept of "media" in the early modern period. The concept of media arises concomitantly with the emergence of a category of speech, "the communication concept[, which] emerged in earlhy modernity as an explicit challenge to the system of rhetoric."[77] This is simply another way of describing the emergence of plain style.

Guillory finds in Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* the initial moment that distends the common definition of "medium," setting the stage for future thinkers to invent the current concept of "media." The moment comes in a passage that tries to describe language-use as the art of "expressing or transferring our knowledge to others." Guillory observes that Bacon muddles the term "medium" when he speaks about the "medium of words" within the context of his innovative notion of language. Guillory highlights a

[77] John Guillory, "Genesis of the Media Concept," *Critical Inquiry* 36.2 (2010), 327.

passage in which Bacon aims at the familiar Aristotelian target, this time attacking the old Grecian's basic process of signification:

> For the organ of tradition, it is either Speech or Writing: for Aristotle saith well, "Words are the images of cogitations, and letters are the images of words"; but yet it is not necessity that cogitations be expressed by the medium of words. For whatsoever is capable of sufficient differences, and those perceptible by the sense, is in nature competent to express cogitations. And therefore we see in the commerce of barbarous people that understand not one another's language, and in the practice of divers that are dumb and deaf, that men's minds are expressed in gestures, though not exactly, yet to serve the turn. And we understand further that it is the use of China and the kingdoms of the high Levant to write in Characters Real, which express neither letters nor words in gross, but Things or Notions.

Bacon substantiates his point by pointing to Chinese hieroglyphs and gestural communication of "barbaric" civilizations as non-literary expressions of cogitations, which, as Guillory rightly notes, means that Bacon uses the word "medium" in the sense common in his day, as "means" or "instrument." But this introduces confusion, albeit a productive one, because the means of language is supposed to be inconsequential. Guillory points out that "the context of 'transferring thoughts' also hints at a difference between means and medium."[78] That is, Bacon wants to strike out Aristotle's phrase "letters are the images of words" for a perfectly perspicuous language, making writing a transparent medium between word and image. The success of communication, language-use through the Baconian medium of words, depends upon the utter inconsequentiality of the medium. The

[78] Ibid., 328-9.

word for utility works properly when divested of any utility. This begins the critique of rhetoric circulated within rhetoric, which makes the concept of media a product of the triumph of plain style. This is how the *genus humile* began to be naturalized as the superior means for communication.

Bacon has a figure for his medium of words, and De Quincey's critique of Baconian language starts with an attack on that trope. Moreover, De Quincey targets Baconian language when defining his category for literature, the literature of power. The first chapter demonstrated how De Quincey constructs the literature of power against the Enlightenment faculty of the understanding in order to conceptualize a type of writing invested in affect, embodiment, and the subconscious. Here we will see how De Quincey invents his notion of literary language in direct response to the call for perspicuity at the onset of British Enlightenment. By the end, we will see that this archly figurative and rhetorical sort of writing requires a fully embodied subject.

The literature of power passage in the Pope essay, which starts with the *idola theatri*, finally names Francis Bacon three paragraphs down:

> …[literature] speaks ultimately it may happen to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light, but proximately it does and must operate, else it ceases to be a literature of *power*, on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering *iris* of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. (XVI:336)

Humid light is associated with human passions and the literature of power, dry light with reason, and hence, the literature of knowledge. This passage severs the link forged by the

famous dictum attributed to Bacon—"knowledge is power"—in order to recast power as that which is opposed to knowledge, and Bacon's figure for the medium of perspicuity is the pressure point. *Novum Organum* is shot through with dry light. For instance, after Bacon establishes the basic class of examples necessary for the "Interpretation of Nature," he remarks that these instances, which establish the fundamental method for Enlightenment ways of knowledge, "should be employed as a sort of preparative for setting right and purging the understanding." This safeguards the understanding from the Idols of the Mind, "for whatever withdraws the understanding from the things to which it is accustomed," he continues, "smooths and levels its surfaces for the reception of the dry and pure light of true ideas." "The human understanding," Bacon simply puts, "is no dry light."[79] In "Of Friendship," Bacon cites Heraclitus as the source for this operative trope for natural science: "*Heraclitus* saith well, in one of his aenigmaes; *Dry Light is ever the best,*" adding, "and certaine it is, that the Light a Man receivt, by Counsell from Another is Drier, and purer, then that which commeth from his owne Understanding, and Judgment; which is ever infused and drenched in his Affections and Customes."[80] Dry light is the medium for plain style, for communication. Dry light is the ideal medium for the nominalism that underwrites natural science. One must be able to see clearly and speak clearly in order to conduct experiments that draw out general truths inductively. Affect and customs color and distort vision by infusing and drenching light, which is to say that figurative language is a product of, on the one hand, literary and cultural inheritance, and, on the other, human passions, desires, and genial emotions. That personal affect, historical context, and intellectual history are the agents of erroneous thought should sound familiar by now as

[79] Bacon, *Novum,* 18, 52.
[80] Francis Bacon, *Bacon's Essays*, edited by F.G. Selby (New York: Macmillan, 1892), 70.

echoes about the Idols of the Mind. Bacon cinches ideology and rhetoric together into a conceptual whole and positions plain communication in opposition to the Aristotelian language of malicious dissimulation. Dry light is what one sees when one turns his back on the Idols of the Mind.

Bacon goes even further than describing humid light. He names it. In his passage on the Idols of the Marketplace, Bacon uses "humid" as the key example for the vagaries of vulgar language, depicting how affect and customs can obstruct "Counsell from Another." According to Bacon, the Idols of the Marketplace obscure truth by mediating thoughts through "intercourse and association of men with each other."[81] Appropriately, it is within the category of the Idols of the Marketplace that Bacon discusses idolatrous words. The two types are, first, "names of things which do not exist," and, second, "names of things which exist," but are malformed by "faulty and unskillful abstraction." Bacon spends no time on the former, because they can be easily expelled. It is the latter that is the real threat, because it is "intricate and deeply rooted" (in what Bacon does not say), and he exemplifies the danger with the word "humid." I quote at length because each definition in Bacon's catalog will be meaningful for us, and, moreover, the sheer size of the list is central to Bacon's point:

> Let us take for example such as word as *humid*; and see how far the several things which the word is used to signify agree with each other; and we shall find the word *humid* to be nothing else than a mark loosely and confusedly applied to denote a variety of actions which will not bear to be reduced to any constant meaning. For it both signifies that which easily spreads itself round any other body; and that which

[81] Bacon, *Novum*, 49.

> in itself is indeterminate and cannot solidize; and that which readily yields in every direction; and that which easily divides and scatters itself…and that which is easily reduced to a liquid, or being solid easily melts. Accordingly when you come to apply the word—if you take it in one sense, flame is humid; if another, air is not humid; if in another, fine dust is humid; if in another, glass is humid.[82]

Bacon is basically talking about figurative language, but to do so he simply catalogues qualities of humidity and converts them into connotations (not denotations, despite Bacon's insistence) for "humid" and then applies them to other objects. Bacon enacts the very process that he condemns, but uses a word that visually figures the uncontainable, pestilential threat of figuration for striking effect. The miasmic nature of humidity is applied masterfully, though to figuration itself, proving that figurative language is one way to communicate a point convincingly. A critique of rhetoric circulated internally within the system of rhetoric.

By way of humid light, Bacon suggests that the myriad meanings possible in each and every act of signification is in some ways related to the utter singularity of the affective being. Remember: humid light is drenched not in any, but in "his" affect and custom. De Quincey will not concede the idiosyncrasy of an individual's human experience (as befits a pariah, autobiographer, and egoist), which necessarily changes the terms for the ideal use of language. In a notice to the reader, De Quincey states what he sees as the utter necessity of humid light for literary sense and pleasure:

> The sun, in rising or setting, would produce little effect if he were defrauded of his rays, and their infinite reverberations…And upon this analogy, psychological

[82] Ibid., 57-8.

> experiences of deep suffering or joy first attain their entire fulness of expression when they are reverberated from dreams. (IXX:17)

Effect, dream, and psychological experiences speak to what we have pieced together about the literature of power in the previous chapter. We have seen in the first chapter that literary language is powerful precisely because it compels an affective form of reading. What we are starting to see here is that it is precisely the affective nature of literary reading that makes literature pointedly figural. De Quincey, we can say, embodies this idol—"I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed," he says about his opium dreams (II:71). He theorizes the antithesis of Baconian dry light and calls it Eloquence and from it derives a medium of words invested in the interiority of the subject.

Without mentioning humid light, he details the conjunction between subjectivity and figuration in the final installment of "Style," wherein he establishes, "why…all subjective branches of study favour the cultivation of style." To De Quincey, "subjective" studies involve mental exercises that "draw[] much from [the thinker's] own proper selves, or little (if anything) from extraneous objects." Its opposite, "objective" study, is as it is named: object-driven inquiries. Whereas subjective studies "treat a vague question, such as Cicero calls a *quaestio infinita*, where everything is to be finished out of [the thinker's] peculiar feelings, or his own way of viewing things," objective studies are endeavors for which "determinate *data* from without already furnish the main materials" (XII:71). This division between subjective and objective study maps directly onto dry and humid light. Clearly, natural science and philosophy is purely objective in these terms.

The Idols of the Tribe and of the Cave interdict one's own subjectivity from oneself, and the purpose of the experiment is to safeguard the Enlightenment thinker from

subjective study. To foreclose this problem, Bacon invents the modern experiment, which is to say that the Enlightenment experiment is a situation invented to assure dry light, a proposition surely mythic for the Englishman. "The truer kind of interpretation of nature," according to Bacon, "is effected by instances and experiments fit and apposite; wherein the sense decides touching the experiment only, and the experiment touching the point in nature and the thing itself."[83] Only the sense touches the experiment, which forecloses any possibility of one's personal history influencing one's apprehension of the experiment; this ropes off the Idols of the Cave. Furthermore, the sense touches only the experiment, and not "the thing itself." The experiment buffers the Enlightenment thinker from the ontic world, keeping him safe from the Idols of the Tribe. This is how one is able to see the truth through light kept dry from "Affections" and "Customes".

De Quincey creates these categories of study in order to describe the privileged position that interiority has as a resource for eloquence. When one undertakes subjective study, he or she inevitably "finds that the manner of treating [the *quaestio infinita*] not only transcends the matter, but very often, and in a very great proportion, *is* the matter." Thus, "such pursuits are peculiarly favourable to the culture of style. In fact they force that culture."[84] To exemplify what he means, De Quincey turns to the public sphere. Enlisting a very Aristotelian example, he uses the division between subjective and objective study to

[83] Ibid., 52-3.

[84] For the study that single-handedly started the renaissance in De Quincey studies, J. Hilllis Miller argues that De Quincey originates a sort of post-Romantic lineage of literature based on an infinitude that is interior to the writing subject. What we see here reinforces Miller's point that this infinity within is the topos for the invention process.

Also, note that this is a rear-guard use of the term "culture." In *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, Raymond Williams traces how the word "culture" changed drastically over the nineteenth century, from a word about the tendency of growth to "*culture* as such, a thing in itself" (xvi). According to Williams' study, the emergence of this thing called culture, which is recognizable to us today, is a reaction to the social, economic, and political changes that occurred in the early half of the century. De Quincey, like Coleridge, uses culture in an outdated, but socially virtuous way, by Williams' account.

answer what appears to be a perplexing question: why does one so skilled in the courthouse, such as Thomas Erksine, find it so difficult to be effective in Parliament, and, conversely, one so gifted in Parliamentary oratory, like William Murray, find it so hard to be persuasive in the courts? One's skills of persuasion do not readily transfer between the bar and Parliament, De Quincey answers, because court cases deal with objective study, while the provenance for parliamentary matters is subjective:

> The forensic orator satisfies his duty if he does but take the facts exactly as they stand in his brief, and place them before his audience in that order, and even (if he should choose it) in those words. The parliamentary orator has no opening for facts at all, but as he himself may be able to create such an opening by some previous expositions of doctrine or opinion, of the probable or expedient. (XII:71-2)

We can note now that the parliamentary speaker operates in the world of the probable, but it would be too hasty to label him a rhetorician, at least for the time being. What we can determine now is that the barrister deals with objective study, and he comes about and delivers persuasive speech in a way fundamentally different than a politician does. The forensic orator merely presents the facts given to him: "very often the mere order of chronology dictate[s] the succession and arrangement of the topics." On the other hand, the "deliberative orator, in a senate or a literary meeting" has no such crutch, because "some general view of national policy…[is] not determined *ab extra*, but shaped and drawn from the funds of one's own understanding." This orator is left to his or her own devices, so to speak, relying on one's "own internal resources" for invention and arrangement. Of objective studies, De Quincey remarks: "whatsoever is entirely independent of the mind,

and external to it, is generally equal to its enunciation." This is the nominalist standard for dry light. To contrast, he continues:

> But, the more closely any exercise of mind is connected with what is internal and individual in the sensibilities, that is, with what is philosophically termed *subjective,* precisely in that degree, and the more subtly, does the style or the embodying of the thoughts cease to be a mere separable ornament, and in fact the more does the manner, as we expressed it before, become confluent with the matter.

Because the composition process for subjective studies is strictly relegated to the orator's internal resources, what one says with subjective studies is entirely congruent with how one says it. Hence, subjective studies "force" the "culture" of style.

This is the familiar notion of the Romantic imagination, and at least in this instance, De Quincey readily admits his borrowings. He punctuates the passage on subjective studies by admitting that what he has been talking about all along is what Wordsworth captures in the phrase "the *incarnation* of thoughts" (XII:73). This is the Romantic imagination grafted onto the literary tradition of sensibility. (It is in this way that I see De Quincey as the inflection point between the sentimental novel and the sensation novel.) Additionally, eloquence is more of a semantic theory than a semiotic one, as De Quincey elaborates in an essay written decades after "Elements of Rhetoric." While assessing the "phrase" and "image" in William Hazlitt's writing, he states, "eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent: the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession" (XVI:378). With its emphasis on duration and the "*law* of…succession" for word and

phrase, this passage accurately describes the type of tropological study that deconstructive readers and others have derived from Romantic authors after the linguistic turn. If the pointedly figurative work of Romantic writing comes from subjective study, the literary-political language comes, De Quincey emphatically reminds us, from a body that lives in time.

De Quincey did not come up with his own philosophy of literary language, but what he achieves here is phenomenal. He has repurposed literary language, as understood by the ostensibly "arhetorical" tenets of Romanticism, into the basic material for rhetoric itself. Furthermore, he binds literature and politics together, making literariness essentially political, and politics fundamentally literary—and, by enlisting Aristotle's example for the enthymeme, makes all of it archly rhetorical. De Quincey has always known the persuasive power of Romantic writing, having been moved by *Lyrical Ballads* so much so as to write a masterful letter, travel to the Lake District, and seek out Wordsworth's friendship—which is to say, to redirect his own life, body and soul. De Quincey's theory of rhetoric is an attempt to provide a practical, systematic understanding of Romantic persuasion within the form of neoclassical rhetoric so that literary language can be practicable as a—if not *the*—language for all subjective inquiries, including philosophy, political economy, and "national policy." He is making Romantic writing into administrative art.

Rhetoric and Eloquence: Rhetorical Practices through Theater and Marketplace

I am speaking too quickly. I've just taken the "probable" status of both rhetoric and subjective study to state that eloquence is part of De Quincey's rhetorical system, which

might be taking an ell out of an inch, because, as we must remember with De Quincey's quote about Whately and Campbell, rhetoric and eloquence stand opposed in many ways: "where conviction begins, the field of Rhetoric ends; that is our opinion: and, as to the passions, we contend that they are not within the province of Rhetoric, but of Eloquence" (VI:156). The oppositional definition of these two terms is neither momentary nor anomalous. However, rhetoric and eloquence are almost always thought about in coexistence, as we will see below. The most impressive example of this comes in his paean to opium in *Confessions*. He punctuates the tribute by calling his figure for writing "eloquent opium" and endowing it with "potent rhetoric" (II:51). In an age of secondary rhetoric, and particularly the one dominated by plain style, the dominance of *elocutio* wedges it apart from all the other canons, creating a line between eloquence and rhetoric. Every notable rhetorician of the British nineteenth century starts by acknowledging this division. This fault line is central to the rhetorical theories of Hugh Blair, George Campbell, and Whately. De Quincey too. He bears the British rhetorical tradition past its nineteenth-century impasse not by abandoning, but by harnessing the power from the tension between eloquence and rhetoric.

This seeming contradiction is the central problem for the only monograph dedicated to De Quincey's rhetoric. In *Thomas De Quincey: British Rhetoric's Romantic Turn,* historian of rhetoric Lois Agnew thoroughly documents the consistency with which De Quincey defines "rhetoric" and "eloquence," or as the titles of his essays go, the "Elements of Rhetoric" and "Style." She insists that the oppositional force between rhetoric and eloquence powers De Quincey's theory of persuasion, but her deductive reliance on Bakhtinian dialogism leads to inaccuracies and shortcomings. According to Agnew, De

Quincey's "dialogic rhetoric" is the ability to hold a plurality of oppositional truth-statements (like those of rhetoric and those of eloquence) in mind at the same time and to have the skill to, first, recognize the truth of each proposition, and, then, determine which should come to the fore according to the given situation.[85] Even though this negatively capable faculty allows the oppositional terms to coexist, and even though the liberal judgment described here is indeed rhetorically informed, the pluralism and vacillation does not mesh with De Quincey's actual practice. He has never espoused a Whig position, even when writing for Whig organs. Furthermore, a direct look at Bakhtin reveals more fundamental antagonisms between De Quinceyean rhetoric and the dialogic process. De Quincey's definition of eloquence as an expression of the self-sufficient work in subjective studies matches Bakhtin's damning description of poetic language: "the language of the poet is *his* language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning…that is, as a pure and direct expression of his own intention."[86]

De Quincey has his own theory of opposition, and he posits it when writing as a Tory for a Whig organ. From "A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism and Radicalism" (1835), written for *Tait's*:

> If I say of two parties, that they were Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians, you understand at once that both could not be right: one party must be in the wrong. But, with respect to *Whig* and *Tory*, this does not hold. There is no necessity that either should be in error. On the contrary, there is a high necessity that both should

[85] Agnew, *De Quincey*, 49-74.
[86] M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 285.

> be in the right. For it is not as either, taken singly, presents a complete and adequate theory of the subject: here the two ideas are so far from excluding each other, that both are coessential to the entire construction of the principle. (IX:395)

In what is perhaps the first theoretical formulation of partisan politics, De Quincey hardly validates any conviction of the Whiggish world view, telling the *Tait's* reader what he wants to hear. The essay was published in the Whig organ in 1835, when the Tory party was on the brink of utter dissolution in the wake of the Reform Act. De Quincey does not obscure his commitment to the Tory line to concede any overriding truth to the Whig position, even when it could have been so easy to do so. This is what dialogic rhetoric would have had him do. On the contrary, and contrarily, De Quincey writes an argument for the indispensability of the Tory party to British politics in general, even—and especially—to the Whig reader. Moreover, the "authoritative and absolute" truth of the overarching principle makes De Quincey ultimately invested in what Bakhtin considers "undialogized language." And most importantly for us, the opposition that defines De Quincey's partisan principle is not relativistic, but relational. Defined by its "capacity to negotiate among possible truths," dialogic rhetoric requires, or at least prefers, its oppositional statements to be ones capable of neutralizing each other, defined, that is, according to the relation between Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians.[87] But, to characterize eloquence and rhetoric in Trinitarian/Anti-Trinitarian positions still adheres to the either/or structure definitive of an age of second rhetoric. A generalized version of the partisan principle applies to rhetoric and eloquence, in De Quincey's terms. He constructs a nineteenth-century theory of rhetoric that can muscle past the contemporary age of secondary rhetoric by making

[87] Agnew, *De Quincey,* 52.

rhetoric and eloquence coessential truths that constitute a larger principle, which he calls "literature."

The partisan principle clears up a small debate in De Quincey studies and, with that, further clarifies De Quincey's sense of literature. It has been an open question whether or not the status of the literature of knowledge changes substantially between its introduction at the beginning of De Quincey's career, in "Letters to a Young Man," and its capstone definition at the end, in the Pope essay. As Jonathan Bate observes, the literature of knowledge appears to have the status of "non-literature" in "Letters to a Young Man," but seems to have become a type of literature in "Alexander Pope," albeit a runt of a sibling to the literature of power. Bate notes that if the literature of knowledge were to have changed its status over the years, then it would affects a change in the definition in its contradistinctive term, the literature of power.[88] If we look more closely at the consideration of the literatures of power and knowledge in "Pope," with the help of the partisan principle and De Quincey's rhetorical terms, we will be able to see that the categories indeed do change, but not in terms of their definitions. Between "Letters to a Young Man" and "Pope," De Quincey wrote "A Tory's Account" and developed his rhetorical theory. As early as *Confessions*, De Quincey has had a vague sense of the powerful opposition between rhetoric and eloquence that drives literary writing.[89] In "Letters to a Young Man," he introduces the literature of power and the literature of knowledge, but does so in the oppositional relation of the Trinitarians and Anti-Trinitarians, containing

[88] Jonathan Bate, "The Literature of Power: Coleridge and De Quincey," in *Coleridge's Visionary Language: Essays in Honour of J.B. Beer* (London: D.S. Brewer, 1993), 137-150. Bate is building on a point already made by Sigmund Proctor and John E. Jordan. Fredrick Burwick has most recently argued otherwise.

[89] Agnew makes much about the fact that De Quincey consistently characterizes eloquence as "hot" and rhetoric as "cold." As one addicted to laudanum, De Quincey surely understood that a compound of an upper and a downer could keep one wanting more.

literariness strictly within the category of the literature of power. "All, that is literature, seeks to communicate power," we have heard him decry, and "all, that is not literature to communicate knowledge" (III:71). By "Pope," though, what has changed is not the antagonistic relationship between knowledge and power, or the essential make-up of either concept. When we revisit a passage that we have seen before, we are now equipped to see that the literature of power and the literature of knowledge have been subordinated into stages for reading:

> There is, first, the literature of *knowledge;* and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is—to *teach*; the function of the second is—to *move*: the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light; but, proximately, it does and must operate, else it ceases to be a literature of *power*, on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering *iris* of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. (XVI:336)

The literature of knowledge is still didactic; the literature of power is still a definitively aesthetic text for embodied reading. However, the literature of knowledge and the literature of power become mutually constitutive elements for an overarching principle that, unfortunately, can only be called "literature." Literature is not merely synonymous with the literature of power anymore. In both nautical and meteorological metaphors, literature of knowledge and literature of power work together. Affect and understanding, eloquence and rhetoric, style and persuasion—all the familiar divisions coextensive with

the line drawn between aesthetics and utility are *not* necessarily lines that are drawn between literature and non-literature. Rather these are lines that can be, and often are, found within the former.

So how does literature in these terms work, then? The link between eloquence and the literature of power is readily apparent, especially when we recall what we learned about the literary category in the first chapter. Invested in the feeling subject, both concepts find their provenance in the passions. Eloquence is the language use associated with the literature of power. Indeed, De Quincey coins his literary prose style "impassioned prose." The connection between rhetoric and the literature of knowledge is not so straightforward. There is a solid starting point, though: both rhetoric and the literature of knowledge are objective studies. De Quincey flips the tables on Bacon's claim to universality. Although knowledge produced for the rational understanding lays claim to universal knowledge, literature of knowledge is in fact utterly ephemeral, for it is rendered useless once comprehended: "the *knowledge* literature, like the fashion of this world, passeth away." His example is the dictionary, which because it must be periodically updated, is always already "superannuated."[90] The subjective, passionate nature of the literature of power—its hermeneutic sympathy—is what makes literary language relevant across historical periods and cultural contexts, "so much more durable than the literature of knowledge." The passions evoked by the literature of power "cannot be contemplated when seen stretching through many generations, without a sentiment allied to awe" (XVI:339). "Eloquence in one form or other is immortal, and will never perish," De Quincey

[90] J. Mark Smith reads De Quincey's thoughts on dictionaries as fundamental to the definition of not only his theory of casuistry, but also his general theory of language. He somehow misses this passage and, subsequently, is, in short, wrong.

cries in "Elements of Rhetoric," "so long as there are human hearts moving under the agitations of hope and fear, love and passionate hatred" (VI:165). When it comes to language, then, what does not change is nothing but the gap between sign and signifier that subjectivity forces each of us to bridge in his or her own way. Thus literature of knowledge neutralizes the literature of power, unless it is an object-oriented study of *probable* knowledge. Rhetoric is only a subset of the literature of knowledge, but it is the only subset capable of engaging with the literature of power.

In other words, if one is interested in mobilizing Romantic writing for didactic ends, in circulating subjective textures of language amongst others persuasively, then one is forced into rhetorical practices. In "Elements of Rhetoric," De Quincey gives us a formulation of how eloquence and rhetoric work:

> By Eloquence we understand the overflow of powerful feelings upon occasions fitted to excite them. But Rhetoric is the art of aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief, by means of various and striking thoughts, some aspect of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings, and therefore rests upon artificial aids. (VI:160)

This obviously hearkens Wordsworth's famous formulation for poetic production, further proving that De Quincey Romanticizes rhetoric and rhetoricalizes Romanticism. The word "spontaneous" solidifies De Quinceyean literary production as a rhetorically-oriented practice. Because subjective and objective studies are at the forefront of his mind, we know that he uses the primary (but not most common) definition of "spontaneous": "Of personal actions: Arising or proceeding entirely from natural impulse, without external stimulus or

constraint; voluntary of one's own accord."[91] Because it deals exclusively with "some aspect of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings," rhetoric is objective study, and hence its "artificial aids." But the absence of "spontaneous" makes eloquence rhetorically-attuned as well. Eloquence is *not* a spontaneous overflow because it flows "upon" the occasion that gives rise to the literary words. No manner of the monologue here. Eloquence is meant to actually communicate, but needs rhetoric to make overly-subjective aspects of the statement accessible to its audience.

To see this literary work in practice, we can turn to the part of *Confessions* that culminates into the paean to "eloquent opium" and its "potent rhetoric." It is no coincidence that the passage not only seeks out a definition for the effects of opium on the body and imagination—the word "intoxication," more specifically. The passage does so on the basis of his debauched forays into markets and theaters. This does not directly address the Idols of the Marketplace and the Idols of the Theater, but eloquence and rhetoric do transgress Bacon's interdictions because both Bacon and De Quincey couple the two public forums together on the same principle. Jean-Christophe Agnew's *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* provides a definitive account of how the spatial, functional, and, hence, ideological link between market and theater evolved over the eponymous years to produce a world seen as *theatrum mundi*, a worldview built on a general sense of public space in which representation, spectacle, and commerce were imbricated into the basic workings of social life. In the middle ages theater took place only within the market, which was confined to a specific time and place, often at festival time and always at the border of a town. "Both forms of exchange [i.e., commercial

[91] *Oxford English Dictionary,* "Spontaneous," accessed April 17, 2018.

and theatrical] evoked the experience of a threshold," Agnew points out, adding that the marketplace was "above all a 'place for seeing.' Visibility was its indispensable property."[92] There was utter perspicuity with these exchanges. Interaction in the marketplace was highly ritualized and codified, in action, dress, and manner, and the strict formal conventions—gestural, sartorial, and spatial—assured stability and transparency in communication and commerce.

A loosening of these conventions forced a crisis of representation on the Anglophone world. As the feudal system shifted to the city state, a complex network of factors, which includes the rise of the merchant class, the emergence of social mobility, transformations in sartorial conventions, and the beginnings of a claustrophobic sense of a world burdened with an ever-growing population, dislodged the market from any particular locale. Consequently, the market no longer designated first and foremost a market*place*; from that time on, it has been taken as an abstract notion of the "invisible hand." No longer site-specific, marketplace (and thereby theatrical) exchanges had lost the thick texture of ritual that assured its participants of the legitimacy and equity of the exchange at hand. Without this guarantee, "the transparency of commodity exchange declined accordingly," forcing a crisis of representation upon the public sphere.[93] Representation was no longer an act of depiction, but of disclosure, which made *mis*representation a viable act and an ever-present threat. Because theater had always taken part within the market, people turned to theater to make sense of the "bewildering" nature of an economic world newly run on a market that is a "boundless and timeless

[92] Jean-Christoph Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 40.
[93] Ibid., 43.

phenomenon."[94] Theater did not dispel the paranoia over dissembling and manipulation, though. Rather, the threat of dissimulation reverberated into the theater too, transforming the very nature of actors and acting, registered even on an etymological level. It is at this time that "actor" attained its exclusively thespian definition. This crisis interjected the heavy dose of suspicion with which the populace generally considers actors, and provoked and exacerbated the doubt underlying every economic and histrionic exchange into the dominant, impulsive reaction to commerce in the market-theater. At the core lies a fear of the contingency of representation, particularly in terms of its realization in the performance of exchange, which is what Bacon tried to quarantine with his denunciation of the Idols of the Marketplace and the Idols of the Theater. These are the two idols from the phenomenal world, that enter the human mind from without. Indeed, it is the specifically "unreal" and "scenic" (*scenicos,* in the original Latin) quality of the theater that is embodied by the *idola theatri*. And, in what is surely an example of the Idols of the Marketplace, I cannot help but to find Martin Harries' proposition about the etymological origin for the word "phantasmagoria" alluring. He points out that the "ghost" of *phantasma* and the public realm associated of the *agoreuein* can be easily nudged into "idol" and "marketplace," making the "Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other…on account of the commerce and consort of men there" the origin for phantasmagoria.[95] And it is in this conjuncture that De Quincey defines eloquence and rhetoric.

[94] Ibid., 170, 41.
[95] Bacon, *Novum*, 49. Martin Harries, *Scare Quotes from Shakespeare: Marx, Keynes, and the Language of Reenchantment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 105.

The passage in *Confessions* starts by establishing itself as subjective study. De Quincey declares that there is nowhere to go but to "what is internal and individual in [his] sensibilities" to give word to the opiate imagination, because all other commentaries about opium come from, he alleges, "unscientific authors" who have no "experimental knowledge of [opium's] action." Utterly confined to autobiography for invention, arrangement, and style (if not all five canons), he knows his task is for eloquence: "this is the doctrine of the true church on the subject of opium: of which church I acknowledge myself to be the only member—the alpha and omega: but then it is to be recollected, that I speak from the ground of a large and profound personal experience" (II:45-46). This is a project built necessarily on ethos, in many ways, and the absolute truth-value that De Quincey imputes on his own experimental knowledge lasts longer than one might assume, evident most resoundingly in the deus ex machina that *Confessions* becomes in *The Moonstone*.

In order to find the most suitable environment for subjective study, De Quincey scheduled his debauches for excursions to the opera, because music is the superior medium for eloquence. Music is sensuous experience—and we witnessed in the previous chapter the importance of the sonic to theatric prose. But music is more than mere sound; it is melody and harmony. Thus, "it is by the re-action of the mind upon the notices of the ear, (the *matter* coming by the senses, the *form* from the mind) that the pleasure is constructed" (II:48). Listening to music is undeniably an act of studying eloquence, for to follow a melody is to—per the words in the essay on Hazlitt—discern the "*key* of the [tune's] evolution" and "the *law* of [its] succession" (XVI:378). Moreover, music is purer as a subjective study than anything linguistic can be, because one "can attach no ideas to [musical notes]." With music, there is no place for the "language of representative feelings,"

because the matter of association for a music listener are notes, not ideas. (The next chapter spends more time on De Quincey's contention with the Lockean notion of signification that is grounded on the idea.) The music aficionado listens with "the whole of [his or her] past life—not, as if recalled by an act of memory, but as if present and incarnated in the music" (II:48). One finds the epitome of eloquence in the incarnation not of thought (which is poetry), but of music. It is with music that the auditor is delimited most strictly to her own internal resources. Finding signification in music can be nothing but impressionistic, without words or ideas to hang onto. In this eloquent practice, when one puts thought or word to a song one hears, matter and manner can be nothing but inextricable. Consequently, the incarnation of internal life by way of musical signification is all the more palpable than any poetic recollection of powerful feelings. No tranquility here. Music is the superior medium for subjective study, and, therefore, literary language aspires to music.

These outings would not be a full exhibition of De Quincey's eventual literary practice if they did not include a second act. Just as literature works first and proximately through humid light, and then travels to a remote object in dry light, De Quincey's experimental trips comprise first a hedonistic experience immersed in the lights and sounds of the stage, followed by one that comes down from that site into the material world. Eloquence is powerful, moving speech, but it requires rhetoric to be relevant to those beyond the elocutionist. As overcome as De Quincey would be with the operatic assault on his senses, his night would not be complete without wandering through the streets of London's working-class districts:

> For the sake, therefore, of witnessing, upon as large a scale as possible, a spectacle with which my sympathy was so entire, I used often, on Saturday nights, after I had taken opium [and gone to the opera], to wander forth, without much regarding the direction or the distance, to all the markets, and other parts of London, to which the poor resort on a Saturday night, for laying out their wages. (II:49)

These walks into the market are a rhetorical technique put to what some now in the art world would call "social practice," for rhetoric makes the solipsistic nature of high eloquence as widely accessible, and applicable, as possible. In "Elements of Rhetoric," De Quincey states that rhetoric "lay[s] the principal stress upon the management of thoughts" and, in "Style," that it involves "the management of our mother-tongue in all offices to which it can be applied" (VI:166; XII: 47). In other words, when rhetoric works with eloquence, the "artificial aids" of the former make the entirely subjective nature of the latter accessible to others. And so, De Quincey's expressed purpose was not to shop, but to talk:

> Gradually I became familiar with their wishes, their difficulties, and their opinions…Wherever I saw occasion, or could do it without appearing to be intrusive, I joined their parties; and gave my opinion upon the matter in discussion, which, if not always judicious, was always received indulgently. (II:49)

These convivial meanderings exhibit rhetoric in action. As De Quincey persistently mentions throughout his oeuvre, vehicles of eloquence, like music and opium, merely stimulate what is already innate. The opera house is a space saturated with nothing but spontaneous feelings. Even the babble from the Italian women in the gallery retain the

status of music, meaningless sounds not destined for discussion.[96] But, as De Quincey states in an essay titled "Conversation," it is conversation that complements eloquence by "supply[ing] the natural integration [of knowledge] for the deficiencies of private and sequestered study" (XVII:6). With conversation, "there sometimes arise glimpses and shy revelations of affinity, suggestion, relation, analogy, that could not have been approached through any avenues of methodical [subjective] study."[97] Recall that rhetoric is "the art of aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief…some aspects of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings" (VI:160). The stated effects of conversation undeniably resonate with the expressed aims of rhetoric. Conversation is dialogic rhetoric, but not in Bakhtinian terms. Like Wordsworth and Coleridge, De Quincey makes "conversation" one standard of Romantic literature, but the prosaic one is casuist, rhetorical, and concerned with "the management of our mother-tongue in all offices to which it can be applied."

These conversations are not the "Counsell from Another" that Bacon declares the means for Enlightenment truth. The promiscuous spread of subjectively determined signification is precisely what Bacon fears with humid light, and it is the "commerce" of the marketplace that propagates these ill-defined words. "*Idols of the Marketplace* are the most troublesome of all," Bacon opines, because they "have crept into the understanding through the alliances of words and names." "For men believe that their reason governs words," he continues, "but it is also true that words react on the understanding."[98] The problem is not

[96] "I listened with a pleasure such as that which Weld the traveler lay and listened, in Canada, to the sweet laughter of Indian women, for the less you understand of a language, the more sensible you are to the melody or harshness of its sounds" (II:48).
[97] Thomas De Quincey, *Selected Essays on Rhetoric*, ed. Fredrick Burwick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 269.
[98] Bacon, *Novum*, 56.

necessarily that words can impact the understanding—how else could one learn from the "Counsell from Another"? The problem is that *vulgar* words are prone to do so, as typified by the "Idols formed by the intercourse and association of men with each other…on account of the commerce and consort of men there.[99] The common usage of words has hamstrung the sciences by drawing definitions along "lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding." Thus, when a member of the intelligentsia—"an understanding of greater acuteness"—makes an observation that "would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change."[100] Per the logic of the Enlightenment experiment, the "greater acuteness" requires the purification of oneself through a divestment of one's affects and a renunciation of one's place in cultural customs and intellectual history. And, as we have seen Bacon readily admit, this is a space cut off from the ontic world. So when Bacon declares that "the Light a Man receivt, by Counsell from Another is Drier, and purer, then that which…is ever infused and drenched in his Affections and Customes," this counsel can come not from a man, but only from a non-subject.[101] We have already seen through the example of humid light that subjectivity corrupts signification into a myriad-meaning process. Now we see that the unwieldy plurality of meaning spreads and grows through commerce among the commons. By now, we are able to see that De Quincey's literary practice simply inverts the terms of Baconian counsel, or what Guillory notes is simply what we understand as "communication."

Thus the class line that Bacon draws between the intellectual and commercial worlds plays an important part in De Quincey's practice. It is the marketplace, and not the

[99] Ibid., 49.
[100] Ibid., 56. The Norton Anthology rightly footnotes this passage on the Idols of the Marketplace as the impetus for the Royal Society's campaign for plain style.
[101] Bacon, *Essays,* 70.

theater, that represents the threat the vulgate poses to scientific language. For one, Bacon defines theater in terms of the aristocratic exclusivity of the court masque.[102] The danger of the *idola theatri* comes from one's intellectual peers and superiors. Additionally, the market, as the topos of barter, trade, and economic exchange, requires the vulgar to represent itself, and the interchange of economic commerce puts each of the parties at the mercy of the other's disclosures, no matter the professional class or intellectual training. This line is crucial for De Quincey's forays into the London district. Avowing an anthropological motivation for these wanderings, he positions himself above the working masses. At the opera, De Quincey always splurged some of his meager funds for galley seats because only "five shillings admitted one to the gallery, which was subject to far less annoyance than the pit." De Quincey maintains the line not along wealth, ultimately, but rather along aesthetic sensibility, demarcating a distinction between the flâneur and the working poor, and setting these trips up as excursions not for finding facts, per se, but for building a specific sort of sympathy. De Quincey does not wish to connect with "[the poor's] distresses and sorrows," which is "chiefly" the case with this top-down class sympathy. He wants to "throw [his] feelings into different channels…by sympathizing with [the working class's] pleasures" (II:49).

This emphasis on pleasure differentiates this type of interaction from Baconian "Counsell from Another." Indeed, it is conversation that De Quincey is talking about, not communication. In his 1847 essay dedicated to the topic, and titled thusly, "Conversation," De Quincey bifurcates conversation along the familiar lines of objective and subjective studies. On the one hand, conversation can be used "ministerial to intellectual culture,"

[102] Cf. "Of Masques and Triumphs," Bacon, *Essays*, 99-100.

and, on the other, it can be "valuable as an organ…of social enjoyment." The latter, what De Quincey phrases the "*colloquial* commerce of thought" is special due to the symbiotic nature with which the two conversants grow: "the two orders of conversation—*that*, on the one hand, which contemplates an interest of knowledge and of the self-developing intellect; *that*, on the other hand, which forms one and the widest amongst the gay embellishments of life—will always advance together."[103] De Quincey's forays into the land of the proletariat succeed because his anthropological method is to listen first in order to start grasping the local language and knowledge before partaking in conversations on these terms:

> Gradually I became familiar with their wishes, their difficulties, and their opinions…Whenever I saw occasion, or could do it without appearing to be intrusive, I joined their parties; and gave my opinion upon the matter in discussion, which, if not always judicious, was always received indulgently. (II:49)

It is in these forums that conversation exists. De Quincey can share, circulate, and spread the eloquent speech that arose from attending the opera by way of the "colloquial commerce of thought." Conversely, local knowledge allows De Quincey to be deftly rhetorical, "aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief…some aspect of truth which of itself" is not found in what he made of the music.

These interchanges differ from Baconian communication because they are essentially aesthetic practices. Conversation is ultimately invested in sharpening conversational skills, not in communicating information; it is a matter of subjective study,

[103] De Quincey, *Rhetoric,* 270, 287-8.

not knowledge. "Conversation" hinges on a perverted take of Baconian communication and study:

> Lord Bacon had been led to remark the capacities of conversation as an organ for sharpening one particular mode of intellectual power. Circumstances, on the other hand, led me into remarking the special capacities of conversation as an organ for absolutely creating another mode of power. Let a man have read, thought, studied, as much as he may, rarely will he reach his possible advantages as a *ready* man, unless he has exercised his powers much in conversation: that, I think, was Lord Bacon's idea.

David Masson footnotes De Quincey's words with passages that he appropriately selected from Bacon's "Of Studies" and "Of Friendship," but he is misled, I would say, in thinking that De Quincey's sense of conversation reaffirms Bacon's "conference."

> "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man,"—is Bacon's well-known saying in his essay *Of Studies*; but in his essay *Of Friendship* he discusses the benefits of "conference" or conversation more at large, thus:—"Certain it is that, whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discussing with another.

We must remember that "Of Friendship" contains the crucial passage that defines dry light, and when we return to De Quincey's essay to watch him explain the consequence of his take on Bacon, we can see how he "thinks" up Bacon to devalue the objective standards of dry light that define natural philosophy.

> Now, this wise and useful remark points in a direction not objective, but subjective; that is, it does not promise any absolute extension to truth itself, but only some greater facilities to the man who expounds or diffuses the truth. [104]

At this point, I can only read the interjection that ends the first block quote—"I think"—as a rhetorical flourish that signals a sleight of hand. De Quincey converts a well-known Baconian axiom by swapping Baconian communication for De Quinceyean conversation, a mode of literary exchange built on the very sort of language that Bacon disparages. In a footnote in "Elements of Rhetoric," De Quincey deplores Bacon for an inability to think rhetorically:

> [Lord Bacon] had great advantages for rhetoric, being figurative and sensuous (as great thinkers must always be),…but yet, if we except a few letters, and parts of a few speeches, he never comes forward as a rhetorician. The reason is that, being always in quest of absolute truth, he contemplates all subjects, not through the rhetorical fancy,…but through the philosophic fancy. (VI:172)

Conversation "diffuses" the subjective truths of humid light. And conversation does not necessarily propagate any kernel of scientific truth. Rather, conversation is mainly invested in cultivating within each of its subject the subjective skill to put one's own word to the ideas and feelings in one's own mind, the very capacity that threatens the Baconian method.

So we have now seen literature work first and proximately through eloquence and then directed out to its rhetorical situation. Only with a sense of his audience's beliefs, desires, and defining characteristics can De Quincey share—or "diffuse"—the eloquent

[104] Ibid., 267-8.

speech that arose from his operatic experience. We see this throughout his essays, which span an astonishing breadth of topics—from biography to translation and cultural study—but often find space for the eloquent speech that he has coined "impassioned prose." He admits that this is not a natural inclination of opium, or eloquence, though. As we know, there is a productively antinomial force between rhetoric and eloquence. When De Quincey wraps up the account of his regular trips to the borderland of commerce that is the market-theater, he confesses, finally, that one is actually prone to seek out solitude and silence in an opiate state:

> I will admit that markets and theatres are not appropriate haunts of the opium-eater, when in the divinest state incident to his enjoyment. In that state, crowds become an oppression to him; music even, too sensual and gross. He naturally seeks solitude and silence, as indispensable conditions of those trances, or profoundest reveries, which are the crown and consummation of what opium can do for human nature. (II:50)

De Quincey's writing is a product of the antinomial tension between opium's tendencies toward the divine and De Quincey's insistence to ground the opiate imagination in the sensuous and the worldly, the tension between solitude and sociality, silence and music, "impassioned prose" and the essay. He continues by sharing that at a later point in his life he was able to indulge opium's predisposition for solitude and silence. The reveries were serene: "more than once it has happened to me, on a summer-night, when I have been at an open window, in a room from which I could overlook the sea at a mile below me…that I have sate, from sun-set to sun-rise, motionless, and without wishing to move" (II:51). The London haunts, though, have a terrifying effect on this "divinest state." Toward the end of

Confessions, he shares what, as John Plotz has shown, is a paradigmatic vision of his night terrors, courtesy of his opiate imagination:

> The waters now changed their character,—from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change…Hitherto the human face had mixed often in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens: faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries:—my agitation was infinite,—my mind tossed—and surged with the ocean. (II:69-70)

Of course his London life is the cause. The two dreams of the Malay that follow this terrifying image follow suit, as does "Dream-Fugue," and any other private recollection in the impassioned autobiographies, if not the entire corpus. Here is an allegory in which the sea of innumerable faces shows that rhetoric lays bare the historical "aspects" of truth within eloquent imaginings, which the imagination could not display on its own, and it is terrifying.

CHAPTER THREE

THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S OPIATE THEATER (CONTRA LOCKE): TWO PERCEPTIVE ICONS FOR THE MIND

John Locke is in this story too. Locke is the watershed in the British Enlightenment tradition, which comes out of Sir Francis Bacon. Bacon rarely gets an explicit nod from Locke, and his role as primary interlocutor to Locke has been overshadowed by René Descartes since at least the twentieth century. But, it has been documented that Bacon's texts are some of the most consulted books in Locke's library. Plus, thinkers in Locke's intellectual circle, particularly as members of the Royal Society, are utter devotees of Bacon. The debt to Bacon was readily apparent to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers like Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart.[105] De Quincey sees the line between Bacon and Locke, and his double-barreled attack on Enlightenment theories of language and knowledge targets Locke too. In this chapter, we will look at his contention with Locke, ending with a comparison between the figures that crystallize De Quinceyean ideology and Lockean empiricism, the palimpsest and the camera obscura, respectively. This exercise will index for us the radical shift from an Enlightenment notion of subjectivity to a post-Enlightenment notion of the subject and teach us how these different theories of language use—and visuality—lead to opposing philosophies of pedagogy and civic deportment.

Whereas De Quincey sights Bacon at the end of his career, he hones in on Locke at the beginning. As we know, the literature of power is introduced in "Letters to a Young Man Whose Education has been Neglected." The section therein titled "Outline of the Work" ends with a diatribe against Locke's conduct manual. When "Outline of the Work"

[105] Neal Wood, "The Baconian Character of Locke's *Essay*," in *John Locke: Critical Assessments, Volume IV,* edited by Richard Ashcraft (London: Routledge, 1991), 333-373.

takes its turn towards the end, it reveals whom De Quincey considers the arch-antagonist for his pedagogic essay: "With the help of this explanation, you will easily understand on what principle I venture to denounce, as unprofitable, the whole class of books written on the model of Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding."* In short, the explanation is that *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* operates on a level of generality that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to consider cases from "ordinary life." According to De Quincey's diagnosis, Locke's "aphoristic" method is the source of the problem. The basic methodological concept for a conduct manual should be casuistry, De Quincey insists. Casuistry is a variant of the syllogism in which "a subsumption of the *cases* most frequently recurring in ordinary life, should be combined with the system of moral principles;—the latter supplying the major (or normal) proposition; the former supplying the minor proposition, which brings the special case under the rule." We saw in the previous chapter that although he does not state the word here, casuistry is judgment by way of the enthymeme, the rhetorical syllogism. Let us proceed with the complaint. *Of the Conduct* provides principle after moral principle, but fails to consider any cases in ordinary life that fall under the general rule. For casuistry, "the minor [premise] is…distinguished from the major by an act of the *judgment, viz.* a subsumption of a special case under a rule" (III:55-56). And it is this very act of judgment that is missing from Locke's pedagogic text. If one breaks one of Locke's rules:

> …it is either that he has not reflected on his own method; or that, having done so, he has allowed himself, in the act or habit offending these rules on a false view of its tendency and character; because, in fact, having adopted as his rule (or *major*) that very golden mean which Mr. Locke recommends, and which, without Mr. Locke's

> suggestion he would have adopted for himself;—it has yet been possible for him by an erroneous judgment, to take up an act or habit? under the rule—which with better advice he would have excluded; which advice is exactly what Mr. Locke has—*not* given. Over and above all this the method of the book is aphoristic; and, as might be expected from that method, without a plan; and, which is partly the cause and partly the consequence of having no plan, without a foundation. (III:56-57)

Another way to state De Quincey's charge is that Locke's pedagogy is arhetorical, and thus "utterly useless."

Before we can attend to casuistry fully, we must first unpack Lockean pedagogy. Fortunately for us, De Quincey is astonishingly astute with his emphases on judgment, habit, and action. One could allege De Quincey of cherry-picking, because *Of the Conduct* is consciously abstract in its prescription, while its complement text, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, provides the practical grounding for *Of the Conduct*. But judgment, habit, and action are core concepts for Locke's life-long project of creating the framework for an empirical mode of understanding, which is carried forth most fully in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. For one, D.J. Casson has meticulously shown that "judgment" is *the* fundamental act for Lockean civility, which we will see throughout the chapter.[106] Moreover, the main objective for Lockean education is to instill the capacity for judgment. A central chapter in *Essay* starts by defining adolescence and adulthood around judgment. Chapter nine ("Of Perception") of book two ("Of Ideas") begins by signposting the stages of development in the growth into human understanding. The opening book of *Essay* topples the Idols of the Tribe and of the Cave by deracinating all innate ideas from the

[106] Douglas John Casson, *Liberating Judgment: Fanatics, Skeptics, and John Locke's Politics of Probability* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

mind, leaving the human understanding clear and arable for the introduction of ideas, which come by way of the two fundamental sources of knowledge for empirical understanding: "sensation" and "reflection." The former is "observation employed…about external sensible objects," while the latter is about "the internal operations of our minds, perceived and reflected on by ourselves." Together, they "suppl[y] our understandings with all the materials of thinking."[107] Because of the originally blank nature of the mind, children "depend on something exterior to the mind" to build a store of ideas. Even the ideas that seem to be lodged in a child's mind at birth, Locke argues, are "effects of sensations, are only from some affections of the body" in utero. For children, ideas come directly from sensation first. But, within a paragraph, Locke mentions that the "i*deas we receive by sensation, are often* in grown people *altered by the judgement,* without our taking notice of it."[108] For Locke, habit and judgment are integrated terms, and one crosses the threshold from childhood to adulthood when one's sensation is mediated unconsciously and immediately—habitually, that is—by one's own judgment.

Put in slightly different words: the main objective for Lockean education is habituation. This is immediately evident when one looks at *Some Thoughts* and *Of the Conduct*. At the onset of *Some Thoughts*, Locke states, "the great thing to be minded in education is what *habits* you settle."[109] Both tracts insist that practice, not rules, is the most effective way to instill habits, because at their early stage children are still receiving ideas more readily through sensation than from reflection, as stated in *Some Thoughts*:

---

[107] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* edited by Roger Woolhouse (New York: Penguin, 2004), 109.
[108] Ibid., 143.
[109] John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, edited by Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), 19.

> But pray remember, children are *not* to be *taught by rules,* which will be always slipping out of their memories. What you think necessary for them to do, settle in them by an indispensable practice as often as the occasion returns; and if it be possible, make occasions. This will beget habits in them, which, being once established, operate of themselves easily and naturally without the assistance of the memory.[110]

This sets the growing boy up for a life in which, as Locke states in *Of the Conduct:* "As it is in the body, so in the mind; practice makes it what it is, and most even of those excellences which are looked on as natural endowments will be found…to be the product of exercise, and to be raised to that pitch only by repeated actions."[111] Habit makes a voluntary imposition natural by establishing an operation that does not require memory. In other words, youthful practice forges links between a particular sensation and its attendant action(s) through repetition so that when the subject comes of age, they are there for the thinking subject.

Habit, as Locke points out in "Of Perception," saves us time when performing tasks, especially when it comes to the most menial ones. In order to function rationally in the world, humans need habit in order to accomplish even just the daily tasks needed for our basic functions. Such is the case with perception itself. Locke notes that when one looks at a monochromatic globe, we can gather from it the idea that it is intended to communicate—i.e., its uniform color and shape—because "we hav[e] by use been accustomed to perceive, what kind of appearance convex bodies are wont to make in us;

[110] Ibid., 173.

[111] Ibid., 174 I use the gendered subject here advisedly. At the beginning of *Of the Conduct*, Locke baldly declares that the treatise is meant specifically for men and expressly leaves its relevance to women an open question.

what alterations are made in the reflections of light, by the difference of the sensible figures of bodies." Habit allows one to bracket off all the material felicities external or anathema to the idea that the object is meant to generate in order to enable the rational subject to generalize accurately in the given situation. Locke continues:

> The judgment presently, by an habitual custom, alters the appearances into their causes: so that from that, which truly is variety of shadow or colour, collecting the figure, it makes it pass for a mark of figure, and frames to itself the perception of a convex figure, and an uniform colour; when the idea we receive from thence, is only a plain variously coloured, as is evident in painting.[112]

This is the habitual adjustment of sensation that defines a "grown" person. The "mark of figure" delimits the "difference of the sensible figures of bodies" into the idea that is intended to be elicited by the object. When one looks at a monochromatic globe, one has the expectation to perceive a monochromatic globe. This "mark of figure" "alter[s] by judgment" the raw sensation taken in by what he calls elsewhere "bare naked *perception*," which means that in this case the mark flattens out the variegation in the coloring and draws out a third dimension from the flat scene that is the product of the mechanic eye. Judgment is the mark of the human understanding. To become an adult, in these words, is to be habituated to see what is meant to be seen. (It is useful to mention here that Locke consistently classifies children as non-rational beings.) But judgment here is not judgment by De Quincey's definition. Whereas casuist judgment focuses on the ineluctable gap

[112] Locke, *Essay,* 144.

between the major premise and the special case, Lockean judgment works to suture together this gap, normalizing each special case to the general rule.[113]

THROUGH THE IDEA:

PERCEPTION, FIGURATION, AND WHERE SENSATION LIES IN BRITISH EMPIRICISM

De Quincey, then, is accurate in his declamation, but the charge of an aphoristic, a-casuist method can go much deeper than just the pedagogic texts. Indeed, it goes to the very heart of Lockean empiricism. Although published posthumously, *Of the Conduct* was written with the expressed intention of being the capstone for his magnum opus, *Essay*, which clearly evidences how Locke wants these texts to be read. Although *Essay* is traditionally taken as a monumental, and even a foundational, work of philosophy, it should be read, as Casson puts it, as a "civil discourse." [114] In other words, Locke's account of British Empiricism should not be read as a description, but as a prescription, not as an account of how it is for the reader, but how it should be.

To teach empiricism is to make something out of perception. Perception is the central faculty because it is "the most comprehensive of all our senses" and thus is used often—but not always—synecdochically as the general function of the human understanding.[115] In fact, as we will see, perception is transformed into the very act of the human understanding itself, over the course of a number of crucial chapters. The first third of book two, "Of Ideas," is dedicated to instantiating the process by which ideas come to mind. These eleven chapters, which include "Of Perception," establish the basic taxonomy

[113] Whately on rhetoric. As we can see, Whately's rhetoric is a project that carries forth Locke's trajectory into the realm of the neoclassical art of persuasion.
[114] Casson, *Liberating*, 11.
[115] Locke, *Essay*, 145.

of ideas, define perception, and draw out the relation between these two key terms. In doing so, this crucial portion of *Essay* lays out the process by which the empirical subject understands the world, which includes the groundwork for Locke's formative contributions to the philosophy of language. Habit and judgment condition not only perception, but also language. The normative process of Lockean perception that we have begun to see is more fundamental to empiricism, as it is defined by this oeuvre, and it puts sensation in a very precarious position.

The idea is the fundamental concept for Locke's groundbreaking system of thought. Thanks to Vere Chappell's counting, we know that "the very word 'idea' appears more frequently in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* than any other noun; its occurrences outnumber even those of such common words as 'he,' 'have,' and 'for.'"[116] The first book of *Essay* uproots all innate ideas from the human understanding, and with it, all common definitions of the idea that have existed before Locke's work. And the second book begins the task of redefining its eponymous term. Despite the numerous uses of the term and the dedication of the first two books to the idea of ideas, only two moments in *Essay* directly define the central concept. In the very beginning of *Essay*, Locke simply states that an idea is "whatsoever is the object of the understanding."[117] The only other moment in the tome at which Locke pointedly defines idea arrives in book two, chapter eight: "whatsoever the mind perceives in itself, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call *idea.*"[118] This definition elaborates the nearly tautological, first definition by simply appending another term central to Lockean

[116] Vere Chappell, "Locke's Theory of Ideas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 26.
[117] Locke, *Essay,* 59.
[118] Ibid., 134.

empiricism, "perception." Although these instances do not provide any real substance to the definition of the idea outright, they do signal the beginning and the end of the process by which perception is made the general act of the human understanding.

Locke starts "Of Ideas" by dividing perception into "perception of things" (i.e., sensation) and "perception of the operations of the minds" (i.e., reflection).[119] But, by the time he dedicates a chapter to elaborating perception, the "first faculty of the mind," he has already collapsed sensation into reflection. "Of Perception" starts: "*Perception*, as it is the first faculty of the mind, exercised about our ideas; so it is the first and simplest idea we have from reflection, and is by some called thinking in general." Because "some" includes Locke and all his followers, of course, the qualifications to the primacy of perception are important to recognize. Perception is only the first faculty that is "exercised about our ideas" and the first idea "[that] we have from reflection." So, perception is in reality a second-order faculty, and moreover an essentially mental one. Indeed, in chapter six of book two, Locke equates perception with thinking. "Of Perception" starts by pointing out that "actual perception" is actually "produced in the mind." Per Locke's example, fire does not create pain in the body, if the mind within the body does not perceive that the body is aflame. Perception, as the subtitle for the exemplifying paragraph states, "is only when the mind receives the impression." Or, as the paragraph concludes, "*So that wherever there is sense, or perception, there some idea is actually produced, and present in the understanding.*"[120] This is the sense of perception maintained in *Essay* from that point on. At the beginning of book four ("Of Knowledge and Opinion"), Locke reiterates, "*Knowledge* then seems to me to be nothing but *the perception of the connexion and agreement, or*

[119] Ibid., 109.
[120] Ibid., 129, 142-3.

disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas."[121] Locke begins by bifurcating perception into perception of "things" and perception "of the operations of our minds," as one would expect. But perception ultimately yokes sensation to reflection and subordinates the former into the latter to produce the general structure of understanding for empiricism. Lockean perception is in actuality apperception.

We have been proceeding on a path parallel to the above exploration of habit and custom. For a rational subject, sensation is habitually conditioned by reflection. If we can recall a powerful phrase from the beginning of the chapter, we can say more accurately that rote habituation inculcates a "mark of figure" that "frames the perception to itself."[122] The "mark of figure" is the figure for the very operation of reflection that conditions sensation, and there is a concept for this very figure. When Locke says that perception is "the first and simplest idea we have from reflection," he references what he considers the basic unit of his theory of ideas, the "simple idea." "Of Ideas" starts by declaring that the fundamental units for the idea are the "simple idea" and the "complex idea." The former provides "the material of all our knowledge," while the latter is merely a combination of the basic unit that is the former. Simple ideas are ideas given by an object that are "*one uniform appearance,* [which are] not distinguishable into different ideas."[123] Hence the example of the monochromatic globe that we saw Locke use in the above. The first third of the second book establishes his discourse on empirical knowledge by isolating the simple idea to ultimately define perception as the "first faculty of the mind."

[121] Ibid., 467.
[122] Ibid., 144.
[123] Ibid., 121.

When one pauses to consider the simple idea, difficulties arise. On the surface, simple ideas ground empiricism as at heart a materialist method of understanding. Axiomatic truths derived from the sensory apprehension of the ontic world are the basic units for ideas: "Concerning the simple ideas of sensation 'tis to be considered, that whatsoever is so constituted in nature, as to be able, by affecting our senses, to cause any perception in the mind, doth thereby produce in the understanding a simple idea."[124] But, as we have seen, ideas are necessary for the rational subject to make meaning of sensation. This is not so much a chicken-or-the-egg question as a sleight of hand in a shell game. What one cannot find with this legerdemain is sensation itself, which restricts the limits of what we can, or should, know.

The simple idea is the material for the most certain of Locke's orders of knowledge, "intuitive knowledge." The first three chapters of the final book, "Of Knowledge and Opinion," delineate the degrees of knowing. In descending order of certainty, there is "intuitive knowledge," "demonstrative knowledge," and "sensitive knowledge." He dedicates all but the last two paragraphs to proving that intuitive knowledge, "where the ideas themselves, by an immediate view, discover their agreement or disagreement one with another," is more certain in its truth than demonstrative knowledge, wherein "*such truths, whereof the mind having been convinced, it retains the memory of the conviction without the proofs.*"[125] Locke points out that demonstrative knowledge, learned knowledge, requires substantiation through the self-evident logic of intuitive knowledge. Any sort of demonstrative truth, whether it be geometric, scientific, or philosophic, required at its inception the removal of doubt, which, in Locke's empirical system, can only be achieved

[124] Ibid., 133.
[125] Ibid., 470.

through intuitive knowledge. This is to say that an experiment or proof cannot be self-evident, because it requires "intermediate ideas" that verify the demonstration's outcome with its axiomatic truths. The backsolving that, say, an experiment entails requires a degree of knowledge more fundamental in its veracity than any experiment can supply. One of the implicit casualties here is the Baconian experiment's claim to universal truth. An experiment cannot be understood by merely looking at it through "dry light." Unpacking an experimental outcome thoroughly would lead to a set of basic ideas that come from neither a received system of knowledge nor innate principles, but rather from what is undeniably true "from immediate view."

Moreover, the Baconian experiment relies on an even foggier degree of knowledge, what Locke calls "sensitive knowledge." The chapter "Of the Degrees of our Knowledge" ends with Locke willing to concede that a degree of knowledge exists with sensorial apprehension, but this, what Locke calls "sensitive knowledge," is absolutely the most provisional of the three:

> These two, *viz*. intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but faith, or opinion, but not knowledge, at least in all general truths. There is, indeed, another *perception* of the mind, employed about *the particular existence of finite beings* without us; which going beyond bare probability, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of knowledge.[126]

[126] Ibid., 477.

Knowledge derived from embodied perception is but opinion or faith when considered in general terms, and can only pass (barely) for knowledge, in just name, when speaking of the particular. Just seeing an object through "dry light" is not enough. In fact, Locke "doubt[s] that, how far soever human industry may advance useful and *experimental* philosophy in *physical things, scientifical* will still be out of our reach: because we want perfect and adequate ideas of those very bodies, which are nearest to us, and most under our command." What limits the effectiveness of experimental philosophy is the subjective variance that plagues sensory apprehension: "Distinct ideas of the several sorts of bodies, that fall under the examination of our senses, perhaps, we may have: but adequate ideas, I suspect, we have not of any amongst them."[127] When Locke elaborates the definition of sensitive knowledge, he not only grounds sensitive knowledge with intuitive knowledge. He, moreover, instantiates intuitive knowledge:

> There can be nothing more certain, than that the idea we receive from an external object is in our minds; this is intuitive knowledge. But whether there be anything more than barely that idea in our minds, whether we can thence certainly infer the existence of anything without us, which corresponds to that idea, is that, whereof some men think there may be a question made, because men may have such ideas in their minds, when no such thing exists, no such object affects their senses.[128]

By the end of the passage, we see that the beginning sentence is meant as a double entendre. The circular reasoning accomplished by the block quote (i.e., intuitive knowledge proves the existence of intuitive knowledge) establishes the mediating presence

[127] Ibid., 494.
[128] Ibid., 477.

of the idea as an axiomatic truth, concluding that sensuous apprehension only happens through our ideas of them.

Of course, this is precisely what Bacon tried to achieve when he invented the modern form of the experiment. As we saw in the previous chapter, Bacon neutralizes the phenomenal, sensuous body from natural philosophy by inventing the experimental situation, which buffers the ontic world from the perceptive body. "The truer kind of interpretation of nature," we can recall him saying, "is effected by instances and experiments fit and apposite; wherein the sense decides touching the experiment only, and the experiment touching the point in nature and the thing itself."[129] Locke does not refute Bacon, but rather seeks to improve him by undoing the experimental situation, because a contradiction occurs when an Enlightenment scientist realizes the experimental mode. The Baconian thinker's inductive method requires him to observe without sensory perception, which is still to this day impossible to achieve.

Locke strips the overriding authority from the Baconian experiment, because he finds it ultimately inadequate as an inductive method for "general truths." Locke makes up for the shortcomings of the Baconian experiment by using the Lockean idea to replace the Baconian experiment as the "intermediate" stage that buffers the sensuous subject from the ontic world. As we have seen, in Lockean terms, (proper) judgment adjusts the special cases of ordinary, phenomenal life to fit their respective general rules, i.e., the particular ideas attached to any perceived object. Sensible objects give to the human understanding certain ideas, and the ideas manage the subject's apprehension of the phenomenal world. The Lockean idea is the terminal point for the rational subject's sensory body. Locke

[129] Bacon, *Novum,* 52-3.

exploited a semantic overlap to make this configuration sound right. Up until the middle of the eighteenth century, "experiment" also included the definition "Practical acquaintance with a person or thing; experience; an instance of this."[130] In a deftly rhetorical move, Locke undoes the experiment and reconstitutes it as the basic process of empiricism.[131]

All of this puts the simple idea in a crucial, but troubling, position. Like Bacon, Locke wants to invent an inductive method capable of general truths, and, like Bacon, he must contend with the myriad-meaning body. As the only substance for intuitive knowledge, simple ideas are presented, at least ostensibly, as axiomatic truths given by perception of the material world. One can't argue with what one sees, but one must remember that intuitive knowledge is not sensitive knowledge, is not the immediate introduction of sensation. Intuitive knowledge is not sensation per se, but sensation conditioned by the habitual custom of judgment.

To see what this means for perception itself, we can start by pointing out an irresistible resonance between Baconian dry light and the light that Locke describes as the medium for intuitive knowledge:

> Such kind of truths, the mind perceives at the first sight of the ideas together, by bare *intuition*, without the intervention of any other idea; and this kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain, that human frailty is capable of. This part of knowledge is irresistible, and like bright Sunshine, forces itself immediately to be perceived, as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way; and leaves no room for hesitation, doubt, or examination, but the mind is presently filled with the

[130] *Oxford English Dictionary,* "Experiment," accessed on May 1, 2018.
[131] It seems not merely a coincidence that this definition of "experiment" became archaic during the very years in which Locke's work was deeply and broadly influential, but pursuing this hunch would lead us too far afield.

> clear light of it. 'Tis on this *intuition,* that depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge, which certainty everyone finds to be so great, that he cannot imagine, and therefore not require a greater.[132]

Light is the means by which intuitive knowledge is revealed to us. But, as we must remember, a mind completely open to the irresistible sun cannot function effectively (a point that Johann Herder would argue more pointedly, and more boldly, nearly a century after Locke in "On the Origin of Language"). This is the child's mind, completely exposed and impressionable. And, as we have seen, Locke finds it debilitating for the understanding and the senses to be utterly vulnerable to the infinitely variegated and overly stimulating phenomena of the ontic world.

Thus the camera obscura. In a large and consistently impressive book, the camera obscura is certainly the most powerful and famous of the figures. It is, as I aim to demonstrate, truly the central figure for the Lockean understanding. What we want to see is that the camera obscura is nothing but an apparatus that manages light. When Locke nears the end of the chapters dedicated to establishing the idea of the idea, the first third of book two, he admits that his description of the process by which simple ideas enter the mind is incomplete and inadequate. His recourse is to cap his discourse off by figuring the perceptive mind as a camera obscura. The paragraph, titled "Dark room," is quoted in full:

> I pretend not to teach, but to inquire, and therefore cannot but confess here again, that external and internal sensation, are the only passages that I can find, of knowledge, to the understanding. These alone, as far as I can discover are the windows by which light is let into this *dark room*. For, methinks, the *understanding*

[132] Locke, *Essay*, 472.

> is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little opening left, to let in external visible resemblances, or ideas of things without; would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the ideas of them.[133]

This figure captures perception by blending sensation with reflection, as we have seen Locke do discursively. Locke appropriately titles this paragraph because with it he builds a dark room around a companion figure that precedes the camera obscura. In the opening chapter of "Of Ideas," another well-known figure for the understanding appears:

> Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas; how comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store, which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*.[134]

In elaborating his one-word answer into the experience of a perceptive subject, Locke builds a dark room around this white paper to block out almost wholly the irresistible sun. Only in the dark room can one see the paper furnished with characters and ideas.

Keeping in mind the gate-keeping function of the Lockean idea, remembering that perception is actually apperception, we can say that the simple idea is actually not any representation projected into the dark room, but rather the "mark of figure" that leaves "some little opening left." The "ideas of things without" can only be complex ideas, because they rely on the "mark of figure"—the simple idea—for admittance into the understanding.

[133] Locke, *Essay*, 158.
[134] Ibid., 109.

The simple idea is the means by which Locke, in the words of Jonathan Crary, conceives "the apodictic claims of the camera obscura to establish its truth": "the [specifically Lockean] camera obscura allows the subject to guarantee and police the correspondence between exterior world and interior representation and to exclude anything disorderly or unruly."[135] The little opening brackets off the world outside for the observer, and, because of the darkened room, there is the illusion of simultaneity between the representation therein and the objective world without, which produces a notion of the instantaneity of sight. The materialist smack of incontrovertible truth contrived. This is exactly how simple ideas and habitual judgment work, as we have seen. If an idea is a product of the mind—whether as an object purely of reflection, or as one of perception, which is first and foremost a reflective act—then the simple idea is not given as an objective fact from the material world, as Locke misleadingly implies. Simple ideas are inculcated by rote habituation. "*Habits,"* as stated in "Of Perception," "*produce actions in us, which often escape our observation,"* and, in *Of the Conduct*, "give[] us ability and skill in anything, and lead[] us towards perfection."[136] Habit is necessary for ability, skill, and perfectibility, because habit alleviates the burden one bears to think through the processes of an inferior intellectual level. When it comes to sensation and reflection, judgment habitually "alters" sensation so that one can focus on the object of perception without having to search around one's empiric landscape for it. One carves out this mark of figure, this habitually mediating idea, by forming a habit. Lockean pedagogy is a severe process of disciplining the human understanding apart from the human body. Indeed, in the paragraph on self-denial in *Some*

[135] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 14, 42-3.
[136] Locke, *Essay*, 145. Locke, *Thoughts,* 173.

Thoughts, Locke plainly states: "He that has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to *resist* the importunity of *present pleasure or pain* for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry and is in danger never to be good for anything."[137]

What This Means for Language

We will speak more about the camera obscura in the following section, but we have an opportunity now to determine how Lockean perception unfolds into Locke's groundbreaking theory of language. It is no longer anomalous to consider Locke's contributions to the Western intellectual tradition in terms of his impact on how we understand language. Whether taken as sincere or disingenuous, his well-known confession in the middle of book three in *Essay* ("Of Words")—that "when [Locke] first began this discourse on the understanding, and a good while after, [he] had not the least thought, that any consideration of words was at all necessary to it"—can no longer be read without irony, dramatic or intentional.[138] Since at least Paul de Man's trenchant reading of figuration in Locke and Hans Aarsleff's thorough history that draws a line from Locke to structuralism, language has been central to a wealth of studies on and inspired by Locke.[139] Locke has risen again as a major object of study particularly now, since historical, political, and cultural studies have also taken the linguistic turn, because his monumental work uses a sophisticated notion of signification to make a theory of communication and a theory of

[137] Locke, *Thoughts*, 32. De Quincey would not have been able to invent the coherent sense of the drug habit as we know it today without working within this Lockean sense of moral upbringing.
[138] Locke, *Essay,* 435.
[139] Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (1978), 13-30. Hans Aarsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

governance one and the same. Using John Guillory's phrase, Locke forges for the first time an "inherent link to sociability" in his linguistic theory by tempering the Shaftesburian discourse of the *sensus communis* with the Baconian discourse against the uncertainty of knowledge.[140] As Hannah Dawson puts it: "Bacon's deep insertion of language into epistemology and vice versa is a key moment. We have to wait for Locke to unravel the devastating consequences of this interdependence."[141] And, in this doubt-filled world of precarious signification, this land of false idols, Locke intends to, as Casson puts it, "recoin[] a political vocabulary" for liberal governance.[142] This means that language, pedagogy, politics, and human subjectivity are all inextricable (as De Quincey too wants them to be), making Locke a powerful source or source of contention for a theory of language that entails aesthetics, politics, psychology, and literary studies.

The compound figure of the blank sheet/camera obscura signals a primary investment in representation, and the "policing" function of the camera obscura proves to be a fundamental aspect of Locke's theory of language. Locke shifted the entire discourse on the understanding of language by proving the arbitrariness of all linguistic signification. With the Idols of the Mind passage, Bacon admits the possibility of—or even proclivity for—arbitrary signification, but Bacon calls for language use that avoids this danger. Locke does not see any sort of language immune to this condition:

> …*words…*[have] come to be made use of by men, as the *signs of* their *ideas*; not by any natural connexion that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain

[140] Guillory, "Media," 331.
[141] Hannah Dawson, *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 123.
[142] Casson, *Liberating*, 19.

ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea.[143]

In what is a truly Copernican move, Locke admits that a word is nothing but an arbitrary mark voluntarily imposed on an idea. At the end of *Essay*, Locke calls for a new science that studies language in these terms, a field he dubs semiotics, but, as de Man points out, Locke's theory of language "is frankly semantic rather than semiotic."[144] Indeed, Locke's philosophy of language seems to share the definition that we saw De Quincey state for eloquence: "the *key* of the evolution [of a sequence of significations], [and] the *law* of the succession" (XVI:378).

This groundbreaking notion of language ties directly to Locke's formative contributions to civil discourse. Before Locke, Hobbes followed Bacon's "key moment" by considering the nature of language in his philosophy of sovereign governance. But, like Bacon, he kept the contingency of language at bay. Hobbes dealt with the contemporary crisis of certainty by endowing the sovereign with the power to instantiate definitive truth. With this Adamic notion of language, Hobbes can still retain a nominalist theory of language utterly committed to a universal language in which names fit their respective objects perfectly. But, as Hobbes himself admits in the *Leviathan*, Babel plagues this world. Locke redresses Hobbes by embracing the world of Babel. The tolerance and liberal governance that Locke propounds in his political tract find their empiricist structure in *Essay*. When substantiating general claims about the human understanding, Locke regularly cites evidence from foreign cultures and emphasizes their complete cultural

[143] Locke, *Essay,* 363.

[144] De Man, "Epistemology," 16. De Man is perceptive about this quality of the Lockean philosophy of language, which makes de Man's odd, persistent recourse to etymology in his essay anathema to the Lockean world.

difference from the English reader. Consequently, empiricism is constructed as a theory or system of knowledge meant to accommodate cultural diversity.

The general difficulty that liberalism has with reconciling difference and universality still exists, though. Even though Locke's semantic theory accommodates a plurality of languages, Locke considers a multiple meaning word the greatest abuse of language. We can see this evidenced clearly in the chapter "Of the Abuse of Words," the most aggressively dogmatic part of *Essay*, which prohibits the Lockean subject from "figurative speech" and "inconstancy." Although listed separately, rhetoric and inconsistent use of words are in fact related. Inconstancy is when "the same words…[are] used sometimes for one collection of simple ideas, and sometimes for another." Locke adds, "words being intended for signs of my ideas, to make them known to others, not by any natural signification, but by a voluntary imposition, 'tis plain cheat and abuse."[145] In the famous denunciation of figurative language that concludes the chapter, Locke describes the greatest abuse, rhetoric. In it, he declaims, "all the art of rhetoric,…all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat."[146] Words cheat when they insist on multiple meanings, and secondary rhetoric is the *perfect* cheat because it is willful inconstancy.

The problem is that, as we should recall, words are "not made by any natural connexion…[or] signification, but by a voluntary imposition."[147] Every word use is by definition a matter of inconstancy, then, unless it is policed. In the words of Paul Guyer:

[145] Locke, *Essay*, 439.
[146] Ibid., 452.
[147] Ibid., 363, 439.

"[Locke] proposes a theory that is intended to show that room for certain kinds of confusion is an inherent liability in the nature of language, and classification themselves, and that this 'imperfection' of language can be remedied only if this fact is clearly understood." The remedies, as we will see, are severe. Although Locke is preoccupied with providing a thorough account of the limited accuracy of language, he, as Jules Law observes, "refuses to *thematize* failure," and, as Guyer further notes, "Locke's theoretical discussion of the nature of language and classification and his discussion of the imperfections of language and their remedies are not two separate themes, but parts of a single argument."[148]

In an article that consciously stalks de Man's reading of Locke, Geoffrey Bennington makes a point that echoes what Law and Guyer just said: in order to stabilize his semantic theory of language, Locke must stop the chain of arbitrary signification. In order to safeguard the language of empiricism from failure while preserving empiricism's integrity as an inductive method capable of general truth, Locke must cap off the chain arbitrary signification, and what comes to be is the idea. As Bennington puts it, "abstraction is in fact coeval with *any* use of language."[149] We have already seen this work, specifically in terms of the generation of simple ideas. The pragmatic sense of the simple idea is the conceptual

---

[148] Paul Guyer, "Locke's Philosophy of Language," in *The Cambridge Companion to Locke,* edited by Vere Chappell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 115-116. Jules Law, *The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I.A. Richards* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 70.

[149] Geoffrey Bennington, "The Perfect Cheat: Locke and Empiricism's Rhetoric," in *The Figural and the Literal: Problems of Language in the History of Science and Philosophy, 1630-1800,* edited by Andrew E. Benjamin, Geoffrey N. Cantor, and John R.R. Christie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), 112.

De Man defines Locke's project as "frankly semantic rather than semiotic, a theory of signification as a substation of words for 'ideas' (in a specific and pragmatic sense of the term) and not of the linguistic sign as an autonomous structure." (13). De Man never attends to the "specific and pragmatic sense" of the Lockean idea, which is what we are undertaking in this chapter. If he did, he might have been able to account for the contradiction between the semantic nature of the Lockean discourse and the interdiction against figurative language in a way other than a—in de Man's words—"scrupulous and superb writer" having a substantial and substantially eloquent momentary lapse. (14).

stop that grounds the chain of combinations and arbitrary impositions so that empirical knowledge can have the status of general, universal truth. For the simple idea, the figural is made literal, and done so through habituating judgment.

Locke wanted to embrace the world of Babel and build a practical system of knowledge capable of accounting for cultural difference. Remember, the idea arose as a necessity because without it, according to Locke, we would be in an impossible world in which there is "but one language amongst all men."[150] Locke's toleration for cultural differences has been a reliable cornerstone for liberal, progressive ethics, and yet, as we have seen, there is little room for variance on the fundamental level of human experience. In fact, it is the variety of this that falls prey to Locke's system. Casson encapsulates the pedagogic thrust of the Lockean project by stating that *Essay* and *Of the Conduct* basically argue "that truth is accessible to the disciplined human mind and that disagreement is the result of individuals not making proper use of their rational faculties."[151] We should lay bare the Foucauldian inflection of "disciplined" that Casson did not intend. Locke can build a system that at once accounts for cultural difference while pronouncing universal truth only upon a generalized account of bodily experience, which is to say that he can promulgate that system of civil discourse only through a severely normative account of living. It might be culturally sensitive, but its body politic is deadening. We see this manifesting consistently in his examples. Locke points to religious practices and social customs of far-off places as radically foreign examples that fit—nay substantiate—his system of thought, but women, children, and the mentally and physically disabled are referenced time and again as those without proper access to the human understanding.

[150] Locke, *Essay*, 363.
[151] Casson, *Liberating,* 81.

Lockean empiricism expunges any wherewithal to consider the exceptionality of any special case, which is to say that De Quincey is correct in perceiving in the Lockean world no means for casuist judgment. What we also know is that these special cases come first and foremost from embodiment.

Camera Obscura and Palimpsest: Two Perceptive Hypericons for the Mind

Surely, Jonathan Crary's *Techniques of the Observer* has done more for the study of the camera obscura than any other study in recent memory. Crary has firmly established that from roughly the 1820s to the 1850s the point of view by which subjectivity had been oriented underwent a full-on transformation. The camera obscura was the presiding figure leading into the transition period. Intellectual history, commercial invention, and scientific inquiry collectively developed a "new 'objectivity' accorded to subjective phenomena." A rupture in the history of visuality annihilated the paradigm of "decorporealize[d] vision" promulgated by the camera obscura. This uncovered "the newly discovered territory of a fully embodied viewer," which would be the controlling topos for the discourses and cultural practices that would define the observer for the subsequent epoch. The rupture "shattered the *scenic* relationship between viewer and object that was intrinsic to the fundamentally theatrical setup of the camera obscura."[152] De Quincey's writing career spans roughly from 1820 to 1850, and, I aim to show, he contributed to this rupture that Crary locates in the history of visuality. In fact, his palimpsest is the icon for the age that follows the break from the one dominated by the camera obscura.

[152] Crary, *Techniques*, 98, 39, 136, 127.

I use the word "icon" advisedly. In his chapter that considers the definitive power of the camera obscura in the *German Ideology*, W.J.T. Mitchell designates the camera obscura one of the most—if not *the* most—prominent examples of a "hypericon" in the Western intellectual tradition. Hypericons are "themselves 'scenes' or sites of graphic image-production, as well as verbal or rhetorical images." This is a useful term, because it compels one to keep in mind the fact that figures within this category serve as images that, at once, concretize abstract concepts and produce more images. These are images in a "double sense." They are points of investigation potentially powerful in their capacity to reveal the intellectual workings at a specific historical time, because hypericons are "metaphors that inform its own discourse."[153] Thus, Richard Rorty is not completely accurate when he claims in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, that Locke creates an ultimately obfuscating philosophy because he refuses to fully unpack the figures that he uses to demonstrate the representational process for the human understanding.[154] Hypericons are figures that cannot be fully unpacked per se, because they are figuratively productive. Hypericons not only concretize abstractions, making systems of thought more amenable to allusion, appropriation, and the smack of immediate comprehension (i.e., intuitive knowledge), they are also generative, facilitating the elaboration of the system of thought instantiated by the hypericon. In other words, hypericons do not merelhy represent, or reify, an idea. Hypericons are figures technologized for dissemination, engineered to proliferate its own images within the system of thought in which it is meant to intervene. Clearly, the palimpsest also fits the definition of a hypericon.

[153] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 162, 159.
[154] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 143-144.

We could compare them straight away, but, unfortunately, Crary does not go on at length about the "fundamentally theatrical setup of the camera obscura." So that first. Substantiating his phrase would prove the palimpsest and the camera obscura both figures that overlay theater with writing, or vice versa. We in the profession of literary studies often draw a stark, but floating, and often awkward, line between writing and theater. (In which department do your theater specialists reside?) If we can successfully determine both the camera obscura, which transformed the way we think about common language use between people, and the palimpsest, which is the operative figure for literature as we know it today, we could start to see that the uneasiness and awkwardness with this line is due to the fact that it is actually *difficult* to think of writing without theater after Locke and De Quincey, even though the presence of theater is mostly kept in the shadows.

Peter Otto has already given us a head start. He reveals the fundamentally theatrical setup of at least Locke's camera obscura by drawing out the development of the figure of the dark room rather than reading the static image by itself. Otto points out that the camera obscura is preceded by not only the blank page, as we have already seen, but also by another figure. When Locke begins his discourse on simple ideas (book two, chapter three, "Of Ideas of One Sense"), he describes the human understanding as "the mind's presence-room":

> First, there are *some ideas, which have admittance only through one sense,* which is peculiarly adapted to receive them…And if these organs, or the nerves which are the conduits, to convey them from without to their audience in the brain, the mind's presence-room (as I may call it) are any of them so disordered, as not to perform

their functions, they have no postern to be admitted by; no other way to bring themselves into view, and be perceived by the understanding.[155]

The figures of the mind's presence-room and the dark room bookend the chapters that define first the idea, and then, consequently, perception. Taking the two figures together, we see that over these chapters Locke darkens the presence-room for a picture show, in what Otto calls a "Spartan theatre" and on what he deems a "bare stage."[156] So both Locke and De Quincey do define human subjectivity with figures that compound writing with theater. It is appropriate that a hypericon would have a fundamentally theatrical setup, because the theater is the preeminent "representative space," to use a term from Henri Lefebvre, for cultural production. At least before cinematic and digital arts, theater stood alone as the place where explicit representations explicitly produced networks of representations. If one were to look for a figurative generative of other figures at the time that De Quicney was writing, the theater was the only place to go.

What interests me is that, having seen the crowd in the mind's presence-room, we now know that the camera obscura houses an audience that is conspicuous in its absence. Crary notes that "[Locke's] camera obscura performs an operation of individuation; that is, it necessarily defines an observer as isolated, enclosed, and autonomous within its dark confines."[157] Knowing that the observer—which the reader him- or herself cannot see—stands amidst a crowd compounds the alienation all the more. In *A Short History of Western Performance Space*, theater historian David Wiles contends that debates over the obfuscation of the viewing environment have been central to the development of theater

[155] Locke, *Essay,* 123.
[156] Peter Otto, "Disoriented, Twice Removed from the Real, Racked by Passion in Walpole's Protean Theatres of Sensation," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 27.3-4 (2015), 685, 688.
[157] Crary, *Techniques,* 38-9.

and performance space from the Enlightenment period to this very day. He finds Descartes the progenitor for the advocates of the darkened theater. Cartesian space implies what Wiles calls "the Cartesian theatrical dichotomy," "the naturalness of the divide between active actor and passive spectator":

> Cartesian space is an ocular space. The invisible *ego* not only views the action but also quells the actors with the controlling power of its gaze. It does not submit to any embodied immersion in space—space as apprehended through kinetics, smell, sonic vibrations or an osmosis running through packed shoulders.[158]

A tradition of actors, playwrights, dramaturges, and other theatrical and performance artists have exalted this theatrical dichotomy as the standard of performance, and the individuation of the spectator is the key move to establish this dynamic. For instance, Richard Wagner engineered Beyreuth so that "the sacred lay in the mental space of the spectators, and not in the physical environment their bodies occupied." Stadium seating for clear sightlines all around, all of the audience oriented toward nothing but the stage, and the orchestra hidden from sight. Known for its dim interior, the Bayreuth theater is a very grand dark room indeed. Like the state-of-the-art movie theater, with its increasingly comfortable chair and pitch-black interior, all meant to sedate the viewing body into a mass all eye, "[Wagner's] theatre was not a grand urban monument, but a building oriented upon its interior where individuals could lose their imprisoning individuality in the work of art." As Wiles concludes, "Wagner required his spectators to forget other inhabitants of the darkened auditorium, and lose themselves in evocations of Germanic myth." [159]

[158] David Wiles, *A Short History of Western Performance Space* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7.
[159] Ibid., 52, 229.

Well, the observer in the camera obscura loses himself in the evocation of the myth of British empiricism. Locke darkens the mind's presence-room because he wants to define perception as a passive act. Locke privileges sight above all else, because, as he states in "Of Perception," it is "the most comprehensive of all our senses." This means that 1) sight encompasses the most categories of simple ideas, like color, shape, motion, and space, and, more importantly for us, 2) one's experience of sight happens so instantaneously that perception often happens unnoticed and is taken for a multisensory experience. Note how Locke's discourse prevents the sense of sight from noticing itself, as the camera obscura does with its observer:

> This, in many cases, by a settled habit…is performed so constantly and so quick, that we take that for the perception of our sensation, which is an idea formed by our judgment; so that one, viz. that of sensation, serves only to excite the other, and is scarce taken notice of itself; as a man who reads or hears with attention and understanding, takes little notice of the characters, or sounds, but of the ideas that are excited in him by them.[160]

This is a deceptively complicated passage. Perception is the most comprehensive of all the senses because it is the sense most capable of stimulating other senses. But perception possesses this power only because it is the sense that, according to Locke, can operate most capably without "notice of itself." What he describes here is the passivity with which he characterizes "bare" perception and thought, the passivity of the habitual, something he declares time and again. To choose somewhat randomly from a surfeit of examples: "For in bare naked perception, the mind is, for the most part, only passive: and what it perceives, it

[160] Locke, *Essay,* 145.

cannot avoid perceiving." Or: "In the reception of simple ideas the understanding is for the most part passive." And: "the mind, in respect of its simple ideas, is wholly passive, and receives them all from the existence and operations of things, such as sensation or reflection offers them."[161] The bustle of the mind's presence-room, with all the ushering in of sensation to the understanding, is nullified when it comes to perception.

Otto seizes on the second-order multisensory experience of perception to argue that the camera obscura is not only a prototype for the black box theater, but also a prescient figure for virtual reality. His most recent book, *Multiplying Worlds: Romanticism, Modernity, and the Emergence of Virtual Reality*, proposes, as the title states, that the concept of virtual reality emerged out of the aesthetic debates over imagination and metaphysics that defines Romantic literature. Otto endorses the status of the camera obscura as a hypericon without a noticeable reference to Mitchell, insisting that the plethora of figures for and about the human understanding are representations projected into the dark room. "This world," after all, "rests on foundations provided by simple ideas, is built by the mind from the same materials, and therefore opens from and yet is contained by the 'dark room' of the mind." The dark room is a "multimodal space…designed to process only the bare elements of perception…which appear one after the other on an empty stage." He concludes that, although the reader sees nothing in the dark room but its picture show, "Locke's Spartan theatre now seems a viewing platform from which the astonished reader/spectator is able to see, albeit only in virtual form and with the help of Locke's still-proliferating analogies."[162] Not everyone valorizes this space of virtual reality as Otto does. Even though Crary agrees with Otto that "space here is real and rational

[161] Locke, *Essay,* 142, 120, 262.
[162] Otto, "Twice," 685-6.

rather than subjective and phantasmal," Crary emphasizes that it is this quality of space that endows the dark room with "the apodictic claims…to establish its truth."[163] "The virtual instantaneity of optical transmission," he states later in the book, "was an unquestioned foundation of classical optics and theories of perception from Aristotle to Locke. And the simultaneity of the camera obscura image with its exterior object was never questioned."[164] Virtual reality is aesthetic experience out of passive (Lockean) perception. The immersive sensationalism associated with virtual reality in fact requires the nullification of the body and the ideation of the senses. "The body then is a problem the camera [obscura] could never solve except by marginalizing it into a phantom in order to establish a space of reason," Crary concludes.[165] This black box theater, then, is the Baconian experiment built out in architectural terms.

Although Locke critiques the "dry light" of the Baconian experiment, the camera obscura toys with its own light to shimmer forth the mirage of its own "hard" truths. The light of inductively derived general truths is not elemental; the trick of light is preserved in the figure itself. In a camera obscura, the observer takes projection as reflection, which is another way to summarize the argument of the above paragraph, and the passive nature of perception enables the process. The camera obscura emblematizes this trick of light and every image that comes from the camera obscura appears natural within and by this context. Thus the "apodictic," "aphoristic," and "virtual" quality of its representational claims.

[163] Otto, "Twice," 686. Crary, *Techniques,* 14.
[164] Crary, *Techniques,* 98.
[165] Ibid., 41.

Here we find a direct point of contrast with De Quincey's palimpsest. We now have a way to account for the projective nature oddly associated with the palimpsest. Writers "discharge" and "expel[]" the writing from the palimpsest when they want to prepare it for something new. To recall past writing is to make that language, like the Phoenix, which is "but a type of what we have done with the Palimpsests," rise from its own ashes. All past events return, as it did for the lady who faced sudden death, as if "phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eye-balls; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain" (XV:176). Projection, trajectory, expansion because there is depth. All of this we know from the first chapter. De Quincey creates infinite depth within the vellum membrane by imagining an introvoluted structure for the palimpsest. What we can see now is why De Quincey uses projection to do so: "Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And in reality not one has been extinguished" (XV:175). As is the case with the camera obscura, writing is represented as light landing on a blank surface, but the representations made on the palimpsest are not reflections, but inscriptions.

It is this contrast of light on surface that makes the camera obscura and the palimpsest hypericons of radically different epochs. M.H. Abrams famously distinguished the age of Locke from the Romantic era through this very shift from reflection to projection.[166] In terms of the history of visuality, Crary defines the triumph of projection in

[166] *The Mirror and the Lamp* uses the passivity of Lockean perception as the point of critical departure for the projective nature of imagination that results from the collective rejoinder that comprises major works of Romantic literature. As compelling as the conclusions of this book has been, and continues to be, we must not overlook the simple fact that the Lockean understanding is a camera obscura, and not a mirror. (Locke, in fact, speaks not too kindly of mirrors.) Jules Law is right to say that Abrams substantially distorts Lockean empiricism by completely bracketing off the active aspects of Lockean perception. But Law, on the other hand, is overdetermined in putting the active notions on an equal plain with the passive notions of Lockean perception. Locke narrates the process by which the active process of sensation becomes pacified to produce Lockean perception. Romantic literature and

terms of the newfound centrality of the body: "as observation is increasingly tied to the body in the early nineteenth century, temporality and vision become inseparable."[167] Whereas reflection is a figure of atemporal perception, projection is vision set in time. De Quincey, as we have been insisting all along, is fully invested in the body as the central site of sensation and vision. We should pause to note, though, that temporality varies differently among Romantic authors. The next chapter will spend much time differentiating the temporalities of Wordsworthian and De Quinceyean literary production. For now, we can recall from the first chapter that for the palimpsest time is specifically historical. Whether it be of a person's life, a literary tradition, or of what we consider more properly history, time as registered by the palimpsest is defined by the historical specificity of a certain period. That light sinks "immortal impresses" upon the palimpsest means that the general truth about representation here is not the meaning of the representation itself, but rather that the representation's meaning is historically conditioned, and preserved as such.

Although De Quincey did not derive the palimpsest directly from Locke's camera obscura, his defining statement about the material traces left by palimpsestic writing illuminates a problem that Lockean perception has with time. In the camera obscura, image after image flits by with utter ephemerality. Locke admits this when he draws his figure of the dark room: "For methinks the understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light…would the pictures coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the

---

subjectivity, then, was not built in opposition to Enlightenment, but rather out of a critique of Enlightenment that rolled back the process that Locke undertook for reflective reason. One could say that Romanticism is a critique of Enlightenment circulated within British Enlightenment.

[167] Crary, *Techniques,* 98.

understanding of a man, in reference to all objects of sight, and the idea of them."[168] In an argument that implicitly opposes Otto's, Sean Silver insists that the Ur-figure for Locke is the cabinet "as an increasingly stable repository of ideas," and that the dark room is merely a variant of this storehouse of the mind.[169] The more local argument requires, though, a tin ear for what Locke would call "uneasiness" in the camera obscura passage, and subsequently compromises the larger argument too, with the dark room's status as the stated figure for the understanding. "Would the pictures…but stay," but they don't of course. To call the dark room a repository, and a stable one at that, fulfills Locke's far-flung wish. As we have pointed out, the images that we see in the dark room are virtual reality. The images projected onto the white paper within the dark room do not stay, and there is an anxiety persistently expressed through *Essay* about the ephemerality of ideas and their attendant significations. "*The pictures drawn in our minds, are laid in fading colours;* and if not sometimes refreshed, vanish and disappear," Locke opines.[170] Or, when speaking of a mirror, he remarks:

> *To think often, and never to retain it so much as one moment, is a very useless sort of thinking:* and the soul in such a state of thinking, does very little if at all, excel that of a looking-glass, which constantly receives variety of images, or ideas, but retains none; they disappear and vanish, and there remain no footsteps of them.[171]

[168] Locke, *Essay,* 158.
[169] Sean Silver, *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 31.
[170] Locke, *Essay,* 149.
[171] Ibid., 115.

The hypericon is a camera obscura, and not a mirror. But Locke wants to pass the camera obscura's image as reflection, and is willing to admit this misgiving of the dark room: reflection leaves no footprint on the blank surface.

The ephemerality of the images in this virtual reality suggest that memory is a problem with Lockean perception. True, memory is a cornerstone of the Lockean project; we have seen this by way of the centrality of habit. But the camera obscura reminds us that *historical* memory is a problem for the camera obscura, that the dark room has a difficult time *retaining* its images. Memory for Locke is pointedly rote memory. Each succession of images actually *does* extinguish the succession before it. The only way to keep a representation in the mind is to introduce it repeatedly into the cavernous understanding. Rearing a subject to function through purely rote memory scrubs the subject clean of the sediments of interiority, the impressions left by the ordinary case of human life, the material for what we saw De Quincey define in the previous chapter "subjective study." In fact, Locke defines subjectivity with the very term that De Quincey uses to exemplify objective study: "*Person,* as I take it, is the name for the *self*…It is a forensic term appropriating actions and their merit, and so belongs only to intelligent agents capable of a law, and happiness and misery."[172] If we can remember the examples of the bar and Parliament that De Quincey uses to distinguish subjective and objective studies, which we studied in the previous chapter, we can say that although Locke redirected the discourse on language within British philosophy by attaching to his theory of language "an inherent link to sociability," his semantic theory is not yet political, as far as De Quincey defines it. The practicality of the system of language is not accountable to particularities of the rhetorical

[172] Ibid., 312.

situation in which an expression takes place, which is to say that it is a-casuist, or aphoristic. British empiricism polices the myriad-meaning body away from language use, and so language in these terms can be considered "practically useless." In the following chapter we will see De Quincey stage his reading practice, an embodied literary practice that situates the reader with others within a rhetorically attuned reading commons.

CHAPTER FOUR

DOVE COTTAGE, DOMESTIC THEATER:

WORDSWORTHIAN SINCERITY, DE QUINCEY'S THEATRICALITY

"Now draw up the curtain," Thomas De Quincey commands his reader at the climax of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), "and you shall see me in a new character" (II:55). We draw the curtain up onto the most recognizable scene in all of De Quincey's writings, and one of the most remarkable in all of Romantic literature, the episode in which a Malay visits him at Dove Cottage. If, as Charles Rzepka states, "the confrontation with the Malay seems to reflect a new author's apprehensions of his anonymous reading public," then what does De Quincey's most characteristic scene gain from the theatrical backdrop?[173] In pursuing this line of inquiry, this chapter argues that De Quincey presents his "new" character out of a rebuttal to the laws of Wordsworthian literary production, as understood under the rubric of Wordsworthian Sincerity, anticipating a word that would be coined less than two decades later, "theatricality." By investigating how William Wordsworth and Thomas De Quincey position themselves differently in relation to Dove Cottage, the storied site of Romantic literature, we can see that the difference between Wordsworthian Sincerity and De Quincey's theatricality hinges on the body. I want to demonstrate that this difference results in drastically different conceptions of reading. Wordsworthian Sincerity demands a solipsistic reader withdrawn from the social world and denied of her corporeality. De Quincey writes for an embodied, civic-minded public created through theatricality.

[173] Charles Rzepka, *Sacramental Commodities: Gift, Text, and the Sublime in De Quincey* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), 5.

Theatricality and sincerity are mutually dependent terms. The primary definition for theatricality in the Oxford English Dictionary is "the quality or character of being theatrical; theatricalness" (1837).[174] This is hardly a helpful definition, and when we attend to the definition later in the paper, we will see how it is misleading. The opening citation is much more helpful in determining what specifically is being defined by the term, by opposing "theatricality" to "sincerity": "By act and word he strives to do it; with sincerity, if possible; failing that, with theatricality." By virtue of its direct opposition to sincerity, a term central to Romanticism and Romantic criticism, theatricality has a privileged status as a means for critiquing the basic principles of Romantic literary production. "Sincerity," M.H. Abrams pronounces in *The Mirror and the Lamp,* "began in the early nineteenth century in its career as the primary criterion, if not the *sine qua non*, of excellence in poetry."[175] William Godwin, Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron plot out the discourse of sincerity in the nineteenth century; Abrams, David Perkins, Lionel Trilling, and Jerome McGann mark out the trajectory for the twentieth. Sincerity was the means by which literary studies dislodged New Criticism from its dominant position; an author's intention became a legitimate consideration for critical studies. After the linguistic turn, sincerity, in turn, has been the primary object of critique, fueling decades of studies that mine the richness of irony in Romantic literature, describe the political implications of displacing historical details, and question the efficacy of a theory of singular authorship.

Despite deconstruction and new historicism's relentless efforts, sincerity has been surprisingly resilient. A recent resurgence in sincerity studies, in "New Sincerity," spans a

[174] *Oxford English Dictionary,* "Theatricality," accessed May 16, 2017.
[175] Meyer H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958), 318.

wide array of fields, galvanized by David Foster Wallace's *cri de coeur*, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction." Wallace's account of fiction in the age of television attributes the disaffection and cynicism that dominated American literature in the last half of the twentieth-century to television's status as the dominant means for gathering information. The essay ends with a call to would-be novelists to swing the pendulum back: "The next literary 'rebels' in the country might well emerge as some weird bunch of 'anti-rebels'…[w]ho eschew self-consciousness and fatigue," Wallace declares. "These anti-rebels," he proclaims, "would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Too sincere."[176] This critical mass of cultural workers and critics who have heeded Wallace's call find a dead-end in the irony and cynicism that they have seen predominant in culture, philosophy, and literature. This renaissance takes Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* as its touchstone, which designates Romanticism the crucible for the transformation of his titular terms.[177] Trilling traces the literary transition by which sincerity—"the congruence between avowal and actual feeling"—relinquishes its moral authority to authenticity.[178] He shows that seventeenth-century England's preoccupation with disingenuousness, which rose coextensively with theater's popularity, effectively redefined sincerity into a human quality. Hitherto a term reserved for the purity of objects, sincerity was a civic term about communication in the early modern period. One measured "the congruence between avowal and actual feeling" purely in terms of articulate speech,

[176] David Foster Wallace, "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction," *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13 (1993), 192-3.

[177] The work is legion, and the reach is broad. Among current studies in sincerity: Bernard Williams' final book, *Truth and Truthfulness*, culminates into an argument for the unsurpassable worth of sincerity to contemporary philosophy and politics. Ernest van Alphen, Mieke Bal, and Carel Smith recently edited *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*, a collection of essays that study the cultural import of the performance of sincerity. A recent article in *The New York Review of Books* by Jed Perl, "The Perils of Painting Now," calls for painters to turn to sincerity in order to find a way out of the cul-de-sac of authenticity that contemporary painting has been confined to for far too long.

[178] Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 2.

the ability to communicate according to one's intention. As individual autonomy became a valued objective to the middle class, autobiography rose in popularity. Over time, sincerity increasingly found its provenance in the subject, privatized to the point where sincerity gave way to authenticity as the top moral standard, but recognized still as "sincerity." By the time "Michael" appears, with its gravitas and quietism, Wordsworth is able to establish the figure of the Englishman as "sincere *and* authentic, sincere *because* authentic."[179] In this way, Trilling singles out Wordsworth as the catalyst in the Western literary tradition who alchemizes sincerity into an authenticity that is a certain bourgeois sense of virtuous being. Sincerity has been transformed from a term about communication to one about expression. Measuring "the congruence between avowal and actual feeling" is now at heart a judgment of one's virtue, not one's rhetorical skills. After Wordsworth, sincerity commonly implies sincerity-as-authenticity.

Now that the status of sincerity is no longer given or natural, the performance of sincerity has been important to New Sincerity. Angela Esterhammer uses the performativity of sincerity to suture together a formative rift drawn between first and second generation Romantic poets. Some New Historicists, following the groundbreaking work of Jerome McGann, have attempted to sever the strong tie that Matthew Arnold defines between Wordsworth and Byron. Although Arnold famously praises, on the one hand, Byron's "sincerity and strength," and, on the other, Wordsworth's perfect expression of "life" in "Michael," McGann insists that Byron ultimately critiques (Wordsworthian) sincerity by engaging sincerity as a set of conventions rather than as a natural process. Esterhammer's reparative work proves that the distinction is not so clear cut,

[179] Ibid., 115.

demonstrating that both Byron and Wordsworth acknowledge that sincerity "must be read…through the semiotic systems by which body language gets interpreted." [180] She contends that both poets register sincerity's central paradox: that sincerity is "inimical to performativity," but "coextensive with performance." Although my argument will ultimately assert that sincerity-as-authenticity is inimical to *theatricality*, but coextensive with *performativity*, it is still important to recognize the performative process of sincerity as a prominent through line for Romantic poetry.

When Wordsworth exemplifies this performative sincerity to its fullest, he displays the significance of Dove Cottage to this process. To sharpen the focus on the domestic theater that De Quincey makes of Dove Cottage, we should turn first to Wordsworth's "Lines Written at a Small Distance from my House, and Sent by My Little Boy to the Person to Whom They are Addressed" to see how Wordsworth imagines Dove Cottage in *Lyrical Ballads*. We will see that, by establishing the eponymous distance between poet and Dove Cottage, "Lines Written at a Small Distance" instantiates the process by which sincerity-as-authenticity produces its poetry, which will then allow us to see how De Quincey's theatricality disrupts the solipsistic reading that Wordsworth demands of his readers.

Practically hitherto unstudied, "Lines Written at a Small Distance" is a sibling of "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned," a precursor to the two in the first edition and a postscript to them in the second. Like the other two, "Lines Written at a Small Distance" is a ballad in rhymed quatrains that apparently exalts the pedagogical worth of naïve natural experience above that of book-learning. In this poem, Wordsworth marks off

[180] Angela Esterhammer, "The Scandal of Sincerity: Wordsworth, Byron, Landon," in *Romanticism, Sincerity and Authenticity,* ed. Tim Milnes and Kerry Sinanan (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 102. Also see Esterhammer's *The Romantic Performative* (2002).

a territory for poetic inspiration out of earshot and eyesight of his house, a small distance from the calendar and books that mark its everyday routine. In an expressive fit, he exhorts his sister, who is reading inside the house, to leave both book and house to join him. The lyric outburst ends with a description of how the poetic power coursing through him unites him with his natural surroundings, affecting a transcendent temporal order. Although this poem pits book-learning against natural inspiration, like "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned," this poem does not position tutelary nature contra reason. "Lines Written at a Small Distance" figures nature contra civil society, in particular the cultural apparatuses that make possible a civil society: calendar, book, and house. The calendar's basic function is to structure human relations.[181] The book in this poem is a book object, first and foremost pages bound between two covers. And the house, "my house," is where the poet's sister and servant reside. Thus, unlike the "Matthew" in the other two poems, Dorothy and Edward clearly and unequivocally designate people existing outside of *Lyrical Ballads*, making the titular house undeniably Dove Cottage. Among the three poems, "Lines Written at a Small Distance" is an outlier because the emphasis on the cultural objects that maintain a civil society makes the poem's diegetic world Wordsworth's biographical one, which allows the poem to aim its commentary directly at the publishing world.

In the middle of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, we already have a classic Burkean stance. Wordsworth spurns the artificial forms of rational civilization for an organic method synecdochic with nature. Wordsworth "preserv[es] the method of nature in the conduct of

[181] G.J. Whitrow, *Time in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 10. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 22-36.

[a] state," this one comprising poet, sister, and servant.[182] Like the Wordsworth poems read by James Chandler, this poem "translates" Burkean politics into an attack on Jacobin "systems of education."[183] The target here is a practical one, the calendar. Specifically, it is the French Republican Calendar, an extreme and unabashed example of the calendar's civic, unnatural essence. What starts with a line punctuated by a month, "March," halfway through reveals that an utter discontent with the calendar's unnatural power has occasioned the verse. Even though Wordsworth wills an atavistic undoing of the calendar to a purely biological, organic time-keeping, the beginning third of the poem contains numerous markers of conventional time-reckoning:

> It is the first mild day of March:
> Each minute sweeter than before,
> The red-breast sings from the tall larch
> That stands beside our door.
>
> There is a blessing in the air,
> Which seems a sense of joy to yield
> To the bare trees, and mountains bare
> And grass in the green field.
>
> My Sister! ('tis a wish of mine)
> Now that our morning meal is done,

[182] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* ed. L.G. Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 34.
[183] James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), xxii.

Make haste, your morning task resign;

Come forth and feel the sun.

Rhyme pronounces the non-natural status of March by coupling it with a non-native decorative tree. (Indeed, the larch is the most despised of all possible objects in Wordsworth's *Guide to the Lakes* due to its presence as an exotic, ornamental commodity.)[184] Additionally, "morning" here denotes a matter of scheduling, not a diurnal phenomenon. When Wordsworth attributes "morning" to "meal" and "task," he reminds us that the more civilized a population becomes, the more likely its constituents eat according to schedule, not hunger.[185] Before Wordsworth's living calendar appears, before the introduction of idleness and the future tense (an almost immediate one), the poem's first three stanzas establish a civilized setting for the poem.

Just as nature here is set in spatial relation to Dove Cottage, its door, and its foreign tree, Wordsworth establishes calendrical time in order to actively reject it for his hour of organic time-reckoning. In speaking about nineteenth-century techniques for depicting rural settings, Martin Meisel says, "for the contemporaries of Wordsworth and Wilkie, a displacement in space could incorporate literally—not just psychologically—a displacement in time."[186] The last seven stanzas, "this hour of feeling," take place in a different temporal mode. Articulated by the repetition of the fourth and final stanzas, this almost-immediate future, this speculative time of monologic rhetoric is a hermetically sealed paradise. Marvell's garden-dweller is more forthright than Wordsworth when the

[184] William Wordsworth, "Guide to the Lakes," *Romantic Circles,* April 2015, paragraph 49, accessed February 2, 2017.
[185] Whitrow, *Time*, 18.
[186] Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 145.

satirist says, “Two paradises ‘twere in one, / To live in paradise alone.” Part of the reader’s skepticism comes from doubts that Wordsworth can sustain this hour of feeling in the presence of Edward or Dorothy.

> Edward will come with you, and pray,
> Put on with speed your woodland dress,
> And bring no book, for this one day
> We’ll give to idleness.
>
> No joyless forms shall regulate
> Our living Calendar:
> We from to-day, my friend, will date
> The opening of the year.
>
> Love, now an universal birth
> From heart to heart is stealing,
> From earth to man, from man to earth,
> —It is the hour of feeling.

Wordsworth distances himself with this small distance from a clearly defined and clearly legible mundane world. Wordsworth recognizes that spatial and temporal confines determine the particularities of the human relations that constitute the particular workings of a civic group. These are Dove Cottage’s “joyless forms.” To achieve transcendent love, one must withdraw from the social world by spurning the calendar. So the love that is presented in a present tense couched within a nascent tense is a singular one.

Wordsworth's poetic production here is eternally presentist, and, moreover, solitary, that is, without history and society. The universal birth that is love does not connect hearts, but rather steals from one to another. A literal reading puts one heart in man (i.e., Wordsworth) and one in earth, no other. And the hermetic setting corroborates our suspicion that the literal reading is intended, withdrawn from the civic world of historical time and material reading. The process of individuation feeds from and enables a logic of organic jurisprudence, detailed in the eighth and ninth stanzas.

> One moment now may give us more
> Than fifty years of reason;
> Our minds shall drink at every pore
> The spirit of the season.
>
> Some silent laws our hearts may make
> Which they shall long obey;
> We for the year to come may take
> Our temper from to-day.
>
> And from the blessed power that rolls
> About, below, above,
> We'll frame the measure of our souls,
> They shall be tuned to love.
>
> Then come, my sister! come, I pray,

With speed put on your woodland dress.

And bring no book, for this one day

We'll give to idleness.

By the end, we see that the poem delineates the process for producing sincerity-as-authenticity. According to Wordsworth's organic jurisprudence, we, only in this hour of feeling, may make laws that we ourselves obey, which "frame the measure of our souls" for ineluctably poetic expression. Per the logic of Wordsworthian Sincerity, the poet makes the actual feelings to which his avowals are matched, cinching the feedback loop between sincerity and authenticity. Wordsworth's juridical begging-the-question is a pure demonstration of the performative, "that discursive practice," in Judith Butler's words, "that enacts or produces that which it names."[187]

Wordsworth's performative sincerity is adverse not only to calendrical time, but also to the body. Wordsworth's hour of feeling is a completely disembodied zone. Not only are the bodies of others absent, but the poet's body too is incorporeal. "Lines Written at a Small Distance" is a desexualized rewriting of "Corinna's Going A-Maying." Herrick's inverted-aubade, turned into a carpe diem, calls its addressee to leave her house for the outdoors. It too occasions the beginning of spring. The first stanza names a month that leads to a group of stanzas articulated together by a refrain. Wordsworth shorthands Herrick's second stanza with "woodland dress" and switches Herrick's lark for a red-breast in order to make the ornithological detail more accurate to the Lake District. However, the Romantic poet commemorates the onset of spring by directing his clarion call at his sister, not a lover. Bolstering the pre-Freudian reading that we must grant him, Wordsworth's

[187] Judith Butler, quoted in Tracy C. Davis, "Theatricality and Civil Society," in *Theatricality*, ed. Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151.

little boy is a servant, not a son, a possession commercial, not familial. Wordsworth strips Herrick's carpe diem bare of lust, an extreme instance of disembodiment. It is the *mind* that drinks from the pores in Wordsworth's hour of feeling. The heart is spirit, not a muscle. Feeling is sentiment, not sensation. Love is not an occasion—or excuse—for a genital act. Like Herrick, Wordsworth seeks a means of time-keeping more natural than the Roman calendar's joyless forms. But the Romantic bard does not look to flora and fauna, or to past cultural practices. Rather he turns inward, to an interiority naturalized into a blank, prelapsarian zone. Wordsworth transforms the rutting body into one of universal birth.

We need to look at the theater and theatricality in order to see how embodiment disrupts the logic of sincerity-as-authenticity, which we will get to shortly. But first, we should note that what we see here is the process by which Wordsworth creates the reader that suits his poetic process, "*creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed."[188] It has long been established that the decline in patronage and the revolutionary changes brought on by the printing press forced "the English Romantics [to be] the first to become radically uncertain of their readers."[189] Dorothy has long been central to this story, due to her prominent role in *Lyrical Ballads*, which designates her the paradigmatic figure for the Wordsworthian audience. But the focus has been exclusively on the Dorothy in the Tintern Abbey poem. When Wordsworth beckons Dorothy out of and away from Dove Cottage in "Lines Written at a Small Distance," we can see how Dorothy *becomes* the sylvan sister who

[188] William Wordsworth, *The Major Works,* ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 657-8.
[189] Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 1.

is responsible for, in John Barrell's words, "the ratification of [Wordsworth's] achievement of a transcendent subjectivity."[190]

More specifically, "Lines Written at a Small Distance" displays the process by which Wordsworth creates his readership according to the principles laid out in his essay supplementary to the preface for his 1815 collection of poems. The 1815 essay is preoccupied with what seems to be the imminent unpopularity of his collection of poems. If true poetry "communicate[s] *power*" to its reader without fail, why is it then, he asks, that literary history's most powerful writers have been underappreciated during their lifetimes? If poetry moves its reader by sheer transmission of emotion, why do great writers attain adequate recognition only posthumously? These questions enable Wordsworth to elaborate the classist distinction between poetry and popular culture that he establishes at the beginning of his career in his *Lyrical Ballads* preface, reiterating what was famously stated in 1802: the "savage torpor" induced by popular media disables the contemporary reader's ability to find and register truly powerful poetry. "Away, then, with the senseless iteration of the word, *popular*," Wordsworth rails, adding, "the qualities of writing best fitted for eager reception are either to startle the world into attention by their audacity and extravagance; or they are chiefly of a superficial kind."[191]

The 1815 essay ends by creating two classes of readership so that the poet can focus on those worthy of his work. Wordsworth separates the "Public" from the "People," privileging the latter above the former. Because public approval is "the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence," the

[190] John Barrell, "The Uses of Dorothy," in *Poetry, Language and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 162.
[191] Wordsworth, *Major,* 660.

truly great poet owes his "devout respect" and "reverence" to the more expansive group, the People, a transhistorical generalization of the present readership, "faithfully supported by its two wings, the past and the future."[192] To write exclusively for the People, the poet must purify language of all its public, man-made elements: "Remember, also, that the medium…is language; a thing subject to endless fluctuations and arbitrary associations. The genius of the poet melts these down for his purpose; but they retain their shape and quality to him who is not capable of exerting, within his own mind, a corresponding energy."[193] This is what Wordsworth means when he declares that *Lyrical Ballads* uses "language of real men." Language of the People is defined by the subordination of the historical fluctuations of meaning and the arbitrary associations of public idiom to the poet's power. When the 1798 preface for *Lyrical Ballads* defines the volume as an experiment to test "how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure," we learn within a couple of decades that the answer is: not completely.[194] There is a small, but significant distance between the public realm and that of the bourgeois reader. When Wordsworth beckons Dorothy out of Dove Cottage, he is luring Dorothy out of the public into the natural realm of the humanist reader. Calendrical time is the temporality for periodicals and long-run theater, the metronome by which the populace clamors for the popular. The central importance of the materiality of the book-object to the cultural transformations of late Georgian England has been well-documented. Only after Dorothy traverses the small distance from "Lines Written at a Small Distance" to "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" can she

[192] Ibid., 662.
[193] Ibid., 660.
[194] Ibid., 591. Jon Klancher provides what is still the most intricate and persuasive account of the class-based prejudice motivating the creation of these contradistinguishing readerships.

become the paradigmatic surrogate for the Romantic reader that is pure potentiality "never actualised."[195]

Wordsworthian Sincerity cannot risk the presence of another subjectivity distinct from the poet's. The individuality would grant the interlocutor if not the autonomy, then at least the agency, to question the poet's sincerity. It is clear that in "Lines Written at a Small Distance," the poet's main objective is not really to commune with his sister. In the stanza that names the title's little boy, Wordsworth's name shows up too, but as verb. By the end of the nominating stanza, "will" turns to "we'll," signaling that the poet's name subsumes Dorothy's, a stanza all too resonant with Wordsworth's poetic practice. Trilling states, "it is impossible to exaggerate the force that the word 'be' has for Wordsworth."[196] Here the poet's name becomes the all-important verb and absorbs all other names within its sphere of influence. The poet's name is now the poem's animating spirit. Without the calendar, without time reckoned even by herbs and flowers, time becomes absurdly elastic, a fact the poet exploits. Eschewing the organizing function of the calendar, the blessed soul, inhabited and framed by the poet, needs order. In the absence of calendrical time, and with the self-legislator's monarchical freedom, Wordsworth frames the (née our) soul's measure out of blessed power while in the midst of that power. Because of the poet's blessed power, one cannot stand for or stand to be a part of "we" without considering each of Will Wordsworth's avowals sincere *de facto*.

The poem's main goal is to give us something to read that is "sincere *and* authentic, sincere *because* authentic." To produce ineluctably sincere poems, you need to withdraw

[195] Barrell, "Dorothy," 162.
[196] Trilling, *Sincerity*, 91. For an extreme, if not limit, case of this, see Susan Wolfson's "Will plus Words plus Worth: What's in a Name?"

from the civic world so that you can transcend the public. Its "arbitrary associations" and "fluctuations" of meaning pose a problem to your self-made sincerity. This must be a disembodied zone, for reasons we will see below. Distance yourself from the instruments of time-keeping and reading so that you can make the feelings to which each avowal is matched, casting reading as a process subservient to the writer's will.

*

As one would expect from a lifelong essayist, De Quincey does not believe in the myth of a transhistorical language: "No language is stationary, except in rude and early periods of society. The languages of nations like the English and French, walking in the van of civilization, having popular institutions, and taking part in the business of the earth with morbid energy, are placed under the action of causes that will not allow them any respite from change."[197] The consummate essayist writes for the Public that Wordsworth disparages, embracing the "endless fluctuations" and "arbitrary associations" against which the poet guards his People. One way to substantiate the contradistinction between De Quincey's reading public and Wordsworth's humanist reader is to explore how contemporary twentieth-century readings of De Quincey and Wordsworth overlap, unbeknownst to each other. Karen Swann's "Public Transport: Adventuring on Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain" and Sanjay Krishnan's "Opium and Empire: The Transports of Thomas De Quincey" share a word, and the titular affinity is not merely semantic. For both Krishnan and Swann, an exemplary text transports its reader by way of a puncture in the text that opens an aperture for philological inquiry. Swann takes from "Adventures on Salisbury Plain" the archaic word "gride" and follows it through Milton to Spenser in order

[197] Thomas De Quincey, *Selected Essays on Rhetoric*, ed. Fredrick Burwick (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 246.

to argue that Wordsworth utilizes gothic and Spenserian conventions to write a self-annihilating poem that differentiates in its repetition. The nodal point for Krishnan is "a-muck," which De Quincey uses to describe the Malay that he encounters in *Confessions*. The manifold meanings constellated around "a-muck" comes not from the literary evolution of the word, but rather the lexicographic. Krishnan lays bare the historical fluctuations and indeed arbitrary associations of the word "a-muck" to argue that De Quincey's Malay is in fact a nuanced thematization of the opium trade, rather than the Orientalist figure that he might seem to be, made by the mindless conflation of Chinese, Malaysian, and Indian details.[198] Krishnan and Swann together demonstrate a basic fact. When a Romantic writer, per Wordsworth's phrase, "creates the taste by which he is to be relished," his first decision involves word choice. Diction is decisive in determining how the public is attended to in and with one's reading public.

Just as the poem written at a small distance from Dove Cottage exhibits the process of literary production for Wordsworthian Sincerity, the play that De Quincey presents *within* Dove Cottage is, as we will see, a scene of reading that promulgates a histrionic method of reading. Within Dove Cottage, De Quincey stages a two-act play, the first of which is his encounter with the Malay. In the second, he presents an unconventional self-portrait. As I will show, these scenes precisely depict the proper link between sincerity and theatricality. Although both scenes are equally fantastic in their production, the first incites theatricality and the second precludes it. De Quincey's theatrics carve, from both sides, authenticity away from sincerity-as-authenticity in order to show that a sympathetic breach is the sole basic element for theatricality. We will see that De Quincey exploits an

[198] Karen Swann, "Public Transport: Adventuring on Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain," *ELH* 55 (1988), 811-834. Sanjay Krishnan, "Opium and Empire: The Transports of Thomas De Quincey," *boundary 2* (2006), 202-234.

intrinsic link between theatricality and the public to fashion a reading method that contravenes the principles of Wordsworthian Sincerity. De Quincey's theatrics are meant for an embodied reading public.

As we have seen, it is not performance that differentiates sincerity-as-authenticity from theatricality. As Wordsworth's solipsism suggests, the separation is due to differences in the relational dynamic between performer and spectator, which is to say that it comes down to how the public is conceived. Theatricality is an immanently civic term, as Tracy C. Davis proves. Davis starts "Theatricality and Civil Society" by quibbling with the dictionary. She observes that if "theatricality" were a mere nominalization of "theatrical," as it is in the OED, then our term would be redundant. Hence there is a common confusion of the term: on the one hand, theatricality (" the quality or character of being theatrical; theatricalness") is commonly thought of as degraded imitation, but, on the other, one generally uses "theatricality" as a word distinct from "theater."

Davis rights the definition by shifting the focus from the spectacle onto spectatorship. Her recuperative analyses of the passages from Thomas Carlyle that the OED cites maintains that Carlyle fashions his term out of a fascination with the precariousness of a spectator's sympathy with a spectacle. Davis demonstrates that Carlyle stamps "theatricality" with Adam Smith's formative figuration of civic spectatorship in mind, coining "theatricality" with the understanding that ordinary, sympathetic interaction suppresses the self-divided nature of the spectator's civic character. David Marshall's conclusive account of Smith's theatrical figuration in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* shows that Smith uses the theater to establish within each citizen a "*dédoublement*…internalized and doubled within the self," for each citizen in Smith's morality-driven world needs to be

at once spectator and actor, one's own objective observer of one's own conduct.[199] Carlyle recognizes that a spectacle requires the suppression of *dédoublement* from its spectators for sympathetic viewing under Smithian principles, but he invests the word with a primary interest in moments when a spectator exercises her ineradicable choice—willfully or not—not to sympathize with the act at hand, which induces a self-recognition of her self-divided nature as observer *and* actress. This is the sympathetic breach at the core of the definition that Davis proposes:

> Theatricality: *n.* A spectator's dédoublement resulting from a sympathetic breach (active dissociation, alienation, self-reflexivity) effecting a critical distance toward an episode in the public sphere, including but not limited to theater.[200]

The sympathetic breach disabsorbs the spectator from the spectacle, making her cognizant of the crowd in which she partakes. The individuation of the spectator creates a stark distinction between the spectator and the actor.

Sincerity-as-authenticity is culpable for the OED's misleading definition. When one reads the opening citation ("By act and word he strives to do it; with sincerity, if possible; failing that, with theatricality") with sincerity predicated on authenticity, then theatricality can only be assessed in terms of the authenticity of its mimetic act. That is, since sincerity-as-authenticity begs the question of every avowal's congruence, assessing sincerity—"the congruence between avowal and actual feeling"—would be no more than determining whether or not the "actual feeling" existed at all. With sincerity understood as an assessment of character, not communication, theatricality can only be a matter of fakery, not fit. On the other hand, by determining theatricality in terms of a spectator's

[199] David Marshall, *The Figure of Theater* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 175.
[200] Davis, "Theatricality," 175.

sympathetic breach, theatricality now hinges not on the inauthenticity of the spectacle, but rather on the congruence of an avowal to an actualized—not merely existent—feeling. With sincerity unmoored from authenticity, a spectacle is judged as an interpretive act, not merely a mimetic one: "Theatricality is dependent on inauthenticity in phenomenology, though it is not the inauthenticity per se because that would be mimesis."[201] No longer defined in terms of mimesis, but rather phenomenal hermeneutics, theatricality no longer delimits its purview merely to aesthetic matters. With sincerity reverted back to its status as an act of communication, theatricality is fundamentally civic and embodied. The critical distance effected by theatricality confers full agency to both actor and spectator, distinguishing them enough from each other to pronounce the interpretation entailed in communication. Theatricality also implicates the corporeality of all involved, heightening the phenomenological and interpretive nature of spectatorship. We begin to see how embodiment poses a critical problem to sincerity-as-authenticity.

Although the Malay scene is the scene central to De Quincey's entire oeuvre, we should start from the end, because the self-portraiture scene complements Wordsworth's poem and sheds light on the disruptive force of the body to Wordsworthian Sincerity. De Quincey opens the finale with Dove Cottage immersed in a winter landscape. He presents the interior to his reader by pulling a painter from offstage to paint the Wordsworthian study. He describes the interior by barking out commands, at the painter first, then the reader; quickly the commands are scattered so indeterminably that painter and reader merge into one, albeit bifurcated, interlocutor. The description culminates toward a climactic moment of self-representation, but our anticipation is thwarted. I quote in length

[201] Davis, "Theatricality," 151.

to show how the parentheticals, interjections, and questions pronounce the reader's participation in the reading process:

> No: may as well paint the real receptacle, which was not of gold, but of glass, and as much like a wine-decanter as possible. Into this you may put a quart of ruby-coloured laudanum: that, and a book of German metaphysics placed by its side, will sufficiently attest my being in the neighbourhood; but, as to myself—there I demur. I admit that, naturally, I ought to occupy the foreground of the picture; that being the hero of this piece, or (if you choose) the criminal at the bar, my body should be had into court. This seems reasonable: but why should I confess, on this point, to a painter? or why confess at all? If the public (into whose private ear I am confidentially whispering my confessions, and not into any painter's) should chance to have framed some agreeable picture for itself, of the Opium-eater's exterior—should have ascribed to him, romantically, an elegant person, or a handsome face, why should I barbarously tear from it so pleasing a delusion—pleasing both to the public and to me? No: paint me, if at all, according to your own fancy; and, as a painter's fancy should teem with beautiful creations, I cannot fail, in that way, to be a gainer. (II:68)

Like "Lines Written at a Small Distance," this scene is safeguarded from theatricality. When De Quincey makes the unconventional move to concede to "any" member of his public full authorial veracity, he structures a scene that precludes theatricality, as fantastic and histrionic as it may be, for every avowal made by the protagonist necessarily matches an actual feeling, namely whichever one the reader fancies. Like every one of Wordsworth's avowals, any possible avowal here is ineluctably sincere, but not because of any actual

feeling in De Quincey. This radically permissible reader-response begs the question of the author's sincerity too. De Quincey's portraiture scene proves that not everything theatrical is guilty of theatricality.

De Quincey's self-portraiture scene reinforces something we have learned from "Lines Written at a Small Distance": to assure protection from theatricality one must be alone. Wordsworth's solipsistic "hour of feeling" forecloses any possibility of theatricality. De Quincey's self-portraiture scene exhibits this fact from the other end: only the reader's body is prominent, and not even presented as her own, figured as a painter's. It is the public's *private* ear which De Quincey addresses, private because alone. Both De Quincey and Wordsworth display, in their own way, the problem that the corporeal body poses to sincerity. Benjamin Bennett's "Performance Space and the Exposure of Hermeneutics" reveals how the actor's corporeal body endows performance space with a hermeneutic capacity superior to the broad range of critical endeavors that operate under the umbrella of "hermeneutics." Performance space usurps hermeneutics as the method most liberated from the understanding because textual hermeneutics requires a tacit assumption that "meaning and understanding are undeniable in their operation" for any sort of systematic coherence, even though it simultaneously maintains that "they are also unattainable, unassertable, impossible to localize or verify, always deferred." Performance space can do without this operational presumption, because it only requires "the living, self-modifying body" for coherence.[202] Only the performer's corporeal body can successfully issue forth an ever-expansive web of avowals without any supersedure by understanding or meaning. In performance space the spectator's interpretative act is necessarily constant and

[202] Benjamin Bennett, *All Theater is Revolutionary Theater* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 174, 180.

pronounced because there is no superseding meaning on which interpretation can rely. Thus, with the living, self-modifying body's avowals, sincerity is utterly precarious. The spectator is kept ever on the brink of a sympathetic breach. Bennett clarifies the importance of De Quincey's demurral. Only without the presence of his living, self-modifying body can De Quincey grant his reader's interpretive will absolute veracity. This self-portraiture scene is a still life in every sense of the phrase; it is a *théâtre mort*.

De Quincey's final scene amplifies, in relief, the theatricality with which he starts his two-act play. Taken together, these two scenes identify the workings of theatricality. We draw the curtain to a knock on the door from a Malay who has inexplicably found his way to the Lake District. The servant—no drunken porter, but a young, country girl—answers the door. Perplexed and frightened, she calls De Quincey, thinking the polymath scholar has "the art to exorcise [the Malay] from the house" (II:56). He comes downstairs to the stranger frightfully costumed. Not knowing a word of any "Oriental tongue," and put on the spot by the neighbors now gathered around the spectacle, De Quincey blurts out a few lines from the *Iliad* because, of all the languages this polyglot knows, Greek is the one geographically closest to the Orient. The Malay lies on the floor for an hour-long nap, convincing the audience of the efficacy of the Homeric words. He gets up to leave. Upon the wanderer's departure, De Quincey offers him opium, assuming it—unlike language—is something they have in common. The Malay immediately gulps down all the opium, enough "to kill three dragoons and their horses," frightening De Quincey with certainty of a dead body, and then shocking our protagonist with his improbably high tolerance for drugs (II:57). The Malay walks off unaffected, so far as De Quincey can ascertain.

The *coup de théâtre* unfolds dramatically, rife with elements that acknowledge, pronounce, and play with the mimetic nature of the scene. In her chapter on *Confessions*, E.S. Burt argues that the primary effect of the Malay visit is "[to] bring out a fakery that the inhabitants of Dove Cottage…have come to forget."[203] In order to shock the reader out of this amnesic state, De Quincey exposes the staginess by pointedly framing the Malay scene, a convention Meisel has proven prevalent in, if not necessary to, nineteenth-century pictorial presentation, whether literary, dramatic, or artistic.[204] "A more striking picture there could not be imagined," De Quincey says upon first sight of the Malay, "than the beautiful face of the girl…contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany." On the following page, he attributes the Malay's horrifying presence in his dreams "partly from the picturesque exhibition [the Malay] assisted to frame, partly from the anxiety [De Quincey] connected with the images for some days" (II:57, 58). The object that frames the Malay scene is the Malay.

But there is more to the Malay. When he comes on the scene, he steps forth from the scenery: "In a cottage kitchen, but panelled on the wall with dark wood that from age and rubbing resembled oak, and looking more like a rustic hall of entrance than a kitchen, stood the Malay" (II:57). Burt underscores the tension created by the deliberate decision to attribute the middle adjectival phrases representationally to the cottage kitchen but syntactically to the Malay.[205] The sentence that follows in *Confessions* corroborates the unsettling hunch that De Quincey intends the latter, but makes the former true as well, only after transforming our notion of the cottage. The Malay, with his skin "enamelled or

[203] E.S. Burt, *Regard for the Other: Autothanatography in Rousseau, De Quincey, Baudelaire, and Wilde* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 129.
[204] Meisel, *Realizations*, 30.
[205] Burt, *Regard,* 130.

veneered with mahogany," and set in this cottage, which has "wall[s] with dark wood that from age and rubbing resembled oak," is more than just the frame for this theatrical production. He is the cottage itself, our theatrical institution corporealized and animated.

In this way, the autobiography's only opium-eater becomes English. In *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, De Quincey strictly *drinks* opium in laudanum form. The only person seen *eating* opium is the Malay. Much ink has been spilled to account for this contradiction. Accounts of the Malay's Englishness mainly argue that the Malay is but a second self of De Quincey, in one way or another. I want to suggest that we should recognize the Malay's Englishness in terms of his status as the stand-in for Dove Cottage, which De Quincey appropriately thematizes as part and parcel with British imperial expansion. Indeed, in essays on China and "the Opium Question," De Quincey asserts that literature is the most powerful and fundamental means for successful imperial incursions. Furthermore, in an unpublished essay written a mere month after the publication of *Confessions*, De Quincey characterizes *London Magazine*, where *Confessions* appears, as "[a] journal worthy of the great Empire to which it is addressed" (III:359). De Quincey writes as fully for the public as possible. When he hands opium—his figure for literature—to the Malay-as-Dove-Cottage, he presents a scene of reading that acknowledges and generalizes the privileged position Romantic writers had in manufacturing the national ideals that would become British national character. As impassioned and metaphysical as his prose can sound, De Quincey's style is imbued with the historicity of language, as Krishnan has shown. His essays are full of the "loud clamour" of "factitious influences" because he is not willing to overlook literature's central role in the commerce that undergirds British Imperialism.

We have seen the staginess and the publicness of the Malay production, but we have not gotten to theatricality yet. We must not forget that fakery is not enough for theatricality. Improbable scenes and shocks to the sensibility have a tendency to draw a spectator to question the fit between the spectacle's signifier and signified. But, as the self-portraiture scene reminds us, only a sympathetic breach can provoke theatricality. The Malay scene assures theatricality from its reader because De Quincey's avowals are radically insincere avowals. The Homeric blurt and spastic gift-giving are improvisations hastened out without any actual feeling preceding it. De Quincey assures a sympathetic breach from his reader by confessing an incongruity between his impromptu avowals and their respective "actual feelings" from the start. And, theatricality begets theatricality. The "impassable gulph fixed between all communication of ideas" that De Quincey discerns between himself and the Malay prompts from our writer the visceral reactions that prompt theatricality in us (II:57). Moreover, the public bound by theatricality is strictly the reading public; the Lake District neighbors watch convinced of the felicity achieved by our hero's gestures. The sympathetic breach, then, defines the scene's most intimate group.[206] De Quincey renders theatricality into textual form, and his reading public is a civically-minded readership bound not by sympathy, but rather by an ever-proliferating sympathetic breach.

According to Davis, this should result in an embodied reading practice. As we know by now, the writer's living, self-modifying body is the greatest threat to sincerity-as-authenticity. Such is the case with the Malay scene. The Homeric blurt and the impromptu

[206] Critics agree that the hallmark of impassioned prose is the absolute individuation of the reader into, in Elizabeth Bruss' words, "the writer's other self." Whereas conventional autobiography addresses its audience generally, De Quincey's autobiographies of impassioned prose address their reader as an individual, a textual and hermeneutic "other" with which De Quincey engages. I want to suggest that theatricality is precisely the technique that creates this literary effect. Elizabeth Bruss, *Autobiographical Acts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1977), 93-126.

gift-giving are visceral reactions, unpremeditated gestures without thought or feeling. As the chain reaction of theatricality suggests, the spectator who experiences theatricality also has a prominently embodied status. The Malay scene illustrates an argument that Davis develops throughout "Theatricality and Civil Society," that the mimetic, kinesthetic nature of Smithian fellow-feeling (we flinch when we see a blow aimed at someone else) takes on a powerful variant when applied to the experience of theatricality. The "impassable gulph" that De Quincey attributes to the Malay is, in his theatricality, reflected in himself. Hence the dédoublement that makes the blurt and gift-giving baffling to himself. The corporeality of the living, self-modifying body should reflect too. The experience of theatricality should be a moment of heightened sensuousness, a moment "dependent on inauthenticity in phenomenology."[207]

We can turn to Wordsworth again to teach us about embodiment and theatricality, or rather, that sincerity-as-authenticity is formed out of an aversion to the phenomenal reading practice particular to theater-going. "Residence in London" recounts Wordsworth's paranoid wanderings through London's urban maze, punctuating his claustrophobic account of London's teeming streets with wary descriptions of the theater. The most offensive is Jack the Giant-Killer, whose "garb is black, the word INVISIBLE flam[ed] forth upon his chest."[208] This "delusion bold," as Wordsworth decries it, exemplifies play-acting's oppositional relation to sincerity-as-authenticity when it is compared with Jack the Giant-Killer's better half. "Residence in London" ends with another figure donning language on his chest. This time, the man is a beggar wearing paper that

[207] Davis, "Theatricality," 151.
[208] Wordsworth, *Major,* 476.

"explain[s] the story of the Man, and who he was." Unlike the theater's, this spectacle has for Wordsworth universal worth:

> My mind did at this spectacle turn around
> As with the night of waters, and it seemed
> To me that in this Label was a type,
> Or emblem, of the utmost that we know,
> Both of ourselves and of the universe…[209]

This emblematic beggar exemplifies Wordsworthian Sincerity, "sincere *and* authentic, sincere *because* authentic." Just like Wordsworth in his "hour of feeling," the authenticity endowed from the outset upon the beggar makes the life story, "who he is," sincere unto itself. Each avowal, each written word, matches actual feeling; the tautological loop is secured. One does not even have to see the exact words on his paper to be convinced of its genuine nature. He need not even move. He is but a prop, at the mercy of the reader's will. Much like *The Prelude*, the beggar's writing is a partially published account of one's life that is invisible to the reading public. It is this sort of autobiographical process that makes a corpus sincere-because-authentic. Wordsworth suppresses the proper publication of *The Prelude* (which De Quincey partially spoils) so that the "growth of the poet's mind" can invent the actual feelings with which all his other avowals are meant to be measured. No wonder Arnold, ever the proponent of sincerity, demotes *The Prelude* to exalt Wordsworth's "small" poems.[210]

Jack the Giant-Killer's proximity reveals that the play-actor is incommensurable with sincerity-as-authenticity. First: to truly assess a play-actor's sincerity, one assesses

[209] Ibid., 483.
[210] Matthew Arnold, "Wordsworth" in *Essays in Criticism* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1923), 44-66.

each avowal's congruence not with any feeling within the actor, but rather with the literary text without. INVISIBLE is sincere in terms of how well the performing body matches the script. Secondly: Wordsworth spurns the theatrical body not only for its hermeneutic process, but also for the phenomenological status of its avowals. Wordsworth signals the phenomenological inauthenticity that he attributes to Jack the Giant-Killer by pronouncing the fact that theatrical spectatorship is essentially a phenomenal reading practice. The INVISIBLE emblazoned on the play-actor's chest, with not much subtlety, frightens Wordsworth because it is a material avowal that must be apprehended by the senses to be read. The theatrical embodiment that rankles Wordsworth comes not only from the actor's material body, but also from the spectator's, caught in its act of phenomenal interpretation. Thus the materiality of the beggar's body *and* his words must be absent in order to establish a disembodied hour of feeling—or spot of time, if you will—around the Label of a man. The "gross and violent stimulants" of theater, which Wordsworth so famously disparages, are not just theater's lights, colors, and sounds. They are moreover the writing that the lights, colors, and sounds of the theater body forth.

The gestures that drive the Malay scene are just that, phenomenal avowals that do not find their source in the writer's subjectivity. The meaningless Greek word rings as pure sound. The improvised exchange is what De Quincey labels a similar *coup de théâtre* "a pantomime communication" (III:332). These are citations from literary history and social convention meant to be seen and heard, but not understood, making of its readers an affectively-oriented public. Adela Pinch notes that a great bulk of De Quincey's interior life and life's happenings is constituted by quotations from literary works. Constituted, not represented, because Pinch sees these quotations as "social currency" that circulate

feelings among his contemporaries.[211] De Quincey establishes sympathy with his ever-growing populace by circulating common texts by which each possessor of the coin can evoke a particular feeling. Pinch calls this "social currency" because De Quincey himself equates these citations with coins of the realm. For instance, to fully manage one's grief, one should "after the example of Judaea (on the Roman coins)—sitting under her palm-tree to weep, but sitting with her head veiled—do you also veil your head" (XV:184). Much like the Roman coin, quotation establishes a common sentiment amongst a civic crowd through repetition and emulation, the flinch of Smithian sympathy converted into play-acting. This is literary allusion that implicates the body, thereby creating an embodied reading public. Remember that theatricality's dédoublement makes one aware of her status as both actress and spectator. Such aspirations call for theatricality.

De Quincey is a paragon of the public actor, as Richard Sennett defines it. The theatrical public is predominantly civic because "[the public actor's] identity is based on making expression as presentation work."[212] *Confessions* is original in so far that it is an autobiography not as self-representation, but rather through self-presentation. A text like this is always in the realm of the histrionic. The surfeit of the theatrical in theatricality comes from the phenomenal and citational nature of its avowals, and it is through his avowals themselves that De Quincey assures theatricality from each of his readers. The fantastic monstrosity of the Malay Dove Cottage certainly tests the sympathy of the common spectator. But only the radically insincere nature of the gestures *assures* theatricality. There can be no sincerity with these impromptu avowals because these

[211] Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotions, Hume to Austen* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 173.
[212] Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Norton, 1976), 108.

visceral reactions, as De Quincey confesses, have no actual feelings preceding them. To achieve "expression as presentation work" one must be open to radically insincere avowals, wrought out of a rhetorical-historical situation and meant to be interpreted within the context of its event. Jürgen Habermas reminds us that the nation-state was, and arguably still is, first and foremost "a fairly abstract form of solidarity among strangers."[213] The creation of reading publics has always been an integral part of nation-making, but the revolutionary upheavals in the understanding of the world that defined late Georgian England pressed writers of the Romantic era to grapple with the unknown when figuring out their respective readerships. Both Wordsworth and De Quincey estrange themselves from their respective readers. The difference is that Wordsworth distances the reader for a hermetic hour of feeling. De Quincey, on the other hand, makes a civic reading public by instilling the impassable gulph between reader and writer *into* the literary public. The realm ruled by sincerity-as-authenticity is lonely; what the constituents of the public reading commons share is a sympathetic breach. What we learn from De Quincey is that if one wants to write for an embodied public situated within its historical context, one does so needing to embrace theatricality.

[213] Jürgen Habermas, *The Divided West*, edited and translated by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 63.

Bibliography

Abrams, Meyer H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. New York: Norton, 1958.

Abrams, Meyer H., et al., eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 2*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1993.

Aarsleff, Hans. *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

Agnew, Jean-Christoph. *Worlds Apart: The Market and the Theater in Anglo-American Thought, 1550-1750.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Agnew, Lois Peters. *Thomas De Quincey: British Rhetoric's Romantic Turn.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2012.

Althusser, Louis. *On Ideology*. New York: Verso, 2008.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* New York: Verso, 2006.

Aristotle. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, translated by George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Arnold, Matthew. *Essays in Criticism*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1923.

Bacon, Francis. *The New Organon and Related Writings*, edited by Fulton H. Anderson. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960.

—. *Bacon's Essays*, edited by F.G. Selby. New York: Macmillan, 1892.

Bakhtin, M.M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist and translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

Balfour, Ian. "On the Language of the Sublime and the Sublime Nation in De Quincey: Toward a Reading of 'The English Mail-Coach'." In *Thomas De Quincey: New Theoretical and Critical Directions*, edited by Robert Morrison and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Barish, Jonas. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

Barrell, John. *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

—. *Poetry, Language and Politics.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.

Barth, Hans. *Truth and Ideology*, translated by Frederic Lilge. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Bate, Jonathan. "The Literature of Power: Coleridge and De Quincey." In *Coleridge's Visionary Language: Essays in Honour of J.B. Beer*, edited by Morton D. Paley and Tim Fulford, 137-150. London: D.S. Brewer, 1993.

Bender, John and David E. Wellbery. "Rhetoricality: On the Modernist Return of Rhetoric." In *The Ends of Rhetoric: History, Theory, Practice*, edited by John Bender and David E. Wellbery, 3-39. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Bennett, Benjamin. *All Theater is Revolutionary Theater*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005.

Bennington, Geoffrey. "The Perfect Cheat: Locke and Empiricism's Rhetoric." In *The Figural and the Literal: Problems of Language in the History of Science and Philosophy, 1630-1800,* edited by Andrew E. Benjamin, Geoffrey N. Cantor, and John R. R. Christie, 103-123. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987.

Bizzell, Patricia and Bruce Herzberg, eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. Boston: Bedford Books, 1990.
Borch-Jacobsen, Mikkel. "Analytic Speech: From Restricted to General Rhetoric." In *The Ends of Rhetoric*, edited by John Bender and David E. Wellbery, 127-139. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
Bratton, Jacky. "Romantic Melodrama." In *The Cambridge Companion to British Theatre, 1730-1830*, edited by Jane Moody and Daniel O'Quinn, 115-127. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
Brooks, Peter. *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.
Bruss, Elizabeth. *Autobiographical Acts: The Changing Situation of a Literary Genre*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.
Burke, Edmund. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, edited by LG Mitchell, Oxford University Press, 2009.
Burt, E.S. *Regard for the Other: Autothanatography in Rousseau, De Quincey, Baudelaire, and Wilde.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.
Burwick, Fredrick. *Thomas De Quincey: Knowledge and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
Carlson, Julie A. *In the Theatre of Romanticism: Coleridge, Nationalism, Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
Casson, Douglas John. *Liberating Judgment: Fanatics, Skeptics, and John Locke's Politics of Probability.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
Castle, Terry. *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
Chandler, James. *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.
—. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
Chappell, Vere. "Locke's Theory of Ideas." *The Cambridge Companion to Locke,* edited by Vere Chappell, 26-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. *Biographia Literaria*. Ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
Colley, Linda. *Britons*. New Haven: Yale, 2012.
Cox, Jeffrey. *In the Shadows of Romance: Romantic Tragic Drama in Germany, England, and France*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987.
Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.
Croll, Morris. "'Attic Prose' in the Seventeenth Century." *Studies in Philology* 18.2 (1921): 79-128.
Davis, Tracy C. "Theatricality and Civil Society." *Theatricality*, edited by Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 127-155.
Dawson, Hannah. *Locke, Language and Early-Modern Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
De Man, Paul. "The Epistemology of Metaphor." *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (1978): 13-30.
De Quincey, Thomas. *Selected Essays on Rhetoric*, edited by Fredrick Burwick. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967.

—. *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by Grevel Lindop, et al. London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999-2003.
—. *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by David Masson. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1980.
Dillon, Elizabeth Maddock. *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
Donohue, Joseph. *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
Esterhammer, Angela. *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002.
—. "The Scandal of Sincerity: Wordsworth, Byron, Landon." In *Romanticism, Sincerity and Authenticity*, edited by Tim Milnes and Kerry Sinanan, 101-119. New York: Palgrave, 2010.
Fairclough, Mary. *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
Farrell, Thomas. "Aristotle's Enthymeme as Tacit Reference." In *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric, edited by Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer, 93-106. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
Favret, Mary. "The Pathos of Reading." *PMLA* 130.5 (2015): 1318-1331.
Fay, Elizabeth. "Hallucinogesis: Thomas De Quincey's Mind Trips." *Studies in Romanticism,* 49 (2010): 293-312.
Gaines, Robert N. "Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and the Contemporary Arts of Practical Discourse." *Rereading Aristotle's* Rhetoric, edited by Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer, 3-23. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008.
Gamer, Michael. *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Guillory, John. "Mercury's Words: The End of Rhetoric and the Beginning of Prose." *Representations* 138.1 (2017): 59-86.
—. "Genesis of the Media Concept." *Critical Inquiry* 36.2 (2010): 321-362.
Guyer, Paul. "Locke's Philosophy of Language." *The Cambridge Companion to Locke,* edited by Vere Chappell, 115-145. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
Habermas, Jürgen. *The Divided West*. Edited and translated by Ciaran Cronin. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.
Hamilton, Paul. *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
Harries, Martin. *Scare Quotes from Shakespeare: Marx, Keynes, and the Language of Reenchantment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
Higgins, David. *Romantic Genius and the Literary Magazine: Biography, Celebrity, Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
Jacobus, Mary. *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference: Essays on* The Prelude. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
Jewett, William. *Fatal Autonomy: Romantic Drama and the Rhetoric of Agency.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
Jordan, John E. *Thomas De Quincey: Literary Critic*. New York: Gordian Press, 1973.
Kennedy, George A. *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Klancher, Jon. *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.
Krishnan, Sanjay. "Opium and Empire: The Transports of Thomas De Quincey." *boundary 2* (2006): 202-234.
Kurnick, David. *Empty Houses: Theatrical Failure and the Novel.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.
Lamb, Charles. *Selected Prose*. Ed. Adam Phillips. London: Penguin, 1985. Print.
Law, Jules. *The Rhetoric of Empiricism: Language and Perception from Locke to I.A. Richards.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
Leask, Nigel. "Toward a Universal Aesthetic: De Quincey on Murder as Carnival and Tragedy." *Questioning Romanticism*, edited by John Beer, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, 92-122.
Levinson, Marjorie. "A Motion and a Spirit: Romancing Spinoza," *Studies in Romanticism* 46.4 (2007): 367-408.
Lindop, Grevel. *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey*. New York: Taplinger, 1981.
Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* edited by Roger Woolhouse. New York: Penguin, 2004.
—. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, edited by Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996.
Lynch, Deidre. *Loving Literature: A Cultural History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.
Marshall, David. *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.
McDonagh, Josephine. *De Quincey's Disciplines*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
Meisel, Martin. *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
Milnes, Tim and Karen Sinanan. Introduction. *Romanticism, Sincerity and Authenticity*, edited by Milnes and Sinanan. New York: Palgrave, 2010.
Miller, J. Hillis. *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers.* Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
Mitchell, W.J.T. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
Moody, Jane. *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Morrison, Robert and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, eds. *Thomas De Quincey: New Theoretical and Critical Directions*. New York: Routledge, 2008.
Newman, Gerald. *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997.
Otto, Peter. "Disoriented, Twice Removed from the Real, Racked by Passion in Walpole's Protean Theatres of Sensation." *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 27.3-4 (2015): 681-706.
Ortiz, Ivan. "Nostalgia and Trauma in Thomas De Quincey's *The English Mail-Coach*." In *Traumatic Tales: British Nationhood and National Trauma in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Lisa Kasmer, 34-54. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Parker, Reeve. *Romantic Tragedies: The Dark Employments of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Perl, Jed. "On the Perils of Painting Now." *New York Review of Books.* 24 September 2015.
Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotions, Hume to Austen*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999.
Plotz, John. *The Crowd: British Literature and Public Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
Poulet, Georges. "The Phenomenology of Reading." In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* edited by Vincent B. Leitch, et al, 1320-1333. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001.
Proctor, Sigmund. *Thomas De Quincey's Theory of Literature*. New York: Octagon Books, 1966.
Pyle, Forest. *The Ideology of Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
Reed, Arden. "'Booked for Utter Perplexity' on De Quincey's *English Mail-Coach*." In *Thomas De Quincey: Bicentenary Studies*, edited by Robert Lance Snyder, 279-307. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
Richards, I.A. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, edited by John Constable. London: Routledge, 2001.
Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
Russett, Margaret. *De Quincey's Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
Rzepka, Charles. *Sacramental Commodities: Gift, Text, and the Sublime in De Quincey*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.
—. "The 'Dark Problem' of Greek Tragedy: Sublimated Violence in De Quincey." *The Wordsworth Circle* 29:2 (1998): 114-120.
Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*. New York: Norton, 1976.
Shapiro, Stephen. *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2008.
Silver, Sean. *The Mind is a Collection: Case Studies in Eighteenth-Century Thought*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
Smith, J. Mark. "De Quincey, Dictionaries, and Casuistry." *English Literary History* 84.3 (2017): 689-713.
Spinoza, Benedict. *Ethics*, edited and translated by Edwin Curley. New York: Penguin, 1996.
"Spontaneous." *Oxford English Dictionary*. Oed.com. Accessed 17 April 2018.
Steiner, George. *The Death of Tragedy.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
Swann, Karen. "Public Transport: Adventuring on Wordsworth's Salisbury Plain." *English Literary History* 55 (1988): 811-834.
"Theatricality." *Oxford English Dictionary.* Oed.com. Web. 20 March 2014.
Trilling, Lionel. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972.
Van Alphen, Ernst, Mieke Bal, Carel Smith, editors. *The Rhetoric of Sincerity*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2008.
Wallace, David Foster. "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 13:2 (1993), 151-194.

Wang, Orrin. "Ideology." In *A Handbook of Romanticism Studies*, edited by Joel Faflak and Julia M. Wright, 245-258. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
Whately, Richard. *Elements of Rhetoric*. Oxford: J. Parker, 1828.
Whitrow, GJ. *Time in History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.
Wikipedia. "Rhetoric." Accessed April 11, 2018.
Williams, Bernard. *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
Williams, Carolyn. "Moving Pictures: George Eliot and Melodrama." In *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, edited by Lauren Berlant, 105-144. New York: Routledge, 2004.
Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
—. *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983.
Wiles, David. *A Short History of Western Performance Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
Wilson, Frances. *Guilty Thing: A Life of Thomas De Quincey*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016.
Wolfson, Susan. "Will plus Words plus Worth: What's in a Name?" *English Literary History* 84.3 (2017): 649-688.
Wood, Neal. "The Baconian Character of Locke's *Essay*." *John Locke: Critical Assessments*, *Volume IV,* edited by Richard Ashcraft, 333-373. London: Routledge, 1991.
Woolf, Virigina. "Impassioned Prose." In *Selected Essays*, edited by David Bradshaw. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
Wordsworth, William. *Guide to the Lakes*. College Park: Romantic Circles Praxis, accessed February 2, 2017.
—. *The Major Works*, edited by Stephen Gill. London: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.