THE FUNCTION OF THE SUBLIME IN THE WRITING OF THOMAS DE QUINCEY

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By
DAVID FISHER CLARKE M.A.

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AUTHOR: David Fisher Clarke, B.A. (Exeter University)
M.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor W.J.B.Owen

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ABSTRACT

De Quincey's writing has already been thoroughly examined from the point of view of his critical statements, and attempts have been made to resolve some of the many contradictions which occur in such statements. In this thesis, however, De Quincey's work is approached not from a consideration of critical theory but through an examination of his ideas and techniques as they related to the well-established literary and psychological category of the sublime. De Quincey's interpretation of the sublime in literature relates closely to his theory of the literature of power, and provides a central standpoint from which to examine many different aspects of his writing. De Quincey's general application of the theory of sublimity reveals a concentration upon a certain number of fixed formulae which can be used as guidelines to his criticism of literature as well as his own creative processes. De Quincey's ideas relating to sublimity provide, in addition, a religious and philosophical background from which to approach both the areas of criticism and creation. Ideas connected with the sublime also allow a convenient approach to De Quincey's theory of symbolism, his use of opium, and the dreams which haunted his life and became the substance of his creative writing. To observe the close relationship between these various aspects of De Quincey's life and thought is to become aware of the patterns which dominated his literary processes.

Having shown the various modes of the sublime as exemplified by De Quincey's works in general, the thesis proceeds to a detailed examination of some passages in his literary criticism as they specifically relate to these modes. The emphasis is not upon the value and meaning of the criticism *per se*, but rather upon the extent to which it expresses De Quincey's continuing search for the powerful or sublime effect in literature. The critical contexts examined are seen to function on the basic principles already established, and these

same principles are then applied to De Quincey's major fiction. The same patterns, involving paradox, symbolism and revelation, are clearly in evidence, and, indeed, reveal the main intention of these works. The English Mail-Coach, The Confessions of an English Opium Eater, and the Suspiria De Profundis are all discussed in considerable detail, and while considerations other than that of the principle of the sublime are included, this principle remains always the basic starting point.

From an analysis of the workings of the sublime principle in De Quincey's writing, a new kind of unity becomes apparent in his work, a unity of symbols and images, of mood and emotion. An awareness of this special kind of unity contributes to an understanding of a writer who seems, on many occasions, to be discontinuous, erratic and wildly mistaken.

NOTE

All references to De Quincey in this thesis are to the Masson edition of his works (Edinburgh, 1890) unless otherwise stated. Volume and page specifications from this edition are inserted in brackets in the main body of the text.

I should like to thank my supervisor, Dr. W.J.B. Owen for his help, during a sabbatical year, in the preparation of this thesis, and the Canada Council for its support during the final two years of the doctoral programme.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I attempt to present a general picture of De Quincey's writing through the examination of a familiar literary phenomenon, the sublime. At least, the idea of the sublime and its many characteristics is the starting point from which I begin an exploration of De Quincey's thought and literature. My principal interest has been, indeed, the practical applications of the idea of the sublime as De Quincey envisaged it, as he appreciated it, and as he followed it as a guiding light. However, although the category of the sublime and its literary traditions provide the central link throughout the thesis, I have not confined my attention to purely sublime contexts in De Quincey's writings. For example, I devote considerable attention to his theory of symbolism and its applications, but I hope to show that this theory does emerge from De Quincey's overall conception of sublimity. Likewise, in the second part of the thesis, I examine certain recurrent themes and images, which are not always in themselves sublime, but do contribute to a general understanding of the motives and methods behind De Quincey's choice of literary subject.

It will be seen that much of De Quincey's creative fiction in fact emerges from his ideas concerning the Christian sublime, and that the correct interpretation of such a work as the Confessions of an English Opium Eater depends upon a clear reading of the Christian duality as De Quincey understood it. Emerging from this Christian duality is the general dialectical theory, which, as I often note, is fully shared with contemporary writers. Although most of the ideas I describe in the first section are therefore commonplaces of the romantic period, I do not believe an attempt has been made to examine the extent to which De Quincey totally espoused these ideas, and based much, if not all, of his writing upon them.

Sigmund K. Proctor, author of the first valuable book on De Quincey's literary criticism, wrote that "the sublime is for De Quincey the primary aesthetic effect in literature",[1] and my argument entirely supports this

contention. My intention, however, beyond merely observing the dominance of this effect, is to indicate the reasons why De Quincey became so totally involved with what Jordan has called his "idée fixe".[2] I examine the "idée fixe" from several angles, showing, for example, how the ideas of Burke on the terror of the sublime, together with its obscurity and infinity, are taken up by De Quincey and integrated within a philosophical and literary system which reaches far beyond the mere definition of a certain kind of human experien I examine the way in which the duality of De Quincey's Christian sublime, with its vital process of antagonism, penetrates every area of his thought, so that ultimately, certain key ideas can be recognized in De Quincey's creative process. In order to fully illustrate the large range of De Quincey's interests, and the varied contexts in which his ideas concerning the sublime are applied, I provide many parallels, in the notes, to points made in the main text.

De Quincey's creative process, however, is the principal object of analysis in this thesis, and in the second part, or the last four chapters, I turn to more specifically literary concerns.[3] I show that the principles and structures defined in the first four chapters determine the kind of criticism which De Quincey attempts. My intention is not to go over ground already admirably covered by Proctor and Jordan, but rather to show how De Quincey's literary criticism, and the passages of works which he selects for consideration, are in fact closely related to his own creative purpose. Thus, many critical opinions can hardly be considered as original, but what I hope to demonstrate is that in many instances De Quincey is, in fact, searching out and recreating in his own words the sublimest of his literary experiences. The moments of climax which he thus celebrates in his "critical" passages are then seen to be analagous with the brief, symbolic visions, which constitute the meaning and purpose of his fictional writing. A valuable sense of structure in the main fictional works, and the principles which determine this structure, is thereby derived from an analysis of De Quincey's conception of the sublime.

I give a general indication, in the notes, of the derivation of the many ideas which are combined and developed within De Quincey's system.

However, I find the analogues with the writings of Kant particularly interesting, and devote an appendix to this subject. In view of the nature of their relationship and some distinct similarities between their work, I also examine many comparisons between Wordsworth and De Quincey, and the majority of these observations are contained within the main text.[4] Such comparisons are made, of course, with the specific intention of exploring further the nature of the sublime principle in De Quincey's work.

PART I: GENERAL CONTEXTS OF THE SUBLIME

CHAPTER ONE: SUBLIMITY, RELIGION AND MORALITY

It would be useful to attempt at the outset a definition of the term "sublime" as it was understood at the time De Quincey was writing; De Quincey's specific interpretation of the phenomenon, and the elements of which it is composed, will emerge in the course of the thesis. Developing beyond Longinus' description of the sublime in his essay Peri Hypsous, eighteenth-century theoreticians expanded the original definition of this category of experience to include a variety or irrational emotions. Longinus' main emphasis in his account of the sublime was upon rhetorical effects, although he did associate sublime expression in literature or nature with particularly intense experiences of passion or emotion. Aestheticians of the eighteenth century, such as Dennis, Addison and Burke, grouped feelings of terror, ecstasy, horror, or experiences of vast, gloomy landscapes, within the general concept of the sublime, and the Romantics continued just this association. Of course, the sublime, conceived of as an expression or experience of powerful and often overwhelming feelings, is consonant with the Romantic view that poetry arises from deep emotional and partially irrational sources. De Quincey's definition of the literature of power depends entirely upon this view; and his interpretation of the sublime is essentially an expression of his trust in the emotional rather than the reasoning faculty.

In the course of the thesis I will provide various important statements from both Wordsworth and Coleridge concerning the nature and effect of the sublime, in order to establish the immediate context of De Quincey's use of the idea. Initially, however, it must be understood that sublime experience, whether derived from natural or literary sources, involves an elevation of the mind, an awareness of the potential greatness of man in his moral sphere, together with a concomitant dissolution of the finite particularities of self. Thus, though at first an aesthetic issue, experience of sublimity might extend further to become meaningful on a religious or philosophical level. I shall begin with an account of certain aspects of religious sublimity in this first chapter, and will adduce the causal principles of sublime experience in the course of subsequent chapters.

1. De Quincey's attitude to Christianity

> It is well said, in every sense, that a man's religion is the chief fact with regard to him.
>
> T. Carlyle

> The three greatest powers which we know of in moulding human feelings are first, Christianity; secondly the actions of men emblazoned by history; and, in the third place, poetry.
>
> De Quincey

As a first approach to De Quincey's definition and application of ideas associated with sublimity, it is necessary to consider the religious background to his work. It is important to appreciate the extent to which Christian ideas consciously permeate his work, and having done so, it is easy to follow De Quincey's pattern of Christian symbolism in the fictional works, and the nature of the religious revelation which is the ultimate purpose of those works. De Quincey's attitude to Kant, which I shall consider first, is one example of the manifestation of the former's fundamentally emotional relationship with Christianity, and of his violent opposition to forms of thinking which do not allow any place for his particular kind of sublimity.

De Quincey's initial dissatisfaction with the Kantian philosophy is that he cannot accept a system where reason, based on sensual perception, is the highest faculty of knowledge.[1] Direct knowledge of God is impossible according to Kant, and this position led De Quincey to assert all the more strongly his belief that the source of religious knowledge lay in "the understanding heart" (X, 56), or the feelings. When discussing Kant, De Quincey writes, "Neither can I think that any man, though he make himself a marvellously clever disputant, ever could tower upwards to a very great philosopher, unless he should begin or end with Christianity" (II, 155). His immediate specification of Kant as a "dubious exception" does little to resolve the essential negativity to the Christian faith which De Quincey finds in Kant's work. In one of his several separate essays on the life and writings of Kant, De Quincey lays out clearly the philosopher's relationship with Christianity. He bluntly states "...it must not be concealed that Kant is an enemy to Christianity" (VIII, 94-5), and although De Quincey makes other similar exaggerations in the same essay,[2] his position nonetheless remains clear. In fact the energy with which De Quincey infuses his denunciation of Kant, attests to his extreme sensitivity and

orthodoxy when it comes to considerations relating to the Christian religion. "Not content with the privilege of speaking in an infidel tone, and with philosophic liberty, he [Kant] manifestly thinks of Christianity with enmity -- nay, with spite" (VIII, 95), De Quincey continues.

One of the most interesting features of the account of Kant's hostility to Christianity, and De Quincey's own passion over the issue, is that De Quincey perhaps unconsciously provides an explanation for the attitudes of both authors. He asserts that much of Kant's enmity towards Christianity derives from his essential sympathy for the object of his attack. "Absolute and unmitigated contempt will generally preclude hostility" (VIII, 96), De Quincey explains, and thereby also reveals the basis of his own passionate attitude. For all his "paganism" and irreverence, Kant provided much for De Quincey to respect, and it is only over the sensitive issue of Christianity that they seem to come into real conflict. As Proctor well expresses it:

> De Quincey was first a Christian and then a philosopher; first a creature of profoundly emotional belief, then an intellectial being who sought the satisfaction of understanding, speculatively, the system of ideas which he accepted on the basis of his intuitions and his faith in spiritual revelation.[3]

De Quincey's disappointment with the philosophy of Kant[4] seems to have been rooted in a failure to discover a sublime capacity in the implications of the philosopher's work. The phraseology of Proctor's remark is significant in this respect, because such ideas as "emotional belief", speculative understanding, "intuitions" and "revelation" are closely linked to De Quincey's conception of the sublime. Kant's system seemed determined to destroy ideas of this nature, and De Quincey writes that it "offers nothing seducing to human aspirations, nothing splendid to the human imagination" (II, 86), and that Kant himself "had no instincts for creation or restoration" (II, 155). What De Quincey really found lacking was an appeal to the imaginative faculty, an appeal to the sublime capacities in man, since he saw a denial of these powers in Kant's apparent hostility to Christianity.

Christianity meant much to De Quincey in terms of his concept of imagination and of the sublime, since its essential truths could only be reached by means which transcend the rigorous demands of reason. These means, mainly centred upon man's emotional capacity, depend upon

revelation, which shows "that which the moral darkness of man will not, without supernatural light, allow him to perceive" (VIII, 39). Revelation is experienced primarily through the symbolism associated with Christianity,[5] and I will examine the extent to which De Quincey associates sublimity with these established symbols in the last three chapters. In order to express the opposition between sublime truth founded on the emotional interpretation of Christian symbolism, and the limited Kantian position based on reason, De Quincey develops a continuing antagonism in his work between the pagan and Hebrew forms of belief. Kant, as an enemy to Christianity, is clearly identified with the pagan side of the dialectic and is inevitably associated with the various attributes which De Quincey ascribes to paganism. It becomes clear in the course of this continuing opposition, that a capacity for the sublime experience is the crucial distinguishing factor between pagan and Christian beliefs.[6] De Quincey recognizes the importance of the opposition between pagan and Christian, at least in terms of his own writings, and, indeed, he claims it as an idea original to himself:

> Had I then really all that originality on this subject which for many years I had secretly claimed? Substantially I had, because this great distinction between modern (or Christian) ideas of 'a religion' and the ancient (or Pagan) idea of 'a religion', I had nowhere openly seen expressed in words (I, 372).

This assertion of originality seems strange in the light of the long tradition of such an opposition,[7] but, nevertheless, the idea is central to an understanding of De Quincey's religious references. As I show in later chapters, religious structures are fundamental to De Quincey's fictional writing, and in fact a celebration of the Christian doctrine is very often the specific end in view.

The essential element in De Quincey's distinction between Christian and pagan lies, as I have suggested, in his concept of the sublime. Sublimity, as a form of apprehension closely linked with the faculty of imagination, expresses itself in ideas connected with a transcendence of man's perception of the visible world. The Christian religion, according to De Quincey, depends upon impulses which build on the emotions and attempts to penetrate the invisible and infinite, whereas the religion of the Greeks subsisted entirely upon the concrete and finite. De Quincey's most coherent statement upon the antithesis is found in his essay "On Christianity as an organ of political movement", where his main concern

is to demonstrate the ways in which all tendency towards the sublime is naturally thwarted by the essential facts of Greek religion. According to De Quincey, the gods of the Greeks (or any pagans for that matter) are, primarily human in their attributes, being "liable to fear...to physical pain...to anxiety" (VIII, 228), and, most disturbing of all, to death. Man's mind, De Quincey argues, cannot be morally informed and expanded by such feeble images of the deity:

> When gods are perishable, man cannot have the grandeurs of his nature developed; when the shadow of death sits upon the highest of what man represents to himself as celestial, essential blight will sit forever upon human aspirations (VIII, 228).

As I shall show, De Quincey's idea of the sublime involves precisely the expansion of the mind here described, and it is upon this basis that he finds the Greek approach to religion so entirely wanting. His apprehension of the two opposed modes of being, as represented by the Greek and Christian model, is so pervasive in his work that even an essay on language contains a further elaboration of the idea:

> Greece was, in fact, too ebullient with intellectual activity--an activity too palestric and purely human--so that the opposite pole of the mind, which points to the mysterious and the spiritual, was, in the agile Greek, too intensely a child of the earth, starved and palsied; while in the Hebrew, dull and inert intellectually, but in his spiritual organs awake and sublime, the case was precisely reversed (X, 250).

The Hebrew religion is specifically described in terms of its teleological function -- "that is with a view to certain purposes, to certain final causes ahead" (VIII, 213) which is clearly linked to De Quincey's teleological conception of the sublime itself. For example, as I shall shortly explain, the sublime is a direct source of moral awareness, which in turn provides a vision of the final purposes of existence. The gods of the pagan provided no such further moral dimension,[8] and were in fact simply a source of terror which had no teleological implications whatsoever. "First arising from a basis of terror, these gods never subsequently enlarged that basis, nor sought to enlarge it" (VIII, 213), De Quincey explains, clearly indicating the difference between such terror and the terror of the sublime, but the important thing to understand about such terror is that it exists only as a part of the sublime. In other words, it must be considered teleologically.

To the pagan, terror became an end in itself, and just like the gods themselves, could admit of no extensions or further meanings. A vision of infinity was no part of either.

One further specific instance of the sublime potential of Christianity for De Quincey should perhaps be noted at this point. It is clear from the foregoing description that the vision which Christianity presents to De Quincey of a striving for ideal goals far transcending momentary impulse is the root of that religion's real greatness. Christianity possesses "foreward-looking views, contemplating, for instance, the furthering of civilization, or contemplating some interests in a world beyond the present" (VIII, 212), while "Religion, in the eye of the Pagan, had no more relation to morals than it had to shipbuilding or trigonometry" (VIII, 212). Pagan religion thus entirely lacked the Christian concept of sin[11] as a basis for moral action, and it is within the very idea of sin that De Quincey finds a further extension of the Christian revelation of sublimity. The fullest statement of the nature of this sublime effect can be found in the Posthumous Works, and once again the direct comparison with paganism is employed:

> Sin is that secret word, that dark aporréton of the human race, undiscoverable except by express revelation, which having once been laid in the great scheme of God as a germinal principle, has since blossomed into a vast growth of sublime ideas known only to those nations who have lived under the moulding of scriptural truth.

He goes on to speak of sin as a "sublime agency" and then asserts that "even in its dreams every Christian child is invested by an atmosphere of sublimity unknown to the greatest of pagan philosophers."[12] The full importance which De Quincey attaches to such dreams will be noted later, but here the "atmosphere of sublimity" directly relates to the Christian's apprehension of sin, and at first the idea may seem somewhat obscure. The reasons for De Quincey finding the qualities of the sublime in the concept of sin will be examined in another place,[13] and for now it is sufficient to appreciate the total interfusion of the sublime principle in De Quincey's interpretation and exaltation of the Christian religion.

It seems strange in the light of the above statements made by De Quincey on the subject of Christianity, that J. Hillis Miller should include this author in his study of five Victorian writers for whom God

has substantially vanished.[14] The pervasiveness of De Quincey's religious utterances would tend to suggest that God, and particularly the kind of God provided by the Christian religion, was an immanent presence in his life. Miller, however, pictures De Quincey as suffering, through the death of his sister,[15] a general sense of disintegration which was to pervade his vision of existence:

> When this fragmentation has occurred there is nothing a man can do but sink back on the centre of himself, and, as the last link attaching him to God and the world is broken, to heave one sigh and acquiesce in silence to the irrevocable fact that all is lost.[16]

De Quincey, according to Miller's argument, becomes at the time of his sister's death newly aware of the vastnesses of infinity, both spatial and temporal, outside of himself, and he thus becomes a wanderer, finding relief from the pain of alienation in his opium usage. Certainly, the event of this death causes, in De Quincey's personal mythology, his exclusion from the innocent paradise of childhood, but Miller's false assessment of this incident lies in an inadequate understanding of the true meaning of both grief and infinity within De Quincey's dialectical system.[17] Both these important topics, grief and infinity, will be examined in detail in Chapter Four, and for now I shall merely indicate the positive value which De Quincey attaches to the concept of infinity, particularly as it relates to his religious views.

Miller writes of De Quincey's new apprehension of infinity in the following way -- "This infinity of space and eternity of time are precisely an infinity of the unavailability of God",[18] and, certainly this statement is partially true. An awareness of mortality is surely awesome, but for De Quincey it is no final cause for despair, being an inevitable element in the paradox of Christianity. Indeed, De Quincey himself provides a remarkably close parallel statement to that of Miller's given above, and comes to the opposite conclusion.

> Great is the mystery of Space, and greater is the mystery of Time. Either mystery grows upon man as man himself grows; and either seems to be a function of the godlike which is in man... He trembles at the abyss into which his bodily eyes look down, or look up; not knowing that abyss to be, not always consciously suspecting it to be, but by an instinct written in his prophetic heart feeling it to be, boding it to be, fearing it to be, and sometimes hoping it to be, the mirror to a mightier abyss that will one day be expanded in himself (VIII, 15-16).

This passage is crucial to an understanding of De Quincey's attitude towards the idea of infinity, and fully reveals the deeper implications of his vision by the bedside of his dead sister. Firstly, there is the point that the concepts of space and time "grow upon man", and, in this sense, seem to provide a constituent element of maturity. Thus it is surely more reasonable to interpret the bedside revelation as an inevitable stage in the evolution of the young De Quincey, rather than as a moment to be utterly lamented. Secondly, De Quincey emphasizes the growth or expansion which ideas of space and time reveal within man's own mind, and this vastness he specifically associates with man's origin "the godlike which is in man"). Once again, such expansion can hardly be interpreted as being in any way detrimental to the human mind involved. And thirdly, it should be noted that ideas of fearful withdrawal, rather more in line with Miller's view of experience of infinity, are an important element in the passage. Man fears and trembles before the awesome spectacle of infinity, but such a reaction, so far from detracting from the value of the experience, is, as I shall show later, an essential element of its sublimity.[19] Once again, De Quincey's familiar paradoxical structure is clearly in evidence,[20] and there are no real grounds to suppose that the revelation of infinity as described here implies, in a final sense, cause for despair. The experience may be disturbing, but then any experience of the sublime will be disturbing. De Quincey sees such disturbance as an essential element in the total effect, and as an important part of his spiritual development. To have remained unaware of the significance of infinity would have left the mind in the dark, would have left man unaware of the potential of his own soul. In this way, the revelation of infinity which De Quincey experiences by his sister's bedside, is a fortunate fall from innocence into experience. It is also, in the discovery of the "godlike" within himself, a move towards God rather than away. The dream-visions which I shall discuss in the second part of the thesis will provide practical examples of the truth of this statement.

It should also be remembered that the whole of De Quincey's persistent opposition of the pagan with the Christian tends finally to exalt the idea of infinity. Paganism is described in terms of finitude, ultimately leading nowhere, having no ultimate goals beyond an immediate sensual reality, and leaving the mind terrorized and narrow.

Christianity and the Christian God, however, are consistently and conventionally associated by De Quincey with the language of infinity. "No finite intellect will ever retrace the total curve upon which Christianity has moved" (VIII, 209), he writes, and in another place describes the transformation from the sensual gods of the pagans to the spiritual one of the Christian -- "Not less awful in power was the transition from the limitations of space and time to ubiquity and eternity... (VIII, 230). "The truths of the Scripture", he states, "are of too vast a compass, too much like the Author of those truths -- illimitable and incapable of verbal circumspection".[21] Furthermore, the Christian concept of sin, already briefly described, is seen by De Quincey as a direct means of access to infinity, and thereby to God Himself. He writes, in continuation of the passage about sin quoted above:

> Yes I affirm that there is no form through which the Infinite reveals itself in a sense comprehensible by man and adequate to man; that there is no sublime agency which compresses the human mind from infancy so as to mingle with the moments of its growth, positively none but has been in its whole origin -- in every part -- an exclusively developed out of that tremendous mystery which lurks under the name of sin.[22]

Infinity is, familiarly enough, a facet of God, and a revelation of infinity becomes a revelation of God for De Quincey. It is not hard to see how the idea of infinity becomes an essential factor in the religious basis of De Quincey's sublime. The sublimity evoked by a contemplation of the vastness of space and time is in fact the sublimity of God, a revelation without which man would have no spiritual identity. There are suggestions, then, that the meaning of De Quincey's experience of infinity is directly in opposition to Hillis Miller's assertion that "This infinity of space and eternity of time are precisely an infinity and eternity of the unavailability of God". Indeed, though it may be true, as Hillis Miller suggests, that the self's integrity has been violated by an early experience of death, De Quincey clearly sees the moment as the establishment of a new identity, an identity less purely involved in the self, and more aware of the nature of God. As I shall show, a shift of this kind from an absorption in the self and the sensuous world to an awareness of the Deity, is at the root of De Quincey's conception of the sublime. The experience at the time of his sister's death, then, represents no denial of religion for De Quincey, despite its deeply ambiguous nature, and it will become apparent in later chapters that

Christianity remains undiminished as the most vital force behind his creative writings.

2. The power of the sublime as a moral force

> The commerce between Man and his Maker cannot be carried on but by a process where much is represented in little, and the Infinite Being accommodates himself to a finite capacity. In all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry: between religion -- making up the deficiencies of reason by faith; and poetry -- passionate for the instruction of reason; between religion whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and poetry -- ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation.
>
> Wordsworth

I have indicated some of the ways in which Christianity constitutes the root source of the sublime for De Quincey. He considers, in fact that Christianity is the sublimest object of contemplation, though of course sublimity manifests itself in ways other than the specifically Christian. The various other aspects of De Quincey's sublime will be discussed in succeeding chapters, and I merely intend to indicate now something of the moral effect which an experience of the sublime can produce upon man. De Quincey's problems with the Kantian position, which seems to deny the essence of the Christian's faith by asserting that no certain knowledge of God can ever be achieved by reason, are reflected in his reliance upon sublime revelation as a source of truth. Proctor, during his account of De Quincey's struggle with Kant's philosophy, expresses the situation in the following way:

> ...as a man of feeling, as a moral mystic, and as a devout believer in scriptural revelation, he [De Quincey] chose to repudiate, not the possibility of knowledge, but the particular faculty which had been shown impotent to give knowledge of ultimates.[23]

Proctor's account of De Quincey's reliance upon "the understanding heart" (XI, 56) as a source of moral truth need not be repeated here,[24] but the point I wish to emphasize is that De Quincey is able to transcend Kant's formulation of reason by his continuing experience of the sublime based upon his emotional capacities.

It will be valuable before proceeding with an account of De Quincey's own beliefs concerning the moral effects of the sublime to consider Wordsworth's opinions upon the same subject, since, although De Quincey

develops the idea with different emphasis, his fundamental assertions are derived, by his own admission on some occasions, from the older writer.[25] Although specific considerations of the sublime as manifested in the natural world are relatively rare in the writings of De Quincey,[26] the root of Wordsworth's conception of sublimity rests firmly in his experience of nature. In his essay "The Sublime and the Beautiful",[27] Wordsworth makes his clearest statements concerning the moral effect of the sublime upon the mind of man. Very often in The Prelude he does not specifically attach the epithet "sublime" to his description of experiences of power, but the above essay makes it not only quite clear that such experiences are essentially those of sublimity, but also that they are deeply moral in implication. The sublime as a general concept is loosely applied to experiences of great emotional power, and Wordsworth emphasizes the lasting moral change which certain experiences of the sublime or powerful in nature can bring to the personality. He asserts that "it is impossible that a mind can be in a healthy state that is not frequently and strongly moved both by sublimity and beauty",[28] and he goes on to explain what he means by a "healthy state". A mind, to be healthy in this sense, must be fully exercised in terms of its emotional potential, its ability to feel the extent of its own greatness. Wordsworth in fact defends his consideration of the sublime and the beautiful precisely on the grounds that they are of such great significance in the moral development of the individual. He writes, "... I am persuaded that it is of infinite importance to the noblest feelings of the Mind and to its very highest powers that the forms of Nature should be accurately contemplated."[29]

The Prelude contains many specific examples of the result of the poet's experiences in natural settings, sometimes certainly not in states of contemplation but rather in states of passive absorption. The effects of passive experience or active contemplation are, however, very much the same. Wordsworth writes in Book I of the refining quality of such powerful experiences as the boat-stealing episode, and of the way in which his "passions" are intertwined

> Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things,
> With life and nature, purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought...[30]

The enduring qualities of the mountains in which the poet spent his childhood have thus produced an awareness of the enduring qualities of

the human soul. Likewise, in Book II, Wordsworth claims that the mountains, lakes and cataracts which constituted an important part of his youthful scenery, served to remove him from "little enmities and low desires",[31] and thereby lay a solid basis for his moral development. As a leitmotif, the assertion of the ennobling power of nature appears throughout the poem, stated in explicit terms, and one further example will suffice to establish the general point. Nature is not only a source of moral instruction under ordinary circumstances, but particularly so during moments of confusion and distress, such as during Wordsworth's own stay in London, or his period of disillusion following the French Revolution. Having experienced the "blank confusion"[32] of London, the poet goes on to reflect once more upon the strength he has derived from powerful experiences in nature:

> By influence habitual to the mind
> The mountain's outline and its steady form
> Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
> The measure and the prospect of the soul
> To majesty; such virtue have the forms
> Perennial of the ancient hills.[33]

In nature, then, lies the source of moral power, and Wordsworth, undergoing experiences of sublimity in his natural surroundings, finds himself absorbing this power. As a poet, he then sees his task as one of somehow reproducing in his work the sublime effects he has experienced in nature, in order to exert a similar kind of moral power over his readers. In this sense, the Wordsworthian idea of the poet is of a transmitter of the sublime effect, and poetry which seeks to convey an experience of the sublime to its audience in this way, is what De Quincey would call the "literature of power" (XI, 54). In the same manner as Wordsworth's own mind was stimulated and moulded by his contact with nature, so his poetry in turn should stimulate and morally fortify the minds of his readers. Thus, in the "Preface" of 1800, Wordsworth writes of the "worthy purpose" of his poetry:

> ...we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

Having the advantage of a mind particularly responsive to the sublime effects of nature, the poet's aim is to extend at least something of this heightened sensibility to his audience. Wordsworth explains further:

> For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor.[34]

In this fashion, Wordsworth sees the poet as a healer administering to the diseased affections of his contemporary man, a healer who by attention to the feelings or emotions will effect a vital moral reconstitution.

As I remarked, De Quincey himself has very little to say directly upon the subject of the sublime as produced in nature, although from time to time there are hints that he does in fact hold the same fundamental view of the subject as Wordsworth. For example, in his essay on Schiller, there is a brief intimation of a similar moral relationship:

> He [Schiller] could not look at his native Alps but he saw in them, and their austere grandeurs or their dread realities, a spiritual reproach to the hollowness and falsehood of that dull imposture which Gottsched offered by way of a substitute for nature. He was taught by the Alps to crave for something nobler and deeper (IV, 426).

Certainly there are indications here that De Quincey accepts the Wordsworthian view of the educative function of the natural sublime.[35] He, however, concentrates his own analysis upon the intermediary role of the artist,[36] together with the deeply emotional effect produced by certain incidents in his own childhood and youth. I shall describe the importance of these autobiographical incidents in the second part of the thesis. On the subject of the sublime effect produced by literature, however, De Quincey's clearest statements occur within his discussion of the literature of knowledge and the literature of power, and it emerges that his initial concern is with the effect which a certain kind of literature may have on the feelings.

De Quincey's earliest description of the literatures of knowledge and power occurs in his "Letters to a Young Man" (1823), and although there are some interesting differences between this early theory and the later development of it,[37] his emphasis here is very firmly upon the effect which the literature of power exerts on the feelings. The literature which communicates power makes him

> 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 (X, 48).

Although the moral effect of such emotional exercise is not explicitly stated here, it is clear that De Quincey envisages the literature of power as performing a very particular function. Like Wordsworth, he sees it as an awakener from "savage torpor",[38] "a vital agent on the human mind" (X, 49) which serves to expand the capacities of a man's sensibility. De Quincey quotes the effect of Milton and of King Lear in this context, and it is certain that he rarely invokes the former unless a question of sublimity is under discussion.[39] Furthermore, he also writes of "being startled into a feeling of infinity of the world within us" (X, 49), which is again an essential element in an experience of the sublime. For De Quincey, the fundamental purpose of the artist is to reproduce the sublime effect, which he, as a highly sensitive individual, is capable of discovering in the world around him. The powerful change he is then able to effect within the feelings of his audiences is the final fulfilment of his purpose. Thus although the literature of knowledge is intended to "teach" and the literature of power to "move" (XI, 54), there is clearly a specific kind of education effected by sublime literature. I will return to this point once again during my account of De Quincey's didactic theory in Chapter Five.

In the essay "The Poetry of Pope", De Quincey expounds a later (1848) and more elaborate theory of knowledge and power in literature, making more explicit the relationship between the exercise of the human sensibility and the moral effect of such an experience. He explains that "like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle" (XI, 56), and in another context he goes so far as to assert that such sensibility would never even be noticed by the possessor, unless he takes the pains to develop it by, for example, watching tragedy on the stage.[40] The root of man's moral being is, for De Quincey, founded in the sensibilities, and thereby he makes his claim for the final importance of the literature of power, which he himself spent so much time attempting to write. He says in the Pope essay that "It is in relation to these great moral capacities of man, that the literature of power, as contra-distinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action" (XI, 56). He goes on to write that "It is certain that, were it not for the Literature of Power, these ideals [justice, hope, truth, mercy etc.] would often remain among us as mere arid notional forms; whereas, by the creative forces of man put forth in literature, they gain a ver-

nal life of restoration, and germinate into vital activities" (XI, 57). It is this strengthening of ideals, together with a representation of the larger, more universal considerations of human life, which becomes the basis of De Quincey's symbolic theory of literature, as I show in later chapters.

It should also be mentioned in the present context that De Quincey's distinction between genius and talent, which emerges directly from his concern with the power/knowledge antithesis, depends largely upon the moral nature of genius.[41] He establishes that genius and talent are categories closely related with the power/knowledge distinction when he writes, "in all literature properly so-called [he has just been discussing the literature of power] genius is always manifested, and talent generally, but in literature of knowledge it may be doubted very seriously whether there is any opening for more than talent".[42] The man of genius is thus the producer of the literature of power, and is, by this token, a repository of moral sensibility. De Quincey states his belief on this matter in his "Gilfillan's Literary Portraits":

> And hence also it is that, besides its relationship to suffering and enjoyment, genius always implies a deeper relationship to virtue and vice; whereas talent has no shadow of a relation to moral qualities any more than it has to vital sensibilities (XI, 383).

Again, De Quincey is asserting the breadth and essential correctness of the artist's emotional judgement, or his "understanding heart". It is interesting to observe, however, that he makes it clear that while genius implies great moral capacity, the reverse does not necessarily apply. Charles Lamb, De Quincey feels, is a case in point, for although he considered this author as a "moral being" to constitute "the nearest approach to an ideal standard of excellence", he was "not in the very first rank" (III, 47-8) when it came to the question of genius.

It is evident, then, that the literature of power is primarily important for its moral implications. In his essay "On Christianity", De Quincey again stresses the power/knowledge opposition, and the way in which the former works upon the sentiments to produce a fuller moral awareness. He writes, "To know is not always to feel; and without a correspondent depth of feeling, there is in moral cases no effectual knowledge" (VIII, 230). Here, again, De Quincey shows his rejection of Kantian reason, where a reliance on such a vague faculty as "the feelings" is entirely out of the question, and places his apprehension

of moral truth upon just this faculty. The sublime power of God himself would thus work upon De Quincey through his feelings in an essentially unknowable way, and to keep these feelings well exercised is a means towards a greater experience of God. In his role as an artist, De Quincey would then, in a sense, imitate God in his attempt to produce sublime literature which would be capable of transmitting a greater moral awareness and depth to its audience. It is essential to an understanding of De Quincey's own creative fiction to hold in mind the religious and moral elements of his thought, and to notice how these essentially familiar ideas relate to the knowledge/power distinction.

3. The moral/aesthetic discipline of the sublime

> The feeling for the infinite, however, can be attained only if we are bounded to the utmost. The greatest limitation for man is the "self"; it is manifested in the experience: "I am only that!" Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious.
>
> C.G. Jung

As I have shown, the artist as a producer of the literature of power may be considered as a conveyor of sublime effects, or as an interpreter of the revelation he has received. He is clearly a man of extraordinary capacities, as Wordsworth indicates in his "Preface" of 1800,[43] being able to comprehend the nature of sublimity and then reconstitute his revelation in the form of a concrete work of art. It is important to understand the nature of this artistic capacity as De Quincey saw it, and to be aware of the terminology which he applies to the process by which the artist reaches his superior awareness.

As a mediator between the sublimity of the Creator Himself and ordinary men, and as a conveyor of a moral sense through the power of his work over the emotions, the artist possesses many of the attributes of a priest. Although this idea is only implicit in the writing of De Quincey, it would have been familiar to him through his communications with Wordsworth, and the reading of that poet's work. An essential aspect of the imagery attached to the poet in The Prelude is precisely that of a man who has experienced a divine calling. Wordsworth speaks of himself as being "santified"[44] by the discipline of nature, and of "that spirit of religious love in which/ I walked with nature".[45] Such concepts are supported by wealth of imagery which

strengthens the poet's association with the priesthood, and his resulting concern with the moral influences of his work.

One of the basic features of the identification of the poet with the priest is that, in the same way as a Christian priest, the poet must be capable of transcending his finite self in his role of mediator between man and God. In his approach to the sublime, or in order to fully enter into ideas of a sublime nature, the poet, according to De Quincey and other writers of the period,[46] must step beyond the sensual world and thus the self, in order to be able to create, in his turn, a work of sublimity and moral force. That an excessive involvement with the outer forms and identities of the world must be preclusive of sublime experience is central to De Quincey's thought, and his definition of the artist rests upon such an idea of self-transcendence.

Since his impassioned prose and the sublime climaxes which it expresses will be central considerations in the later part of this thesis, it is interesting to note De Quincey's statements about the necessity of selflessness in connection with this specific mode of expression. He writes in the Autobiography that "Any expression of personal vanity, intruding upon impassioned records, is fatal to their effect -- as being incompatible with that absorption of spirit and that self-oblivion in which only deep passion originates" (I, 29). Since "impassioned records" are in fact the vital core of De Quincey's creative writing, this expression of concern about the personal nature of some of his writings (the Confessions of an English Opium Eater and the Suspiria De Profundis are, of course, autobiographical in origin) is extremely relevant. As an autobiographer, therefore, he would be sensitive to the kind of criticism put forward by Hazlitt in his essay "On Shakespeare and Milton", where a cautionary note is sounded against the over-free indulgence of pure emotion in poetry:

> The great fault of a modern school of poetry is, that it is an experiment to reduce poetry to a mere effusion of natural sensibility; or what is worse, to divest it both of imaginary splendour and human passion, to surround the meanest objects with the morbid feelings and devouring egotism of the writer's own mind ...their minds reject, with a convulsive effort and intolerable loathing, the very idea that there ever was, or was thought to be, any thing superior to themselves.[47]

In the introduction to the original version of the Confessions, De Quincey expresses his concern for the potential dangers of excessive

subjectivity. He hopes that his personal record will not only be interesting but also useful and instructive -- "In that hope it is, that I have drawn it up; and that must be my apology for breaking through that delicate and honourable reserve which, for the most part, restrains us from the public exposure of our own errors and infirmities".[48] With his next major autobiographical undertaking, the Suspiria, De Quincey intends to describe in some detail the death of his sister, and is still concerned with justifying the nature of his material:

> All the agitation of this magnitude which a man may have threaded his life, he neither ought to report, nor could report. But one which affected my childhood is a privileged exception. It is privileged as a proper communication for a stranger's ear; because, though relating to a man's proper self, it is a self so far removed from his present self as to wound not feelings of delicacy or just reserve.[49]

De Quincey's general theory of the transcendence of the finite concerns of self must be borne in mind throughout future discussions of his creative writing, since his continuing pursuit of sublime experience and the emergence of a pattern of Christian symbolism can be seen as the final justification of his autobiographical revelation. In this way, De Quincey's search for sublimity can be seen as the triumph of the general over the particular.

De Quincey exalts the Christian ideal of selflessness, or the ability to move in sympathy for others beyond a limited state of self-absorption, as being sublime in itself, as well as being a means towards the apprehension of sublimity. The conclusion of his biographical piece "Joan of Arc", which is itself an attempt at sublime communication,[50] contains a representation of just such a moment of self-transcendence. Joan is about to suffer death by burning, and a monk on the scaffold is so absorbed in prayer for her, that he almost falls into danger from the flames:

> A Dominican monk was standing almost at her side. Wrapped up in his sublime office, he saw not the danger, but still persisted in his prayers. Even then, when the last enemy was racing up the fiery stairs to seize her, even at that moment did this noblest of girls think only for him....bidding him with her last breath to care for his own preservation, but to leave her to God. That girl, whose latest breath ascended in this sublime expression of self-oblivion, did not utter the word recant either with her lips or with her heart (V, 413).

This passage is important since it provides a clear context for a significant aspect of De Quincey's concept of sublimity. Here, at this moment of death, two persons are involved in the act of existing outside of themselves, or feeling entirely for and on behalf of another. Such a process, which is part of the discipline of the Christian, is essential also to De Quincey's definition of the artist, and it is this point which he is making when he justifies Wordsworth's avoidance of such themes as wedding days on the grounds that these events are "selfish" and "tend downwards" (XI, 300-1).

Essentially, De Quincey's theory of the selfless character of the sublime revolves around his conception of sympathy, and the capacity that the poet must have for sympathy.[51] The principal statement of De Quincey's beliefs concerning the capacities of the artist in this respect can be found in the essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth". Renowned as perhaps one of the most successful attempts at literary criticism, the essay is in fact equally important as a statement of how he feels an artist should function. The discussion revolves upon the murder of Duncan, and De Quincey observes that "murder, in ordinary cases, where the sympathy is wholly directed to the case of the murdered person, is an incident of coarse and vulgar horror" (X, 391). There is nothing remotely sublime in a desperate clinging to life, which is represented by unthinking sympathy for the murdered person, and the instinct to feel this kind of sympathy De Quincey sees as severely limited, and goes so far as to say that it "exhibits human nature in its most abject and humiliating attitude" (X, 391). The following passage then explicitly defines the necessity to transcend an essentially selfish attitude, which "little suits the purpose of the poet" (X, 391):

> He [the poet] must throw the interest on the murderer. Our sympathy must be with <u>him</u> (of course I mean a sympathy of comprehension, a sympathy by which we enter into his feelings, and are made to understand them) (X, 391).

De Quincey elaborates further in a footnote to the above passage, stating that sympathy is "the act of reproducing in our minds the feelings of another" (X, 391n.), which, of course, is exactly the process of self-transcendence he describes as sublime at the conclusion of "Joan of Arc".

The aesthetic discipline involved in the process of sympathetic identification with the object of attention relates closely to De

Quincey's idea of the artist as priest, as mediator between the world of the immediate senses and the transcendental world of spirit. The struggle between sense and spirit is indeed a theme which recurs throughout De Quincey's writing as an essential part of a dynamic structure of opposites, of which the pagan /Christian antithesis is the foundation. In the next chapter it will become clear that the polarity between the visible world (epitomized by the finite self) and the spiritual world, informs all areas of De Quincey's thought. Indeed, De Quincey's first awareness of the sublimity of a particular scene or circumstance often springs directly from his sensitivity to this polarity.

To appreciate De Quincey's view of the artist as moral guide and educator is an essential preliminary to understanding the purpose of his own creative writings. It is only with a clear idea of De Quincey's religious opinions in mind, embracing the notion of the sanctity of the poet's role, that one can understand his own literature of power or sublimity. For this reason I have introduced in this first chapter certain important aspects of De Quincey's religious position, and have attempted to relate them in a preliminary fashion to his literary taste. Christianity, as represented by the continuing contrast with paganism, is in fact the vital source of sublimity as De Quincey conceived it. There is certainly something ill-considered about the unrelenting reluctance to allow that any elements of sublimity may be present in Greek art or philosophy, but it is this very insistence which characterizes De Quincey's response to sublime effects. Christianity remains always the final source of sublimity for him, and in subsequent chapters I shall adduce many examples to support this contention. I shall show that numerous themes introduced by De Quincey into both his journalistic and imaginative writing bear direct relation to his Christian consciousness. Similarly, some of the most significant symbols developed by him derive from specifically Christian origins. Indeed, as I shall show in Chapter Two, De Quincey's belief is that the origins of symbolism itself can be discovered within the obscure origins of the Christian religion. The Christian symbol reveals the eternal within the finite and expresses for De Quincey the duality of Christianity itself where, as I have indicated, the painful aspects of existence must be integrated with the joyful. I shall explain in Chapters Three and Four that this duality,

drawn from the pattern of De Quincey's belief, provides the basis for several distinct elements of sublime experience. His rejection of pure terror as associated with the structure of pagan religion, evolves towards a final statement concerning the true place of terror within sublime experience. Likewise, the concept of infinity, deriving from religious association, becomes an essential aspect of sublimity, but only when clearly defined within De Quincey's dialectical system. To describe further the foundations upon which De Quincey's theory of sublimity rests, I shall now proceed to examine and explain in greater detail certain aspects of this dialectical theory. The direction of the following enquiry, as in the present chapter, will be towards an analysis of De Quincey's beliefs and taste, with the final intention of showing precisely <u>why</u> he found certain events, certain combinations of circumstances, to contain the potential for sublime expression.

CHAPTER TWO: ASPECTS OF A DIALECTICAL THEORY

1. Transcendence of the sensual world as a basis for the sublime: knowledge and utility

> Perhaps there is no more sublime passage in the Jewish Law than the commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in in heaven, on earth, or under earth....
>
> Kant

> Call ye these appearances
> Which I beheld of Shepherds in my youth,
> This sanctity of Nature given to Man
> A shadow, a delusion, ye who are fed
> By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
> Whose truth is not a motion or shape
> Instinct with vital functions, but a Block
> Or waxen Image which yourselves have made,
> And ye adore.
>
> Wordsworth

As I have observed, a distinction between the teleological implications of Christianity and the specifically finite imitations of paganism, is fundamental to De Quincey's enthusiastic espousal of the former religious structure. Christianity pointed to the "mysterious and spiritual" (X, 250) pole of man's mind, while the pagan religions led to delimiting concentration upon the external, visible aspects of existence. In an essay on Herder, De Quincey expresses the dialectic by opposing the "Hebraic, sublime, and unsensualizing nature" with the more"Grecian, voluptuous, and beautiful nature" (IV, 383), and in his historical essay entitled "Pagan Oracles", he asserts of paganism that it was "deplorably meagre and starved as to most of the draperies connected with the mysterious and sublime" (VII, 78).[1] De Quincey's argument continually stresses the inadequacy of the pagan form of religion to stimulate any kind of sublime apprehension, or mode of belief which seeks to transcend the sensual images of the world and reach beyond the finite. And to be "too intensely a child of the earth", as De Quincey expresses it, is to be "starved and palsied" (X, 250) and incapable of an access to sub-

limity.

Just as he maintains the pagan/ Christian opposition throughout his work, De Quincey establishes a sensual/ spiritual polarity as a basis for his account of the fundamental modes of apprehension. The first mode, the sensual or pagan, is associated consistently with finite images, while the spiritual or sublime mode of apprehension is associated with images of infinity. It has been noted already that De Quincey, as well as Wordsworth, saw that "ordinary life" (X, 48) does not excite emotion in the way that the literature of power can, and he felt furthermore that "daily life in its realities"(XI, 56) would not provide the moral support required by man. "Ordinary life", for De Quincey, is deceptive in its appearances, and its images become identified within a metaphor of falseness; whereas the sublime mode of apprehension, which, to follow the metaphor, involves a penetration beyond the appearances of life, is the only means by which truth can be approached. The details and appearances of ordinary life are described by De Quincey as being "the shadowy present" XII, 157), which immediately recalls a Platonic view of reality,[2] and which indicates a source of truth beyond the visible world.[3] Furthermore, in his explication of the meaning of "knowledge", De Quincey establishes that this faculty "speaks to the mere discursive understanding" (XI, 54), and thus, in the following description of the cycle of literature, it is clear that a period when "the understanding is quickened" is a period when knowledge has become preeminent over power:

> ...in the earliest stages of literature men deal with the elementary grandeurs of passion, of conscience of the will in self conflict...or with the more mysterious struggles amongst spiritual races allied to our own that have been dimly revealed to us. Expanding social intercourse in towns... banishes those gloomier and grander phases of human history from literature. The understanding is quickened; the lower faculties of the mind...are applied to the contemplation of society and manners. Passion begins to wheel in lower flights...(XI. 60-1). 4

Whether historically accurate or not, De Quincey's overall picture indicates that the literature of knowledge is hampered by its involvement with the transitory issues of existence. The literature of knowledge is, indeed, intended primarily to teach, and what De Quincey has in mind is the teaching of facts, such as one might find in a cookery

book (XI, 54), so that his emphasis centres upon a question of utility, or ends in the practical, narrow sense. The matter of utility or non-utility becomes an essential part of the discussion of aesthetics which I shall make in a later chapter,[5] but the idea itself is always closely linked with De Quincey's continuing reference to the superficial aspects of life, the manners and physical appearances of society. Utility, as I shall briefly show here, becomes a part of the mode of apprehension specifically opposed to that involved in experiences of the sublime.

A clear statement of De Quincey's attitude to utility occurs in his essay on Richard Bentley, and involves a juxtaposition of a study of science and a study of the classics, in much the way that knowledge and power are opposed in other places. De Quincey writes:

> It is not improbable, also, that a reflection upon the 'usefulness' of such studies [the classics], according to the estimate of coarse utilitarians — that is, their inapplicability to any object of mercenary or mechanic science — co-operates with their more direct influences in elevating taste. To be useless is not unfrequently a gorgeous emblazonry of honour on the face and frontispiece of difficult accomplishments (IV, 174). [6]

It is certainly indicated here that the classics work upon the emotional part of man, just as the literature of power does, while science tends to no end but practical progress, which is the domain of knowledge. Once again, De Quincey's broad historical antithesis of the ancient with the modern is employed to drive home his very consistent point that the possibilities of sublimity have been subverted by a dedication to mere scientific knowledge, or to "the gross uses of necessity",[7] as he terms it. In his essay "Rhetoric", De Quincey further extends the historical antithesis to a discussion of ancient oratory and modern British oratory. As with the historical scheme proposed in "The Poetry of Pope" (XI, 60-1), De Quincey sees the ancient period as being more concerned with the large and basic issues of human life (subjects which might readily embody sublime expression), while the modern period has become too much involved in the transient details of society. He writes as follows:

> The same spirit of differences extends to forensic eloquence. Grecian and Roman pleadings are occupied with questions of elementary justice, large and diffusive, apprehensible even to the uninstructed, and connecting themselves at every

> step with powerful and tempestuous feelings. In British trials, on the contrary, the field is foreclosed against any interest of so elevating a nature, because the rights and wrongs of the case are almost inevitably absorbed to an unlearned eye by the technicalities of the law, or by the intricacy of facts (X, 99).

Once again, it should be noted, De Quincey stresses the essential democracy of sublime expression which is immediately and generally understood with no particular preparation. This of course depends upon the fact that "powerful feelings" are involved in the earlier form of expression described above, and that a sense of the infinite nature of such expression ("large and diffusive") is indicated. The basic utility, or utilitarian concern of modern oratory, is, however, bounded entirely by the finite so that, as DeQuincey expresses it, the "field is foreclosed against any interest of so elevating a nature".[8] In a passage to which I refer again when the question of utility and aesthetics arises, De Quincey clearly associates his definition of the useful with ideas of finitude, and thereby specifically dissociates it from any possibility of sublimity:

> ...whatsoever is useful, and merely useful, is essentially definite, being bounded and restricted by the end to which it is adapted; it cannot transcend that end, and therefore can never, in the least degree, partake of the illimitable (XI, 219n.).

Certainly, a useful object here is in much the same polar relationship to the sublime as the superficial, sensual details of the visible world. Both can broadly be defined under the heading of what De Quincey describes as "knowledge", which, if over-emphasized, will provide a permanent exclusion of the sublime from man's perceptions.

It is essential, therefore, as De Quincey describes it, to transcend the "mere discursive understanding", and his demand is, that in order to penetrate the deceptive superficialities of existence, a symbolic reading of those external forms must be employed. A transcendence of the finite or the utilitarian can be achieved only by an awareness of the non-literal dimensions to both the visible forms of the world and to the process of thought itself. Again, De Quincey analyses the non-literal potential of thought in terms of a large historical antithesis:

> The truth is that the ancient poets are, much more than the

> Christian poets, within the province of unimaginative good sense. Much might be said, and many forcible illustrations given to show the distinction between the two cases; and that from a poet of the Miltonic order there is no inference to a poet such as Lucan, whose connexions, transitions and all the process of whose thinking, go on by links of the most intelligible and definitive ingenuity(IV, 227).

The actual structure of a man's thought processes provides, in fact, an analogue to the kind of non-literality required by one who proposes to think in a symbolic fashion. The statement above indicates, furthermore, a background to the kind of process which is involved when the imagination, as opposed to the discursive understanding, is employed. To work by "links of the most intelligible and definitive ingenuity" is to be bound by the necessities of logic and of reason, and to use language in one dimension only. Not surprisingly, scriptural language is of primary concern to De Quincey, and he is at pains to indicate that literality will fail completely in a reading of the Scriptures. In a short essay "Scalinger and the Epistle to Jude", De Quincey illustrates the clash of erudition (which is his equivalent to knowledge or literality in this context) with an understanding of the Bible. He presents here the case of the Scalingers' objection to the "Epistle of Jude" on the grounds that certain details are inconsistent with its alleged authorship. De Quincey predictably re-asserts that the Bible appeals not to the intellect but to the "human heart", claiming that it is "the sense of Scripture" which matters, and "not...its grammatical niceties". He continues:

> ...how little could depend upon the mere verbal attire of the Bible, when the chief masters of verbal science were so ready to go astray--riding on the billows so imperfectly moored. In the ideas of Scripture lies its eternal anchorage, not in its perishable words, which are shifting for ever like quicksands. 9

The confusion of literality and spiritual truth described here, assumes a wider significance when it is realized that herein lies the basis of the Victorian conflict between science and religion.[10] It was long held, and often still is held, that the advancement of science made severe inroads upon the spiritual authenticity of the Bible, the case of "Genesis" being perhaps the most obvious example of the problem. It is greatly to De Quincey's credit that, by applying his dialectic of knowledge and power, he managed to separate science and spiritual truth

into two distinct categories of apprehension. Though, as he admits in his "Postscript" to the "System of the Heavens", the Bible is obliged to use "the erroneous language of men" (VIII, 39) and must employ such concepts as day or night, summer or winter, it would be a great error to assume that these usages are anything but guides to the true meaning of the text in question:

> Days! But is it possible that human folly should go to the length of understanding by the Mosaical day, the mysterious day of that awful agency which moulded the heavens and the heavenly host, no more than the ordinary...cycle of twenty four hours (VIII, 40).

In like fashion, De Quincey stresses the folly of a certain Mr. Bennet in attempting to assign a specific geographical location to Paradise. Not only is this an impossible task in itself, but to assign specific locations to places of spiritual importance does nothing but confound their potential sublimity.[11] By erasing what De Quincey calls the "punctual identities" of such places, they are raised to the status of "shadowy powers":

> By that process such remembrances pass from the state of base sensual signs, ministering only to a sensual servitude, to the state of great ideas -- mysterious as spirituality is mysterious, and permanent as truth is permanent. Thus it is and therefore it it is that Paradise has vanished (VII, 434).

The facts of science, De Quincey concludes, can never conflict with the Bible as long as the two modes of apprehension, the literal and the non-literal, are recognized as being entirely distinct from one another.

Only by transcending the finite location, or the sensual image of wordly association, can the greatness or the sublimity of a religious idea be approached, and it is just such a principle which De Quincey applies to his discussion of literature. In his essay called "Schiller", he approaches the classic problem of the presence of supernatural or other logically incredible agents in works of art, a problem which, as he explains, is only created by confounding the understanding with the higher faculty of apprehension. To be unaware of the distinction, or to have allowed one's sensibilities to decay to the extent that the capacity for sublimity is no longer present, will be a complete barrier to the appreciation of a work of art in which supernatural or incredible agents are present:

> ...some readers, in whom the judicious acquaintance with human

> life in its realities has outrun the sensibilities, are too much shocked by these hypernatural phenomena that they are incapable of enjoying sublimities which on that basis of the visionary really do exist (IV, 435).

De Quincey continues his point with the sound critical observation that providing, as in the case of Shakespeare, the work of art has internal coherence, then it need not relate logically to the real world beyond the play. Again, he stresses his principal point that the two modes of apprehension must be separated, and warns against the mingling of supernatural behaviour with otherwise normal action. It is on these grounds that De Quincey establishes his critical preference of Shakespeare over Schiller. The three Moors in Schiller's The Robbers, De Quincey contends, are too close to logical, expected reality, and therefore a schism between the understanding and the non-logical, imaginative faculty must occur. He concludes, on these grounds, that "as a coherent work of art, The Robbers is indefensible" (IV, 436), and it can be seen from this statement that a further important aspect of aesthetic theory emerges from De Quincey's energetic distinction between knowledge and power. It also becomes clearer that De Quincey's theory of religious revelation transcending the powers of reason is closely linked with his theory of art. In the "Postscript" to the "System of the Heavens", De Quincey accounts for his opinion that for a "religious messenger from God" (VIII, 35) to have any dealings with "truth merely scientific, or economic or worldly" (VIII, 36) would entirely subvert his revelatory purpose. His spiritual message must come untarnished by worldly knowledge, in order to avoid "vitiating the spiritual atmosphere of the audience — that is corrupting and misdirecting the character of their thoughts and expectations" (VIII, 36-7). In exactly the same way, De Quincey's demand of a work of art is that it should not provoke confusion and a sense of incoherence by confounding together two distinct modes of apprehension.

2. Symbolism in its relation to sublime potential

> No object of sense is sublime in itself, but only as far as I make it a symbol of some Idea.
>
> Kant

> The concerns of religion refer to indefinite objects, and are too weighty for the mind to support them without relieving itself by resting a great part of the burthen upon words and symbols...in all this may be perceived the affinity between religion and poetry.
>
> Wordsworth

As I have indicated, the structure of man's thinking, or his ability to transcend a merely logical or literal mode of thought, provides an access to De Quincey's use and understanding of symbolism. Symbolism, for De Quincey, involves reading the external appearances of nature, or of life in any of its forms, in such a way that they reveal the meaning below the surface, and much of his imaginative writing involves, as I show in the final three chapters, an attempt to recreate the significant symbols he has experienced as an artist. De Quincey praises Lamb because "his impulses, like those of Wordsworth, are derived from the depths of nature, not from the surface of manners" (III, 90), and in a specific sense this statement indicates the process of the symbolic mode of apprehension.

Beneath the forms of nature lie, for De Quincey, the key to the real meanings of man's existence.[12] In the Literary and Lake Reminiscences, De Quincey describes an experience beside the mountain river Brathay when he becomes filled with thought of death and the purpose of life itself. He concludes his account in the following way:

> ...the destiny of man is in correspondence with the grandeur of our endowments, and...our own mysterious tendencies are written hieroglyphically in the vicissitudes of day and night, of winter and summer, and throughout the great alphabet of Nature! (II, 402).

The external features of nature are seen by De Quincey as mere hints of a sublimity and meaning which lie beyond the world of common perception.[13] In a way, what is required in order to be aware of this symbolic level of apprehension, is a new or different perspective, (such as the new perspective concomitant with the transcendence of self), and given such a shift, revelation might occur under any circumstances. In "Secret Societies", for example, De Quincey employs a natural analogy to show how revelation came to Paul of Tarsus during the martyrdom of St. Stephen. He first presents a picture of himself in the mountains of the Lake District, unable to see the sun directly because of the heavy

clouds present at the time:

> — I could not see the sun: the sun was hidden behind some gloomy mass of clouds; but far below I beheld, tremulously vibrating on the bosom of some half-hidden lake, a golden pillow of solar splendour which had escaped through rifts and rents in the clouds that to me were as invisible as the sun himself (VII, 220).

Clearly, De Quincey is once again talking about the type of vision involved in this fine description of a moment in Lakeland weather, showing that revelation depends upon how one looks at nature. It is an oblique vision that De Quincey describes, one that is thwarted in its attempt to look directly at the source of illumination itself, but which can penetrate that veil merely by an alteration in perspective. Likewise, as De Quincey's account continues, Paul of Tarsus at the martyrdom could similarly see "no gate of heaven that opened, could see no solar orb... nothing but darkness of error and clouds", until suddenly, looking aside from the chaos of the moment, he perceived in the countenance of St. Stephen "a golden sunlight, some radiance not earthly, coming through avenues not revealed to himself" (VII, 220).[14] De Quincey describes this moment of revelation in a manner reminiscent of his own experience near the Brathay, when he became aware of the "hieroglyphic" communication of nature:

> That face of the martyr brought down telegraphically, from some altitude inaccessible to himself, a handwriting that must be authentic, a secret reading that would not be refused (VII, 220).

The image again is one of literally reading the surface appearances of the visible world, and finding their secret meaning. It is interesting to note, however, that De Quincey does not restrict symbolic revelation to the reading of visible appearances, and on at least one occasion, he writes of an abstract quality in the same way. In the original version of the Suspiria De Profundis, De Quincey discusses the meaning of solitude to a Christian child, having asserted as a part of the familiar dialectic, that to a Greek child, solitude is essentially meaningless:

> Oh, mighty and essential solitude, that wast, and art, and art to be -- thou, kindling under the torch of Christian revelations, art now transfigured forever, and hast passed from a blank negation into a secret hieroglyphic from God, shadowing in the hearts of infancy the very dimmest of his truths. 15

Essentially, therefore, it is once again the sublimity inherent in Christianity which De Quincey is celebrating, sublimity which derives from the perception of spiritual meaning in any of the forms or activities of earthly life. It will be seen in later chapters how De Quincey develops the concealed symbolism of his own life pattern, as revealed by certain events and dreams, into a unique form of autobiography.

De Quincey's concept of the sublimity of secrecy and mystery will be examined in Chapter Four, but it is important to note here the continuing sense of a secret being penetrated throughout his account of symbolism. Symbolism, De Quincey writes, is to "mean mysteriously"[16] and he finds the roots of symbolism, as he does of sublimity, in Christianity, which of necessity in its earliest days found itself obliged to "mean mysteriously". In his long essay "The Essenes", De Quincey accounts for the Roman persecution of early Christians, and it is as a result of the concealment which followed, according to De Quincey's very individual view of history, that symbolism was born. He imagines the thought processes of the early Christians:

> We must hide ourselves effectually. And this can only be done by symbolizing; i.e. conducting our inter-communications through conventional signs...let us muffle ourselves in thick clouds which no human eye can penetrate. And towards this purpose let us immediately take a symbolic name (VII, 120).

This represents, of course, a simple form of man-made symbolic structure introduced for a very practical purpose, but it illustrates the incipience of a mode of apprehension quite beyond the limited perception of a pagan. Christianity gave new and profound meaning to the appearances of nature, by associating them with ideas of grandeur, by linking them with sentiments of sublime significance. In the Confessions of an English Opium Eater, De Quincey briefly indicates the powerful incarnation of great sentiments within physical objects or the observable phenomena of nature, and he attributes the whole process to Christian invention. The reasons for this attribution have been indicated in the first chapter, and consist essentially of the sense of moral and spiritual meaning which Christianity introduced, and which was not at all present in the pagan religions of fear. De Quincey expresses the birth of Christian symbolism in the following way:

> Flowers, for example, that are so pathetic in their beauty, frail as the clouds, and in their colouring as gorgeous as the heavens, had through thousands of years been the heritage of children -- honoured as the jewellery of God only by them -- when suddenly the voice of Christianity, countersigning the voice of infancy, raised them to a grandeur transcending the Hebrew throne, although founded by God himself, and pronounced Solomon in all his glory not be arrayed like one of these. Winds again, hurricanes, the eternal breathings, soft, or loud, of Aeolian power, wherefore had they, raving or sleeping, escaped all moral arrest and detention? Simply because vain it were to offer a nest for the reception of some new moral birth whilst no religion is yet moving amongst men that can furnish such a birth. Vain is the image that should illustrate a heavenly sentiment, if the sentiment is yet unborn (III, 292).

And he proceeds to illustrate the association, in a symbolic manner, of certain great sentiments and certain observable phenomena:

> Call for the grandest of all earthly spectacles, what is that? It is the sun going to his rest. Call for the grandest of all human sentiments, what is that? It is that man should forget his anger before he lies down to sleep. And these two grandeurs, the mighty sentiment and the mighty spectacle, are by Christianity married together (III, 292).

I have quoted at length from this statement since it so effectively reveals the Christian basis for the symbolism, a symbolism which was to become such an important part of the structure and meaning of the Confessions and De Quincey's other most creative writings. These writings become the practical illustration of how certain moments, such as the setting of the sun at evening, or the period just before dawn,[17] or the sound of a river, can assume moral significance as they bind themselves together with the actions of men's lives. The observer, of course, must be capable of such an interpretation, and to be blinded by the "gloomy mass of clouds" and to see only the immediate visible effect, is to remain unaware of the hieroglyphic communication of such a moment.

In the Essenes essay, De Quincey attempts to examine Josephus'[18] account of a religious sect of this name, in the hope of proving that the Essenes and the Christians were, in fact, one and the same group of people. Josephus himself provides a typical example of one who, deceived by sensual appearances, by the apparent and superficial meanings of what he saw around him, is unable to come at the truth revealed through symbolism. De Quincey cleverly employs this form of blindness to suggest, for example the reasons behind Josephus' suppression of the prophetic doctrine of the Messiah:

> Why, then has Josephus suppressed it? For this reason: the doctrine offers a dilemma — a choice between two interpretations, one being purely spiritual, one purely political. The first was offensive and unintelligible (as was everything else in his native religion beyond the merely ceremonial) to his own worldly heart; the other would have been offensive to the Romans. The mysterious idea of a Redeemer, of a Deliverer, if it were taken in a vast spiritual sense, was a music like the fabled Arabian voices in the desert — utterly inaudible when the heart is deaf, and the sympathies untuned. The fleshly mind of Josephus everywhere shows its incapacity for any truths but those of sense (VII, 138).

Again, it can be seen how De Quincey's interpretation of history is determined by his demand for the recognition of two modes of perception. Because Josephus could not report the purely political aspects of the stories of a Messiah, he reported nothing, being quite unable to penetrate the spiritual meaning of the event. The symbolic blindness of Josephus extended to his inability to comprehend the true Christian meaning of either oil (VII, 161) or white robes (VII, 164). De Quincey explains that "here again we find the external fact reported by Josephus, but with his usual ignorance of its symbolic value, and the secret record which it involved" (VII, 164). Likewise Josephus' account of Abraham represents the prophet as a Roman general, rather than emphasizing the true simplicity and power of the story. It becomes progressively more evident that where there is no use or understanding of symbology in literature then, for De Quincey, there is no power, no sublimity. His own fictional writing substantiates this impression, for his representation of the sublime moments in his own life depends entirely for their effect upon an awareness of their symbolic implications.

It is clear, then, that symbolism, and its close links with the birth of Christianity, is the means through which the spiritual world is both represented and apprehended. Symbolism exemplifies the process by which the finite world of the senses may be transcended, the means by which, for the Christian, the most finite of all images, death, may be conquered.[19] It is, for De Quincey, an obscure mode of revelation, fleeting and often partly incomprehensible, but sublime in its implications far beyond the convenience of a mere literary device. It involves a way of seeing which provides an analogue to the kind of perception and new perspective required before an apprehension of the sublime may become possible. At the same time, symbolism provides the basis of

De Quincey's own literary method, and an awareness of the importance that he assigns to symbolic meaning is a prerequisite to an understanding of his attempt to recreate the sublime in literary form. It is easier, then, to comprehend the nature of his finest writings, the Confessions and the Suspiria De Profundis, which each consist of a group of symbolic passages rising as climactic points from the lower-toned bulk of the autobiographical material.

CHAPTER THREE: THE DIALECTICAL THEORY DEVELOPED

1. Images of conflict

> Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human Existence.
>
> Blake

> It is a connection formed through the subtle progress which, both in the natural and moral world, qualities pass insensibly into their contraries, and things revolve upon each other.
>
> Wordsworth

It is evident from examples discussed in the first two chapters that a pattern of opposition, whether of pagan with Christian, knowledge with power, sense with spirit, or of finite with infinite, informs De Quincey's entire apprehension of the world and determines the method of his writing. Indeed, such an awareness of opposition and antagonism is a fundamental element of his experience of sublimity, and it is because he tends to seek out moments of power as the substance of his literature that so much of his writing is structured according to such a pattern. His rhetorical method, his exposition of an argument, will almost always depend upon the observation and analysis of opposing forces. Thus the antitheses noted above are all aspects of the same phenomenon,[1] are all means by which paradox can be proposed and resolved.

Repeatedly, in many different contexts throughout his writing, De Quincey indicates that violent opposition of two forces has a close affinity with an experience of the sublime. War, one of the most tangible examples of opposition, is celebrated for its symbolic value as archetypal conflict. Having transcended what he considers to be the "vulgar" aspects of war, De Quincey expresses his response to news of a British victory against France in the following manner:

> Not as victories won with English bayonets or artillery, but as victories in a sublime strife of the good principle with the bad I entered with all my heart into the fulness of popular feeling (III, 62).

Certainly, the quality of vision shown here emphasizes De Quincey's continuing attempt to transcend the literal and trivial meanings of an idea such as war, and to extract its symbolic potential. The

association of sublimity with such a symbolic mode of apprehension is significant in the light of remarks made on this subject in the previous chapter. Since De Quincey's literary effort is consistently directed towards a discovery of the powerful or the sublime, his emphasis, whether in his journalism or his creative fiction, is always upon such symbolic opposition. Thus when he is describing the meaning of power to the young man of the "Letters", it is the pattern of conflict discovered in King Lear which forms the root of the sublime experience afforded by that play:

> When, in King Lear, the height, and depth, and breadth, of human passion is revealed to us, and for the purposes of sublime antagonism, is revealed in the weakness of an old man's nature, and in one night two worlds of storm 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 with the double darkness of night and madness — (X, 49).

The dimensions alluded to in the earlier part of this quotation are typical of De Quincey's sublime images, and the passage as a whole is typical of his rhetoric of antithesis,[2] by which he hopes to evoke once again the power he himself has felt in a particular situation.

The grand or sublime effect, for De Quincey, is always based upon the juxtaposition of opposing forces, and as such can always be linked with the dynamic theory that process can only occur by means of opposition. The pattern of man's life itself, with the struggle against pain and suffering, is the fundamental example of such a theory, since De Quincey frequently expounds the creative value of such adverse experience.[3] The key to De Quincey's analysis of more or less any phenomenon, whether literary, historical or scientific, subsists within the continuing attempt to discover the sublime effect as it can be found in the unity of contrapuntal structures. In the Autobiography, for example, he describes in enthusiastic prose his conception of the reciprocal effect that should exist between the capital city of a country and its strong provincial towns. His idea of political unity in its idea form is thus built upon a structure of tension, resistance and interaction:

> Conceive a state of communication between the centre and the extremities of a great people, kept up with a uniformity of reciprocation so exquisite, as to imitate the flowing and ebbing of the sea, or the systole and diastole of the human heart; day and night, waking and sleeping...action

> and re-action from every point of the compass being perfect and instantaneous, we should then first begin to understand, in a practical sense, what is meant by the unity of a political body (I, 270-71). 4

The sense of dimension is again present in this passage, but most importantly, the political analysis stresses, in similar fashion to the remarks on King Lear, the basic structure of dynamic interaction. It is important, also, to notice the sublime nature of the subject itself, of vital communication being maintained over huge distances. The power of such a conception held great sway over De Quincey's mind, and becomes a vital impulse behind one of his most powerful pieces of writing, The English Mail-Coach.[5] In another statement, De Quincey rests his belief concerning the nature of process, upon just such a contrapuntal basis. Here, again, the forces of antagonism are seen as being the raw material from which process emerges:

> The Revolution, and the resistance to the Revolution, were the two powers that quickened each other for ultimate good...Neither the Revolution singly, nor the resistance to the Revolution singly, was calculated to regenerate social man (XI, 312n.).

From politics, through literature to semantics, De Quincey will always emphasize the polar structure of the phenomenon under discussion. The English language itself is described as existing in a vital tension between the saxon and the latin elements,[6] while De Quincey's proposed course of study for his young man includes the necessity for both a centripetal and centrifugal system of approach.[7] Again, it is the sense of dimension and all-inclusiveness which appeals to De Quincey's imagination.

De Quincey gives, in many different contexts throughout his writing, a complete explication of the meaning and function of such a structure of opposition, and it becomes clear that he regards the pattern as more than a mere rhetorical device. For De Quincey, as a man or a literary artist, the only adequate view of existence is one which seeks to embrace all possibilities, and is one which admits the necessary presence of the darker forces in the world. It is, indeed, from his personal experience of the intermingling of contrasting elements that his continuing association of summer with death arises. This pattern of contrast, which, as I will show, is important both to De Quincey's literary criticism and his fictional writing, is originally outlined in the Confessions. However, the root of the idea in his personal experience can be found in

the Autobiography. The reason why death is more affecting in summer

> lies in the antagonism between the tropical redundancy of life in summer, and the frozen sterilities of the grave...But in my case there was even a subtler reason why the summer had this intense power of vivifying the spectacle or thoughts of death (I, 38-9).

De Quincey then goes on to explain how his early biblical reading fixed in his mind the association of the crucifixion with summer weather. His account in the Confessions of the same phenomenon gives three further reasons for the linking of summer and death to occur. He writes that, "It may generally be observed that wherever two thoughts stand related to each other by a law of antagonism, and exist, as it were, by mutual repulsion, they are apt to suggest each other" (III, 444). This, in itself, is not a statement of the organic nature of such a relationship, but in the context of other assertions made by De Quincey it can be seen as suggesting more than simply association by contrast.

In the essay "The Principle of Evil", De Quincey expresses his theory of the French Revolution, which I have quoted in part above, in more comprehensive terms:

> Not only must the energies of destruction be equal to those of creation, but, in fact, perhaps by the trespassing a little of the first upon the last, is the true advance sustained; for it must be an advance as well as balance. But you say this will but in other words mean that forces devoted (and properly so) to production or creation are absorbed by destruction. True; but the opposing phenomena will be going on in a large ration, and each must react on the other. The productive must meet and correspond to the destructive. The destructive must revise and stimulate the continued production. [8]

To interpret this proposition as far as the individual, and particularly the artist, is concerned, sheds further light on the moral/aesthetic discipline already described in chapter one. De Quincey has pictured the artist as a man who is capable of transcending his own ego, and who is capable of imaginatively extending his vision in order to sympathize with the ideas and concerns of others. As with the capacity to apprehend symbolic or permanent meaning, such vision can only be achieved by adopting a different or broader perspective, which will allow the artist to transcend the finite and reach sublimity through his approach towards infinity.[9] A capability of this kind is closely related to, and partly explains, De Quincey's general account of the dialectical pattern he discovers in the world around him. Creation must embrace and not deny destruction, and the artist must be capable of comprehending just such a picture of apparent paradox. Indeed, De Quincey describes the nature of the poet in the same terms as those employed to describe

the contrapuntal view of the world:

> In all poetic enthusiasm, however grand and sweeping may be its compass, so long as it is healthy and natural, there is a principle of self-restoration in the opposite direction; there is a counter-state of repose, a compensatory state, as in the tides of the sea, which tends continually to re-establish equipoise (XI, 380n.). 10

The poet thus exists within the structure of balances, but De Quincey's more important point is that breadth of vision in a poet and, indeed, critic as well, is the ideal proposed by his antithetical structure.

The question of paradox will be discussed shortly, but once again, in the examples given above, there is an attempt being made to define two modes of vision. These modes are not necessarily the right and the wrong, but are more probably the partially right and the wholly right. Obviously a confusion between the latter pair is more likely than between the former, and De Quincey makes it his task to resolve this confusion. "It was not so much the falsehood of this interpretation, as the narrowness of that falsehood, which disturbed me", he writes. "There was a glimmer of truth in it: and precisely that glimmer it was which led the way to a general and obstinate misconception of the meaning" (VII, 39). He thus continually advocates the comprehensive view of a subject (though he himself is painfully guilty of the opposite on many occasions), and denounces the limited, or what he calls, after the German, the "one-sided" view. Thus in the essay "Lessing", De Quincey criticizes Lord Shaftsbury's powers as a critic:

> No one had ever suggested in that day that the modern or Christian poetry, and the poetry of the antique, had each its separate law and character. Either, tried by the standard of the other, of necessity appeared to be imperfect; and, as Lord Shaftsbury thought it a matter of course to try the modern by the ancient he became unjust in a puerile degree to the magnificent literature of his own country. He was in fact what in German is called einseitig, or one-sided,—right in one respect, but, from the limitation of his view, wrong in every other (XI, 159).

The amusing thing about this remark is that De Quincey's own comparisons of the modern and the ancient periods are variable according to his particular purpose at the time, although as a recommendation to be careful about adopting the correct critical perspective when judging works of different periods, such a statement remains, of course, entirely valid. Again, in his account of Hazlitt in "Recollections of Charles Lamb", De Quincey condemns the limited viewpoint:

> And, whatever gleams of wandering truth might flash at times upon his mind, he was at the mercy of every random impulse; had no principles on any subject; was eminently one-sided; and viewed all things under the angle which chance circumstances presented, never from a central station (III, 83). 11

De Quincey again points out that rightness is sometimes illusory when issues are not considered in a sufficiently broad context, and his point here is closely related to the account of utility and symbolism I have already given. There can indeed be a certain rightness in the observation of "the tangible realities of things and persons" (X, 119), but it is a rightness of a very limited kind, and one which does not comprehend a larger symbolical vision, which must contain conflict rather than smug certainty. Possessed of such perspective, war can be seen in terms of its symbolic values rather than its transient issues (De Quincey says nothing about the physical suffering involved), and the Wanderer of Wordsworth's poem would not have undergone such severe disenchantment at the early failures of the French Revolution.[12] The mind of the poet or critic must be fully able to reflect and respond to the world of extreme antithesis wich he sees around him, but beyond considerations related specifically to poets and critics, it can be seen that De Quincey is constructing a whole philosophy of existence based upon the dialectical theory. Other areas of his thinking which are interfused with the same principle will now be considered.

2. Paradox and synthesis in the dialectical theory

> Paradox is what is at the same time good and great.
>
> F. Schlegel

> Now, paradox is a very charming thing; and, since leaving off opium, I take a great deal too much of it for my health.
>
> De Quincey

For De Quincey, one of the most obvious mistakes which a one-sided mind might labour beneath would be to overlook the sublime synthesis or resolution which arises from the antagonism of two forces. In the Suspiria De Profundis he explains the full implications of the pattern of antithesis which he has employed and alluded to so often, and which closely relates to the structure of the sublime itself. The "rapture of life", he writes in the Suspiria, is produced by the "confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtile

concords." He goes on:

> Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act, —which is the feeble conception of many,--but by union. They are the sexual forces in music:'male and female created he them': and these mighty antagonists do not put forth their hostilities by repulsion but by deepest attraction (XIII, 350) 13

Such a statement af the "deepest attraction" of antagonistic forces is, of course, at the root of the Romantic conception of the reconciliation of opposites, an idea which dominates De Quincey's thinking.[14] The development of a pattern of counterpoint throughout his work attests to the extent to which he embraced this seminal concept.

It is only to be expected, in view of the solidly Christian position which he maintains in his work, that De Quincey should find a paramount example of antagonism, synthesis and sublimity within the structure of the Christian religion itself. The dynamic opposition between the pagan and the Christian, is the means by which De Quincey elaborates upon the nature of the Christian sublime. This, in itself, is one kind of antagonism, but is rather the product of a whole mode of thinking than an embodiment of the "deepest attraction" refered to above. De Quincey does not talk of the synthesis of pagan and Christian for reasons of orthodoxy, but he is more than willing to bring the darker side of existence into the light and use it to further his position. The discussion of sin is a case in point. Here De Quincey is clearly welcoming the darker forces of the world, incorporating them into his dialectical structure and finding sublime revelation in the contrast thus established. He talks of sin as a "germinal principle" which has "blossomed into a vast growth of sublime ideas", and concludes rhetorically:

> Yes, I affirm that there is no form through which the Infinite reveals itself in a sense comprehensible by man and adequate to man; that there is no sublime agency which compresses the human mind from infancy so as to mingle with the moments of its growth, positively none but has been in its whole origin--in every part--and exclusively developed out of that tremendous mystery which lurks under the name of sin. 15

The grammar is a little involved here, but the meaning of the sublime effect of sin is evidently, though of course paradoxically, the presence, rather than the exclusion, of the darker half of man's nature. Just as the Christian conception of God contains the wide antithesis of human experience, sensual involvement and spiritual striving, so the presence of sin within the Christian structure allows for a final synthesis achieved through struggle. This is the same principle by which De Quincey celebrates Christian honesty towards the subject of death.

Within the concept of Christianity itself, however, De Quincey

not only discovers the principle of antagonism, but its extension into the state of synthesis. In the first place, in typical fashion, De Quincey probes the origins of Christianity, and finds its evolution to have resulted from a synthesis occuring at a time when the barbarian tribes had ceased to be nomadic, and were prepared to accept new ideas. His language shows clearly how he sees directionless development evolving into synthesis, and the antithetical structure of the sentences reveal the power he feels to have been present at this moment of time:

> The motions of Barbaria had hitherto indicated only change; change without hope; confusion without tendencies, strife without principle of advance; new births in each successive age without principle of advance....But now the currents are united, enclosed, and run in one direction, and that is definite and combined. 16

The full meaning of such a synthesis, where strife and conflict can possess a principle of advance, is explained by De Quincey in other places.

The nature of the synthesis in fact relates directly to De Quincey's knowledge/power distinction, or more specifical in terms of material discussed in my argument, to man's dual mode of perception, the literal and the symbolic. I have shown how De Quincey continually denounces literality or preoccupation with the immediate sensual world, as being a barrier to symbolic revelation. In other words, power, or sublimity, cannot manifest itself, whether in aesthetic or religious contexts, when the finite considerations of knowledge are paramount. Since his concern is so often with the sublime, it is natural that such thwarting elements are generally condemned by De Quincey. However, he is well aware of the importance of both tendencies in human response, and finds the great synthesis of Christianity to be based upon the necessity for such a duality. His own words can best explain the primary resolution of opposites which can be discovered within the Christian structure:

> If a philosophic thesis...attempts to realize the idea of supreme Deity, he becomes aware of a double and contradictory movement in his own mind whilst striving towards that result. He demands, in the first place, something in the highest degree generic and yet again, in the opposite direction, something in the highest degree individual; he demands on the one path a vast ideality, and yet on the other in union with a determinate personality... this difficult antagonism of what is most and what is least generic must be maintained; otherwise the idea, the possible idea, of that august unveiling which takes place in the clouds. Now, this antagonism utterly collapses in paganism...(VIII, 223-4).17

De Quincey continues, in this essay "On Christianity", to elaborate upon the total lack of anything "generic" in the "Pagan Pantheon", while stressing the Christian capacity to maintain the valuable balance of opposing

ideas. In a footnote to the "London Reminiscences", he repeats an explanation which he accredits to Kant, and which again emphasizes the dual and potentially contradictory nature of Christianity. The Stoic, recounts De Quincey, is too ideal in his morality, allowing no room for human weakness, while the Epicurean unreasonably locates his standards among the purely sensual areas of existence. He concludes:

> Now comes Christianity, and effects a synthesis of all which is good in each, while she purifies herself from all taint of what is evil. She presents a standard of holiness...[which]...she makes accesible to man: not by any compromise or adaption of its demands to a lower nature; but by means particularly her own--by promise of supernatural aid (III, 49n.).

Thus, in both these examples, man is not required to deny the sensual parts of his being, or, in other words, the potential for duality of vision. The literal can be maintained beside the symbolic.

As I have noted in Chapter One, a further distinction of which De Quincey is particularly fond is the opposition which he repeatedly refers to between genius and talent.[18] He writes, as if exploding old myths instead of following an established tradition, that "Talent and genius are in no point allied to each other, except generically--that both express modes of intellectual power. But the kinds of power are not merely different, they are in polar opposition to one another". Talent, in this definition, aligns itself with the utilitarian or "knowledge" side of De Quincey's overall dichotomy, having to do with "the adaption of means to ends, while genius is almost the same thing as power, in that it is conversant only with ends" (I,194n.). Genius, as a reflection of the synthesis within God Himself, involves a combination of both the emotional and intellectual parts of man, while talent, though not in itself a false ability, is distorting in that it represents only a very partial view. Again, De Quincey's original addition to this general debate, that of distinguishing between the partially right and the wholly right, governs the nature of his definition:

> ...genius is a voice breathing that represents the total nature of man, and therefore his enjoying and suffering nature, as well as his knowing and distinguishing nature; whilst, on the contrary, talent represents only a single function of that nature. Genius is the language which interprets the synthesis of the human spirit with the human intellect; whilst talent speaks only for the insulated intellect (XI, 382-3). 19

For De Quincey, the patterns of opposition, which he inherits in most cases from other writers, represent a sublime struggle which has as

its goal a transcendental vision. His fictional works are based on, and seem to emerge out of, what amounts to his obsession with the sublime potential of antagonism, and its related paradoxes. Indeed, it is clear from De Quincey's wholehearted support of the dialectical structure that he delights in paradox.[20] When explicating the sublime potential of contrapuntal arrangements by showing that apparent opposites are really reconcilable, paradox is his own mode of expression. Christianity, being the supreme example of sublime potential by virtue of its combination of opposing forces, is De Quincey's favourite excuse for employing his own rhetoric of paradox, which is intended, in the first instance, to shock his readers into attention. His second paragraph of "On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement" runs thus:

> It is because Christianity works so secretly that it works so potently; it is because Christianity burrows and hides itself that it towers above the clouds; and hence partly it is that its working comes to be misapprehended, or even lost out of sight. It is dark to eyes touched with the films of human frailty: but it is 'dark with excessive bright' [footnote giving the source of this quotation as Milton] (VIII, 207).

As will be seen, light in opposition to and conflict with dark, because of its attractive potential for paradox, is a recurrent motif in De Quincey's writing, and he begins his essay "The Pagan Oracles" with just this motif:

> It is remarkable--and, without a previous explanation, it might seem paradoxical to say it--that oftentimes under a continual accesion of light important subjects grow more and more enigmatical (VII, 44). 21

To open thus with a statement of paradox, is typical of De Quincey's method of composition. De Quincey will, indeed, find paradox everywhere, and even manages to turn it to his personal use on occasions. He was, during his writing career, under continual pressures from his publishers to produce work on time. He often seems to have felt that his inability to correct and revise under these circumstances could well be detrimental to his work, but by an extension of his penchant for paradox, he manages to justify this apparent lack. "It is my misfortune," he writes, "to have been under the necessity too often of writing rapidly, and without opportunities for after-revision". But he continues:

> Not to be too much at leisure is, indeed, often an advantage. On no occasion of their lives do men generally speak better than on the scaffold, and with the executioner at their side (X, 53).

This comparison probably accurately reflects the occasional desperation De Quincey felt while attempting to fulfil his literary obligations, at least towards the end of his career, if not at the time of writing these words.[22] In like manner, and, indeed, very near the end of his life, when revision was a large part of his literary task, he still refers to "the disadvantage, but therefore...the privilege, of unpremeditated composition" (XI, 323).

But paradox, though lightly employed by De Quincey in these examples, is in fact, central to his vision. Indeed, he seems to have taken upon himself the specific task of explaining the true nature of paradox to his readers, as a part of his development of the dialectical structure. As I have said, De Quincey employs a rhetoric of surprise or paradox in order to arrest the attention of his reader, but he will shortly afterwards explore fully the nature of the paradox he has proposed. It emerges, not surprisingly, that the principle of interpreting paradox is in fact closely identified with the problem of perspective. Paradox demands the establishment of a correct perspective, that is to say a clear distinction must be drawn, as, in the case of symbolism, between the two distinct modes of apprehension. Once again the essential definition of knowledge and power is invoked, such as in the following example where De Quincey proposes and solves a further example of paradox:

> Tertullian's profession of believing things, not in spite of being impossible, but simply because they were impossible, is not the extravagance that most people suppose it. There is a deep truth in it. Many are the things which, in proportion as they attract the highest modes of belief, discover a tendency to repel belief on that part of the scale which is governed by the lower understanding (VII, 178).

Just as experiences of the sublime demand a suspension of factual enquiry, so a broader vision is required for the resolution of paradox.[23] Expectedly, De Quincey's most effective example of paradox in action, of the invaluable co-existence of the two levels of apprehension, is provided by Christianity. In a further essay on this subject entitled "Christianity as the Result of Pre-established Harmony"[24], De Quincey expands upon his other idea concerning the dual nature of the Christian God. He points out that other religions, such as Mohammedanism, are destroyed by arguments over facts concerning their belief. De Quincey admits the human predilection for wishing to dispute intellectually, but where such dispute endangers the very fabric of belief, then it is hardly valid. Christ-

ianity, however, has incorporated within itself the possibibility of dispute on one level, and an unassailable faith on another. Thus Christians can dispute intellectually upon such issues as the "doctrine of free agency" and do no harm to the central tenets of faith which simply cannot be reached by the tools of the understanding. To reinforce this point, De Quincey inserts a powerful passage which is worth quoting in full since it presents so effectively a summary of his dialectical theory of paradox and synthesis as it exists within that sublimest of all ideas, Christianity:

> But Christianity, merely by her settlements and fixing of truths, has disengaged and unfixed a world of other truths, for sustaining or for tempting an endless activity of the intellect. And the astonishing result has thus been accomplished-- that round a centre, fixed and motionless as a polar tablet of ice, there has been in the remote offing a tumbling sea of everlasting agitation. A central gravitation in the power of Christianity has drawn to one point and converged into one tendency all capital agencies in all degrees of remoteness, making them tend to rest and unity; whilst again by an antagonist action, one vast centrifugal force, measured against the other, has so modified the result as to compel the intellect of man into divergencies answering to the line of convergence; balancing the central rest for man's hopes by everlasting motion for his intellect, and the central unity for man's concience by everlasting progress for his efforts. 25

A more sustained and careful use of antithesis could hardly have been managed.

It is apparent from this impassioned statement about Christianity that this religion is not merely the highest expression of paradox resulting from opposition, but is indeed its source and final meaning for De Quincey. For him, the most fundamental paradox of all is to accept that God "give[s] by seeming to refuse" (III,454), as he expresses it in " The Daughter of Lebanon", and much of his fictional writing, as I shall show, is intended to celebrate the acceptance and sublimity of this paradox.

CHAPTER FOUR: THREE SPECIFIC MODES OF THE SUBLIME

1. Of Terror, pain and grief.

> For the sublime is an awful and serious emotion; and is heightened by all images of Trouble, and Terror, and Darkness.
>
> Blair

> Of feeling, little more can be said than that the idea of bodily pain, in all the modes and degrees of labour, pain, anguish, torment, is productive of the sublime.
>
> Burke

> Pain driven to agony, or grief driven to frenzy, is essential to the ventilation of profound natures.
>
> De Quincey

Terror, or fear, was, of course, an essential element of the sublime as proposed by Burke in his Philosophical Enquiry[1], and this element is likewise fundamental to De Quincey's conception of the sublime. In the first place, a thoroughgoing espousal of all the conflicting forces of the world, is, as I have indicated, a necessary condition of De Quincey's antithetical vision. A need to explore the darker areas of his mind was presumably provoked by the action of opium upon his dreaming capacity, which produced on some occasions visions of religious joy, but on others visions of almost unbearable terror. He writes that " the world of sleep and the anarchy of dreams figur[es][2] the dark worlds of sin and death" (VII, III) and on many other occasions his experience of the sublime is expressed in images drawn from these dark worlds.

Burke discussed the power of terror to move the mind, and concluded that such power determined an experience of sublimity. De Quincey certainly recognized the moving effect derived from situations of terror, and indeed his own fascination with the subject of murder must derive from his response to such a power. A specific point in De Quincey's criticism of Addison is that the earlier writer was incapable of appreciating "the sublimities of earthly misery and of human frenzy" (XI,24). Addison, belonging to the time of Queen Anne, was crippled by "extreme artificiality, [the] sheepish reserve upon all impassioned grandeurs"

(XI, 21) then prevalent, so that terror could not move him towards sublime experience. The power of terror as a moving force is important to De Quincey, but it is necessary to be aware that terror, along with such related concepts as pain and grief, is thoroughly justified by him on philosophical and religious grounds. Being an intuitive rather than an analytic critic, and being a writer of impassioned prose[3], De Quincey bases his theory of power upon the extent to which the emotions are called into play, but he also makes an attempt to explain the effect of terror and grief through an examination of his own past, and reflection upon the quality of human nature in general.

To a large extent, indeed, De Quincey's autobiographical writing can be seen as an attempt to understand and integrate the pain of existence with its pleasures, to find some justification, within his Christian scheme, for the suffering which he himself underwent, and which he observed as occuring all around him. De Quincey writes of man's "original capacity of pleasure and pain", (III, 34n.) and, indeed, defines "genius" as possessing "the capacities of pleasure and pain" (XI, 382).[4] He describes how his own capacity for pain was developed at an early age, and while opium later had a powerful effect upon the terrific nature of his dreams, he felt that his tendency to dream was in the first place provoked by the vicissitudes of his early life. He wrote in the original version of the "Afflictions of Childhood" that "The nursery experience had been the ally and the natural coefficient of the opium"[5], and his early experience of suffering determined the dual vision he was to develop throughout his writing. In typically paradoxical fashion, De Quincey examines in "The Afflictions of Childhood" the intuition he had at the time of the death of his sister that "Life is finished! Finished it is!" (I, 29), and he wonders how this could really be true of someone so young who has so many valuable experiences ahead of him. The answer to the problem essentially consists of an account of existence very similar to Blake's conditions of Innocence and Experience. De Quincey's early experience of death brings him firmly into the world of experience, so that "The peace, the rest, the central security which belong to love that is past all understanding--these could return no more" (I, 29).[6] He thus enters the finite world, where love no longer passes understanding, and where visions of infinity are at best intermittent; but, like Blake, De Quincey

entirely accepts the conditions of his new world.

De Quincey's continuing attempt to reach and describe sublime experience is determined by the sense of loss he has experienced, but, since he lives in the finite world, these experiences depend upon the conflict of good and evil, of sorrow and pleasure. Raptures are certainly ahead of him, "but raptures are modes of troubled pleasure" (I, 29), and are a necessary combination of conflicting elements. De Quincey describes the duality in the following way, in the short section entitled "The Vision of Life" from the Suspiria De Profundis:

> ....if the reader has (which so few have) the passion without which there is no reading of the legend and the superscription upon man's brow, if he is not (as most are) deafer than the grave to every deep note that sighs upwards from the Delphic caves of human life, he will know that the rapture of life (or anything which by approach can merit that name) does not arise, unless as perfect music arises, music of Mozart or Beethoven, by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtile concords (XIII, 350).

From such mixture evolves the capacity for sublime experience. "Without a basis of the dreadful", De Quincey repeats, "there is no perfect rapture. It is in part through the sorrow of life, growing out of dark events, that this basis of awe and solemn darkness slowly accumulates" (XIII, 351). The image of sighs emerging from the Delphic cave of human life is of course the origin of the Suspiria themselves, sighs always emanating from the painfulness of existence. In one place, De Quincey explains the physical origin of the actual sighs with which he is afflicted and which arise mechanically from pains of the liver,[7] so that his spiritual affliction actually expresses itself through a literal counterpart. Such "sighs" recurred repeatedly to De Quincey, since his whole life experience and reaction to that experience, is determined by his sense of joy and sorrow being inextricably woven together:

> Greater changes summon to greater meditations. Daily we see the most joyous events take a colouring of solemnity from the mere relation in which thay stand to an uncertain future: the birth of a child, heir to the greatest expectations, and welcomed clamorously by the sympathy of myriads, speaks to the more reflecting in an undertone of monitory sadness.[8]

The opening of the Suspiria describes De Quincey's realization that he could not for a third time withdraw from the use of opium, and he concludes, "One profound sigh ascended from my heart, and I was silent for days" (XIII, 338). As on the occasion of his sister's death,

De Quincey describes this moment in terms of gates closing behind him, and of life being, in one sense at least, over. This fundamental kind of experience gives impetus to much of his creative writing, which involves an examination of the meaning of pain and horror, or the implication of these sighs. The vision of the woman and her daughter in the "Memorial Suspiria" (XIII, 352), "Savannah La Mar" (XIII, 359), which is a religious revelation of the meaning of suffering "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" (XIII, 362) and The English Mail-Coach, all have this theme in common. The Confessions itself has the long "Introductory Narration" balanced by the two shorter sections "The Pleasures of Opium" and the "Pains of Opium", and thus provides a literary paradigm for De Quincey's view of the dual nature of existence. The repeated use of images of terror, pain or horror in these creative works will be examined in part II of this thesis.

De Quincey's philosophy of pain and suffering naturally finds its ultimate justification within his religious vision. Because God has nothing of the finite or the present moment about him, His purposes are often obscure to men who concentrate upon the present moment. Suffering, according to the familiar argument, can thus be justified by reference to some ultimate purpose, a purpose which gives spiritual meaning to De Quincey's own sighs:

> The future is the present of God, and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human present. Therefore it is that he works by earthquake. Therefore it is that he works by grief...Upon a night of earthquake he builds a thousand years of pleasant habitation of man. Upon the sorrow of an infant he raises oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages that could not else have been (XIII, 361). 9

Such a justification provides the background to De Quincey's discussion of pain, but moreimportant as far as his own work is concerned is his defence of pain as a necessary prerequisite to creation. It has already been observed that his childhood sufferings helped to expand his dreaming capacity, and thereby his capacity for symbolic revelation. In his "Preface" to Volume VIII of his own edition of his works, De Quincey again evokes the paradox that pressure to write against a deadline has a stimulating effect upon the imagination—"though painful and exhausting, [such a struggle] has the effect of suddenly unlocking cells in the brain, and revealing evanescent gleams of original feeling". He concludes that "Pain, and conflicts with suffering, are ministrati-

ons of development to the human intellect, even in the youngest infants, much more frequently than is commonly observed" (VII, 6). In another place he declares that "Suffering is a mightier agency in the hands of nature, as a Demiurgus creating the intellect, than most people are aware of"[10], and for this reason he gives a very full account of his own personal sufferings both in his Autobiography and in the Confessions. In the case of the grief which attended the death of his sister, described in the "Affliction of Childhood", De Quincey again celebrates it as a passion which can both humble and exalt[11], a duality which naturally attends a potentially sublime experience. In this specific instance, De Quincey discovers that grief provides him with moral fortitude which he often accuses himself of lacking.[12]

Such was the moral strength which De Quincey derived from experiences of the unpleasant areas of existence; but he also describes grief as being a creative power in ways which directly effect his own potential as a writer of sublime experience. He continues in the following way, having observed the moral strength which had arisen from his grief:

> At this time, and under this impulse of rapacious grief that grasped at what it could not obtain, the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of the heart, grew upon me in morbid excess. And I recall at the present moment one instance of that sort, which may show how merely shadows, or a gleam of brightness, or nothing at all, could furnish a sufficent basis for this creative faculty (I, 46).

Then follows the two pages of impassioned prose which conclude "The Affliction of Childhood", and which consist of a brilliant evocation of the group of images seen through a church window by a child in the throes of grief. With the aid of the music of the organ, De Quincey merges his images to produce a transcendence of the grief which gave them cause, and builds the passage towards a revelations concerning the final meanings of existence.[13]

The creative process here is in fact close to that afforded by dreaming, where images gather from waking life group together to produce an entirely new meaning.[14] But, like experiences drawn from life, the dream experience for De Quincey is suffused with images of horror. The dreamworld, that centrally important motif of De Quincey's creative

fiction, is not only important for the access it provides to the shadowy areas of the sublime, but also for a revelation of the "dark worlds" of horror which emerge from the subconscious when one is sleeping. As I quote more fully in the next section, the value of the effect of opium upon De Quincey's dreaming power was not only that it made the colours of his dreamscenery more vivid but also that it strengthened "the sense of its fearful realities" (XIII, 335). He writes of such a tendency towards nightmare in the following way:

> I seemed every night to descend—not metaphorically, but literally to descend—into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I should ever re-ascend. Nor did I by waking feel that I had re-ascended. Why should I dwell on this? For indeed the state of gloom which attended these gorgeous spectacles, amounting at last to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency cannot be approached by words (III, 435). 15

The quality of nightmare is indeed the dominant effect of many of De Quincey's most creative pieces, the most remarkable example perhaps being the "Vision of Sudden Death" from The English Mail-Coach, which is prefaced by the following remark upon dreaming:

> But the dream-horror which I speak of is far more frightful... These are horrors from the kingdom of anarchy and darkness, which, by the very intensity, challenge the sanctity of concealment, and gloomily retire from exposition (XIII, 292n.).

Likewise, the moment of realization that he could not turn away from the "dark idol" opium, is expressed through images drawn from just such a nightmare:

> I saw, through vast avenues of gloom, those towering gates of ingress which hitherto had always seemed to stand open now at last barred against my retreat, and hung with funeral crape. (XIII, 337)

Thus, too, the image of Asia, which came to De Quincey in the form of a Malay who unexpectedly visited his door,[16] is particularly invested with terror for De Quincey. It is because of this terror, in combination with other potentially sublime attributes of that continent,[17] that the Malay becomes a nightmare, "the unimaginable horror" (III,442) of his dreams. It is indeed the terror of certain experiences on the mail-coach which initially provide the impetus towards the creation of an essay on that subject.

Certainly, the dreaming faculty is creative,[18] but an essential

element of the created images is terror, a terror which, having been produced from images of waking life, pass through the dream stage, and actually have a further effect upon waking life. De Quincey explains that:

> these [his dreams] were the immediate and proximate cause of shadowy terror that settled and brooded over my whole waking life (III, 434).

Thus, in this solipsistic situation, horror in life stimulates the dreaming faculty into action, and this, in turn, produces the more "shadowy terrors" just refered to:

> But a movement of horror, and of spontaneous recoil from this dreadful scene [the near accident in the Mail-Coach] naturally carried the whole scene, raised and idealized, into my dreams, and very soon into a rolling succession of dreams (XIII, 329).

Horror can thereby provide the natural symbolizing or abstracting effect usually associated with vagueness or indistinctness, as I describe in the next section. The tangible creative product of the dreaming faculty together with its horrific and painful associations are examined in later chapters, and for the present it is sufficient to observe the total interfusion of the ideas of pain and terror through both De Quincey's waking life and sleeping experience, together with their potential as forces creative of the sublime.

Just as terror, or pain, can give a greater depth or meaning to an experience, can create the sublimity within such an experience, so De Quincey finds this property to be valuable as a presence in nature. Although he only infrequently refers specifically to natural phenomena, certainly by comparison with Wordsworth,[19] the description De Quincey gives of the "sublime cluster of mountain groups" (III, 282) in the Lake District, stresses the potential for terror to be found in this area. Indeed he asserts that the peculiar form of pastoral life found in Wastdale-head and Borrowdale is

> so much nobler (as Wordsworth notices) in its stern simplicity and continual conflict with danger hidden in the vast draperies of mist overshadowing the hills, and amongst the armies of snow and hail arrayed by fierce northern winters, than the effeminate shepherd's life in the classical Arcadia, or in flowery pastures of Sicily (III, 283).

Potential terror in such a landscape is the fascination here, and of course, this terror largely depends upon the "vast draperies of mist", and the general sense of obscurity surrounding this area.

But perhaps the best expression of De Quincey's double sublime, a sublime split between joy and horror, are the two specific images he provides in the "System of the Heavens". Here, side by side as pendants to one another, he sets the two most sublime images of his experience. The first is the sculptural head of Memnon, imported from Egypt, and which, apart from the intimations of infinity with which the figure fills him , also presents De Quincey with the "peace which passeth all understanding" and with "diffusive love" (VIII, 17). The second image, but equally sublime for De Quincey, is the terrible face he imagines represented in the Herschel drawing of the nebula in Orion. The following excerpts from the description of the nebula show the purely nightmare qualities of this particular image of sublimity:

> You see a head thrown back, and raising its face (or eyes, if eyes it had) in the very anguish of hatred....Brutalities unspeakable sit upon the upper lip....But the lower lip, which is drawn inward with the curve of a marine shell—oh, what a convolute of cruelty and revenge is <u>there</u>! (VIII, 19-20)

Such a juxtaposition of the two kinds of sublimity is typical of De Quincey's method, and it will often be recognized in later discussions of his imaginative writing. The sublimity of horror provides a particular attraction for De Quincey and provides a central theme for much of his work, and lays the basis for his taste for the gothic in general.[20] As perhaps can be predicted from knowledge of his dialectical theory, De Quincey's experience of the sublime thus involves a conflict or a stress of opposing forces. Innocence is threatened by pain and horror, and at first, as in Kant's description of sublime experience, De Quincey feels himself deeply distressed and perhaps defeated by these powers. But like Kant, too, De Quincey's ultimate transcendence of his nightmare gives way to an even more powerful sense of revelation.[21]

2. <u>Of the obscure</u>.

> To make anything very terrible, <u>obscurity</u> seems to be necessasary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of apprehension vanishes.
>
> Burke

> Clarity is all right for convincing: it is of no use for moving. Clarity of whatever kind damages enthusiasm. Poets, speak incessantly of eternity, infinitude, immensity, time, space, divinity.... Be dark!
>
> Diderot

> ....by how much more the shadowy—the uncertain—the infinite—is at all times more potent in mastering the mind than a danger that is known—measurable—palpable—and human.
>
> De Quincey

It will be remembered that the root of De Quincey's analysis of symbolism develops from his conception of Christianity, in its early days, being forced to "mean mysteriously" because of contemporary persecution. For De Quincey, to represent many things by only one, to convey an infinity of ideas through a single, mysterious symbol, is a conception which is, in itself, sublime. To exist and function in a state of darkness or obscurity, perhaps by means of such symbolism, is, according to him, the very epitome of sublimity itself.[22] The point is important, since such a use pervades De Quincey's theoretical writing, determines his taste to a very large extent, and provides a valuable clue to the nature of his creative fiction. The following passage from an essay entitled "Secret Societies" makes it clear that De Quincey's conception of the meaning of obscurity is essential to his definition of what is sublime:

> Generally speaking, a child may not—but every adult will, and must, if at all by nature meditative—regard with a feeling higher than vulgar curiosity small fraternities of men forming themselves as separate and inner vortices within the great vortex of society; communicating silently in broad daylight by signals not even seen, or if seen, not understood except among themselves; and connected by the link either of purposes not safe to be avowed or by the grander link of awful truths which, merely to shelter themselves from the hostility of an age unprepared for their reception, are forced to retire, possibly for generations, behind thick curtains of secrecy. To be hidden amidst crowds is sublime; to come down hidden amongst crowds from distant generations is doubly sublime (VII, 173).

Such is De Quincey's view of Christianity itself, and quite apart from the other sublime aspects of this religion, its birth in secrecy and obscurity provides a powerful image of sublimity.[23] It is almost as if the evolution of Christianity from such sources determines the wealth of paradox and obscure meanings which are to be discovered within it. De Quincey's account of sin, as one essential aspect of Christianity, is, for example, weighted with implications of the power of impenetrable mystery. Sin is "that secret word", an obscure idea, the "only thing originally shadowy and in a terrific sense mysterious", which somehow infiltrates the mind of the Christian child and invests it with an "atmosphere of sublimity".[24] While it is not entirely clear why sin should be "the only thing originally shadowy", the terms of De Quincey's response to the idea are typical.

De Quincey's symbolic vision demands always a revelation of an ideal world, or a world of abstract forms, which can only be perceived when the mind is uncluttered by the finite images of the physical world. Junius "lingered forever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons" (X, 119), but to transcend such a vision, and to perceive a higher reality, is expressed in De Quincey's terms by the paradox of entering or embracing obscurity. It is not surprising that he should stress the paradoxical implications of such a process, since no experience can be sublime for him unless he is aware of such a paradox. Thus because the geographical facts concerning the location of Paradise are not known, and because the historical truths of such a time cannot be discovered, these ideas in their obscurity become "shadowy powers" (VII, 434)[25]. De Quincey's account of the Christian God in "Pagan Oracles' firmly establishes the power of this figure as dependent upon His essential obscurity, while,on the other hand, "a religion like the pagan, [is] so deplorably meagre and starved as to most of the draperies connected with the mysterious and the sublime..." (VII, 77). As a part of De Quincey's religious belief, such obscurity of certain aspects of the truth is absolutely essential, for by means of another paradox resolved, he turns ignorance about Christian history into an important spiritual power. He writes in "The Essences" of the obscurity of the early years of Christianity:

> And for much of this darkness, we must confess that it is now past all human power of illumination. Nay, perhaps it belongs to the very sanctity of the struggle in which powers more than human were working concurrently with man that it should be lost like much of our earliest antediluvian history in a mysterious gloom, and for the same reason--viz. that, when man stands too near the super-sensual world and is too palpably co-agent with the schemes of Providence, there would arise, upon the total view and the whole plan of execution, were it all circumstantially laid below our eyes, too compulsory an evidence of a supersensual agency (VII, 105).

Thus, De Quincey argues, to be without such a measure of obscurity, such an ignorance concerning the roots of Christianity, faith would no longer be a matter of free choice, but one of inevitability and one involving no moral capacity.[26]

As an element within his spiritual scheme, obscurity is thus essential both to a faith involving moral choice and to the feeling of

sublimity which arises during the contemplation of the secret origins of Christianity. Obscurity, however, has a wider significance for De Quincey's writing, and is indeed, the primary element of his view of symbolism, and the basis, thereby, of his own poetical vision. As previously mentioned, the symbolic potential of the visible world lies, for De Quincey, in the fact that "our own mysterious tendencies are written heiroglyphically" (II, 402) there, and that he relies for the revelation of truth upon a vague intuition of the infinite meanings or "secret readings" which might lie in the natural landscape or in the face of a martyr.[27] The interpretation of the obscure, or the reading of hidden meanings in the signs of the visible world is what De Quincey calls "the dark sublime" (I, 130). The term is significant because De Quincey specifically distinguishes this form of sublimity from the moral sublime, as, in the paper "On Milton", he distinguishes a third kind, the "ethico-physical sublime".[28] He uses the expression "dark sublime" in his chapter "Infant Literature" from the Autobiography, and in this place he discusses the effect upon himself of the story "Aladdin". As with the "Macbeth" essay which I shall look at in the next chapter, De Quincey opens his account with a statement of perplexity, because, as a child,he found the story of Aladdin altogether trivial in itself, and yet recognised a sense of great power in one of its incidents. He writes, "The sublimity which it involved was mysterious and unfathomable, as regarded any key which I possessed for deciphering its law or origin" (I, 128), and goes on to describe the incident of the magician's capacity for distinguishing Aladdin's footsteps from all the other sounds of the earth. To read into this sound "an alphabet of new and infinite symbols", to comprehend the "secret hieroglyphics" is, in itself, an act of "dark sublimity" (I, 129). De Quincey concludes his analysis with the statement that "the least things in the universe must be secret mirrors to the greatest" (I,129). It is the shroud of mystery attached to such a conception, as much as the ability to penetrate the mystery, which is, for De Quincey, sublime.

The powerful effect which a landscape transfigured by mists can make upon him is thus caused largely because of its pure obscurity. He describes in the following way an appearance in a landscape which he says he will never forget:

> The effect arose from the position of the sun and of the spectator, taken in connexion with a pendulous mass of vapour, in which, however, were many rents and openings, and through them far below, at an abyss-like depth, was seen the gloomy valley, its rare cottages and "unrejoicing" fir trees. I had beheld the scene many times before; I was familiar with its least important features, but now it was absolutely transfigured, it was seen under lights and mighty shadows that made it no less marvellous to the eye than that memorable creation amongst the clouds of azure sky, which is described by the Solitary in "The Excursion".29

Likewise, in the essay entitled "Modern Greece", De Quincey specifies his general taste in scenery which has a strong Gothic flavour to it:

> For ourselves, the obscure sense of being or moving under a vast superincumbency of some great natural power, as of a mighty forest or a trackless succession of mountainous labyrinths, has a charm of secret force far better than any distinct scenes to which we are introduced (VIII, 365).

The qualities of infinitude produced by the obscurity of such a natural scene, is, as will be discussed shortly, an important aspect of De Quincey's response to this kind of scenery. In this same context, De Quincey makes the distinction between what he calls "the knowledge and the power of the scenery hunter" (VIII, 364), the powerful, of course, being his own taste quoted above, while "knowledge" scenery is the picuresque or the local.

The process of abstraction which is involved in the symbolic mode of perception is naturally linked by De Quincey with ideas of obscurity, and, indeed, usually depends upon a state of obscurity. The discussion of the lack of specific knowledge concerning the location of Paradise stresses the value of the inherent mystery which now surrounds such facts. Indeed, the central process of symbolizing is expressed by the creation of this very mystery, since "base sensual signs" cannot achieve the "state of great ideas—mysterious as spirituality is mysterious" (VII, 434). In other words, the process of symbolism or abstraction are attractive to De Quincey by very reason of their obscurity, by their appeal to the undefined areas of the imagination. In the Confessions, De Quincey describes in practical terms, by reference to a particular experience, the way in which his symbolic vision actually works. He tells of a visit to a concert when under the influence of opium:

> ....it is sufficent to say that a chorus, &c., of elaborate harmony displayed before me, as in a piece of arraswork, the whole of my past life—not as if recalled by an act of memory, but as

> if present and incarnated in the music; no longer painful to dwell upon, but the detail of its incidents removed, or blended in some hazy abstraction, and its passions exalted, spiritualized, and sublimed (III, 391).

The use of the word sublime in this context should be particularly noted, since the very act of moving towards symbolic representation is considered as such by De Quincey. In terms of the dual mode of perception discussed in chapter two, such a statement represents De Quincey's continuing attempt to differentiate the particular from the general, and it can be seen that the "general" here implies an absence of literal clarity. The "hazy abstraction" of De Quincey's experience is fundamentally the same effect as he obtains from the contemplation of early Christian activity, for in both cases a sense of power or sublimity emerges from his awareness of obscurity.[30] Thus perception, for De Quincey, can be "dim but elevating" (VII, 300), a paradox which again reflects the grand idea emerging because of the lack of specific information.[31] Likewise, in his discussion of the idem in alio, De Quincey insists that the reason why the waxwork disgusts as a work of art is because its reproduction depends upon literal detail, whereas these should have been "softened under a general diffusive impression".[32]

Abstractions are, in their very nature, obscure, and it is for this reason that De Quincey attributes to them an inherent sublimity. He writes:

> With respect to the sheild of Achilles, it cannot be denied that the general conception has, in common with all abstractions (as e.g. the abstractions of dreams, of prophetic visions, such as that in the 6th Aeneid, that to Macbeth, that shown by the angel Michael to Adam) something fine, and, in its own nature, let the execution be what it may, sublime (X, 310n.).

Again, sublimity is recognized by De Quincey as lying in the province of abstraction, and does not depend upon how this abstraction is rendered. It is essential for an understanding of De Quincey's use of opium, to realize the great value he attaches to its abstracting qualities, to the veil which this stimulant throws over one level of perception, only to reveal a greater clarity in another. The effects of opium, in fact, reflect De Quincey's whole structure of paradox and the two levels of perception, and provide, in his own consciousness, an extra capacity

for reaching the grand idea, for intuiting the meanings behind the mysterious appearances of the world. Opium must certainly be seen as at least a partial key to De Quincey's continuing pursuit of the symbol, since it undoubtedly developed his own natural capacity for symbolizing. As well as altering his vision of the world in this way, De Quincey sees opium as effecting a basic change in his nature, when he writes of the opium-eater in general that "the diviner part of his nature is paramount—that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity—" (III, 384). Under these circumstances, a consequent alteration in vision is not surprising.

Opium might, for De Quincey, produce a sense of abstraction in his waking life, when a symbolic revelation will transcend the particular moment, as in the example given above, or it might have the effect upon his dreams, which he writes about so often.[33] De Quincey calls opium an "unknown shadowy power" (III, 416) because of its capacity for producing unknown, shadowy effects, particularily within the dream experience. In the Suspiria he discusses at length the dreaming faculty, and states the direct relationship between his opium-taking and the quality of his dreams. Having mentioned some physical agencies which may effect the power of dreams, he goes on:

> ....but beyond all others is opium: which indeed seems to possess a specific power in that direction; not merely for exalting the colours of dream-scenery, but for deepening the sense of its fearful realities (XIII, 335).

And in turn, dreaming is described as being "That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy".[34] Thus dreaming, like the concept of infinity itself, which is discussed in the following section, eludes comprehension on the normal level, baffles the logical mind. The sublimity of the opium dreams, for De Quincey, is at least partially attributable to the experience of ungraspable infinity which the dream evokes. He continues the above passage in the following way:

> And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, composes the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of that mysterious camera obscura—the sleeping mind. (XIII, 335) 34

Thus dreaming provides some kind of direct access to the worlds of obscurity which are such an essential part of De Quincey's sublime vision. It is no wonder, then, that dreaming should have become such a key idea in De Quincey's creative process and such a central device of his fiction. In the "Recollections of Charles Lamb", De Quincey claims that to give an account of the dreams which he had experienced was the most important purpose of the Confessions,[36] and in the introduction to the Suspiria he makes the link between that work and the Confessions even more specific:

> The Opium Confessions were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself (VIII, 335).

De Quincey's intention when writing the Confessions do seem to have changed with time, but his revised "Preface" to the 1856 edition also stresses the importance of the dreaming faculty, though here the emphasis is slightly more upon the opium effect:

> —and therefore I beg to say here, in closing my Original Preface, a little remodeled, that what I contemplated in these Confessions was to emblazon disease and pain, but over the grander and more shadowy world of dreams (III, 215).

In words very close to those used by Wordsworth,[37] De Quincey elsewhere talks of "that softening and spiritualizing haze which belongs at any rate to the action of dreams" (I, 51), and it is clear that the action of opium upon his dreams provides De Quincey with a ready-made symbolism, or a means of reaching the world of grand ideas. Dreaming produces the "haze" or vagueness requisite to exclude irrelevant and transitory details, so that the correct perspective upon the subject is readily achieved.

Insofar as De Quincey's attraction for obscurity can explain, to a degree, his symbolic method, it is meaningful on a broad plane. And it is true that De Quincey's choice of sublime subjects depend largely upon their inherent secrecy and lack of immediate clarity, so that an understanding of this fact aids a general reading of his work. However, the almost fanatical pursuit of the obscure does somewhat recall De Quincey's own condemnation of Kant's works, and their popularity in Germany. He writes:

> ...for, even among those who have expressly commented on this philosophy [Kant's], not one of the many hundreds who I have myself read but has retracted from every attempt to explain its dark places. In these dark places lies, indeed, the secret of its attraction. Were light poured into them, it would be seen that they are culs-de-sac, passages that lead to nothing; but, so long as they continue dark, it is not known whither they lead, how far, in what direction, and whether, in fact, they may not issue into paths connected directly with the positive and the infinite (II, 87).

Certainly, as far as De Quincey is concerned, that which is obscure is immediately evocative of the infinite, and the sublimities associated with this concept.

3. Of infinity.

> The ideas of eternity and infinity, are among the most affecting we have, and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little.
>
> Burke

> But the infinite is absolutely (not merely comparatively) great. In comparison with this all else (in the way of magnitudes of the same order) is small. But the point of capital importance is that the mere ability even to think it as a whole indicates a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense.
>
> Kant

> If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.
>
> Blake

De Quincey writes in his "Notes for 'Suspiria'":

> Turn a screw, tighten a linch-pin—which is notto disease, but perhaps to exalt, the mighty machinery of the brain—and the Infinities appear, before which the tranquillity of man unsettles, the gracious forms of life depart, and the ghostly enters. So profoundly is this true that oftentimes I have said of my own tremendous experience in this region...—that death, considered as an entrance to this ghostly world, is but a postern-gate by comparison with the heaven-aspiring vestibule through which this world of the Infinite introduces the ghostly world.[38]

The concept of infinity has often either been implied or alluded to throughout previous sections, and as a conclusion to the foregoing general account of De Quincey's understanding and use of sublime effects, these various references should be tied together more coherently, and linked with any other important uses of the idea. As I mentioned in the

first chapter, the concept of infinity is naturally an essential part of De Quincey's religious vision, and one which certainly, as J. Hillis Miller observes, produces an enormous sense of terror, or, to use De Quincey's own words, unsettles the tranquillity of man. However, this terror is not, as I have noticed, a purely destructive element, and one from which De Quincey would seek to flee. I have shown, rather, that pain and terror are accepted, and indeed welcomed by De Quincey, as a part of a total view of existence, and as an essential element in a final sublime effect. His continuing goal, which is reflected in his imaginative as well as journalistic work, is that of describing and reaching the vision of infinity which has at various times been present to his nonrational mind. The implications of De Quincey's pagan/Christian opposition lead to his belief that the modern or Christian period is great in so far as it does indeed possess particular access to the notion of infinity. His image of man's spiritual striving both upwards and downwards, his exploration through all dimensions, which I quoted from "System of the Heavens" in the first chapter, is repeated in the following celebration of the modern period:

> But we do contend....that the tendencies of this generation are to the profound; that by all its natural leanings, and even by its infirmities, it travels upwards on the line of aspiration and downwards in the direction of the unfathomable. 39

De Quincey here extends the pagan/Christian antithesis to include his contemporary generation, and he attributes this new capacity to the calm period of meditation which succeded the turmoil of the French Revolution. This calm period is essentially analogous to the experience of revelation which succeeds De Quincey's own sublime climaxes.

At times, it is true, De Quincey speaks of the subject of infinity as if it were one he would avoid, as during one analysis of his dreams, which were plagued by horrific images derived from his associations with Asia.[40] Here, in the Confessions, he writes of a "killing sense of eternity and infinity" with which his dream-forms were imbued, but ultimately dreams, however horrific, are welcomed as a creative force by De Quincey. In the "System of the Heavens", De Quincey in fact undertakes a defence of the apprehension of infinity, and despite his whimsical opening to this sublime subject,[41] he progresses towards a

serious statement on the matter. After a good deal of factual material relating to astronomy,[42] he concludes the essay with a short piece adapted from Richter, entitled "Dream Vision of the Infinite as it reveals itself in the Chambers of Space". In this flight of imagination, De Quincey again states the duality of man's response. "For the spirit of man aches under this infinity," he writes, "Insupportable is the glory of God's house" (VIII, 34).

The occasion of this essay was De Quincey's experience of the telescope recently brought into use by Lord Rosse, and which was revolutionary at that time in terms of its capacities to penetrate space. From the image of the vast new dimensions of space revealed by the telescope, De Quincey reflects upon the meaning of infinity to man. His representation of Lord Rosse as a Neptune figure who can remove the barriers to infinity, is specifically religious in its expression. De Quincey imagines Rosse saying "Roll back, ye barriers, and no longer hide from us the infinities of God!" (VIII, 17), and himself assents to this exploration of the infinite dimensions of space. De Quincey feels both that God is approached by such a means and that the full potential of man's own soul is recognised through such a contemplation. As I quoted in the first chapter, De Quincey sees the revelation of infinity as a part of man's growth, and he interprets the vastnesses of the physical dimensions as symbolic of an inner reality:

> ...the depths and heights which are in man, the depths by which he searches, the heights by which he aspires, are but projected and made objective externally in the three dimensions of space which are outside of him (VIII, 15).

Again, in correspondence with the theory of the two stages of sublime experience, the observable universe is seen by De Quincey as a means to an end or simply an expression or representation of that end, which is spiritual revelation.[43] De Quincey's objections to the Kantian philosophy in his Autobiography rests largely on the fact that he finds the writings of the German author to contain no appeal to this quality of infinity in man's mind. [44] It is only because no-one really understands the nature of Kant's work that it is still read, for, he argues:

> no popular interests can long be sustained by speculations which, in every aspect, are known to be essentially negative and essentially finite. Man's nature has something of infinity within

> itself, which requires a corresponding infinity in its objects. (II, 87) 45

The tremendous effect which King Lear has upon De Quincey results, at least partly, from such an awareness. "When I am thus startled into a feeling of the infinity of the world within me," he writes, "is this power, or what may I call it?" (X, 49). The sense of infinity here has been brought about by the "sublime antagonism" represented in the play when "two worlds of storm are brought face to face". De Quincey is in fact describing that commonly recognised but difficult to define sense that a certain work of art somehow says everything there is to say; and at the same time he is responding to a feeling of his own human potential, which, again, is a commonly experienced function of a work of art. He is, to use his own words again, responding to the powerful emotion provoked in him by the hint of infinite possibility. Power, as De Quincey suggests, is the recognition of infinite possibility, while the world of knowledge is forever tied to the finite, and "can never, in the least degree, partake of the illimitable" (XI, 219n.).

De Quincey's account of genius, already alluded to in the last chapter, is directly connected with this sense of the illimitable and represents another form of his attack upon the "one-sided" man. He writes that "genius is a voice of breathing that represents the total nature of man" (XI, 382), and his criticism of Lamb states that this writer cannot be considered as a genius because "his range was a contracted one" (III, 47). The idea of genius is thus used by De Quincey as another image of infinity, and correspondingly implies the kind of excess which is associated with all his own experiences of the meaning of infinity. Walking Stewart, a character who gives his name to one of De Quincey's essays, typifies this notion of genius as the excess of infinity. Stewart, the great traveller and prodigious writer, is described as a "sublime visionary" and "a man of genius...his mind was a mirror of the sentient universe—the whole mighty vision that had fleeted before his eyes in this world" (III, 115). De Quincey writes further that Stewart is a species of madman, where "the animal spirits are exuberant and in excess". He is, in fact, a living embodiment of the mighty exaggerations and extravagances which are associated with De Quincey's various

dream-visions of infinity, some of which I shall shortly mention. "All genius implies originality..uncontrollable singularity" (XI, 351),[46] he writes in an essay on Hazlitt, and thus clearly defines his own penchant for the infinity of excess. Enormity, vastness and intangibility determine De Quincey's taste for men, for nature and for literature, because, to use Kant's expression, they produce an outrage of the imagination, which is the first stage of the sublime.[47] Certainly his own style, rambling and full of impassioned exaggeration,[48] reflects this tendency, and the following quotation concerning climactic conditions well illustrates his taste for the excess which is associated with the sublime:

> It is certain that, in England, and in all moderate climates, we are too slightly reminded of nature or the focus of nature. Great heats or great colds (and in Canada there are both), or great hurricanes, as in the West Indian latitudes, recall us continually to the sense of a powerful presence investing our paths on every side; whereas, in England it is possible to forget that we live amongst greater agencies than those of men and human aspirations. 49

The faculty of dreaming, already noted for its important role in the growth of De Quincey's symbolic vision, is also valued by him, in combination with opium, for providing a ready access to a sense of sublime infinity such as he experiences in watching King Lear. As I have quoted before, he wrote that "the dreaming organ , in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, composes the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of the human brain" (XIII, 335), and certainly as far as he has committed his experiences to writing, it is clear that the combination of opium and dreaming was more productive of a sense of the infinite for De Quincey than his encounters with the sublime in nature. The effect of opium upon his dreams was to annihilate all sense of normal perspective, and the almost obsessive recurrence of images of vastness or infinity in De Quincey's work can be attributed to his dream experience.[50] He writes:

> The sense of space, and in the end the sense of time were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes &c., were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity....(III, 435).

De Quincey himself provides an analogy to his experience of infinite

space with a description of some prints by Piranesi which he had seen, fittingly enough, in the company of Coleridge. De Quincey describes the endless architecture of these Piranesi works, and says that "With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams" (III, 439). It is just this architectural infinity which provides the central motif in De Quincey's loose translation from Richter, entitled "Dream Vision of the Infinite", to which I have just referred:

> To the right hand and to the left towered mighty constellations, that by self-repetitions and by answers from afar...built up triumphal gates, whose architraves, whose archways—horizontal, upright—rested, rose, at altitudes, by spans, that seemed ghostly from infinitude. Without measure were the architraves, past number were the archways, beyond memory the gates. Within were stairs that scaled the eternities above, that descended the eternities below (VIII, 34).

De Quincey's most powerful images tend to build upon this endless multiplication of forms in time or space, and he always associates sublime feelings with the contemplation of such infinity, where he, as an individual, dwindles to insignificance, like his own description of the figure in the Piranesi pictures. It is the sheer numbers of people associated with the region of "South-eastern Asia" and the size of the empires in that part of the world which arrests De Quincey's imagination:

> The vast empires, also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all oriental names or images (III, 442).

His reaction to London on first entering that city and his inital sense of his own insignificance depends upon "this blind sympathy with a mighty but unseen object" (I, 180) and the images of infinity associated with the vast sea of faces encountered in that place (I, 182). Thus, too in the Confessions, London becomes a symbol of infinity, as he writes, "But now rose London—sole, dark, infinite—brooding over the whole capacities of my heart" (III, 346).[51] The streets of London themselves provide De Quincey with a tangible experience of this infinity, as he walks through them under the influence of opium:

> I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphinx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney-coachmen (III, 393).

This, like his other forms of infinity, was to remain with De Quincey always, and help to produce the often terrifying images of his dreams—"For all this, however, I paid a heavy price in distant years...the perplexities of my steps in London came back and haunted my sleep, with the feeling of perplexities moral or intellectual" (III, 393-4). The symbolic potential of such powerful images of infinity is clearly indicated by De Quincey in this statement.

Thus, although outer space is the obvious symbol for such a sense of infinitude De Quincey uses architectural images to convey more clearly the notion of unending dimension. The desert is also refered to as having a similar power, since the desert, like open space, repeated architectural forms or the streets of London, has no distinct markings to evoke any sense of the finite. The desert is:

> one monotonous iteration of sand, sand, sand, unless where some miserable fountain stagnates, forbids all approach to familiarity: nothing is circumstantiated or differenced: travel it for three generations, and you are no nearer to identification of its parts; so that it amounts to travelling through an abstract idea (VIII, 31).

It is a combination of the medium of the desert and the enormous distances involved which led De Quincey to claim that the Revolt of the Tartars was more striking to the imagination than any event in all history.[52] Indeed, he was so impressed by the crossing of the "desert spaces" and by the "vast distances to be traversed, vast reverses to be sustained (VII, 369), added to the fact that the event also provided the sublime element of hidden and obscure purposes, that he wrote a fifty page account of the Revolt.

The reference to "travelling through an abstract idea" in the quotation above is interesting in that it relates the idea of infinity to two significant aspects of De Quincey's sublimity. The first is the symbolic method, already discussed, which, as the above quotation suggests, is aided by the presence of vast distance, where details are overborne by the feeling of great dimension. In contemplation of space so enormous, as in the "System of the Heavens", the mind is led naturally towards the symbolic or the abstract. The same effect is expectedly produced by contemplation of the eternity of time, and De Quincey comments upon the way in which great distances of time will determine a

historical method:

> But when a writer treats (as to Herodotus it happened that repeatedly he treated) tracts of history far removed in space and time from the domestic interests of his native land, naturally he misses as any available guide the ordinary utilitarian relations which would else connect persons and events with great outstanding interests to his own contemporary system. The very abstraction which has silently been performed by the mere effect of vast distances, wilderness that swallow up armies, and mighty rivers that are unbridged, together with the indefinite chronological remoteness, do already of themselves translate such sequestered and insulated chambers of history into the character of moral apologues. 53

Here, of course, De Quincey is again getting at the process of mythology, or of symbolic creation, and is talking, like Aristotle, of the difference between history and poetry, or the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The vast distances of time which Herodotus seeks to encompass in his work has inevitably produced not history, which is accurate as to its facts, but poetry which is accurate in terms of its wider, moral truths. The sublimity of the broader, more symbolic picture represented through the vastness of time, arises because the abstract forms which remain have the power to move the mind more deeply. De Quincey feels that this effect may even arise when the time distance involved is only that of a single generation (which is long in terms of the memory of an individual). To his contemporaries, for example, reflection upon the French Revolution is free of the troublesome detail which obscures the larger issues, so that they "[feel]dimly the great strife which they did not witness, and [feel] it the more deeply because for <u>them</u> [it is] an idealized retrospect..."[54]

The second point which arises from the question of abstraction produced by space and time is the familiar one in discussions of the sublime concerning the form of an object, which may produce a sense of sublimity. Burke clearly states that indefinite form, where no distinct outline can be ascertained, is an essential property of the sublime,[55] and, clearly, in these terms, the images of De Quincey's writing, the labyrinthine streets, the vast architectural complexes, the deserts, all tend to defy any notion of graspable form. Inability to apprehend the form of an object produces, initially, the sense in the observer of being overwhelmed and defeated, and , this, indeed, is an essential

element of the duality of De Quincey's sublime. It is interesting that Wordsworth, who writes on the subject of the form of objects in his "The Sublime and the Beautiful", makes a "sense of individual form or forms" the first of his three main sublime properties.[56] Thus Wordsworth effectually restricts the potential horror which attaches to images of sublimity by limiting one aspect of their possible infinity. The horror of infinity would not be the powerful element which it is in De Quincey's work were it not for the fact that he relentlessly denies concrete, graspable form to his images. By comparison, therefore, Wordsworth's sublime is generally speaking less terrifying, less evocative of vast intangibility, than De Quincey's.

I hope it is clear from the description in this section, that De Quincey's evocation of the idea of infinity is a central theme in his work, and a crucial element in the consideration of sublime effects, providing, as it does, both a dimension of terror and a spiritual goal to be attained.

PART II: CRITICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXTS OF THE SUBLIME

CHAPTER FIVE: LITERARY CRITICISM AND AESTHETICS

> At one time we were ourselves inclined to fear that Milton had been here caught tripping. In this instance, at least seems to be in error. But there is no trusting to appearances.
>
> De Quincey

I have passingly referred to a number of critical comments made by De Quincey with the intention of showing how they reflect his preoccupation with a central, dialectic theory of the sublime. In this chapter I intend to examine more closely some of his more important critical and aesthetic statements, again with the specific intention of illustrating how his approach to literature is determined by a continuing pursuit of sublime ideas, and a determined application of the dialectical theory. An awareness of such a critical procedure will shed light on the methods and intention of De Quincey's own fictional writing.

1. Some examples from De Quincey's literary criticism.

De Quincey's dialectic of sensual and spiritual has already been discussed in terms of its symbolic potential, and since the main province of symbolism (apart from religious usages) is literature, it is only to be expected that his criticism bases itself upon this dichotomy. His destructive criticism, his attacks upon the authors who do not provide the kind of literature he approves of, begins with an assesment of them in terms of their sensual or non-sensual literary characteristics. Southey is generally commended as a poet by De Quincey, but his chief fault is found in his excessive concentration upon the outward appearance of nature. De Quincey writes:

> ....the sole objection to them [Southey's poems] is, that they are too intensely objective--too much reflect the mind, as spreading itself out upon external things--too little exhibit the mind as introverting itself upon its own thoughts and feelings (II, 319).

Although the antithesis here is specifically between an objective

or subjective response of the poet, it nonetheless begins to indicate De Quincey's persistent condemnation of a concentration upon external images.[1] In another context, but in a similar manner, De Quincey praises Lamb as a writer because "his impulses, like those of Wordsworth, are derived from the depths of nature, not from the surface of manners" (III, 90). What is meant by "the surface of manners" will be suggested later in the section, but it is clear that the same antithesis between internal truth and external falsehood is present here. The final implication is that authors who do not attempt to penetrate the outward appearances of the world can never have anything of the grand or sublime about their work, and can never hope to reach beyond the finite and particular. In his essay "Rhetoric", De Quincey launches an attack upon the writer known as Junius, on these grounds:

> It is an absolute fact that Junius has not one principle, aphorism, or remark of a general nature in his whole armoury; not in a solitary instance did his barren understanding ascend to an abstraction or general idea, but lingered forever in the dust and rubbish of individuality, amongst the tangible realities of things and persons (X, 119).

De Quincey also deals with Swift in the same terms, and although his objections to this eighteenth century satirist lie on dubious foundations, his concern with Swift's work is that it lacks any sense of higher issues, or any attempt to reach truths which lie beyond the limitations of the present moment. De Quincey quotes Schlosser, whose literary history he purports to review, and agrees with him that Swift's views "were directed to what was immediately beneficial; which is the characteristic of savages". Like the terror inspired by the pagan gods, there was no teleological concern attached to Swift's ideas, since they were rooted, like the author himself, in sensual reality:

> The meanness of Swift's nature, and his rigid incapacity for dealing with the grandeurs of the human spirit, with religion, with poetry, or even the science when it rose above the mercenary practical, is absolutely appalling. (XI, 14)

Obviously, in these terms, De Quincey sees no possibility of sublimity in the work of an author such as Swift, since there is no possibility of access to spiritual reality in a writer who is so clearly finite in his choice of subject matter.

Perhaps the most elaborate example of De Quincey's literary criticism finding its basis within a spiritual / sensual antithesis can be found in his discussion of Pope's poetry. Here it becomes quite clear that De Quincey associates a poet's preoccupation with finite issues to be absolutely preclusive of sublimity in his work. It becomes obvious, in fact, that De Quincey's dialectic of spirit and sense is an essential part of his conception of where the sublime resides, and thereby a part of his continuing definition of what the sublime in fact is, and how it can be recognised. In the essay "Lord Carlisle on Pope". De Quincey makes a specific contrast of his two favourite examples of sublime authorship, that of Shakespeare and Milton, with the work of Pope.[3] His whole argument at this point is intended to show the relative incomprehensibility of Pope's subject matter, being a result of its finite nature, beside the generally apprehensible qualities of the two earlier poets. He writes:

> ....it is often a secret compliment to the breadth of man's intellectual nature, that he cannot enter into the artificial, the tortuous, the conventional. Many a rude mind has comprehended to the full both Milton in his elementary grandeur and Shakespere in his impassioned depths, that could not even have dimly guessed at the meaning of a situation in comedy where the comic rested upon arbitrary rules and conventional proprieties (XI, 111).

De Quincey is here referring to Pope's satiric and moral writings, which, he says, simply cannot be generally understood because of their limiting dependence upon allusions to contemporary society. Pope's emphasis lies, therefore, upon finite facts concerning the visible world, so that his satires are neither grand nor impassioned, and cannot be comprehended by means of the "understanding heart". However, while venerating the literature of the sublime and warning against the excessive incursion of knowledge <u>into</u> literature, De Quincey's literary criticism is often entirely stuck in the toils of knowledge. The attack upon Swift, noted above, is typically limited by its concentration upon biographical details. De Quincey backs up his critical assertions by dwelling on Swift's tendency towards immorality and irreligion, and his account of Pope proceeds in a similar fashion. He discusses the counterfeit nature of Pope's emotion (XI, 69, 72), the problem of sincerity, and he questions the literal truth of Pope's description of women in his satires (XI, 74), all of which considerations belong clearly to the first half of De Quincey's knowledge / power opposition. This form of criticism prevents him from appreciating the lightness of Pope's wit and seeing the poet's exaggerations for what they are worth.

The most essential point to be understood, however, concerning De Quincey's response to the work of Pope and the other writers mentioned, is that he bases his final judgement upon the extent to which the authors in question can be said to produce literature of power or sublimity. Again, the correctness of De Quincey's assessment is extremely doubtful, especially since his criticism of Pope depends so heavily upon biographical details and also since his insistence upon the exclusive greatness of sublime literature causes him to overlook other forms and values. His argument rests finally, in the case of Pope, on the fact that there can be no appeal to the emotions, or no expansion of the sensibility, in a literature which is dependent upon such transitory issues as societal behaviour. Without such an emotional basis, there can be no possibility of such a literature inducing higher aspirations in its readers.[5]

In a similar fashion, but on the positive side, De Quincey's criticism of works he values highly, very often finds its basis in an intuitive response to the presence of a structure of opposition, or a hint of that duality which is connected to the sublime. Naturally, the results of such a criticism are equally disappointing because they are so partial, but nonetheless De Quincey's analysis and justification of certain passages or effects still seem extremely valuable today. Of course, to De Quincey, poetry in its purest sense <u>is</u> the expression of sublimity, or the incarnation of power. His own style of "impassioned prose" is intended specifically to create the sublime effect, and to this extent De Quincey assents to what he feels is the Longinian conception of the sublime as a mode of expression.[6] But beyond style, it is perhaps more important to discover what else it is that causes the inherent sublimity of poetry, and what it is that excites De Quincey's admiration. It has been seen that the romantic dialectical vision is espoused by De Quincey to the extent that it influences both his thought and expression. It is only natural, then, that such a mode should also direct his favourable critical utterances. In fact, it is an extremely important aspect of De Quincey's thinking that dialectical ideas associated with the imagination and the structure of the world in general should be the root of his critical expression. De Quincey's analysis of poetry, or what is the same thing, literary sublimity, concerns itself, on many occasions, with an examination of the way in which the mind is affected by experiences of literary power which are the direct result of the clash of opposing

forces. The paradox which usually results from such a clash becomes, in fact, the key element of De Quincey's literary response.

De Quincey's most famous piece of practical criticism, and most celebrated,[7] is the essay "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth", which is probably a little disappointing to many people on first acquaintance with it. Essentially, only one brief critical point is made in the course of a very short paper (only five pages), and yet the essay contains a concise summary of all the elements required for an experience of power. Amid various digressions, De Quincey accounts for the supremely powerful effect which is achieved in Macbeth by the Porter's knocking following the murder of Duncan. This moment is indeed a moment of sublimity, and one which evolves from far more than the existence of a mere contrast. The contrast, or the implied conflict, is however, the fundamental reason for De Quincey's choice of this passage for critical examination. To understand how he has constructed an analysis of his own experience of sublimity in this essay is to begin to overcome the persistent feeling that De Quincey never remotely approached a comprehensive critique of even one work. It is indeed the case that there is no attempt at a comprehensive critique anywhere in De Quincey's writing and his attempts at general accounts of writers and their works are notoriously deficient.[8] The reason for this deficiency can largely be attributed to the fact that De Quincey does not attempt to lay down a set of rules for the practice of criticism, and his so-called critical passages or essays are rather, as in the case of the "Macbeth" piece, efforts to account for the sublimity of particular literary effects. De Quincey's undoubtedly sporadic critical utterances do gain some cohesion when they are seen, in this way, as guides to particularly powerful moments, or as attempts to reproduce the author's own sense of sublimity during such moments.

Typically, De Quincey begins the "Macbeth" essay with a statement of paradox, which, in this case, is represented by his own confusion at finding that the knocking rather than the murder itself elicited from him the more powerful response:

> 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 the murder of Duncan produced to my feelings an effect for which I could never account. (X, 389)

In this statement lies the first hint as to why De Quincey's critical

comment upon Macbeth is almost entirely contained within this one example.[9] It is the paradox of his own experience which he really concerned with and not the literary value of the play itself, and it is the sense of paradox which has led him to an analysis of the passage in the first place. Following the above statement comes a warning, or a brief instruction, concerning the way in which the effect is to be viewed in order that the initial paradox may be resolved. Here, of course, De Quincey elaborates once again upon the distinction between knowledge and power, and, as in the other contexts I have discussed, he points to the danger of the lower level of apprehension, the literal understanding, impeding the function of the higher level, or the imagination. De Quincey's understanding told him that the knocking itself could not be a moment of any power, and yet his feelings clearly contradicted this judgement. The first important point concerning the nature of sublimity which is contained in this essay, is thus the familiar one of adopting the correct perspective.

De Quincey's central analysis then goes on to account for the structure of antithesis,[10] or the contrapuntal nature of this pivotal moment of the play. In order to render palpable the world of evil which is created by Macbeth and his wife, there must be a reflex awareness of the ordinary world which has been annihilated or suspended by the creation of an evil universe. The two worlds must balance and react upon one another, and as the normal world succeeds the abnormal, it is here that the moment of power or sublimity is achieved:

> Hence it is that, when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds: the knocking at the gate is heard, and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflux upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live first make us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them (X, 393).

This, of course is an example of the sublime of horror or fear, which can only be fully experienced, or have its real aesthetic effect, when the horror itself is viewed in context and at a distance. Only with such a perspective upon such a potentially shocking subject can a disinterested assessment be made. The language of the passage is obviously very close, both in diction and sentence structure, to De Quincey's other

accounts of antithetical phenomena,[11] and one is particularly reminded, when considering his choice of this passage from Macbeth for comment, of the statement already quoted on page 44 above:

> Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act--... but by union. They are the sexual forces in music:'male and female created he them' (XIII, 350).[12]

It is natural for De Quincey to select a moment of such fusion, where he feels a reciprocity of effects, or a synthesis of some kind, to be the root source of the experience of power. The same antithesis of dark and light is also present in the passage, and typical of De Quincey's choice of sublime moments.

The fusion of antithetical moments in the mind of the observer is thus the basic function of the occurence which De Quincey has chosen for his essay, but he has developed his argument around this instant to include other comments which also throw light upon his definition of power or sublimity.In a footnote to which I have already referred, De Quincey briefly indicates the importance of sympathy, or transcendence of the finite self, to artistic creation. A more specifically critical remark, however, discusses Shakespeare's decision to throw his emphasis not upon the victim but upon the murderers. Certainly, it would have been possible, artistically, to reverse the process, but De Quincey shows his concern and awareness of aesthetic effects by asserting the impossibility of the former. To concentrate upon the victim would be to submerge oneself in the finite concerns of mere survival, whereas the portrait of the murderers at least tends towards larger concerns. Here it is possible to find once again the infinite world of evolving, contrapuntal emotion:

> In the murdered person, all strife of thought, all flux and reflux of passion and of purpose, are crushed by one overwhelming panic; the fear of instant death smites him "with its petrific mace". But in the murderer, 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(X,391-2).

In parenthesis it might be noted that in this description can be found all the requisite elements for a typically romantic subject, and of course it is no coincidence that De Quincey's account of the murderers in Macbeth is so close to the almost stereotyped account of the romantic poet himself undergoing enormous emotional turmoil. The qualification

"such a murderer as a poet will condescend to", admits that all such characters need not be artistically viable, but in Macbeth and his wife De Quincey has found the "flux and reflux" which is the reflection of the poet's own soul, and the core of sublimity. De Quincey's imagination is thus fired, and his critical praise of Shakespeare's characterization follows.

Clearly, De Quincey has made no attempt to give a general critique of Macbeth, and he has not even produced more than a few lines of analysis of the detail which has held his attention. The criticism contained in this essay is most profitably seen as being an account of a sublime moment, recreated by De Quincey in the process of describing its basic elements, and similar to those from his autobiography which I discuss in the next chapters. He has applied the general theory of counterpoint to the play, and has found it to work, pre-eminently, at the moment which so paradoxically fixed his attention. Most importantly, in view of his own continuing purpose, De Quincey has shown how response to the apparent paradox in a piece of literature demands a suspension of the understanding, a suspension which will allow an experience of the sublime.[13] As far as consistent literary criticism is concerned, the impassioned conclusion which De Quincey provides for his essay reveals the essentially non-critical and emotional basis of his whole response:

> O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art, but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert, but that, the farther we press in our dicoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident! (X, 393-4)

The essay, conceived as a paradigm of sublime experience, has thus evolved from a state of paradox, through revelation, to a state of intuitive celebration of the power of the effect discussed.

For De Quincey, then, the greatness of Shakespeare as expressed in this essay, resides in that poet's capacity for providing sublime moments which can only be approached, at least in the first instance, intuitively. This hardly constitutes a sustained criticism of Shakespeare, though it might be expected that in the relatively long essay

entitled "Shakespeare" (more than sixty pages), there might be more critical comment from De Quincey. However, the bulk of this piece of writing consists of a loose biography of the author in question, and it is only in the last ten pages that he states that he will "take a summary survey of his /Shakespeare's/ works, of his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature" (IV, 69). Six of these final pages are taken up with praise of Shakespeare's unique delineation of his women characters, stressing their concreteness, and moving on to a generality about organicism (IV, 71). De Quincey's second point, developed in the next three pages, centres upon the supernatural in Shakespeare, and allows another opportunity for an impassioned paragraph to be written on the subject of sublime antagonism. In the first place, the Christian potential for sublimity founded on the supernatural is contrasted in typical fashion[15] with pagan limitations in this respect. "That shadowy conception, the protesting apparition, the awful projection of the human conscience, belongs to the Christian mind" (IV, 76), he writes. Thus, again, it is not so much a critical premise which De Quincey is bringing to Shakespeare here, as a general predeliction towards the Christian sublime. The details of this sublime effect are provided in this passage by the example of Hamlet, and De Quincey says:

> All the pomps and grandeurs which religion, which the grave, which the popular superstition had gathered about the subject of apparitions, are here converted to his /Shakespeare's/ purpose, and bend to one awful effect (IV, 76).

The mainspring of this effect expectedly resides in the pattern of contrast which De Quincey finds in the play, and which presumably provides the same powerful interaction as the example from Macbeth:

> The wormy grave brought into antagonism with the scenting of the early dawn: the trumpet of resurrection suggested, and again as an antagonist idea to the crowing of the cock (a bird enobled in the Christian mythus by the part he is made to play in the Crucifixion); its starting "as a guilty thing" placed in opposition to its majestic expression of offended dignity when struck at by the partisans of the sentinels;... its ubiquity, contrasted with its local presence; its aerial substance, yet clothed in palpable armour (IV, 76).

The whole device of the ghost is seen as a structure of dynamic contrasts, and the whole effect exists within the context of Christian sublimity which can conceive of such non-earthly beings. The living world is at once alluded to and transcended in the figure of the ghost,

providing the paradox and synthesis for which De Quincey is searching. Others of Shakespeare's plays containing supernatural powers are then commended by De Quincey, and the essay is briefly concluded with allusions to Shakespeare's "teeming fertility of fine thoughts and sentiments" and the verisimilitude to be found in his dialogue (IV, 78-9). Once more, it is not any wide-ranging quality of De Quincey's criticism which has emerged from his account of a particular author, but rather his tendency to discover and explain the sublimity of paradox.

De Quincey's favourite contemporary author was Wordsworth, and he prides himself on his early recognition of the greatness of the poet whom he later came to know quite well.[16] The greater part of his writing on Wordsworth is biographical, and no significant critical utterances occur in chapters three, four or five of the Literary and Lake Reminiscences[17] where Wordsworth is the principal subject. "On Wordsworth's Poetry", a shorter piece written in 1845, does attempt a closer examination of some of the poet's work. Here can be found some comment on Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction[18] (which, incidentally, includes De Quincey's representation of the English Language in a state of "flux and reflux" between the Latin and the Saxon elements of the language), a paragraph or two on the disunity of "The Excursion" (XI, 312 ff.), and a great deal of curiously literal criticism of how the Wanderer in that poem might have done something of a practical nature to deal with the sufferings of Margaret.[19] But, again, the most interesting and perceptive observations concerning Wordsworth's poetry follow the pattern determined by De Quincey's sensitivity to sublime paradox. As with the case of supernatural usages in Shakespeare, De Quincey begins by defending Wordsworth against an objection by Hazlitt on the matter of the poet's choice of subject matter. "One would suppose," De Quincey quotes from Hazlitt, "that on this earth there was neither marrying or giving in marriage" (XI, 300). In the first place, De Quincey justifies Wordsworth's omission of "festal raptures" on the familiar grounds that they are essentially finite:

> These raptures are not only too brief, but, (which is worse) they tend downwards: even for as long as they last, they do not move upon as ascending scale (XI, 300-301).

However, the real truth of De Quincey's justification is, as he says, more subtle than this, and he uses "We Are Seven" as his example. In this poem can be seen the typical Wordsworthian structure of light in

contrast with dark, or simple innocence juxtaposed with "the reflex shadows of the grave" (XI, 301). De Quincey makes the sound point that although the little girl of the poem is ignorant of the true meaning of death, the real force of the poem is that the two elements are combined in the reader's mind, which can appreciate both parts simultaneously. The poem's strength, therefore, resides not in the fact that Wordsworth has delightfully portrayed a form of naive innocence, but in the reader's experience of "Death and its sunny antipole" being "forced into connexion" (XI, 302). De Quincey explains the subtlety of the device in an image of synthesis:

> This influx of the joyous into the sad, and of the sad into joyous--this reciprocal entanglement of darkness in light, and of light in darkness--offers a subject too occult for popular criticism; (XI, 303)

Indeed, so far from being comprehended by popular criticism, De Quincey refers to the actual "repulsiveness" commonly associated with the kind of poetry which contains the paradox of sorrow within grief. To De Quincey, of course, Wordsworth is an author who could attract by means of his repulsion.[20]

In another context, De Quincey writes of Wordsworth that "I know not of any former poet who has so systematically sought his sadness in the very luxury of joy", [21] reflecting his continuing willingness to accept and indeed seek out the polar forces of life, the good and the bad, or the light and the dark. The power of Wordsworth's poetry, when it <u>is</u> powerful, stems from such an opposition, and De Quincey's criticism of the poetry attempts only to celebrate the moments of power.

In this attempt, and in the case of many other authors he discusses, De Quincey is thoroughly consistent. His criticism never achieves breadth, is usually dwarfed by his biographical urge, but is totally consistent in its response to potentially sublime structures. The only thing which De Quincey really finds admirable in the poetry of Pope is the sublime clash of spirit and senses in "Eloisa to Abelard". "How grand is the collision between deep religious aspirations and the persecuting phantoms of her undying passions," (XI, 85) he writes of Eloisa. Otherwise, as I have mentioned, Pope tends to be symbolic of the non-sublime for De Quincey. On the other hand, Milton is revered as the very incarnation of sublimity,[22] and in his essay "On Milton",

De Quincey gives his most extended appreciation of that poet.[23] The name of Milton, is, in fact, more or less symonymous with the concept of sublimity in De Quincey's writing, because, as he says, "In Milton only, first and last, is the power of the sublime revealed" (X, 402). And immediately before this statement, De Quincey bluntly asserts that "there is no human composition which can be challenged as constitutionally sublime from first to last,--excepting the "Paradise Lost" (X, 401-2). Developing out of this generalisation then emerges a defence of certain practices of the great poet against charges laid by Addison and Samuel Johnson. The second point of De Quincey's defence, which reveals his deep concern over the possibility of profanity in Milton, is not my concern here.[24] The first point, however, provides another typical example of De Quincey's criticism basing itself upon the proposition of a paradox and subsequently upon its resolution. Addison attacked Milton for his "supposed pedantry, or too ambitious a display of erudition" in the use of such words as "frieze, architrave, cornice, zenith, etc." (X, 402). In the first place, De Quincey's enthusiasm for the sublime leads him to the statement that pedantry is simply impossible in a work of sublimity because:

> ....in any poem burning with concentrated fire, like the Miltonic, the passion becomes a law to itself, and will not receive into connection with itself any parts so deficient in harmony as a cold ostentation of learned illustrations must always have been found (X, 402).

Like his eulogy at the end of the Shakespeare essay, an intuitive belief in the rightness of a sublime poet submerges the critical faculty. But, as in other examples I have discussed, De Quincey also provides an explanation of the rightness of the poet's method based on something more comprehensible to the lower understanding. The paradox of apparent pedantry is in fact resolved by reference to Milton's very conscious use of the familiar dialectical theory. As usual, being more concerned with his general analysis of this structure, and its importance, De Quincey spends almost half his argument upon a non-Miltonic example. Why, he asks, is the word "amphitheatre" so effectively applied to impressive scenery in hilly country? His explanation involves, again, the principle of antagonism and reciprocal action:

> In the word <u>theatre</u> is contained an evanescent image of a great audience, of a populous multitude. Now, this image--half with-

> drawn, half flashed upon the eye, and combined with the word hills or forests--is thrown into powerful collision with the silence of the hills, with the solitude of forests; each image, from reciprocal contradiction brightens and vivifies the other. The two images act and react, by strong repulsion and antagonism (X, 403).

Here, indeed, is the very core of the Miltonic method as De Quincey sees it, and the powerful effects produced by similar examples of antagonism are an essential part of the poet's sublimity. Thus "images of architectural splendour suddenly raised in the very centre of Paradise," so far from being incongruent or objects of confusion, in fact "bring into powerful relief the depth of silence and the unpopulous solitude which possesses this sanctuary of man..." (X, 403). In this passage, more clearly perhaps than anywhere else, De Quincey directly explains the principle of opposition in its relationship to the sublime, and in its status as an actual poetic method. He calls it "this latent wisdom, this cryptical science of poetic effects", (X, 404), and attributes to it a proportion of the sublime power of Milton's poetry. Thus a practice which, on one level, had been interpreted as "defective skill, or even puerile ostentation" (X,404), on another level, and with a different perspective brought to bear on the problem, turns out to be the very spark of sublimity.

When the pattern, or at least the tendency of De Quincey's criticism has been determined in this way, it becomes easier to read the rambling and curious so-called critical essays. When his proposition and resolution of paradox is understood as being merely part of his general theory of the sublime then perhaps the process assumes a greater degree of relevance. De Quincey can be counted upon to point out the sublime moments of an author, and to render his observations in his fine impassioned prose, but little more can be expected. This is not to say that his observations concerning the dialectical structure as applied to details in specific works are not effective. They do indeed provide some valuable analysis into the nature of the aesthetic response, and thereby an exploration of how and why the individual finds certain literary experiences sublime.

2. Some examples from De Quincey's aesthetic theory

With his continual concern for the distinction between knowledge and

power, it is inevitable that De Quincey should apply this dual mode of apprehension to matters of aesthetics beyond those areas of criticism discussed in the preceding section. I have shown how De Quincey's critical impulse, erratic though it may seem, is governed by an urge to come at and explain the sublime in literature. From this urge arose a thoroughgoing application of the theory of paradox or the dialectical theory of literature, where apparently irreconcilable opposites, which correspond to lower and higher faculties of the mind, were evolutionary through a process of vital interaction. It is in the light of this general tendency of De Quincey's thought that his remarks upon didactic poetry must be considered. The power to be obtained through the process of apparent opposition and final resolution of the paradox is the idea which guides De Quincey's espousal of the idea of didactic resistance in poetry.

De Quincey's definition of didactic poetry shows him once again to be keenly aware of the fact that knowledge can impede the progress of power, or in the terms of an earlier chapter, the senses can impede the workings of the spirit. Didacticism is, for De Quincey, essentially a matter of information, or the substance contained within the "Books of Knowledge" as he calls them in the "Letters to a Young Man"(X, 47), and the imparting of such information is inimical to the very idea of poetry. "No poetry can have the function of teaching" (XI, 88), he writes, and continues shortly after with "To teach formally and professedly is to abandon the very differential character and principle of poetry"(XI, 89)[25]. This character and principle of poetry is, of course, the communication of power, which is necessarily impeded by utilitarian concerns, or with "gross palpable uses" (X, 261) as he calls it in another context. Here De Quincey is making the vital distinction between the practical and the aesthetic,[26] and it is with the very specific idea of didacticism as the communication of fact that he finds the Horatian antithesis of "aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetae"[27] so unacceptable. The "instruction" of this epigram is, for De Quincey, a matter of pure facts, and so obviously "pleasure" is most inadequate as the only other possible purpose of poetry. It is in order to rectify this striking omission that De Quincey proposes his own antithesis to instruction which is, of course, power. As I have described in an earlier chapter, sublime or powerful experiences obtained from nature

or poetry do, in De Quincey's opinion, instruct in a certain way; and although he assumes that Horace also could not have meant instruction in this same way, he does admit that "If poetry could condescend to teach anything, it would be truths moral and religious" (XI, 89).[28] In his argument on didactic poetry in "The Poetry of Pope", De Quincey thus concludes that didactic material is introduced into literature merely as a pretext for developing other matters of poetic potential. He uses as his examples the supposed concerns of practical farming in Virgil's Georgics, and the poetical use of the game of cards in "The Rape of the Lock" (XI, 90-92).

However, it is clear from these examples that non-aesthetic matters are inevitably alluded to in poetry, and it is within this dual presence that De Quincey recognizes the vital function of an antithetical pattern. Just as his Christian vision does not banish the darker facts of existence from its structure, but rather finds in these forces the possiblity of sublime synthesis, so De Quincey's aesthetic theory depends upon the presence of didactic elements in poetry. In a long footnote to "Lessing's Laocoon" he discusses the distinction between "mechanic art"[29] and "fine art" with specific reference to the question of drapery in statues. Clearly clothing might be considered to have a purely practical function, but De Quincey explains its greater potentiality in this way -- "Necessity invented dress, and to a certain extent the same necessity continues to preside over it." This practical function, which corresponds to the lower faculty of the mind, can be developed "as an end per se, both directly for its beauty, and as a means of suggesting many pleasing ideas of rank, power, youth, sex, or profession" (XI, 195n.). Here, as in the many other examples of this distinction being made, it is ultimately important that the two modes of perception work in combination. De Quincey restates this principle as he sees it applying to aesthetic considerations:

> Neither is it true that the sense of necessity and absolute limitation is banished from the idea of a fine art. On the contrary, this sense is indispensible as a means of resisting (and, therefore, realizing), the sense of freedom; the freedom of a fine art is found not in the absence of restraint, but in the conflict with it (XI, 195n.).

In a development of the point he was making in "The Poetry of Pope" about the unfitness of Pope's choice of subject in "The Essay on Man",

De Quincey writes elsewhere of the opposition he observes in the quotation above:

> If the logic of the case be steadily examined, a definition of didactic poetry will emerge the very opposite to that popularly held; it will appear that in didactic poetry the teaching is not the power but the resistance.[30]

Losing for a moment his own sense of the nature of this resistance, De Quincey also proposes that the poet's act of resistance is that which is exerted against the material which would defeat his subject, but he then goes on to say that even by including certain didactic elements, the poet is still resisting their character as practical objects.[31] It is through an apprehension of the tension involved in the poet's transcendence of the meaner aspects of his material that a sense of greater beauty is achieved. De Quincey's aesthetic theory is thus brought into close connection with his general acceptance of the dialectical pattern, and it further supports his account of sublimity as originating within such a pattern of opposition.

De Quincey extends the dialectical pattern to include a further and equally important aesthetic question, that of imitation. Indeed, the ancient problem of imitation in the arts is closely linked with the argument which centres around didacticism, and once again embodies the struggle of opposites. The paradox in this case is that of the idem in alio, or the mixture of similitude with dissimilitude in the fine arts, and like so many of the ideas already discussed, it is certainly not original with De Quincey. However, with an understanding of the interpenetration of the theory of paradox through all his thinking, the appeal of the idem in alio theory is obvious. The central discussion of this question occurs in "The Antigone of Sophocles", where De Quincey expands the idea found in his didactic theory. Poetry, De Quincey establishes, derives impetus from the conflict between the didactic and the purely artistic, and it is the same kind of antagonism which he examines in the "Antigone" essay. Indeed, the principle of opposition is there stated to be essential to the artistic creation of a "great effect", and is, therefore, "the very first principle concerned in every Fine Art" (X, 368). He explains:

> ...the object is to reproduce in the mind some great effect through the agency of idem in alio. The idem, the same impression, is to be restored, but in alio, in a different material--by means of some different instrument.[32]

As Coleridge explained it, the "check of difference" between the original impression and the new medium of rendition produces the desired effect. De Quincey acknowledges the direct source of this idea in an essay contained in the Posthumous Works, where he quotes a section from the Coleridge lecture which includes a statement of the principle.[33] However, in his discussion of the idem in alio it seems that De Quincey is far more concerned with the "great effect" which the principle can produce through an awareness of the two levels of perception. In the first place, there is De Quincey's basic celebration of the mere fact of opposition, of diametric contrast, as exemplified by his comparison of wax and marble as the material for sculpture. Were a pair of sleeping children represented upon a tomb made of wax, he argues, the pathos would be little more "than if they had been shown baked in gilt gingerbread" (X, 369). The point here is simply one of contrast. Marble is as unlike to flesh in its intractable rigidity as can be imagined, "a substance the most different", writes De Quincey, and therefore the pathetic power is at its maximum. In this context, from the "Antigone" essay, De Quincey satisfies himself merely with this statement of the effect of the marble, as opposed to wax, in contrast with the usual idea of human flesh. However, in the Posthumous Works commentary on Coleridge's definition of idem in alio, he adds the important point that wax cannot achieve the desired effect because of its impermanent nature. Although he does not state as much, De Quincey would presumably find a further asset of marble to lie in its known permanence, which would provide an energetic contrast to the evanescent moment which is represented.[34]

Following the statement of contrast, De Quincey elaborates upon the argument, and makes it quite clear that it is not merely contrast which produces the powerful effect, although this is always at the root of his conception.[35] The full greatness of the idem in alio effect derives from the fact that it provides a transition from the literal, or observable world, to the ideal. From my account of De Quincey's persistent demand that sensual experience be transcended to allow an approach to sublimity, it is to be expected that his aesthetic theory will rest upon similar principles. The meaning of the opposition or dialectic represented by the idem in alio principle depends upon the transcendence of the sensual world which is necessarily embodied within it. Obviously,

the artist, in the hope of recreating an experience of power which he has experienced might achieve his object by literally copying the elements of that experience. A waxwork is essentially of this kind, and De Quincey objects to this form of representation because, as I have mentioned, wax is essentially ephemeral, but more importantly because such a literal likeness can express no higher meaning. De Quincey writes:

> But the reason why the wax-work disgusts is that it seeks to reproduce in literal detail the traits that should be softened under a general diffusive impression; the likeness to nature is presented in what is essentially fleeting and subsidiary, and the "check of difference" is found also in this very literality, and not in any effort of the etherealizing imagination, as it is in all true works of art.[36]

In the last part of this quotation De Quincey is explaining what he sees as Coleridge's mistake in finding no check of difference in a waxwork representation, but the significant point of the statement is that De Quincey is describing the goal of art in terms of its symbolic method. To concern oneself with an imitation of the finite, transient details of the visible world is to reduce art to "a base mechanic mimicry" (X, 370), and in the "Antigone" essay, De Quincey makes an important list of the ways in which art, in particular the drama, has sought to "unrealize" itself.[37] As a justification of the non-realistic in art and as an examination of how art expresses itself in a symbolic fashion, these ideas are as valid now as when De Quincey wrote them down. The essential truth of, for example, the sculptured children, lies in the representation of "the sleep that masks death, the rest, the peace, the purity, the innocence" (X, 360), or in other words the ideal qualities, or the symbolic qualities discovered by the artist in that group. By choosing a medium such as marble, an aliud of sufficient integrity, the artist will direct the attention of the audience to the symbolic implications of his work, rather than towards its particular constituent elements. Certainly, it seems at times that De Quincey values the idem in alio effect for different reasons, but what would have been the central attraction of such an antithetical structure for him, with its paradox and resolution, is best expressed by Coleridge:

> Those two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of these disparates. The artist may take the point of view where he pleases, provided that the desired effect be perceptibly produced, that there be likeness in the

> difference, difference in the likeness, and a reconcilement of both in one.[38]

As a conclusion to this account of De Quincey's response to, and use of, the idem in alio principle, it should not go unremarked that the whole argument essentially includes the critical debate concerning the conflict and reconciliation of the particular and the general in art.[39] The conflict is resolved by the romantics with their symbolist view of poetry, which explains, through the use of the imagination, the transformation of a concrete image into a revelation of a higher, non-finite, reality.[40] De Quincey himself saw the relationship between the idem in alio principle and the duality of symbolism, which, through its roots in Christianity, was of continuing interest to him. He describes symbolism as dependent for its effect upon the principle of antagonism:

> One part of the effect from the symbolic is dependent upon the great catholic principle of the Idem in alio. The symbol restores the theme, but under new combinations of form or colouring; gives back, but changes; restores, but idealizes (I, 51).

In other words, there is present within a symbolic effect both the phenomenon at the root of the representation, as well as the ideal implications, or generality of the image. As I have shown, De Quincey makes it clear that both these modes of apprehension are required by an observer. His account of the Christian God depends upon such a duality, and his remark during the discussion of Hamlet that it impairs the shadowy grandeur of a ghost to individualize it too much (IV, 76) indicates his awareness of the balance that is required.[41]

Jordan sees De Quincey's "law of antagonism" as not the same thing as Coleridge's reconciliation of opposites.[42] He agrees with Miss Snyder, a Coleridge critic, who claims that the opposition, symmetry, or contrast in De Quincey's writing is essentially mechanical in its operation. He also links De Quincey's pattern with associationism, where opposites suggest one another,[43] and certainly there must be something of associationism present in such a theory.[44] However, it has been my intention to show that it is not merely a mechanical operation of opposite tendencies which occurs in De Quincey's writing, but an organic conception which directly relates to his view of the sublime. De Quincey himself wrote that "Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act--but by union" (XIII, 350), and indeed his whole

philosophy, both of life and of literature, was determined by his sense of the necessary interaction of opposites. At one level, this interaction represents the life principle itself, the very cause of evolution, and in more literary contexts it suggests a progression from paradox through resolution to the infinite inclusion of all things, which is the essence of the sublime experience. Precisely this process will now be seen as it functions in De Quincey's creative fiction.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ENGLISH MAIL-COACH.

> I know of no earlier dream literature which could even faintly have suggested to him either the form or the substance of his dream pieces. He himself recognised their complete originality.
>
> Horace Eaton,
> Thomas De Quincey

There is no more concise and powerful a display of the sublime mode at work in De Quincey's writing than in his three part prose fantasy, The English Mail-Coach. As I have indicated, De Quincey's concept of symbolism is at the heart of what he considers to be powerful or sublime, and in The English Mail-Coach his derivation and selection of a symbol, and the use of it as the basis of his artistic method, is perfectly exemplified. While the Confessions or the Revolt of the Tartars contain sublime episodes, or, particularly in the case of the latter, are developed merely because of the sublime potential of a single event,[1] the Mail-Coach coheres into an artistic unity largely unachieved by these other works. The English Mail-Coach was originally planned as one section of the Suspiria De Profundis, but, presumably because De Quincey recognised the success he had achieved with this single part, he published it separately with no notice of the connection.[2] The remainder of the Suspiria, which I consider in chapter eight, naturally, in its incomplete condition, presents little cohesive structural unity, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to begin my account of De Quincey's major fiction with the Mail-Coach. However, it is not only because the Mail-Coach does stand apart from his other work in terms of its structural unity that I select it for central consideration. The essay is a suitable object of detailed study since it admirably exhibits the various qualities of sublime experience which I have discussed in earlier sections. In addition to this, in point of view of chronology, the Mail-Coach (1849) can be seen as having direct influence upon De Quincey's other major fictional work, The Confessions of an English Opium Eater. Although this work was originally published

in 1821, a number of important revisions were made during 1854-6, and apparently in the light of what had been achieved with The English Mail-Coach.

At the outset of The English Mail-Coach, De Quincey observes that mail-coaches played a large part "in developing the anarchies of my subsequent dreams" (XIII, 271), and, as in The Revolt of the Tartars he provides a careful list of reasons to explain fully why the subject in hand developed such a powerful hold upon him. Four of these five reasons are immediately recognisable as being associated with De Quincey's theory of sublimity. The first reason given, that concerning the velocity of the coaches, is clearly related to the abolition of the normal capacities of sense perception, and the achievement of an entirely new perspective. Such, indeed, is clearly the effect of velocity in this case, as will be seen from later discussions of the images in the essay, where elasticity of space and time are as important as in the Suspiria. The second significant property of mail-coach travel for De Quincey, although much of it naturally takes place during the day, is the "grand effects for the eye between lamp-light and darkness upon solitary roads" (XIII, 271). De Quincey's familiar pattern of contrast, often expressed by means of the juxtaposition of light and dark,[3] is thus given scope through the rapid transitions experienced during travel on the night mail. De Quincey's response to the power of such effects has already been referred to, and his response to the idea of darkness itself is also familiar. He makes a similar point later in the piece when he writes of the "many aspects of sublimity under accidents of mist that hid, or sudden blazes that revealed..." (XIII, 284) in the course of a journey with the mail-coach.

The third source of power contained in the idea of the mail-coach is the readily comprehensible response that De Quincey feels towards the horses, but the fourth is again an idea central to De Quincey's system. Power in this case is derived

> through the conscious presence of a central intellect, that, in the midst of vast distances--of storms, or darkness, of danger--overruled all obstacles into one steady co-operation to a national result (XIII, 272).

Immediately familiar is the stress upon "vast distances", on storms, darkness and danger, all of which are expectedly associated with sublime experience. De Quincey explains the power of the distances, and the

sense of infinity which impresses him about the activity of the mail, in the concluding part of the first section of the essay, which is entitled "Going down with Victory". As the mail carries the news of great victories in the wars against Napoleon to every remote part of the country, it kindles "at every new instant new successions of burning joy, has an obscure effect of multiplying the victory itself, by multiplying to the imagination into infinity the stages of its progressive diffusion "(XIII, 294). But even more significant is the essential conflict of the coach itself against adverse forces, as it strives to fulfil its mission. With a typical use of a musical analogy, De Quincey creates an image of organic harmony emerging from a situation of violent stress and conflict:

> For my own feeling, this post-office service spoke as by some mighty orchestra, where a thousand instruments, all disregarding each other, and so far in danger of discord, yet all obedient as slaves to the supreme baton of some great leader, terminate in a perfection of harmony like that of heart, brain, and lungs in a healthy animal organization (XIII,272).

Thus the mail-coach system provides an image of reconciliation emerging from conflict and chaos, which naturally impresses itself as potentially sublime upon De Quincey's artistic consciousness. He expands on this point of the unity achieved through the power of the mail, when he later compares this form of transport with the more modern steam traction. "The gatherings of gazers about a laurelled mail," he writes, "had one centre and acknowledged one sole interest. But the crowds attending at a railway station have as little unity as running water, and own as many centres as there are separate carriages in the train"(XIII, 284-5).[4] Thus very early on in the essay the mail-coach is established as a suitable symbol of the transcendence of chaos and disunity, which it will ultimately become in the final sections.

As if all this were not sufficient, a fifth reason is provided by De Quincey as to why he has chosen such a theme, and in this final explanation lies an even clearer statement of how the mail coach has become such a potent symbol for him. He writes:

> But, finally, that particular element in this whole combination which most impressed myself, and through which it is that to this hour Mr. Palmer's mail-coach system tyrannizes over my dreams by terror and terrific beauty, lay in the awful political mission which at that time it fulfilled (XIII, 272).

Here it is that De Quincey expresses the universal moral application

of his chosen image, the way in which an ordinary device of modern transport, together with its mundane associations, can become symbolic of archetypal issues. The mail, at the time De Quincey was riding it most frequently, was the principal purveyor of news relating to English victories over the French, which were not "vulgar conflicts of ordinary warfare" (XIII, 272), but rather represented the "sublime strife of the good principle with the bad" (III, 62). The mail-coach as an agent related to this particular war, which was always singled out by De Quincey as being particularly meaningful in terms of its moral value, thus transcends the essential meanness of its own inherent nature. It becomes, indeed, "a spiritualized and glorified object to an impassioned heart" (XIII, 272), sufficiently abstract to exert a remarkable power over De Quincey's dreams. Thus, De Quincey's five reasons collected together reveal how his poet's mind was capable of discovering sublime potential in an ordinary object, so that it might be seen as a symbol capable of development through fifty pages of prose.

A grand and powerful subject has been introduced, and its evolution will be examined shortly. However, a rather different and to a certain extent incongruous element intrudes, or at least occurs, at this point in the essay. In both the "System of the Heavens" and "On the Knocking at the gate in Macbeth", the sublime theme which prompted the writing of the piece is undermined, or intruded upon, by a note of curious levity.[5] This is precisely the case in the Mail-Coach, where the analysis of the sublime potential of the subject in hand is immediately succeeded by a humourous account of the relative status of inside and outside passengers. Using the analogy of the event in history which De Quincey perhaps considers most sacred, namely the French Revolution, he describes the reassertion of the superior value of the outside seats on the mail as achieved by the students of Oxford University. Having thus humourously employed the concept of the Revolution, De Quincey goes on to create a passage in a tone which can best be described as "mock-sublime". Beginning by stating that "No dignity is perfect which does not at some point ally itself with the mysterious," a point he often makes with regard to seriously treated sublime subjects, De Quincey proceeds by parodying the power of the mail's mysterious and unstoppable passage across the country:

Look at those turnpike gates: with what deferential hurry, with

> what an obedient start, they fly open at our approach! Look at that long line of carts and and carters ahead, audaciously usurping the very crest of the road. Ah! traitors, they do not hear us as yet; but as soon as the dreadful blast of our horn reaches them with proclamation of our approach, see with what frenzy of trepidation they fly to their horses' heads, and deprecate our wrath by the precipitation of their crane-neck quarterings" (XIII, 280).

The impassioned prose builds up towards a climax of mock-horror, using words such as "frenzy", "dreadful", "trepidation", "treason", "crime", alluding even to the "systole and diastole" of the political system which De Quincey has elsewhere described in these terms as part of his dialectical structure.[6] The conclusion of this particular passage comes with the upsetting by the mail of an egg cart, which De Quincey pictures in the following way:

> ... when wildernesses of eggs were lying poached under our horses' hoofs, then would I stretch forth my hands in sorrow, saying...."Ah! wherefore have we not time to weep over you?"--

The imagery of potential horror is used to comic effect at this point, and appears to undermine the sublime implications of the theme as originally stated. However, in the present essay, at least, the levity does seem to have some organic relationship with the later developments of the piece, since the mock-horror at the beginning lends greater force to the actual nightmare horror which occurs in the second part of the work. The unstoppable, omnipotent nature of the mail-coach, now treated in humourous style, becomes transformed into an image of potential destruction to life in the "Vision of Sudden Death", the title given to the second section of the essay. The elements of speed and collision become essential elements of the later nightmare, and important parts of the ultimate sublime meaning of the mail-coach. The first section of the work thus gathers and explains the details from which the second and the third sections are constructed. Indeed, it is tempting, in the light of the aesthetic point previously discussed,[7] to justify the curious mixture of sublime potential and farcical humour contained in the first section of The English Mail-Coach. Indeed, if the reader is at all perplexed by the light-hearted tone introduced into the sublime theme, it is worth reflecting upon De Quincey's own response to the similar intrusion in Macbeth. It is not unreasonable to suppose that by means of the tonal mixture and the introduction of paradox, De Quincey hopes to heighten the powerful effect of his sublime

subject by reference to ordinary affairs, to the "knowledge" aspects of mail-coach travel.

A sixth element, though not numbered by De Quincey as such, since it does not spring directly from the image of the mail-coach, contributes to the sublimity of his theme, and is also accounted for in the first section. He has already explained why the image of coach travel itself should have such a powerful effect upon him, and he concludes his argument by then accounting for the horrific element which is to be developed so strongly in the succeeding sections. The potential for horror has thus far only been indicated in the mock-sublime passages, but now De Quincey analyses its incidence in terms of certain images presented to his mind as he travelled in the mail. The extraordinarily sensitive quality of his response to the whole sublime experience accounts for the subsequently very powerful effect of the horrific associations which develop for him. De Quincey describes the growth of horrific associations in the last paragraph in the first section (which is followed, in this same section, by the descriptive piece "Going Down with Victory"), where he explains the sense of lost or passing time he receives from the recollection of a certain girl he used to see beside the route of the Bath mail.

The development of this impassioned conclusion to what has otherwise been the most non-poetic section of the Mail-Coach is indicatory of the way in which the essay as a whole will develop. In this concluding part, the girl becomes associated in De Quincey's mind with a rose in June, so that a recollection of one will naturally evoke the other. This is the idyllic aspect of De Quincey's remembered vision, the part which represents the truly halcyon days of mail-coach travel, long before the threat of steam appeared, and before De Quincey himself had suffered what he calls the "Pains of Opium".[8] The demonic or horrific dimension of the image, which for one thing represents the claustrophobic terror experienced during a full realization of lost or past time, is developed from De Quincey likening the coach driver (who happens to be the girl's grandfather) to a crocodile. The comparison is made originally on the basis of the inability of this driver to turn around in his seat, owing to his bulk, in order to observe the dalliance which De Quincey might be conducting with the girl during a pause in the journey. From this essentially unlikely comparison emerge others

concerning the length and breadth of the crocodile's and the coachman's back, and as De Quincey approaches his finale--"Ah! reader! when I look back upon those days, it seems to me that all things change--all things perish" (XIII, 287)--his imagination concerning the crocodile becomes less and less controlled. It is difficult to know whether the penultimate paragraph of the section is intentionally as absurd as it seems, with its almost insane digression upon the subject of riding crocodiles, but it does at least show how the image of this particular animal takes considerable control over De Quincey's imagination, and becomes inalienably associated with the demonic aspects of stage-coaching.[9] Certainly, the illogical development of this paragraph suggests the uncontrollable dream patterns which are to dominate the remainder of the essay. The last paragraph itself is presented in the form of a dream vision, which is rendered in terms of a heraldic device where the sweetness of the girl, or the pleasant associations of the past, are blended with the horrific or unbearable aspects of such contemplation:

> once again the roses call up the sweet countenance of Fanny; and she, being the grand-daughter of a crocodile, awakens a dreadful host of semi-legendary animals--griffins, dragons, basilisks, sphinxes--till at length the whole vision of fighting images crowds into one towering armorial field, a vast emblazonry of human charities and human loveliness that have perished, but quartered heraldically with unutterable and demoniac natures....(XIII, 289).

The whole device is surmounted by "one fair female hand, with the forefinger pointing, in sweet sorrowful admonition to heaven, where is sculptured the eternal writing which proclaims the frailty of earth and her children". The fair hand of admonition here is certainly closely related to "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" from the Suspiria, and is typical of the religious nature of De Quincey's sublime climaxes. Furthermore, the whole device, containing the essential contrast, is remarkably similar to the image of joy and horror in "The System of the Heavens".[10] Thus ends the revised version of this passage, which consists of the first of the impassioned or sublime revelations to emerge from the central image of the mail-coach.

As Masson observes, however, the concluding passage is a mere one fifth of the length of the original version published in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" in 1849. The removed passage, which Masson reprints as a note to his edition of the 1854 Mail-Coach, is interesting

since, although it would detract from the poetical climax of the first section, it contains many more hints concerning the nature of the sublime experiences later to be described. Most notably, the processes by which the girl and the crocodile-coachman become interfused in a strange dream effect are more fully explained. The nature of the experience of remembrance is more specifically analysed in terms of De Quincey's typical pattern of antithesis and paradox:

> The peculiarity [the fusion of pathos and horror] consisted in the confluence of two different keys, though apparently repelling each other, into the music and governing principles of the same dream; horror, such as possesses the maniac, and yet, by momentary transitions, grief, such as may be supposed to possess the dying mother when leaving her infant children to the mercies of the cruel. Usually, and perhaps always, in an unshaken nervous system, these two modes of misery exclude each other--here they met in horrid reconciliation (XIII, 290-91n.).

Essentially, De Quincey is describing here the repeated duality he discovers in all his experiences of the sublime. The original first section stressed much more strongly, and explained more fully, the nature of the horror which arose from the merging of crocodile and coachman. He writes of such an unnatural fusion:

> This horror has always been secretly felt by man; it was felt even under pagan forms of religion, which offered a very feeble, and also a very limited, gamut for giving expression to the human capacities of sublimity or horror (XIII, 291n.).

The duality is not, of course, absolutely dependent upon De Quincey's mail-coach experiences, but the crocodile associative pattern forever welds images of beauty and images of horror together. De Quincey tells how these images later affected his dreams, the initial "gaiety", as he calls it, of the comparison between the coachman and the crocodile being completely transfigured. He writes:

> I have remarked that the caprices, the gay arabesques, and the lively floral luxuriations of dreams, betray a shocking tendency to pass into finer maniacal splendours (XIII, 291n.).

And this is precisely the method of the Mail-Coach itself, which proceeds from a fairly factual account of coaching to the poetical fantasies of the later sections, where revelation and horror are inextricably mixed. The light humour, or the "gaiety", of the early part becomes transfigured, just as De Quincey's dreams themselves, into the "finer maniacal splendours" of the subsequent sections.

The subsection "Going Down With Victory" serves to expand upon

one or two of the tones and themes thus far introduced, but does so on a predominantly literal level. The sublime conception, already mentioned, of the mail as the propagator of news about the archetypal struggle against France, is the central theme of these few pages. Also included is considerable "knowledge" material concerning the operation and appearance of the mails, "knowledge" which, in the end, helps to build up the "power" of the piece as a whole. And yet literal as it appears to be, this brief account of the news of victory being spread through the land does in fact develop the closing symbol, that of the heraldic device, which provided the climax to the first part. De Quincey generally expresses his sublime climaxes in terms of one single vision, image or symbol, which unites the various elements of the powerful experience. The heraldic device at the end of the first part of the Mail-Coach is typical of this method, which for convenience, can be called the tableau method.

There are three tableaux created in "Going Down With Victory", each of which consists of an encounter with people along the route of the mail, just as Fanny had been encountered. In their differing natures, the encounters elaborate upon, on an essentially realistic level, the duality of the sublime experience already indicated at the end of the first part. Just as the whole sublime subject of coaching has conjured a vision of the joy and suffering of existence, so "Going Down With Victory" advances this central theme. The first encounter is with a mother and her two daughters, and their response to the victory news brought by the mail is nothing but joyous. In typical fashion, De Quincey expresses the moment as if it were a tableau consisting of a few essential details:

> What lovely animation, what beautiful unpremeditated pantomime, explaining to us every syllable that passes, in these ingenuous girls! By the sudden start and raising of the hands on first discovering our laurelled equipage, by the sudden movement and appeal to the elder lady from both of them, and by the heightened colour on the animated countenances, we can almost hear them saying, "See, see! Look at their laurels! Oh, mamma! there has been a great battle in Spain; and it has been a great victory". In a moment we are on the point of passing them. (XIII, 296).

This vision closely corresponds to the "Fanny" element in the heraldic device of a few pages before.

De Quincey, in his habit of perhaps over-explaining the dialec-

tic which is so firmly established throughout his work, then writes that "Every joy, however, even rapturous joy--such is the sad law of the earth--may carry with it grief, or fear of grief to come" (XIII, 297). And so follows an encounter, in almost exactly the same circumstances as the first,[11] with a lady in mourning, together with an attendant. This tableau is the "crocodile" element of the heraldic device:

> The lady is in mourning; and her countenance expresses sorrow...Our decorations explain the case to her at once; but she beholds them with apparent anxiety, or even with terror... and, if the guard were right in thinking the lady to have received it [the newspaper] with a gesture of horror, it could not be doubtful that she had suffered some deep personal affliction in connexion with this Spanish war (XIII, 297).

The third meeting is with a woman who, though at the moment rejoicing in news of the great victory at Talavera, in which her son's regiment took part, will probably very shortly be mourning his death in that same battle. De Quincey, or the narrator, is aware that most of the English regiment were killed in the course of the battle, but he withholds this information to allow the woman at least one more night of happiness. This final tableau thus blends together the themes of joy and sorrow mixed with horror, and the first section of The English Mail-Coach ends with the image of this sublime duality, which, for De Quincey, symbolizes the whole of life experience:

> Strange it is, yet true, that she seemed to have no fears for her son's safety even after this knowledge that the 23rd Dragoons had been memorably engaged; but so much was she enraptured by the knowledge that his regiment, and therefore he, had rendered conspicuous service...--so absolutely was fear swallowed up in joy--that, in the mere simplicity of her fervent nat re, the poor woman threw her arms around my neck.... (XIII, 300).

This final portrait is also significant in that it completes the heraldic trilogy and forms some counterpart to the upraised hand which points "in sweet sorrowful admonition" towards heaven. Like the hand above the shield, the third encounter unites the themes of the foregoing pages in a single, powerful symbol. The passage of the mail-coach across the country is thus a source of sublimity for De Quincey, not only because it propagates news of victory in an archetypal struggle, but also because it elicits the marked duality of response, which is always a central feature of his sublime experience. The mail-coach, too, reinforces De Quincey's natural tendency to establish single, brief images as his cli-

maxes, since its rapid transit automatically creates such isolated symbolic visions.[12]

The motif of horror and bereavement thus developed throughout the essentially realistic first section of The English Mail-Coach lays the basis for the "Vision of Sudden Death" which is the title of the second part of the essay. The mail-coach itself remains as a central symbol, and in the second part, the process by which dreaming can begin to transform such a symbol for De Quincey, to create the "finer maniacal splendours" he has talked about earlier, is well revealed. Dreaming, as a theme and subject for reflection, has already been substantially introduced in the first section (in the 1849 version at least), and indeed De Quincey's descriptions of the three tableaux in "Going Down With Victory" has something remarkably dream-like about them. In the"Vision of Sudden Death", the method becomes less realistic still, thereby emphasising the abstract qualities of the subject in hand, as De Quincey comes closer to showing how the symbols which appear in his writing have been revealed to him in his dreams. It should be remembered, however, that the situation described in section two is one which he actually experienced, and it thus far remains in touch with the purely realistic. However, it was the power of the sublime image of the mail-coach to affect his dreams, which led De Quincey to choose the theme in the first place.

Dreaming is at once the method and the subject of "A Vision of Sudden Death". In the long excluded passage from the first section of the essay, De Quincey had already refered to the transition from an objective horror, for example the "innoculation upon each other of incompatible natures" (XIII, 291n.), to the subjective horror of such an image when it enters a man's dreams. He writes:

> But the dream-horror which I speak of is far more frightful. The dreamer finds housed within himself--occupying, as it were, some separate chamber in his brain--holding, perhaps, from that station a secret and detestable commerce with his own heart--some horrid alien nature. What if it were his own nature repeated, --still, if the duality were distinctly perceptible, even that --even this mere numerical double of his own consciousness--might be a curse too mighty to be sustained (XIII, 292n.).

The "Vision" begins with amplification upon this idea that the horror in dreaming might reveal some deep internal truth about the individual, perhaps concerning guilt which he has concealed (a theme very much in

evidence, as I shall show, in the Confessions). In dreams, De Quincey has always found general revelation concerning the meanings of existence, and so too he suggests that dreaming will lead to the centrally meaningful symbols of man's personal and collective life. In the instance discussed in this second part of the Mail-Coach, the deep internal truth relates to the capacity for action on another's behalf in a situation of crisis. Transcendence of self, which is a condition essential to sublime revelation, thus becomes a theme which emerges from De Quincey's meditation on the theme of sudden death. To act on someone else's behalf is essentially the demand which De Quincey finds made upon him when the mail-coach he is travelling with enters upon a collision course with another vehicle. "A Vision of Sudden Death" is centrally about the processes of vital action at such a moment, and this De Quincey feels, represents an archetypal pattern of dreaming:

> The situation here contemplated exposes a dreadful ulcer, lurking far down in the depths of human nature. It is not that men generally are summoned to face such awful trials. But potentially, and in shadowy outline, such a trial is moving subterraneously in perhaps all men's natures. Upon the secret mirror of our dreams such a trial is darkly projected, perhaps, to every one of us (XIII, 304).

Thus, in a sense, the actual events of "A Vision of Sudden Death" become, for De Quincey, the events of a dream, with a concomitant importance of meaning, they become symbolic and ideal, and sublime in their revelatory quality.

I have suggested that perhaps the description of the three tableaux in "Going Down With Victory" have something dream-like about them, but there is no doubt in the case of "A Vision of Sudden Death" that an actual event is rendered as if it were a dream experience. It is important to note that at the outset of the journey De Quincey took a quantity of laudanum, which, of course, is likely to effect as much of an idealizing or symbolizing process upon the events of real life, as upon the dreaming capacity. But even before taking the laudanum (although too much should not be made of this, since a large part of the section is written in a sublime or impassioned style created, obviously, after the whole event had taken place) De Quincey begins to idealize his central image. Responding, as he so often does, to the sublime potential of light and shade, De Quincey starts to mythologize his subject, seeing "the huge saucer eyes of the mail, blazing through the

gloom" (XIII, 305). At this point occurs a typical humourously-toned passage, which, as in the example from the first section, comes as something of a shock, particularly after the severe introduction on the subject of sudden death. With the witty inversion, famous from his essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts", he recounts that his place on the top of the mail has remained marked by his coat during his absence, despite the darkness of the night:

> --for, in the dark, people commit deeds of darkness, gas being a great ally of morality; but it so happened that on this night there was no other outside passenger; and thus the crime, which else was but too probable, missed fire for want of a criminal (XIII, 306).

The humourous tone persists after the taking of the laudanum, and the description of the coachman, who begins to partake of the symbolic aura of the journey, is rendered in such a manner. De Quincey's lightheartedness identification of this man with Cyclops--" a monster", "dreadful", "shapeless" and "huge"--recalls his use of the inverted sublime in the first section, and relates foreward to the later identification of himself with Achilles.[14] The monstrosity of the present driver must also recall the nightmare associations connected with the driver of the Bath Road coach, and, indeed, the vision of sudden death is finally accountable to this man, since he falls asleep at the reins.

De Quincey returns to a more serious tone when he begins to approach the climax of the vision. The main action itself is given a backcloth of vast calm, a "night of peculiar solemnity and peace" (XIII, 310) which is set in dynamic contrast both to the preceding description of thronging human activity, and to the subsequent near-disaster. De Quincey lingers upon the stillness of this particular moment, just as he does before another important moment of transition or change in the Confessions.[15] The atmosphere of the moment partakes of the familiar haziness associated with the sublime:

> The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight and the first timid tremblings of the dawn were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency (XIII, 311).

Time, soon to be manipulated further by De Quincey as the sense of the dream grows stronger, stops at this moment as he experiences a brief

revelation of the nearness of God. Breaking in upon his revery come the first intimations of the impending collision, and although the tone becomes more urgent and action becomes more specific, De Quincey increa ingly emphasizes the dream-like, symbolic quality of the disaster. Time is slowed down further (for, of course, opium releases all necessity to be bounded by the finite) as De Quincey meditates upon the sound he can hear from the oncoming vehicle. This fact alone immensely heightens the dream-like quality of the episode, with its vastly increased awareness, since De Quincey is claiming that he can hear a light gig four miles away, over the sound of his own mail-coach.

The long meditation upon the rapidly approaching collision effectively involves the reader in the deliberate time distortion, and, of course, builds towards the particularly sublime moment of this episode. Indeed, the reflective passages just preceeding the climax in some measure relate to the nature of the sublime moment as De Quincey describes it:

> ah! what a sublime thing does courage seem when some fearful summons on the great deeps of life carries a man, as if running before a hurricane, up to the giddy crest of some tumultuous crisis from which lie two courses, and a voice says to him audibly, "One way lies hope; take the other and mourn forever!" How grand a triumph if, even then, amidst the raving of all around him, and the frenzy of the danger, the man is able to confront his situation--is able to retire for a moment into solitude with God, and to seek his counsel from Him! (XIII,315).

The moment of peace in contrast with violent action, an idea already well established in this section, is again the fundamental structure of the present sublime occurence. The same pattern of oppositions and contrasts is evoked again at the very end of the second section, when suddenly De Quincey shifts the point of view of the piece from himself to the young girl in the gig, which has been glancingly struck by the mail-coach:

> From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night--from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dreamlight--from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love--suddenly as from the woods and fields--suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation-suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice (XIII, 318).

The importance De Quincey attaches to the dynamic polarity centred about

a crucial moment of transition, is emphasised by this essential repetition, though in slightly varied terms, of the basic situation.

The question of what the driver of the small cart will do to avert the catastrophe, and the extent to which he will fulfil his "terrific duty",(the narrator himself having done all in his power), is brought into further relief by De Quincey's detailed account of the last seventy seconds before collision. De Quincey maintains the sense of force and speed by writing in the following way:

> Oh, hurry, hurry, my brave young man! for the cruel hoofs of our horses--they also hurry! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses (XIII, 316).

But simultaneous with this emphasis on speed as the climax of the vision-like experience approaches, the seconds and actions are lengthened almost interminably, as the gig's driver moves his vehicle from the path of the mail.

The conclusion of the essay consists of the familiar tableau effect, a fixed image of power which reflects the abstracting process which has been central to this second section. The image is once again tri-partite; isolating, but bringing together, the three participants of the drama. De Quincey himself "rose in horror to gaze upon the ruins we might have caused", and the driver of the gig "sat like a rock... his was the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest by horror". It is the lady, however, who surmounts the image as a whole, and unifies the episode by becoming the epitome of horrified expression:

> will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying, raving, despairing (XIII, 317).

The lady, thus becoming another of De Quincey's ladies of sorrow, joins the women of the essay's first section, and is established, like them, as a symbol of the sublime meaning of the essay.

The second section of the Mail-Coach is concluded by the sentence, "the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes, in an instant, and swept it into my dreams forever" (XIII,318). Such dream experience, indeed, provides the substance of the third part of the essay, which is entitled "Dream-Fugue: founded on the preceding theme of sudden death", and which transcends entirely the literal method of the first two parts.[16] De Quincey's technique in the second section of describing the events related there almost as if they were already in a

dream, provides a totally effective link with the more realistic content of the first section. The power of the sublime moment when the accident is finally averted, impressed as it was by force of all the sublime associations De Quincey has previously accounted for, can never be forgotten by him. The incident transfers itself to his dreams, and in that now entirely symbolic condition becomes permanent for him. This is indeed the method of all De Quincey's art and best writing, the presentation of those few powerful images which have, for him, become absolutely permanent and transcendentally meaningful. With an allusion to the commonly used echo image,[17] he writes:

> Epilepsy so brief of horror, wherefore is it that thou canst not die? Passing so suddenly into darkness, wherefore is it that still thou sheddest thy sad funeral blights upon the gorgeous mosaics of dreams? Fragment of music too passionate, heard once, and heard no more, what aileth thee, that thy deep rolling chords come up at intervals through all the worlds of sleep, and after forty years have lost no element of horror (XIII, 319).

The echo, as a symbol of something which, through repetition, achieves a tendency towards the infinite, finds development in this last section, which, in a sense, is a hymn of praise to all that is permanent and infinite. The raised hand above the shield at the end of the first part, the moment of communion with God before the collision, together with the second raised hand belonging to the woman in the gig, gather together to form the religious revelation which is the conclusion of The English Mail-Coach. The theme of infinity, hinted at by these earlier references, gathers to a climax in the last section, where it is expressed principally in accumulations of architectural images.[18] The first version of the Confessions, written almost thirty years before, accounted fully for the prevalence of architectural imagery in De Quincey's work. There De Quincey explains the impression that Coleridge's account of certain Piranesi prints had upon his mind, and he uses this as an analogy (and by implication, a cause) for his dream-scenery:

> In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds (III, 439).

Images of infinity in the "Dream-Fugue" begin with the vast "desert-spaces of the sea" being rendered in architectural images--"Upon its [the sea's] surface sat mighty mists, which grouped themselves into

arches and long cathedral aisles" (XIII, 320). The Piranesi effect gathers force, suggesting an infinity of both time and space, as De Quincey merges his established symbols in the new, non-literal medium of the pure dream:

> Of purple granite was the necropolis; yet, in the first minute, it lay like a purple stain upon the horizon, so mighty was the distance. In the second minute it trembled through many changes, growing into terraces and towers of wondrous altitude, so mighty was the pace...Vast sarcophagi rose on every side, having towers and turrets that, upon the limits of the central aisle, strode forward with haughty intrusion, that ran back with mighty shadows into answering recesses (XIII, 323-4).

Thus De Quincey renders the fearful flight of the now transfigured mail-coach, as it races towards death down the aisle of a vast cathedral.

The symbolic dream-process becomes complete as, in a series of visions, the conflict of beauty and life with the forces of horror and death is brought to a sublime climax of prophecy and revelation. The "Dream-Fugue" opens with the figure of a woman, now transformed into a clearly apocalyptic image by the merging of De Quincey's remembrance of the woman in the gig, and certain tomb carving he has seen:

> Passion of sudden death! that once in youth I read and interpreted by the shadows of thy averted signs!--rapture of panic taking the shape (which amongst tombs in churches I have seen) of woman's Ionic form bending forward from the ruins of her grave with arching foot, with eyes upraised, with clasped adoring hands--waiting, watching, trembling, praying for the trumpet's call to rise from dust for ever! (XIII, 318).

In section I of the "Dream-Fugue" the imminent danger of the lady on her "fairy pinnace" (the light gig) is represented by the contrast of the summer season, and the "shadow of death" cast by the narrator's ship. The lady reappears in iconographic form once again in section II, repeating the movements described at the moment of the earlier collision. So, too, she is in section III, recognisable by her gestures, but now she is represented as being a girl, a more youthful figure. The "killing sense of eternity" is evoked here as the narrator fails to catch up with the fleeing figure of this girl before she is swallowed up by quicksand. The echo of this episode goes far back in De Quincey's life, long before the experience on the mail-coach, to the time of his sister's death, where the loss of her living presence induced a temporary sense of defeat and despair in him. The early experience of death was an important transition point[19] for De Quincey, representing as it

does a movement from the innocence of childhood to a world of "experience", which is to be haunted by images of mortality. As the "Dream-Fugue" progresses, De Quincey moves back in time, therefore, from the image derived from an adult experience of a death situation, to the image derived from his first childhood experience of death. Thus, in part IV, the transformed girl (De Quincey's sister) becomes removed even further in time and becomes a baby. The baby is still in danger from the advancing peril of the mail-coach, and is discovered in the aisle of the architecturally infinite cathedral. As the images of infinity increase in power, so the threat of sudden death becomes greater, since the potential victim is now the helpless child, and the moral fortitude, earlier refered to by De Quincey, is no longer applicable.

As De Quincey wrote in the first version of The English Mail-Coach, ever since his sixth year he could "never hear the sound of joy without sullen whispers of treachery in ambush",[20] and so, in part IV of the "Dream-Fugue" the exultation over the victory of Waterloo appears to be deeply marred by the infant's impending death. But, with the return to the period of innocence, as represented by the figure of the child, the climax of the essay is reached and all sense of mortality, unknown at that early period of life, is dissolved in the vision of revelation. The world of knowledge and death gives way to a world of power and everlasting life. The passage of mortal time, in the form of the galloping coach, is halted by a trumpet blast, and eternity is triumphant as the bas-relief representations of past existences become vital once again. The baby is transfigured once more into the figure of the woman, and thus symbolizes the salvation of all the previous images of "sinking, rising, raving, despairing". De Quincey's dream vision has come full circle and is complete.

Thus the apparent destruction of the transformed lady from the gig in parts I, II, and III of the "Dream-Fugue", gives way in parts IV and V to an apocalyptic vision of salvation, which has distinct echoes from the Book of Revelations. For this is the revelation, the sublime realization which naturally follows from De Quincey's Christian optimism. In a fully recognisable pattern, he has created the paradoxical clash of white and black, or life and death, and has resolved the paradox by evolution into a higher or transcendent mode of perception. As befits a climax in which opposites are resolved, the style of this third

part of the Mail-Coach is entirely that of De Quincey's impassioned prose, showing that, when he feels it to be entirely inappropriate, he can exclude the recurrent tone of levity. Indeed, the essay as a whole possesses the control and the organization of structure which this statement might suggest. The English Mail-Coach is in fact unique amongst De Quincey's writings, being so much more compact than the Confessions and complete by comparison with the Suspiria. No other work so well exemplifies the nature of De Quincey's sublime vision in its many aspects. Others among his works exhibit this same power, but never in the degree of concentration found in The English Mail-Coach, which, as a result of its total effect, provides a useful line of approach to an analysis of some characteristics of these other works.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM EATER

> ..will ye, choir that intercede--wilt thou, angel that forgivest--join together and charm away that mighty phantom, born amidst the gathering mists of remorse, which strides after me in pursuit from forgotten days-towering for ever into proportions more and more colossal, overhanging and overshadowing my head as if close behind, yet dating its nativity from hours that are fled by more than half-a-century?
>
> De Quincey

> Wherever the psyche is set violently oscillating by a numinous experience, there is a danger that the thread by which one hangs may be torn. Should that happen, one man tumbles into an absolute affirmation, another into an equally absolute negation... The numinosum is dangerous because it lures men to extremes, so that a modest truth is regarded as **the** truth and a minor mistake is equated with fatal error. Tout passe--yesterday's truth is today's deception, and yesterday's false inference may be tomorrow's revelation.
>
> C.G. Jung

My emphasis in this account of the Confessions is upon the sublime climaxes which emerge from the long passages of pure autobiography, as well as upon the general structure of the work. These climaxes, or moments of extremely powerful feeling, are expressions of De Quincey's apprehension of symbolism, and contain some, if not all, of the elements I have earlier described as being associable with his idea of the sublime. Some of the examples, however, cannot be considered as specifically sublime in themselves, since very often unmitigated horror is their preponderant effect, but even in these cases it is clear that De Quincey's sense of power derives from familiar characteristics, namely infinity, paradoxical contrast, and obscurity. It should be clear, then, that his choice of incidents to be treated in the impassioned manner seems always to be determined by his attraction to such characteristics.

1. A Consideration of some passages added in the 1856 version.[1]

It is frequently asserted that the revised, or 1856, version of the Confessions of an English Opium Eater is considerably inferior to

the original, or 1821, printing of the work. To take a recent example, Alethea Hayter, in her introduction to the Penguin edition of the Confessions, writes:

> This revised version of the Confessions is one which is most often reprinted and most widely known, and the reputation of the work has suffered accordingly, for De Quincey undoubtedly spoiled his masterpiece by revising it.[2]

However, to make such a statement is to overlook much of great interest and to ignore the changing patterns of De Quincey's later work. Certain of the additions are doubly important since they clearly exemplify De Quincey's increasing use of the aspects of sublimity which I describe in previous chapters. The added portions, which occur principally in the first part of the Confessions, entitled "Introductory Narration", fall essentially into two categories, The first is that of purely biographical information, or "knowledge" material, which serves to fill in De Quincey's early background. Such material includes the account of guardianship, with reference to his own particular guardians, and his stay at Manchester Grammar School (III,233-80). There is also the opening preamble account of his and Coleridge's addiction (III, 223-232), and, certainly, in many instances the information provided does tend to clutter and obscure the direction of the original book. De Quincey's continuing attempt to explain the nature of his opium dreams and visions through relating the experiences which lay at their source is not often supported by such digressive autobiographical material. It seems as if these additions, besides being provided for the purpose of lengthening the Confessions, may have been provoked by the writing and revising of other autobiographical work which he had recently been undertaking.[3]

The second kind of addition, however, relates closely to experiences of power or sublimity, and are more of the quality of the climaxes I have already observed in The English Mail-Coach. These additions are particularly interesting in the light of this earlier essay, since it seems clear that many of the Confessions additions were determined by what De Quincey had achieved in 1849 with this piece. The revisions which he was making to the Mail-Coach in 1854 obviously brought the essay clearly to mind once again, to the extent that the two works reveal very close parallels. I am suggesting, therefore, that the expanded version of the Confessions does not merely represent an exercise

in padding, as Ian Jack maintains,[4] but an attempt to revise on the basis of literary experience and current preoccupations.

Particularly noteworthy among De Quincey's additions, as I shall shortly show, is the intensification of certain episodes which closely recall passages in Wordsworth's Prelude, so that the similar nature of the two autobiographies becomes clearer. De Quincey had, of course, read a draft of the 1805 Prelude when he wrote the first version of the Confessions, but when he was revising this work in 1856, he would certainly have become re-aquainted with Wordsworth's poem through the its final, published version of 1850. It was perhaps this reading which caused the amplification of certain Prelude-like episodes in the Confessions.

Other additions further reveal elements of De Quincey's working method, particularly his symbolizing tendency, together with the pattern of life-echoes which run through his imaginative work. Moments of extreme folly leading to recurrent sensations of guilt emerges more apparently as a principal theme, and, of course, in this later version of the Confessions, De Quincey emphasized the "follies" which had led to his use of opium,[5] rather than the youthful "hardships"[6] he had originally written about. Before, therefore, making any remarks on the Confessions as a whole, I shall consider the importance of some of the 1856 additions to that work.

An early addition is particularly interesting in the light of the Suspiria De Profundis which, being written only a few years before the revised Confessions, should also be borne in mind as a possible influence of the new structure of De Quincey's more famous work. As I shall notice in the next section on the Suspiria itself, simultaneity of time, as a version of De Quincey's preoccupation with infinity, is a major theme in that work. The "echoes" I shall discuss later in this section are one form of representation of De Quincey's idea of the palimpsest,[7] or life considered as a series of closely interacting events. The time distortion in the Mail-Coach, which reaches its climax with a revelation of all time being simultaneous, is another aspect of this same effect. And, as will emerge from my account of certain episodes in the Confessions, time finite (life) versus time infinite (spiritual immortality), is a theme very central to this work. De Quincey was keenly aware of the sublime effect achieved though such a contemplation of life as a totality, with the corresponding pathos attached to the partial nature of

human vision. This is in fact the subject matter of the first of the 1856 additions in question, where De Quincey elaborates upon the period he spent at the house of a Mr. and Mrs. K---- in Manchester, before his attendance at the Grammar School there. The contrast which seizes his imagination in this case is the idyll of happiness which he experienced at this house, juxtaposed with the ultimate fate of the members of the family:

> The spirit of hope and the spirit of peace (so it seemed to me, when looking back upon this profound calm) had, for their own enjoyment, united in a sisterly league to blow a solitary bubble of visionary happiness--and to sequester from the unresting hurricanes of life a solitary household of eight persons within a four months' lull.. (III,245).

The pattern of the Confessions itself describes the fall from such a state of happiness, so that the over-view of life and its vicissitudes which De Quincey provides at this point gives a miniature preview of the work as a whole. De Quincey ignores chronology for the sake of this effect, and pictures himself standing in a shop doorway in Manchester, twenty years after his blissful stay with the K---- family, watching the husband across the street suffering from the debilitations of alcohol. The family, as De Quincey writes, has completely broken apart--"Did the visionary bubble burst at once? Not so: but silently and by measured steps" (III, 245)-- and all its members, save the husband, have since died. The profound effect which this contrast of joy and sorrow has upon De Quincey is expressed in this way by means of a simultaneous vision of several separated moments in time, and part of the mysterious power of such a revelation depends upon the fact that neither he nor any member of the family could have forseen the complexity of the disasters to come.

The sublimity of this kind of vision, as I have said, had already become a part of the Suspiria written in 1845. His growing sense of the importance of such a simultaneous view of life developed naturally as he himself became older, and it is not surprising that, having investigated the subject in the Suspiria, he should introduce a further example of the effect into his revised Confessions. Out of chronology, but directly related to this point, is a further addition, though lesser in extent, which De Quincey made to "The Pains of Opium", the third part of the work. In the middle of his essentially medical account of the benefits of opium upon pulmonary consumption, he introduces the image

of simultaneity or totality of vision as it might be applied to those marked out by fate to die of this disease. Again, the shadowy world of transcendental truth is evoked:

> If you walk through a forest at certain seasons, you will see what is called a blaze of white paint upon a certain élite of the trees marked out by the forester as ripe for the axe. Such a blaze, if the shadowy world could reveal its futurities, would be seen everywhere distributing its secret badges of cognisance amongst our youthful men and women...what a multitudinous crowd would be seen to wear upon their foreheads the same sad ghastly blaze, or some equivalent symbol of dedication to an early grave (III, 442).

As De Quincey later observes (III,442), he was himself diagnosed as being a part of this shadowy group of people marked by destiny for early destruction. Opium, however, saved him from this condition only to set him apart in another way from the rest of humanity. However, the seemingly arbitrary image which De Quincey introduces into the work at this point does bear some relationship to the new emphases of the revised Confessions.

As I have noted, the suggestion that the hardships of De Quincey's youth were in fact partially due to his own folly, is one which reaches more prominence in the 1856 Confessions. It is this greater emphasis upon folly, or fatally flawed decision, which accounts for the great and most effective expansion of the school-leaving episode. In the original version, De Quincey's decision to escape from the bondage of Manchester Grammar School, is indeed made into a slight climax as befits such an act. However, by the time of the revision, De Quincey had begun to see this event as far more meaningful and complex in its relation to his subsequent life. Through a process which I describe elsewhere,[8] the distance of time has clarified the symbolic meaning of the moment for De Quincey. He therefore rewrote the episode as a sublime climax which would assume far greater significance, not only in relation to the pattern of his life, but also to the newly constructed first section of the Confessions.

The flight from school is, in its initial conception, sublime, and reminiscent of Wordsworth's own description of liberation in The Prelude.[9] Wordsworth's account of his own liberation from Cambridge, and what he felt to be the inhibiting aspects of the life there, is given considerable stress in The Prelude. He writes in Book VI:

> We need not linger o'er the ensuing time,
> But let me add at once that, now the bonds
> Of indolent and vague society
> Relaxing in their hold, I liv'd henceforth
> More to myself,... [10]

But, as with De Quincey, his natural inclination towards freedom was burdened by the sense of betrayal of his family which this involved:

> [I] wished to be a lodger in that house
> Of Letters, and no more: and should have been
> Even such, but for some personal concerns
> That hung about me in my own despite
> Perpetually, no heavy weight, but still
> A baffling and a hindrance, a co ntroul
> Which made the thought of planning for myself
> A course of independent study seem
> An act of disobedience towards them
> Who lov'd me, proud rebellion and unkind. [11]

The image of betrayal, with its concomitant mythological suggestions, was similarly adopted by De Quincey as he writes of his independent decision to leave school. The similarities between the spiritual autobiographies are clear, although Wordsworth's liberation took the more acceptable form of a trip to the Alps--"the third summer brought its liberty"[12]--while the guilt attached to De Quincey's action followed him for the rest of his life. However, despite the extreme difference of circumstances, Wordsworth's treatment of the theme of liberty in The Prelude may well have influenced the structure of the Confessions. Indeed, De Quincey actually quotes Wordsworth in support of his feeling that the very concept of leaving his place of imprisonment is sublime:

> Under that transcendent rapture which the prospect of sudden liberation let loose, all that natural anxiety which should otherwise have interlinked itself with my anticipations was actually drowned in the blaze of joy.... this it was, joy--headlong--frantic--irreflective--and (as Wordsworth truly calls it), for that very reason, sublime-- (III, 279.)[13]

The entire mood of freedom of this point in the Confessions is indeed immediately reminiscent of the opening of The Prelude, where Wordsworth writes of a return to pastoral liberation, which is linked to a blossoming of his poetic inspiration:

> Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze
> That blows from the green fields and from the clouds...
> A captive greets thee, coming from a house
> Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free
> A prison where he hath been long immured... [14]

De Quincey takes up the sense and even adopts the biblical or Miltonic

echoes of this passage:

> Already I trod by anticipation the sweet pastoral hills, already I breathed gales of the everlasting mountains, that to my feelings blew from the garden of Paradise; (III, 279)[15]

The moment of innocence, suggested by "the garden of Paradise" and "that vestibule of an earthly heaven", referred to in the next sentence, is shortly to give place to an experience of the Fall which evolves from De Quincey's initially thoughtless escape from school. The moment of the flight will itself provide an opportunity for De Quincey's best poetic writing, and the experience, variously transformed, will supply him with further images of sublimity. The theme of liberation in both The Prelude and the Confessions can be seen to operate within a larger pattern of Fall and Redemption, the descent in each case involving an approach to London. I am not suggesting that Wordsworth's concern is only with this pattern, since his analysis of the growth of the poet's mind is more overtly developed than De Quincey's, but the general pattern of the two autobiographies is undoubtedly similar.

De Quincey's sense of liberation at the time of leaving school is, however, far from unambiguous, and he finds himself "agitated by anticipation of uncertain dangers and troubles" (III, 294), which, indeed, will be fully justified before very long. The typical duality of the sublime moment of escape is established as De Quincey writes that "To this agitation the deep peace of the morning presented an affecting contrast" (III, 294). Just as in the Mail-Coach, an evocation of antagonism, of conflict and calm, precedes the climax or moment of revelation. The evening service just before his departure firmly establishes the mood of peace and quietness, and in this mood, De Quincey is led to reflect upon the meanings of Christian symbolism. He ponders upon the linking of sadness with the end of the day, and the association of the sun setting with man's capacity to forget his anger (III, 290). Such reflections provide a very literal clue to the Christian symbolism of the Fall which is attached to the school-leaving, and to the specifically symbolic nature of the incident as regards De Quincey's own later life and work. The impassioned conclusion to these reflections itself provides the Christian symbol for this moment in De Quincey's life, a transitional time which is naturally seen by him in terms of darkness and light:

> Here again in his prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech

> thee, O lord!" were the darkness and the great shadows of night made symbolically significant: these great powers, Night and Darkness, that belong to aboriginal Chaos, were made representative of the perils that continually menace poor afflicted human nature. With deepest sympathy I accompanied the prayer against the perils of darkness--perils that I seemed to see, in the ambush of midnight solitude, brooding around the beds of sleeping nations; perils from even worse forms of darkness shrouded within the blindness of human hearts; perils from temptations weaving unseen snares for our footing; perils from the limitations of our own misleading knowledge (III, 292-3).

The sublime elements of darkness and terror are thus evoked as essential elements of this moment of transition, a moment which occurs in different forms but similar images throughout De Quincey's work.

Reflections upon the mixture of sorrow and happiness which had naturally attended his stay at the Grammar School further emphasize the pattern of contrasts. While thus meditating, and although he is in a fully waking state, De Quincey descibes himself as beginning to dream. As he has said, "experiences of deep suffering or joy first attain their entire fulness of expression when they are reverberated from dreams" (1, 49) and, as in the "Dream-Echoes of These Infant Experiences",[16] he recalls vividly, in his present dream-like state, an event from the past:

> Suddenly a sort of trance, a frost as of some death-like revelation, wrapped round me; and I found renewed within me a hateful remembrance derived from a moment that I had long left behind (III, 295).

This moment of leaving school in fact turns into an account of a dream within a dream, for he is taken back to that "moment I had long left behind," which itself was a moment of dream revelation. The previous occasion took place during a visit to St. Paul's Cathedral, when, in the midst of sublime impressions, De Quincey fell into yet another dream condition. The great dimensions of the holy place naturally filled him with awe, and this feeling mingled with the associations conjured by the captured flags of war, "the solemn trophies of chance and change amongst mighty nations" (III, 296). Under the influence of such powerful impressions, De Quincey experienced a dream vision which built itself upon the image of the Whispering Gallery in the Cathedral. In a moment of revelation, De Quincey was filled with the sense of the fatality of each word and action in life, things which may never be unspoken or undone.

The experience in St. Paul's is similar to other examples of the theme of irrevocability, notably in the Mail-Coach,[17] and elsewhere in the Confessions itself, when De Quincey felt that he had passed a point of no return. This sense of transition is also central to his experience at the time of his sister's death, when he passed from a world of innocence to a world of experience. Indeed, moments of revelation and sublimity are often closely related to transitional points in De Quincey's life, when one state or mood of fixed character becomes transformed into another which is dramatically different.[18] The moment of transition which provokes De Quincey's first dream-state in this episode is the leaving of school, a decision which he was far from certain about, and one which, like death, was entirely irrevocable. It is for this reason that he calls his trance at the moment of leaving a "death-like revelation", which is rendered in terms of the visit to St. Paul's some years before. This former visit now becomes entirely symbolic. Death and the passing of time were present in the Cathedral in the form of captured banners, and De Quincey, writing down the experience in 1856, adds the fact that his revelation must have taken place "pretty nearly on the spot where rather more that 5 years subsequently Lord Nelson was buried" (III, 296). The nature of the lasting effect that his decision to leave school will have on his life is symbolized by the echo of the Whispering Gallery, which reached him as "a deafening menace in tempestuous uproars" (III,296).[19]

As another version of the palimpsest of the human mind, an idea to be developed later in the Suspiria, the echo emerges as the symbol for the capacity of De Quincey's dreaming faculty to recapture the crucial moments of his life, and recreate them in his imagination. The particular issue of leaving school, being a question of doubtful morality to De Quincey, threatens to haunt him, and he hears a voice saying, "Even now thy conscience speaks against it in sullen whispers; but at the other end of thy long life-gallery that same conscience will speak to thee in volleying thunders" (III, 297). The device of the echo follows De Quincey through his escape towards Chester. At Altrincham, he finds himself, by a typical coincidence, witness to the scene of the market at exactly the time of day he had once observed it years before. Despite the fatal confluence of past and present, usually the cause of powerful emotion in De Quincey (since coincidence is a fact of life which serves

to reveal the absolute simultaneity of time), Altrincham does not turn out to be a Whispering Gallery. The effect upon him of his original view of the market (III, 300) was essentially devoid of those elements which constitute a powerful and everlastingly memorable experience. There was no violent transition, no sense of deep fear or antagonism, and it therefore does not become symbolic. His memories from Altrincham remain ordinary memories and do not become a part of the developing symbol of the Whispering Gallery.

The echo, in fact, first catches up with De Quincey only three days after his escape from school, when he is reminded of the possible bad effect that his example may have upon his brothers (III, 313-4). The echo at this point becomes the "oracle full of woe" (III, 314) or the recurrent burden of suffering which De Quincey describes as being his lot since childhood. In the present case, however, guilt is the principle message of the echo, and having finally encountered the disapproval of his mother, he writes the following:

> I had erred: that I knew, and did not disguise from myself. Indeed, the rapture of anguish with which I had recurred involuntarily to my experience of the Whispering Gallery, and the symbolic meaning which I had given to that experience, manifested indirectly my deep sense of error, through the dim misgiving which attended it that in some mysterious way the sense and the consequences of this error would magnify themselves at every stage of life, in proportion as they were viewed retrospectively from greater and greater distances (III,316-7).

The paradox of something in the past becoming bigger and bigger as more time passes is, of course, familiar from De Quincey's view of the symbolizing effect of temporal distance. The abstract, symbolic qualities of certain events become isolated as their particular instances fade from view, and, in De Quincey's case, these abstract qualities will then tend to clarify themselves in his dreams. Furthermore, the vast and ungraspable visions of infinity which fill De Quincey's writing are exemplified by the symbol of the echo, magnifying uncontrollably from a moment of human error in the remote past. He writes of this effect in one of the "Suspiria" recovered by Japp for the Posthumous Works:

> An error in human choice, an infirmity in the human will, though it were at first less than a mote, though it should swerve from the right line by an interval less than any thread ...sometimes begins to swell, to grow, to widen its distance rapidly, travels off into boundless spaces remote from the true centre, spaces incalculable and irretraceable, until hope seems extinguished and return impossible.[20]

Indeed, such a passage does much to explain the nature of De Quincey's horror of infinity, lodged as it seems to be in a series of irrevocable moral decisions or failures from his past:

> Oftentimes an echo goes as it were to sleep: the series of reverberations has died away. Suddenly a second series awakens: this subsides, then a third wakens up. So of actions done in youth. After great tumults all is quieted. You dream they are over. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, on some fatal morning in middle-life the far-off consequences come back upon you.[21]

De Quincey's experiences of sublimity, or of profound experience, such as the moment of leaving school, are founded in states of moral uncertainty or confusion, which later, transformed symbolically, determine the structure of later dream-experiences. The conflict with his mother over the matter of leaving school, and his inability to communicate to her his reasons for so acting, is in fact seen as having a distinct relationship with certain childhood dreams, or being a tangible fulfilment of what De Quincey sees as an archetypal moral situation:

> Just so helpless did I feel, disarmed into just the same languishing impotence to face (or make an effort at facing) the difficulty before me, as most of us have felt in the dreams of our childhood when lying down without a struggle before some all-conquering lion (III, 316).

This sensation, in itself an actualization of a childhood dream-form, finds its further echo in The English Mail-Coach, where it becomes a central moral preoccupation. The weakness and confusion of De Quincey's position as he faces his mother, all part of the 1856 emphasis upon reverberating guilt, had already been introduced in the Mail-Coach (1845) through the use of the same analogy, that of lying down before the lion. In this earlier essay, De Quincey writes in the following way of the meaning of the childhood dream of capitulating before the lion rather than undertaking the necessary moral struggle:

> That dream....publishes the secret frailty of human nature--reveals its deep-seated falsehood to itself--records its abysmal treachery. Perhaps not one of us escapes that dream; perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every generation, the original temptation in Eden. Every one of us, in this dream, has a bait offered to the infirm places of his own individual will; once again a snare is presented for tempting him into captivity to a luxury of ruin; once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice (XIII, 304).[22]

It becomes clear, then, that the sublime climax of leaving school,

which is in fact the first climax of the Confessions, amounts to De Quincey's personal fall from Eden. His first, involuntary, Fall, and therefore one of a different character, occured at the time of his sister's death, but this second and more significant Fall involves moral choice, and leads to a deep sense of moral failure for which the echo becomes a symbol.

This essential moral dilemma, the new moral dimension of the Confessions, thus finds its precedent in The English Mail-Coach, so that it seems reasonable to begin to assume that De Quincey's developments in fiction during the 1840's directly influenced some of the ideas and patterns to be found in the revised edition of his famous work. Other details from the school-leaving episode also find their counterparts in the earlier essay. In the first place, the season of De Quincey's removal from school is summer-- "Midsummer, like an army with banners, was moving through the heavens"[23]-- and summer, too, is the season of The English Mail-Coach. The"second or third summer after Waterloo" (XIII, 305) is the time of the original incident described in that essay. The effect of the summer season in contrast with the dark events of the essay is typical of De Quincey's dialectical view, and, even in the first edition of the Confessions, he had accounted for his early association of summer and death.[24] Death, of course, is a central theme of the Mail-Coach, and, as I have observed, it is a form of death which is being undergone in the school-leaving episode. Thus the echo from one of De Quincey's earliest associations, that of summer and death, travels through the Mail-Coach only to be developed even further in the 1856 Confessions.

The curious event of the tidal wave coming up the river, which De Quincey experiences on his way to Chester, is a further addition which seems to have been made in the light of a similar description in the Mail-Coach. The account of the tidal wave bears several resemblances to the approaching collision of mail-coach and east in the earlier essay. At the time of the river incident (III, 307-9), De Quincey was suffering considerable mental disturbance, both on account of his flight from school and because of the mysterious letter he finds in his possession.[25] This disturbance is paralleled by his anxiety before the collision in the Mail-Coach, when he finds himself in the position of the destroyer. In the case of the river flood, however, the situation

is reversed, and De Quincey finds himself in the position of the light gig about to be run down by a larger vehicle. Although the dangers of the flooding river are not developed, the same method of anticipation of disaster is employed in this later account, since the unknown danger first makes itself known by distant sound. The exact nature of the peril is concealed by a right-angled bend in the river, which clearly recalls the curve in the road described in the Mail-Coach. The psychological situation is clearly almost identical, and De Quincey's nightmare continues to find expression.

De Quincey's flight from school also derives some of its word-structures from The English Mail-Coach, in particular the mode of conclusion which was employed in that essay. The final passage from the school episode reads as follows:

> I shed tears as I looked round on the chair, hearth, writing table....I see, as if it were but yesterday, the lineaments and expressions of the object on which I fixed my parting gaze. It was the picture of a lovely lady, which hung over the mantle-piece; the eyes and mouth of which were so beautiful, and the whole countenance so radiant with divine tranquillity, that I had a thousand times laid down my pen, or my book, to gather consolation from it, as a devotee from his patron saint. Whilst I was yet gazing upon it, the deep tones of the old church clock proclaimed that it was six o'clock. I went up to the picture, kissed it, then gently walked out, and closed the door forever (III, 297).

The beautifully timed prose and the precision of expression are characteristic of at least two climactic conclusions in the Mail-Coach, one of which I have already quoted.[26] The ending to "The Vision of Sudden Death", though lacking the lady-figure and the kiss present in the conclusion of "Going Down With Victory", has close verbal and rhythmical associations with the passage quoted above:

> The moments were numbered; the strife was finished; the vision was closed. In the twinkling of an eye, our flying horses had carried us to the termination of the umbrageous aisle; at the right angles we wheeled into our former direction; the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes in an instant, and swept it into my dreams forever (XIII, 318).

The excellence of the effect he had achieved in the Mail-Coach no doubt prompted De Quincey to develop in a similar fashion a decisive moment of transition, which he had passed over in the first version of the Confessions.

The echoes, which thus provide close links between these two

works, support the concept of reverberations through time which De Quincey finally established in the symbol of the Whispering Gallery. In the last of his important additions to the Confessions De Quincey again invokes this symbol, as it relates once again to a crucial moment of transition. Just as De Quincey's sense of liberation at the time of leaving school seems to parallel certain elements in The Prelude, so his approach to London becomes as vital an element in his spiritual autobiography as it is in Wordsworth's. This decisive moment was merely glossed over in the first edition of the Confessions, but De Quincey did not let the excellent opportunity for some impassioned writing pass for the second time. It is in fact when he is on the point of setting out on the last stage of his journey to London, another transitional period, that he next hears the "monitorial sighs" (III, 347) from the Whispering Gallery. "For once again," he writes, "I was preparing to utter an irrevocable word, to enter upon one of those fatally tortuous paths of which the windings can never be unlinked" (III, 347).

As in the example of his departure from school, and of the anticipation of the collision in the Mail-Coach, De Quincey sets the scene for his personal revelation by describing the extreme calm of the day when he left Oswestry on his journey southwards:

> this golden sunshine might be said to sleep upon the woods and fields; so awful was the universal silence, so profound the death-like stillness (III, 343).

The reference to death is also familiar from the previous moment of irrevocable transition in the Confessions, and De Quincey develops the idea that death is approaching in his account of the short-lived peacefulness of an Indian summer:

> It is that last brief resurrection of summer in its most brilliant memorials, a resurrection that has no root in the past nor steady hold upon the future, like the lambent and fitful gleams from an expiring lamp, mimicking what is called the "lightening before death" in sick patients, when close upon their end (III, 343).

As he has earlier described the Christian symbolising of certain aspects of nature,[27] he now establishes the moment of Indian summer as symbolic of his own spiritual condition. In this way, he clearly lends further support to the establishment of his own personal mythology within the structure of Christian mythology, a process he has begun with his allusions to the Fall. Having suffered a personal Fall, De Quincey

now approaches the spiritual death he will suffer in the "Hell" of London.

The antagonism always present within De Quincey's sublime climaxes is here represented in two ways. The first antagonism is discovered within the image of the season, the Indian summer of the year:

> There is the feeling of the conflict that has been going on between the lingering powers of summer and the strengthening powers of winter, not unlike that which moves by antagonist forces in some deadly inflammation hurrying forwards through fierce struggles into the final repose of mortification. For a time the equilibrium has been maintained between the hostle forces; but at last the antagonism is overthrown; the victory is accomplished for the powers that fight on the side of death (III, 343-4).

Thus, although the year had advanced in the course of his wanderings, De Quincey was still able to invoke his recurrent image of summer linked inextricably with death. His own "lingering powers of summer" are what small vision of innocence remains to him after his first fall from Grace, and the winter to come is the extreme hardship he will undergo in London, which will ultimately lead to his opium addiction. The second aspect of contrast is provided as De Quincey shifts his focus from the description of summer giving way to winter, to a single totally tranquil day, moving towards its night:

> In the very aspect and sepulchral stillness of the motionless day, as solemnly it wore away through morning, noontide, afternoon, to meet the darkness that was swallowing up its beauty, I had a fantastic feeling as though I read the very language of resignation when bending before some irresistible agency (III, 344)

Light gives way to dark in the familiar pattern, and ordered peace gives way to the "roaring, the everlasting uproar, of that dreadful metropolis which at every step was coming nearer" (III, 344).

The actual scene of De Quincey's present pause on the eve of his approach to London, is a hotel room in Shrewsbury. The symbolic nature of his experience in this place is carefully emphasized by De Quincey as, in mock apotheosis, he is conducted to his chamber in ceremonial candlelight:

> The wax lights...moved pompously before me, as the holy fire, the inextinguishable fire and its golden breath, moved before Caesar <u>semper</u> Augustus, when he made his official or ceremonial <u>exitus</u> (III, 345).

The room itself, enormous in size, conjures the image of London, "cool,

dark, infinite" (III, 346), up ahead of De Quincey, and echoes of the past mingle with fearful apprehensions about the future at this moment of powerful experience:

> This single feature of the rooms--their unusual altitude, and the echoing hollowness which had become the exponent of that altitude--this one terrific feature (for terrific it was in effect), together with crowding and evanescent images of the flying feet that so often had spread gladness through these halls on the wings of youth and hope at seasons when every room rang with music (III, 346).

The hugeness of the rooms (once ballrooms) and their echoing quality thus become symbolic of the vastness of the city ahead and of the echoes of actions which will pursue De Quincey throughout his life. The seemingly far-off days of his own untroubled youth are evoked by the image of the young and careless dancers who had once used the rooms where De Quincey now finds himself. The powerful nature of the experience which De Quincey undergoes in these hotel rooms, with their associations of festive dances long past, is more fully explained by reference to a statement he makes elsewhere on the subject of the dance. In "The Nation of London" section of the Autobiography, De Quincey describes his visit to a royal dance at Frogmore, and expatiates at this point upon the sublime attributes of the occasion--"Of all the scenes which this world offers, none is to me so profoundly interesting, none (I say it deliberately) so affecting, as the spectacle of men and women floating through the mazes of the dance" (I, 96). Out of this account emerges the implication of sadness--"sadness of a grand and aspiring order" --which provides the contrast without which a sense of sublimity is impossible. The dance shortly begins to take on a symbolic aspect, as do all De Quincey's experiences of great power. He describes the dancing as "the continual regeneration of order from a system of motions which forever touch the very brink of confusion", and further reflects that:

> such a spectacle, with such circumstances, may happen to be capable of exciting and sustaining the very grandest emotions of philosophic melancholy to which the human spirit is open. The reason is, in part, that such a scene presents a sort of mask of human life...(I, 102).

Thus an added dimension of the experience in the hotel room is that provided by the echoes of a symbol established far back in De Quincey's past.

This present moment, compressed between powerful impressions

of past and future, is represented as yet another knife-edge of transition as De Quincey pictures himself standing "upon the brink of a precipice" (III, 346) above that "unfathomed abyss in London" (III, 347), from which he recoils in horror. The terror of the situation is heightened by the raging storm which presses upon the room from the world of night beyond-- "Wild it was beyond all description, and dark as 'the inside of a wolf's throat'" (III, 347). The wolf's throat of the night is then transformed into the "dreadful mouth of Acheron" (III, 347) which is London itself, about to swallow De Quincey. The storm, giving full atmospheric support to the sublime climax, is naturally seen by De Quincey as an essential part of the symbolic meaning of the episode, justifying entirely the "farewell adieus to summer" (III, 346) which he has just made.

It has emerged, I hope, from the discussion above, that there is much of great richness and interest in the additions which De Quincey made to the Confessions for his own edition of his works. Though it is true that much of the material that I have not dealt with is factual autobiography, it would be inaccurate to state that all the additions are mere "padding". The instances I have considered are, indeed, too short to serve such a purpose usefully. They do, however, represent a fascinating development of ideas and emotions as they have evolved during the writing of the Mail-Coach and the Suspiria De Profundis, and seem certainly to have been determined by patterns already created in those works. It does not seem likely that De Quincey would have made additions of precisely this kind if in fact he had had the opportunity to write the Confessions as fully as he claims he wished to in 1821.[22] Although it is undeniable that the long digressions and purely autobiographical passages do tend to swamp the symbolic and mythological pattern of the Confessions, there is some truth to De Quincey's claim that he has increased the total structural effect of his work. The "one uninterrupted bond of unity running through the entire succession of experiences" (III, 347) which he claims to have achieved is, to a certain extent, justified. Certainly, through the additions I have considered, the dimension of Christian mythology in the work is significantly increased, and its overall structure of factual autobiography balanced by sublime climaxes is better achieved. The theme of lost

innocence and haunting guilt is now well established in the first section of the Confessions, and the emergence of the opium dreams and fantasies from these earlier experiences of symbolic importance is established more effectively.

2. Symbols and dreams

I shall now turn to those other main elements of the Confessions which existed in the original version, and which directly relate to the themes and methods I have already discussed. Of principal concern, therefore, are the sublime climaxes and symbolic revelations which emerge from the long "knowledge" areas of the autobiography. The first of these instances, which occurs in the first part of the Confessions, relates to the prostitute Ann, whom De Quincey meets during his period of suffering in London.

His forebodings concerning the quality of his life in the great city he was about to enter, turn out to be fully justified. The descent towards a hell on earth, which was indicated during the revelation in the Shrewsbury hotel room, is accomplished rapidly as De Quincey finds himself hungry and alone, finally making his home in an enormous, empty house near Soho Square. This house, in all its horror and size clearly recalls the echoing hotel rooms which he had not long before left, and again the terrifying vastness of the city is symbolized by a building (III, 354-6). The climax of De Quincey's stay in London is the encounter with Ann, who provides an illusory return to the world of innocence which he associates with his sister. De Quincey's defence of the innocence of Ann, and of her unfortunate position in life, is a remarkable piece of social realism in a work written so early.[20] Ann evolves as a symbol of purity, or of the lost innocence of De Quincey's childhood, and it is not surprising, therefore, that she is the one to save him from the streets of London which seem about to destroy him:

> I had been leaning my head against her bosom; and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backwards on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind that without some powerful and reviving stimulus, I should either have died on the spot--or should at least have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all re-ascent under my friendless circumstances would soon have become hopeless (III, 361).

The image is typical of De Quincey, the frozen moment in time, the brief tableau, where he is saved in the embrace of Ann, or "Magdalen" as he later calls her (III, 375). The embrace, the epitome of close human contact, is an image which recurs throughout De Quincey's writing. It expresses salvation, reuniting with his Mother (the object of guilty feelings after the escape from school), the repossession of the mutual love he experienced with his sister before she died. Ann saves De Quincey by selflessly running to buy port wine and spices out of her slender means, and in doing so, creates a symbolic episode which he will never forget. He looses Ann in the labyrinth of the London streets soon afterwards, never to see her again, and this loss becomes transfigured into a central element of De Quincey's dream symbolism. As he writes in the "Introductory Notice" to the revised Confessions:

> Amongst the papers burned partially, but not so burned as to be absolutely irrecrievable, was the "Daughter of Lebanon"; and this I have printed, and have intentionally placed it at the end [of the Confessions] as appropriately closing a record in which the case of poor Ann the Outcast formed not not only the most memorable and the most suggestively pathetic incident, but also that which, more than any other, coloured--or (more truly I should say) shaped, moulded and remoulded, composed and decomposed--the great body of opium dreams (III, 333).

The first piece of impassioned writing which was to emerge from this powerful episode is the three page prose-poem which opens part II of the Confessions. This superb climactic passage, which stands as a link between the early autobiography and the opium autobiography, builds upon the idea of simultaneity of time-perception which informed the account of the K--- family (III, 244-246). On the present occasion, however, it is his own life-pattern which is revealed, and the nature of the fatal interconnection of various periods of life, which is expressed by the echo image, is the principal effect of the passage. A remarkable coincidence provides the basis of this poem in celebration of the eve of suffering and consolation. At the period of his early difficulties in London, De Quincey pictures himself as looking northward up the stone walkway of the streets towards the Lake District, where Wordsworth, his literary idol, was at that time living in Dove Cottage. The keen irony of this longing lies in the fact that De Quincey was to find himself, in the not too distant future, actually living in that very cottage and undergoing some of his worst mental torments. The paradox that this should be the pattern of his life's development is augmented

by reference to yet another time when he is in London once more. At this later date, he once again pictures himself as wishing to be back in Dove Cottage, where his wife, the great comforter in his suffering, is still living. The merging together of several periods of time is typical of De Quincey's method on a larger scale (as in The English Mail-Coach), but it works just as effectively in this brief, sublime climax. These three pages are a short preview of De Quincey's themes and methods (remembering that they were written in 1821). The mythological nature of the passage is clear from De Quincey's identification of himself with Orestes, his wife with Electra and Ann with Mary Magdalen,[30] and as usual at such moments of symbolic distillation, a few contrasting, static images are brought into close juxtaposition. It becomes more apparent that De Quincey's choice of material for such sublime climaxes arises when he does feel some kind of immediate relationship between his life and certain established mythological or archetypal forms.

From the beginning, De Quincey claimed that a principal theme of the Confessions was to be the dreaming that resulted from his use of opium. It was therefore originally his intention to write a lengthy description of these dreams, and the "Preliminary Confessions" are partly justified "As furnishing a key to some parts of that tremendous scenery which afterwards peopled the dreams of the opium eater". De Quincey also defends the autobiographical material (which is particular to himself and therefore may possibly be no subject for literature) on the grounds that it will make the "confessing subject" (himself) more interesting. For

> If a man "whose talk is of oxen", should become an opium-eater, the probability is, that... he will dream about oxen: whereas, in the case before him, the reader will find that the opium-eater boasteth himself to be a philosopher; and accordingly, that the phantasmagoria of his dreams (waking or sleeping, day-dreams, or night-dreams) is suitable to one in that character.

It has been rightly observed, however, that the stress upon the theme of dreaming has increased by the final version of the text,[31] a fact which is not surprising in view of De Quincey's considerable work with dream-fantasy since 1845, the year in which he began the Suspiria. Indeed, in that year, in the introduction to the Suspiria, he wrote in

an entirely new way of the supposed meaning of the Confessions:

> The object of that work was to reveal something of the grandeur which belongs potentially to human dreams. Whatever may be the number of those in whom this faculty of dreaming splendidly can be supposed to lurk, there are not, perhaps, very many in whom it is developed (XIII, 334).

He repeats, a few sentences later, that "The Opium Confessions were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself" (XIII, 335). By 1845, therefore, De Quincey had clarified the structure of the work, essentially describing it as explanatory autobiography followed by a series of dream-visions. Such a structure was indeed achieved in 1849 with The English Mail-Coach, but as far as the Confessions is concerned, neither version really justifies De Quincey's description of it. By 1856 he realized that his original plan would never be carried out, but he nonetheless felt it was necessary to explain what had been his general intention:

> All along I had relied upon a crowning grace, which I had reserved for the final pages of this volume, in a succession of some twenty or twenty-five dreams and noonday visions, which had arisen under the latter stages of opium influence... (III, 221).

Thus, just as the "Dream-Fugue" was the "ultimate object"of the Mail-Coach,[33] so the dream climax was to provide the true balance of the Confessions. This dream section, the part unwritten for "Blackwood's" in 1822,[34] is in fact the Suspiria, which was originally conceived of as consisting of thirty-two parts. As Masson points out (XIII, 332), there was little left of the Suspiria to use when De Quincey came to work on volume five of his Collective Edition,[35] since "The Afflictions of Childhood" and "The Apparition of the Brocken" were incorporated into the Autobiographical Sketches. The English Mail-Coach, which was a part of the original Suspiria, nad been separately published, and much else had either been burnt or never written. De Quincey's solution to the problem, which was not admittedly much of a solution, was to publish "The Daughter of Lebanon" immediately following the Confessions. Since this was such a partial solution to the difficulty, I will consider this dream vision in the more justifiable context of the other "Suspiria". However, as an indication of his general inten-

tion (remembering that dreaming as a theme was not so central in the 1821 edition), De Quincey does close the Confessions with five dream-fantasy passages which I shall shortly consider.

In the Confessions of 1856, therefore, the "Introductory Narration" is greatly expanded, and is followed by two sections entitled "The Pleasures of Opium" and "The Pains of Opium". These parts, as I have suggested before, provide a structural analogue to the many specific instances of De Quincey's juxtaposition of these two central life experiences. In 1856 he sought to emphasize this opposition more strongly by removing a sub-section title, "Introduction to the Pains of Opium". The material in this subsection relates to his idyllic period at Dove Cottage, and indeed De Quincey calls it "an analysis of happiness" (III, 406). He rightly decided that this delightful picture of himself sitting in the cottage, with winter storms growing outside, and with a tea-tray and a decanter of laudanum at his side, was better associated with "The Pleasures of Opium". He therefore removed the sub-section title and brought this tableau of happiness into a complementary relationship with the other enjoyable aspects of opium-taking which he had already described. The centrepiece of "The Pleasures of Opium" is in fact a waking vision which De Quincey experienced when he was looking down one night over the city of Liverpool. This beautifully written passage, so typical of De Quincey's moments of sublime revelation, is worth quoting at some length:

> The town of Liverpool represented the earth, with its sorrows and its graves left behind, yet not out of sight, nor wholly forgotten. The ocean, in everlasting but gentle agitation, yet brooded over by dove-like calm, might not unfitly typify the mind and the mood which then swayed it. For it seemed to me as if then first I stood at a distance, and aloof from the uproar of life; as if the tumult, the fever, and the strife, were suspended; a respite were granted from the secret burthens of the heart; some sabbath of repose; some resting from human labours. Here were the hopes which blossom in the paths of life, reconciled with the peace which is in the grave; motions of the intellect as unwearied as the heavens, yet for all anxieties a halcyon calm: a tranquillity that seemed no product of inertia, but as if resulting from mighty and equal antagonisms; infinite activities, infinite repose (III, 395).

The motionless peace described here is typical of the power of opium to suspend the normal apprehension of time and space. The

moment of sublime synthesis stands as a representation of the beneficial capacities of opium at the same time as a symbol of transcendental experience. Soon to follow are the depths of pain and suffering which are provoked by opium, but which are also the essential experience of life. De Quincey concludes the passage with an impassioned apostrophe, "Oh! just, subtle, and mighty opium! that to the hearts of poor and rich alike...bringest assuaging balm" (III, 395), which stands like an aria from one of the operas he has been describing a few pages earlier (III, 389). The synthesis in this passage is all the more important since the sublime moment of eternity and resolution of strife is not elsewhere represented as a possibility in the Confessions. The guilt and sufferings described in the book, which would have found some greater resolution if the "Suspiria" dreams had been attached as planned, remain as its most powerful impression.

The vision of Liverpool and the less symbolic scene in Dove Cottage thus combine together as the calm before the storm of "The Pains of Opium". As with each section so far, De Quincey continues his account of the medical or physical aspects of opium-consumption, which constitutes the literal or knowledge level of his opium story. But,in the revised edition, De Quincey once again stresses the importance of the dreams to the work as a whole, repeating much of what he had already said on this subject in his "Introduction" to the Suspiria.[36] Having accounted for what he calls his "intellectual torpor" (III, 433) under the effects of opium, De Quincey finally proceeds to a description of the dreams which have by now been exalted as the principal theme of the work. Here, again, there is much material similar to parts of the Suspiria, which reveals how themes introduced in the main part of the Confessions would have been continued and explored in the lengthy dream section which was to follow.De Quincey accounts for his heightened sensibility under the influence of opium, how day time imaginings "were drawn out by the fierce chemistry of my dreams" (III, 434), how the "sense of space, and in the end, the sense of time, were both powerfully affected," and how a sense of total recall, or the "palimpsest" brought back incidents from the distant past. All these elements, together with the sense of descending

each night "into chasms and sunless abysses", are all present in the dream-visions which follow, and are also essential elements of the Suspiria. As I have shown, The English Mail Coach exemplifies all these dream qualities, and De Quincey had intended that work to be only one part of his total analysis of these strange psychological phenomena.

The final part of the Confessions, consists of five dream-examples, mainly intended to reveal the quality of the horrific experience that De Quincey underwent during sleep. Most notable here is the account of the Piranesi effect and the architectural infinity (III, 438-40), which actually figures more prominently in the Mail-Coach than in the Confessions. Following this passage, De Quincey describes the infinity and horror of his associations with Asia, all of which evolves from a chance meeting with a Malay, which has been circumstantially accounted for in "The Pleasures of Opium":

> the main agents were ugly birds, or snakes, or crocodiles; especially the last. The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than all the rest. I was compelled to live with him; and (as was always the case almost in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses. All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c. soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into ten thousand repetitions: and I stood loathing and fascinated (III, 442).[37]

The growth of the dream-horror attached to these images is merely stated at this point, and is not clearly exemplified by the two actual dreams which shortly follow. In fact The English Mail-Coach once again provides a useful context for a full comprehension of De Quincey's meanings, particularly in the matter of the crocodile, since the element of nightmare is more fully developed in that piece. However, the account of the Asian horrors is by no means an informational account, since it is clear, even from the brief passage quoted above, that the description is invested with a dramatic vitality.

The last two dream episodes are more integrated in that they each describe one specific dream and contain one climactic vision or revelation. As such, they are a fitting and effective conclusion to the Confessions as a whole, though, unlike the

apocalyptic vision at the end of the Mail-Coach, De Quincey's Christian optimism, with a final transcendence of the pain/pleasure dialectic of the work, does not assert itself. Such transcendence occurs in the Suspiria, which makes it even more obvious that the Confessions is not in itself a complete work. The first dream, however, is admittedly ambiguous. In it, the search for Ann of Oxford Street is apparently concluded. The time is Easter, therefore clearly associated with resurrection, and the scene is near the Grasmere cottage. The image of death which rises before De Quincey is that of Kate Wordsworth, and it is inevitably associated with the summer season. The Lake District Easter Morning is juxtaposed with an oriental one, which is some abstract from De Quincey's early reading of illustrated biblical episodes,[39] and in this latter scene appears Ann of Oxford Street. The vision is not that of the unfulfilled chase, and indeed, an optimistic tone prevails to a certain extent. Ann's tears, fixed in De Quincey's memory of the London days, have vanished, and though clouds roll between the two of them, the dream is concluded thus:

> and, in the twinkling of an eye, I was far away from mountains, and by lamp-light in Oxford Street, walking again with Ann--just as we walked seventeen years before, when we were both children (III,445).

And yet, in the context, this vision cannot be seen as triumphant. Though De Quincey says to Ann in his dream "So I have found you at last'", she "answered me not a word," a fact which is certainly ominous. It must be remembered, too, that this dream concludes "The Pains of Opium" and is a partial representation of the depths to which De Quincey fell during the worst period of his opium usage. The apparent optimism of this dream, the allusions to resurrection, and the return to the original relationship with Ann, is more difficult to understand in the 1821 version of the text. However, with the more clearly emphasized pattern of the Fall with its echoing guilt in the 1856 text, De Quincey's vision of himself walking with Ann in their childhood is less ambiguous. This is indeed not the childhood of total innocence which is described in the Mail-Coach and other "Suspiria", but a period which actually succeeded De Quincey's loss of Grace.The dream is thus a mere illusion which will be shattered on waking, and thereby emphasizes

even further the separation between himself and Ann (or his own innocent childhood for which she stands). There is not in fact the exultant tone of apocalypse and final redemption with which the Mail-Coach concludes.

The second and final dream again suggests the joy of an apocalyptic vision, an intuition of eternal life, and it clearly prefigures the imagery of the final part of the Mail-Coach. A solemn music sets the scene for what appears to be a revelation of Christian salvation:

> The morning was come of a mighty day--a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and labouring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, I knew not where--somehow, I knew not how--by some beings, I knew not whom--a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting,--was evolving like a great drama, or piece of music; (III, 446).[40]

But, as in so many of his imaginative labyrinths, De Quincey is lost, and his "sympathy was the more insupportable from deepening confusion as to its [the battle's] local scene, its cause, its nature, and its undecipherable issue" (III, 446).[41] He then feels that the successful result of the moment depends in some way upon himself (the moral test he makes central to the Mail-Coach and the revised Confessions), yet he had not the power, "for the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt" (III, 446). The conclusion of the dream leaves no doubt that De Quincey's own sense of guilt and opium debilitation defeats the optimistically Christian vision of resurrection for which he is desperately hoping. Ann is lost once again:

> and at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me, and but a moment allowed--and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then--everlasting farewells! and with a sigh, such as the caves of hell sighed when the incestuous mother uttered the abhorred name of Death, the sound was reverberated--everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated--everlasting farewells!
>
> And I awoke in struggles, and cried aloud--"I will sleep no more!" (III, 446-7).

It remains for the Suspiria to develop and resolve the dialectic De Quincey has created with the pleasures and pains of opium, and it is in recognition of this necessity that he attached "The Daughter of Lebanon" to the 1856 edition of the Confessions.

From this account of the most important symbols and dreams in De Quincey's most famous work it should be clear that the Confessions is seen to both introduce patterns which will become central to his later work, and also, in the case of the additions, to derive part of its structure from those later works. Comparisons with The English Mail-Coach and the other "Suspiria" (which I shall continue in the next chapter) serve to clarify the real unity which runs through De Quincey's imaginative writing. The unity derives principally from a carefully established pattern of symbolism and mythology, the revelations of which provide the impassioned or sublime climaxes which rise out of the plain autobiography. Such a unity of tone and colouring is not one which critics seem most concerned with, is not one of narrative coherence. However, as I have shown here, and elsewhere in respect to his critical writings, De Quincey's strength does not lie in chronological narration, which really belongs to the literature of knowledge. The regular and interlinked pattern of sublime effects provides the unity of a literature of power.

CHAPTER EIGHT: NOTES ON SUSPIRIA DE PROFUNDIS

> Misery is the talisman by which man communicates with the world outside our fleshly world.
>
> De Quincey

> We shy away from the word "eternal", but I can describe the experience only as the ecstasy of a non-temporal state in which present, past and future are one. Everything that happens in time had been brought together into a concrete whole. Nothing was distributed over time, nothing could be measured by temporal concepts... There would be things which would not have begun, other things which would be indubitably present, and others again which would already be finished and yet all this would be one.
>
> C.G. Jung

In this chapter I wish to account for the main themes and patterns of development as they are found in De Quincey's unfinished work, the Suspiria De Profundis.[1] I shall sometimes confine myself to fairly brief notes, but where it seems merited, I shall discuss certain passages in more detail, particularly as they relate to themes and methods already described in previous chapters. Masson has very well accounted for the vicissitudes of the Suspiria in the introductory note to his reprinting of the 1871 Black's edition of what remained of this uncompleted work (XIII, 331-333), and it is certainly hard to form a complete picture of what De Quincey intended the Suspiria to be. Since I am not treating the Autobiography as a separate work (the "Autobiographical Sketches" of 1853 finally incorporated two pieces from the Suspiria, "The Affliction of Childhood" and the "Apparition of the Brocken"), I shall base my comments on the Suspiria upon the original "Blackwood's" order of publication. I shall then append whatever other Suspiria pieces and fragments which have not previously been accounted for, and in this way I hope to present a reasonably coherent picture of the work as a whole. As I have noted, the Suspiria was intended as a companion work to the Confessions, and to discuss the constituent pieces in their

original order is hopefully to recover at least a part of the effect of that scheme.[2]

"Introductory Notice"

A central theme of the Confessions, both in the original and revised versions, was that of dreaming. As I have observed, in the light of such a theme, the actual dream-fantasy parts of the whole work are exceedingly brief (although, perhaps, more dominant in the shorter version), and not nearly so integral as those in the Mail-Coach. However, it was De Quincey's intention to have his Suspiria as a collection of dream-fantasy pieces which would stand in direct relation to the Confessions. De Quincey's "Blackwood" edition of the Suspiria was given the title Suspiria De Profundis: Being a sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium Eater, and the imbalance of the dream sections in this earlier work would be redressed by such a pairing. It is not surprising, therefore, that dreaming is the subject of the initial essay of the Suspiria, and in this section De Quincey describes the power of dreaming, as a faculty creative of sublime effects, to be falling into decay. Although De Quincey has elsewhere applauded the modern period in history for its capacity for infinity and sublimity, his argument as far as his contemporary generation is concerned is that its capacity for infinity, power and sublimity in general is greatly eroded.[3] As he states in the "Introductory Notice", the power of dreaming has diminished in proportion to the "colossal pace of advance" (XIII, 334) in society. Just as De Quincey's theory of the literature of power depends upon the idea of an exertion of the emotional part of man's being, so De Quincey feels that man's capacity for dreaming (and, particularly in his case, creation) is something which has to be exercised--"Whatever may be the number of those in whom this faculty of dreaming splendidly can be supposed to lurk, there are not, perhaps, very many in whom it is developed" (XIII, 334). Dreaming, as I have shown, is a means of symbolic revelation, where events are naturally "raised and idealised" (XIII, 339), and thus it is a medium for sublime expression. The concluding section of the Mail-Coach has well exemplified this point, and it is clear that the decay of the faculty of dreaming is the equivalent, for De Quincey, of the atrophy of man's sublime capacities. Such failure he saw as endemic to his contemporary generation, and it is [illegible]

haps for this reason that he feels it as particularly valuable to employ the form of dream-fantasy as his creative method. He writes:

> How much this fierce condition of eternal hurry upon an arena too exclusively human in its interests is likely to defeat the grandeur which is latent in all men, may be seen in the ordinary effect from living too constantly in varied company (XIII, 335).

Thus De Quincey's own literature of power, his sublime moments expressed in impassioned prose, can be seen in one respect as an attempt to expand his reader's emotional capacity, and perhaps regain for them the "grandeur that is latent in all men". His advice specifically relating to the development of the faculty of dreaming (though relevant to sublime capacity in general) is to cultivate "meditative habits" (philosophy and religion) in solitude. "How much solitude, so much power," he writes, for too much involvement with "social instincts" precludes the "power of dreaming" (XIII, 335). De Quincey goes on in the "Introductory Notice" to reinforce the claims he has made for the Confessions as a vehicle for displaying the dreaming faculty at work, and thereby stresses a purpose which has not been entirely fulfilled in that work. The three dream-fantasies which conclude the Confessions, therefore, lay the basis for the Suspiria, in which De Quincey can develop his penchant for impassioned prose and sublime climax to the full.

The first passages of the Suspiria, therefore, expand upon a theme which is already familiar from the first version of the Confessions. However, the organic connection between the two works is not only based on dreaming, since the Suspiria was conceived of as the third stage of opium addiction-- "Twice I sank-- twice I rose again. A third time I sank" (XIII, 336)-- he writes in the "Introductory Notice", and continues, "It is the record of this third, or final stage of opium, as one differing in something more than degree from the others, that I am now undertaking". The Confessions, it will be remembered, ended with no note of optimistic revelation, concluding as it did with the section entitled "The Pains of Opium". As Japp observes, suffering remains the main theme of the Suspiria,[4] but an important function of this work is to provide an imaginative representation of this suffering in relation to the final meanings of existence. Thus, although he is entering the "final stage of opium", De Quincey begins to justify the suffering he has undergone by means of an extended analysis of the dual nature of

man's existence, the sensual and the spiritual, or the finite and the infinite. As I shall show, the dreams and visions of the Suspiria, though emerging from the dark world of suffering, present a final assertion of Christian optimism.

De Quincey's first "powerful" passage in the Suspiria exemplifies what will become a central technique in both the Mail-Coach and the revised Confessions, that of constructing a sublime moment out of a transitional event. The revelation of the irrevocability of certain decisions and actions, which is essentially a realization of mortality, is the central thread of many of De Quincey's sublime climaxes. Just as he is conscious of a door shutting behind him at the time of his sister's death (I, 43), so, when there was no return possible from his opium addiction, he experiences a similar condition of exclusion. He writes in the "Introductory Notice" that:

> I had not reversed my motions [to withdraw from opium] for many weeks before I became profoundly aware that this was impossible. Or, in the imagery of my dreams, which translated everything into their own language, I saw, through vast avenues of gloom, those towering gates of ingress which hitherto had always seemed to stand open now at last barred against my retreat, and hung with funeral crape (XIII, 337).

This experience of mortality, of defeat and disintegration, is rendered in the "Introductory Notice" by the gothic story of the lady abbess who fails to avert the execution of one of her nuns. The "too late" theme is immediately recognisable, and the imagery of the moment before the crisis of the nun's death is the same as De Quincey will later use and amplify in his description of the moment before the collision in the Mail-Coach:

> The witnesses depose; the evidence is without effectual contradiction; the conviction is declared; the judgement is delivered; nothing remains but to see execution done (XIII, 337).

The freezing of the abbess' gestures at the moment of horror reflects De Quincey's own condition, and gives the title to the present series of writings:

> The voice perishes; the gestures are frozen; and the spirit of man flies back upon its own centre. I, at least, upon seeing those awful gates closed and hung with draperies of woe, as for a death already past, spoke not, nor started, nor groaned. One profound sigh ascended from my heart, and I was silent for days (XIII, 338).

Following the brief impassioned section concerning the lady

abbess, the original introduction to the Suspiria then goes on to justify the autobiographical recollection of the death of De Quincey's sister which is to follow immediately. In this passage, which De Quincey did not reproduce in his Collective Edition, he goes on to speak of the "deep, mysterious identity between himself, as adult and as infant," as a personal justification for his recollection. Clearly this is one of the sublime mysteries for De Quincey, the paradox here represented as the man being the same and yet different from himself as a child. This mystery is indeed close to the familiar Romantic mythology of childhood, a mythology which has already been active in The English Mail-Coach.

The event of his sister's death, which De Quincey is about to describe in some detail, is then further justified on several interesting grounds. In view of the "Suspiria" (sighs) themselves, and in view of De Quincey's preoccupation with death and the finite, this event is of fundamental significance:

> the terrific grief which I passed through, drove a shaft for me into the worlds of death and darkness which never again closed, and through which it might be said that I ascended and descended at will, according to the temper of my spirits.[5]

Although it hardly seems to be true that De Quincey descended "at will" into the nether world of painful experience, the image of the permanent shaft into this world well expresses the continuing duality of his work, where the two areas of joy and suffering are always connected. The account of the death itself is, of course, out of key with the general idea of giving some account of the dreams of this period, but once again De Quincey asserts that it is valuable for a full understanding of the dreams to describe the original facts of the case. The structure of this first part of the Suspiria is thus exactly the same as that of the Mail-Coach and the Confessions, with their factual description followed by dream-fantasy; but it is interesting that De Quincey provides yet another justification for this "real" event being introduced amongst the features of his dream world. He writes that "in colouring, it harmonises with that record, and, therefore, is related to it at least in point of feeling".[6] This is a clear statement about the kind of unity so often employed by De Quincey, which I referred to in the last chapter, the kind of unity which can, if necessary, dispense with the logic of the case,

and rely on pure "feelings!" It becomes more obvious that the real connection between De Quincey's impassioned passages is purely that of feeling, and usually sublime feeling.[7] The mood of the childhood incident he is about to recount is entirely consonant with the subsequent "Suspiria", and therefore its inclusion results in no aesthetic confusion.

Finally, De Quincey, in this excellent passage of literary criticism, (which, as I have noted, was not reprinted by the author himself, nor by Masson) justifies the length of his account of the incident of childhood. Surely, writes De Quincey, it will be objected that a mere mention of the outline of the circumstances will be sufficient to explain the elements of the succeeding dreams. But, he continues:

> it is not for the mere facts that the case is reported, but because these facts move through a wilderness of natural thoughts or feelings; some in the child who suffers; some in the man who reports; but all so far interesting as they relate to solemn objects.[8]

Thus he returns to the justification of his subject on the ground of its feeling, and in this case, as he indicates, its sublime associations. An episode of so much emotion and meaning, coupled with the mystery of the connection between child and man, clearly demands a full and impassioned treatment. Just as De Quincey decided upon a full poetic rendition of certain episodes in the first part of the Confessions, so here he will not let such an opportunity pass. His intention, as he states in the next long paragraph, which utilizes an analogy with a Lake District traveller who is always asking for the shortest route, is not to follow the dictates of factual logic:

> the whole course of this narrative resembles, and was meant to resemble, a caduceus wreathed about with meandering ornaments, or the shaft of a tree's stem hung round and surmounted with some vagrant parasitical plant. The mere medical subject of the opium answers to the dry withered pole, which shoots all the rings of the flowering plants... .

"The true object in my "Opium Confessions," writes De Quincey, suggesting yet another purpose beyond the dreams, was indeed those very "parasitical thoughts, feelings, digressions," which he admits at times might ramble with "too rank a luxuriance." His defence against this last point, in this series of very interesting defences, is that "the eternal interest attached to the subjects of these digressions" lends a power

to what would otherwise be trivial incident.

The above remarks, which are all preparatory to the account of the death of his sister, show De Quincey to be very much involved with the literary theory and structure of his work as he begins his later period of creativity in 1845. He now seems clearer about his purposes, and is intent upon establishing some kind of unity throughout his creative writing. It is typical of his method that such passages of theory and literary reflection should intrude upon the development of his main theme, since, just as with his life itself, De Quincey always sought to justify and explain. And certainly, his account of what the idea of unity meant to him, being a unity of tone and feeling rather than of fact and chronology, sheds considerable light upon De Quincey's theory of the literature of power.

Part I: "The Affliction of Childhood"

"The Affliction of Childhood", as I have noted, eventually became incorporated into the Autobiography of 1853. De Quincey's principal addition at that time, since the piece now finds itself in a completely new context, is to introduce a paragraph on the theme of "Life is finished",[10] which echoes the mood of the story of the lady abbess at the beginning of the Suspiria ("all is lost"), and which anticipates material in Part II of the same work. Again, in order to create an intelligible context for "The Affliction of Childhood", and to emphasize once more a central device of his work, De Quincey writes of the "serene and sequestered position which we occupied in life" (I, 99) at the time immediately before his sister's death. Since, as I have just shown, De Quincey was very concerned with justifying the personal nature of the death he is about to describe, it was probably with some relief that he finally fitted "The Affliction of Childhood" into the Autobiography, where such material would require no justification. However, in the original "Blackwood's" scheme, "The Afflictions of Childhood" must be seen as following the story of the lady abbess, and as an integral part of De Quincey's current analysis of suffering.

De Quincey begins the piece by introducing his universal intuition concerning the meaning of death, when he writes that he has always connected

> a profound sense of pathos with the re-appearance,very early in the spring, of some crocuses. This I mention as inexplicable; for such annual resurrection of plants and flowers affect us only as memorials, or suggestions of some higher change, and therefore in connection with the idea of death (I, 32-3).

This is indeed De Quincey's first intimation, along with the incident of the nurse who ill-treated his sister Jane a few days before her death, of the paradox of mortality. His childhood Eden is about to be lost, the first and most important stage of a fall from Grace which is to be continued, as a theme, in the revised Confessions. The sentence "But for myself, that incident had a lasting revolutionary power in colouring my estimate of life" (I, 35) was added in the Autobiography version, but in its original context, the episode of the death requires no such explanation. Not retained in the Autobiography version, however, is a description of another example of a person being mistreated just before their death, and De Quincey is concerned with how much the guilty person is afflicted with remorse over behaving unkindly to someone who dies shortly after. He observes that the servant involved in the mistreatment of his sister did not seem to suffer any regret, and since he, particularly, would have been quite unable to forget such a moving incident, he includes an example of his kind of response. Clearly, as a part of the original Suspiria, this example of the woman who can never forget her self-reproach, who can never escape from the echoes of the past, relates closely both in mood and theme to The English Mail-Coach and the Suspiria itself.

That the loss of Paradise was an idea uppermost in his mind at the time of writing "The Affliction of Childhood" is most apparent from a passage which is only present in the "Blackwood's" text. Describing the quality of his attachment to his sister Jane, whose death he is about to describe, De Quincey enhances the sublimity of his reflections by making extended reference to Paradise Lost. Though on the point of experiencing the loss of innocence inevitably precipitated by a profound experience of death, De Quincey here, as elsewhere, celebrates the duality of earthly existence. Rather than never to have had the emotional attachment to his sister, he is willing to accept the pain of her death--"In the Paradise Lost, this strong instinct of man--to prefer the heavenly,

mixed and polluted with the earthly, to a level of experience offering neither one nor the other-- is divinely commemorated."[11] De Quincey goes on to cite the example of Adam's choice to sacrifice himself rather than to abandon his love for Eve.[12] Admittedly, De Quincey's conscious fall from Paradise does not begin to occur until the school-leaving episode in the Confessions (which,it must be remembered,is a dimension added to that work in 1856), but it is clear that in 1845 he is concerned with stressing the mythological,and thereby ultimately the symbolical, nature of the experience he is about to describe.

De Quincey now accounts for the relationship of summer and death, a characteristic fusion of opposites which was to be of lasting importance to him throughout his life (I, 38-40). He describes the Biblical stories he read in childhood-- "Christ as man and yet not man, real above all things, and yet shadowy above all things," "the divine revelations of power and mysterious beauty which awed us"--and he explains how these images rooted themselves in his mind. Here, in fact, De Quincey provides a working example of the way in which sublime feelings were capable of permanently altering his mode of perception. Because of the depth of his reaction to the Biblical stories, the process of Christ's death at Easter in Jerusalem is forever linked in De Quincey's mind with the "cloudless sunlights of Syria". This passage thus provides a gloss upon many such juxtapositions throughout his work, and, in particular, extends the meaning of the dream of Easter at the conclusion of the Confessions.

De Quincey turns these observations about summer and death to immediate dramatic use by writing, "From the gorgeous sunlight I turned round to the corpse" (I, 40). Then follows a static moment of revery or vision, one of De Quincey's typical instants of frozen time or "waking dream", when he apprehends mortality for the first time:

> I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me; and, whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow--the saddest that ear ever heard. It was a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries. Many times since, upon summer days, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, solemn, Memnonian, but saintly

> swell; it is in this world the one great audible symbol of eternity (I,41-2).

Images of life are thus juxtaposed with images of death, and emerging from this powerful contrast is an even more powerful intuition of infinity. In the footnote to "Memnonian", De Quincey explains the sublimity attached to the sculptured head of Memnon in the British Museum, which is one of infinity and mystery. This, like the remarks upon the nebula in Orion, is one of the few explicit statements De Quincey makes about the nature of sublimity. He writes of "that sublime head which wears upon its lips a smile co-extensive with all time and space, an Aeonian smile of gracious love and Pan-like mystery..."(I, 41n.), and although the horror attached to the Orion nebula is not immediately present in the head of Memnon, this element of the sublime experience follows shortly afterwards. De Quincey falls into a trance as he stands beside his sister's corpse, and sees a corridor (which is the inversion of the shaft already refered to,[13] but which has much the same effect) stretching to the heavens:

> A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up for ever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft for ever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but that also ran before us and fled away continually. The flight and pursuit seemed to go on for ever and ever. Frost gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death seemed to repel me, some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadful antagonism between them; shadowy meanings even yet continue to exercise and torment in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me (I,42).

All the typical elements of De Quinceyan sublimity are present here, the awareness of infinity,[14] the conflict,[15] the terror of death, and, above all, the mystery. The vision clearly belongs to the syndrome revolving around the pursuit of Ann of Oxford Street, which De Quincey stated would be a central pattern in his dream-visions; and the appalling nature of infinity is close in its representation to the Piranesi image in the Confessions. When considering this passage in direct juxtaposition with the Confessions, indeed, De Quincey's structure of echoes, through themes, symbols and images, is immediately more apparent.

That this experience of infinity is not entirely destructive for De Quincey, as Hillis Miller suggests,[16] is shown in a

passage not retained in the Autobiography version:

> Oh flight of the solitary child to the solitary God--flight from the ruined corpse to the throne that could not be ruined! --how rich wert thou in truth for after years.[17]

And shortly afterwards he writes of the vision that it was the "loveliest amongst all the shows which earth has revealed to me" (I, 42). The ambiguity of the experience is thus quite evident, and De Quincey goes on to develop the mythological significances of the event. The image of the echo, which was to be developed in the revised Confessions, is merged with De Quincey's personal identification with the figure of the Wandering Jew:

> O Ahasuerus, everlasting Jew! fable or not a fable, thou, when first starting on thy endless pilgrimage of woe--thou, when first flying through the gates of Jerusalem, and vainly yearning to leave the pursuing curse behind thee --couldst not more certainly in the words of Christ have read thy doom of endless sorrow, than I when passing forever from my sister's room (I, 43).

He adds, aptly recalling Blake's "Sick Rose", that "The worm was at my heart; and, I may say, the worm that could not die". It is the same worm which rises into De Quincey's consciousness when he next passes forever from a certain room, at the moment of leaving school.

The event of his sister's death is undoubtedly the most significant in De Quincey's autobiography, and the Suspiria can be seen as forming itself around it. The philosophical implications of the death are closely examined by him, and the dialectic of flesh and spirit, which he introduced at the end of the Confessions, is further developed. He writes, concerning the spiritual continuity of man's life, that:

> Some passions, as that of sexual love, are celestial by one-half of their origin, animal and earthly by the other half. These will not survive their own appropriate stage. But love which is altogether holy, like that between two children, is privileged to revisit by glimpses the silence and the darkness of declining years;[18]

The "Blackwood's" edition of this episode greatly expands this theme in the course of the account of the funeral.[19] De Quincey explains that at a certain point in the liturgy --"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption" --he is emotionally unable to accept its meanings. He returns to the point he made earlier about Milton, concerning reason in conflict with feeling, and it is his feeling

that his sister is removed and changed which cannot be accepted, since his own yet distant death is the only remedy for that separation. Then, as in the Milton example, De Quincey refutes another literary case to express his point. In this instance, he rejects the view expressed by Wordsworth in the Excursion that grief can be conquered by contemplating the beatific condition of the dead person.

The death and funeral are thus accounted for in some detail, and the opening section of the Suspiria concludes with the second of De Quincey's visions to emerge from these powerful experiences. As usual, he finds himself at grips with a paradox, that of something positive emerging from a negative power such as grief, and the resolution of this paradox prepares the way for the final, sublime revelation. Grief, in fact, is seen as having a dual effect--"Grief! thou art classed amongst the depressing passions. And true it is that thou humblest to the dust, but also thou exaltest to the clouds" (I, 44). De Quincey then remarks upon the creative power of solitude in combination with such grief, and thus prepares the way for the vision he is about to present. He writes, "now, therefore, began to open upon me those fascinations of solitude, which, when acting as a co-agency with unresisted grief, end in the paradoxical result of making out of grief a luxury" (I, 45). Thus, again, it is emphasized that creative powers arise from the paradoxical, the incomprehensible and the deeply unpleasant areas of existence:

> At this time, and under this impulse of rapacious grief, that grasped at what it could not obtain, the faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping themselves after the yearning of the heart, grew upon me in morbid excess. (I, 46).

This capacity provides the background for the climactic vision which is now to follow, a vision which occurs in church, and which is based upon De Quincey's observation of a window in the building. The contrasts inherent in this window become symbolic of the meanings of his grief:

> The sides of the windows were rich with storied glass; through the deep purples and crimsons streamed the golden light; emblazonries of heavenly illumination (from the sun) mingling with the earthly emblazonries (from art and its gorgeous colouring) of what is grandest in man. There were the apostles....there were the martyrs....And all the time, whilst this tumult of sublime memorials held on as some

> deep chords from some accompaniment in the bass, I saw through the wide central field of the window, where the glass was uncoloured, white, fleecy clouds.... (I, 47).

The clouds transform themselves into the beds of sick children, "mementoes of prostrate sorrow" (I, 48) which occasionally De Quincey feels himself rising up to meet, and somehow triumphing over, as the resounding music of the church organ exalts him. This is certainly one of De Quincey's most effective images, one of his most successful sublime climaxes. It is beautifully wrought, and highly complex, beginning with the dual nature of the glass itself, which expresses the spiritual and mundane simultaneously. The glass thus becomes symbolic of De Quincey's new consciousness of the split nature of human existence and of his own being, part of which, as he has already indicated, cannot accept the separation occasioned by death. The pattern of contrasts is expanded as De Quincey gazes through a section of the uncoloured glass, achieving a new perspective, and a direct revelation of the heavenly sphere. A sense of such immediate apprehension of noumenal reality is familiar from The English Mail-Coach and will occur again later in the Suspiria, notably in "The Daughter of Lebanon", but the essential meaning of this revelation involves a transcendence of the mortality so recently experienced. With this kind of vision, therefore, De Quincey redresses the imbalance created by the "Pains of Opium" conclusion to the Confessions, where mortality and the realm of the finite had created a barrier against experience of noumenal truth.

Part I Cont.

In April of 1845 De Quincey continued the Suspiria with only the above heading attached. In this section he adds to the account of his sister's death, stressing once again the fact that his memory of her is both fleshly and spiritual. He describes the funeral service, quoting passages from the liturgy at some length, since a sublime effect can be produced by the timely introduction of biblical language into the text. The power of certain biblical passages over De Quincey's imagination, if this were not already evident from a general analysis of his writing, is explicitly

stated a little later in this same section, when he describes "the great chapter of St. Paul on the grave and the resurrection...which I had read again and again with so passionate a sense of its grandeur." He shortly afterwards calls this biblical episode "a composition with which my heart was filled".[20] His commentary upon three specific examples from the funeral service, however, reveals again the dual nature of De Quincey's experience at this time. The first passage which he notices ("we therefore commit her body to the ground...") contains reference to resurrection and eternal life, and De Quincey remarks upon the "sublime effect" which occurs when a "rapturous interpolation from the Apocalypse" immediately follows.[21] The contrast contained in this section of the service is that expressed by the image of lowering a body to the earth (the finite) while simultaneously elevating its spirit towards heaven (infinity). The appeal of this simple expression of the transcendence of death and the resolution of paradox is such that De Quincey will use the concept once again in a later section of the Suspiria entitled "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow". The third passage from the service ("who also taught us by his holy apostle St. Paul not to be sorry, as men without hope") seems remarkable to De Quincey because it appears to admit the necessity of sorrow, while stressing the life beyond this sorrow.[22] Resurrection seems adequately merged with human frailty, which is, of course, the truly sublime duality of Christianity as far as De Quincey is concerned. The second passage, however, ("we give thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our sister out of the miseries of this sinful world") gives De Quincey no comfort, since it only emphasizes a paradox he is quite unable to understand at this stage. To him, the world is no longer a paradise since the removal of his sister, and thus her present position in another paradise makes no sense at all. From this point onwards, however, the dichotomy between heaven and earth is fully apparent to the young De Quincey, and the problems of the dissociation of the two levels of existence becomes central to the Suspiria. The concluding dream of this present section represents a fusion which is lacking here, a fusion and synthesis which is the goal of De Quincey's spiritual life and the climax of his creative work. The two modes of grief become united and the

problems of the liturgy dissolve:

> Once more I, that wallowed, became he that rose up to the clouds. And now in Oxford, all was bound up into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny glorifying haze. For high above my own station, hovered a gleaming host of heavenly beings, surrounding the pillows of dying children. And such beings sympathize equally with sorrow that grovels and with sorrow that soars. Such beings pity alike the children that are languishing in death, and the children that live only to languish in tears (I, 50).

Other material in this section should be briefly noted, particularly since it is not reprinted in De Quincey's Collective Works, and not, therefore, by Masson. De Quincey deals at length with the dangers of solitude in grief, implying its suicidal possibility, and he then goes on to account for the death of his cat, and his attitude to the death of spiders.[23] These passages help to fill in the entire picture of De Quincey's childhood response to death in general, and once again reflect his tendency to build up autobiographical material around his central impassioned climaxes. Also contained in this section are further remarks on the innocence of childhood, to which I have already refered,[24] and his description of an early fear of the endless number of volumes he imagines he has ordered in error from a book-seller.[25] Then, having paused to describe the general development and pattern of the Suspiria to date,[26] he goes on to present the vision I have quoted above.

Part I Concluded. "The Palimpsest"

This piece consists of a lengthy definition and description of the palimpsest manuscript, containing two or more layers of writing which can be successively revealed to show, as it were, the whole of its history. The palimpsest the becomes an analogue for the human mind, illustrating the statement that De Quincey had earlier made-- "rarely do things perish from my memory that are worth remembering":[27]

> What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, oh reader! is yours. 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

(XIII, 346).[28]

Clearly, as a symbol for the effects which are seen at work in both the Mail-Coach and the revised Confessions, the palimpsest is of great importance to De Quincey. He tells the story of the little girl who, before almost drowning, experiences total recall of her past life,[29] and this example is obviously directly relevant to the method of his own creative writing.[30] The palimpsest is in fact another form of the echo image of the revised Confessions, and the present section of the Suspiria shows that De Quincey was beginning to put greater emphasis on this idea as early as 1845.

De Quincey observes that in the analogy of the manuscript succeeding layers may provide "grotesque collisions of those successive themes, having no natural connexion, which by pure accident have consecutively occupied the roll...."(XIII, 347). There is no such incongruity, he observes, in the structure of a man's life, for there is an internal cohesion which provides its true harmony:

> but the organizing principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres, whatever heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated from without, will not permit the grandeur of human unity greatly to be violated, or its ultimate repose to be troubled, in the retrospect from dying moments, or from other great convulsions (XIII, 347).

The "great convulsions" which might produce the ordered retrospect of life are, in fact, those moments of crisis and sublime experience which I have noted in the previous two chapters. The revealed pattern of man's life, as it comes to him through his opium dreams, becomes the pattern of De Quincey's most creative work. He states the matter in the following way, reaching an impassioned conclusion to this essentially factual section:

> The romance has perished that the young man adored; the legend has gone that deluded the boy; but the deep, deep tragedies of infancy, as when the child's hands were unlinked for ever from his mother's neck, or his lips for ever from his sister's kisses, these remain lurking below all, and these lurk to the last (XIII, 349).

As the intensity of emotion increases towards the end of the account of the palimpsest (for, after all, such a sublime conception could not possibly be contained within the bounds of ordinary prose, as far as De Quincey is concerned), the power of the

subject is expressed in images of darkness giving way to the light of revelation. He is writing here of the total recall of past life experienced by the small girl:

> A pall, deep as oblivion, had been thrown by life over every trace of these experiences; and yet suddenly, at a silent command, at the signal of a blazing rocket sent up from the brain, the pall draws up, and the whole depths of the theatre are exposed (XIII, 348).

The light dawning, and the subject of the palimpsest as a whole, becomes an important part of De Quincey's Christian mythology, part of the total Christian revelation, an account of which is the final purpose of his work. "Such a light", he writes, "fell upon the whole path of her [the nearly-drowned girl's] life backwards into the shades of infancy, as the light, perhaps, which wrapt the destined Apostle on his road to Damascus" (XIII, 348). De Quincey had likewise written elsewhere of the Christian idea of God as an "explosion of light" (VIII, 230). As The English Mail-Coach showed, De Quincey espoused the mythology that revelation could be achieved by a return to the "shades of infancy", or to a period of life when there was no sense of the finite, and therefore of passing time. Such an idea of simultaneity of apprehension is familiar from the Confessions, and similarly he writes of the girl that "hers [the light] poured celestial vision upon the brain, so that her consciousness became omnipresent at one moment to every feature in the infinite review"(XIII, 348). The religious imagery of the passage continues with reference to the "dread line of revelation" and the awe attached to the resurrection process itself-- "the possibility of resurrection for what had so long slept in the dust" (XIII, 348). The recalling of the past, or the device of the echo which reappears so often in De Quincey's writing, is thus seen as symbolic of that greater, final recalling on the Day of Judgement when all time is forever present. Of course, the resurrection of the past expressed by the palimpsest is imbued with the familiar dichotomy of pain and horror mingled with joy, and De Quincey represents himself as enduring suffering to attain final revelation-- "this mystery is liable to no doubt; for it is repeated, and ten thousand times repeated, by opium, for those who are its martyrs" (XIII, 348). De Quincey naturally responds immediately to the obscure

mysteries of this Swedenborgian system,[31] and writes of the "mysterious handwritings of grief and joy" which constitute past experience. "The Palimpsest" thus represents not only the symbolic pattern of De Quincey's own creative method as employed in The English Mail-Coach and the Confessions, but is also a relatively tangible correlative for the process of Christian revelation.

"Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow"

This piece follows directly after "The Palimpsest" in the "Blackwood's" edition,[32] and relates directly back to the Oxford dreams which closed the "Afflictions of Childhood" section--"Oftentimes at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams" (XIII, 362). In this section De Quincey is not only writing symbolically, but he is describing a symbol which he has drawn from Classical literature, and which has moved him greatly. Levana is the Roman goddess who elevated the child from the earth, after it had been placed on the gound immediately following birth. The sublimity of the act (and despite its pagan origins, De Quincey is forced to admit its power [33]) resides essentially in the juxtaposition of the earthly and the spiritual worlds, which has already been developed as the central theme of his account of his sister's death and funeral. The contrast of the downward motion of placing the child on the ground, and the upward motion of Levana's symbolic gesture, is the perfect expression of sublimity for De Quincey, and has already been considered in his discussion of the text of the funeral service. The single image expressing this dialectic would inevitably become a subject for his impassioned writing. Moreover, Levana is the "tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery" (XIII, 362), but is not concerned with the "knowledge" aspects of education, "not the poor machinery that moves by spelling books and grammars" (XIII, 363). Levana rather presides over the "power" elements of education, "the mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, work forever upon children".

Levana becomes a natural subject for the Suspiria, since

grief, which is its principal subject, is a profoundly moving experience, and Levana is the "tutelary power" which controls this kind of experience. The Ladies of Sorrow themselves are described by De Quincey in perhaps his most explicit attempt to make concrete the invisilbe world of spiritual meanings:

> Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphs written on the tablets of the brain (XIII, 365).

As in the tableau method of the Mail-Coach, De Quincey describes the three ladies of grief as if in some kind of ghostly procession, their characters and expressions presented one by one. From his account of the relationship of "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" to the overall structure of the Suspiria, it is clear that the first of the ladies, Mater Lachrymosum, relates to the episode of the death of De Quincey's sister --"She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces... she it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents..." (XIII, 365). The description of the second lady, Mater Suspiriorum, who gives her name to the whole series of writings, consists essentially of a prayer for the pariahs, or the outcasts of life --"all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of hereditary disgrace; all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs" (XIII,367). It is thus a prayer for the Wandering Jew, to whom he has already refered in the Suspiria, for the many weeping women of his imaginative writing, for Ann of Oxford street, and, above all, for himself. The third figure, the Mater Tenebrarum, is symbolic of that other large area of De Quincey's experience, "the defier of God...the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides" (XIII, 368), and is closely related to the Dark Interpreter, a demonic symbol of man's hidden psychology soon to be introduced into the Suspiria.

"Levana" is concluded with a vision of De Quincey himself being placed in the hands of these goddesses, and being transfered from one to the other as his baptism of pain, sorrow and suffering is accomplished. But for all his suffering, the final lines of the piece once again assert the Christian optimism with which

De Quincey interprets his fall from innocence and joy:

> "Banish the frailties of hope; wither the relenting of love: scorch the fountains of tears; curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace; so shall he see the things that ought not to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again before he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had,-- to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit" (XIII, 369).

"The Apparition of the Brocken"

This piece, like "The Affliction of Childhood", was incorporated by De Quincey in his Autobiography,[34] and when introducing it in that later context, he points out that it is a dream-ascent of the mountain of the Brocken, rather than a real ascent. Indeed, "The Apparition of the Brocken" is a fantasy episode, weaving two central strands together, namely the "spectre of the Brocken", which is a phenomenon of light and shadow, and the grief which is the principal theme of the Suspiria. The day of vision on the Brocken[35] is that of Whit Sunday, since a Christian festival often provides the background to De Quincey's sublime revelations. He describes how the shadow in the mist mimics his actions, how he picks an anemone and places it upon an altar, to symbolize and celebrate the transition of the place from a site of pagan idolatry to one of Christian worship (I, 53). He then, in a futher gesture symbolic of his past grief at time of his sister's death, "veils his head...after the example of Judea, sitting under her palm-tree to weep" (I, 54), and the shadow mimics this action also. The real importance of the mimicry of the shadow is removed from the Autobiography printing of this episode, for in the original version De Quincey goes on to explain the meanings of his image:

> You are now satisfied that the apparition is but a reflex of yourself; and, in uttering your secret feelings to him, you make this phantom the dark symbolic mirror for reflecting to the daylight what else must be hidden forever.[36]

In this remarkable sentence, De Quincey comes close to the ideas of Jung, for remembering that it is a dream which is being related here, De Quincey is clearly experiencing a symbolic representation of his

unconscious.[37] It is here, in the unconscious, that the undying griefs of his life persist and express their meaning. De Quincey only apprehends the true depth of that meaning through the dreams which he experiences.

The name which De Quincey gives to this figure of the unconscious is the Dark Interpreter, and later in the Suspiria he planned a section devoted entirely to this subject.[38] The really interesting feature of this mysterious figure is that sometimes De Quincey recognizes it as a representation of part of himself, of things he has experienced or thought, but sometimes it appears to have an autonomous being --"sometimes, his face alters, his words alter; and they do not always seem such as I have used or could use".[39] The more conventional part (to modern thinking, at least) of De Quincey's account of the Dark Interpreter compares him to the Greek Chorus, the purpose of which was not to provide new information, but "to recall you to your own lurking thoughts--hidden for a moment or imperfectly developed, and to place before you, in immediate connexion with groups vanishing too quickly for any effort of meditation on your own part, such commentaries, prophetic or looking back, pointing the moral or deciphering the mystery..."[40]. The Interpreter is responsible for such manifestation, which, although it is dependent upon experience, is nonetheless "not contented with reproduction, but which absolutely creates or transforms". The Dark Interpreter thus stands as a representation of unconscious processes, the means by which the symbolism of De Quincey's dreams has formed itself into something upon which he can found his art.

Finale to Part I. "Savannah-La-Mar"

Having returned, in"The Apparition of the Brocken", to a somewhat more prosaic account of the dark areas of the human mind, a psychological investigation which complements his discussion of the palimpsest, De Quincey concludes the first part of the Suspiria with a brief, impassioned vision of human suffering. De Quincey imagines himself, together with the Dark Interpreter,[41] voyaging down to the sunken city of Savannah-La-Mar. In the words of the Dark Interpreter, who on this occasion is truly performing the

function implied by his name, De Quincey rationalizes, in his most impassioned style, the nature of suffering:

> "O, deep is the ploughing of the earthquake! O, deep" --(and his voice swelled like a sanctus rising from the choir of a cathedral)-- "O, deep is the ploughing of grief! But oftentimes less would not suffice for the agriculture of God. Upon a night of earthquake he builds a thousand years of pleasant habitation for man. Upon the sorrow of an infant he raises oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages that could not else have been..."(XIII,361).

Thus, once again, the vision of the Suspiria transcends the vision of suffering as presented in the Confessions.

Part II.

Part II begins with a section which was later entitled "The Vision of Life",[42] and consists of an impassioned statement of De Quincey's familiar view of the duality of existence. "The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life," (XIII, 350) he begins, and proceeds to analyse this paradoxical mixture in words which I have already quoted elsewhere. In somewhat obscure sentences, De Quincey evokes the idea of the echo once again, or, at least, the sense of a predictable pattern of existence --"As 'in today already walks tomorrow,' so in the past experience of a youthful life may be seen dimly the future" (XIII, 350). This conception is clearly linked with the palimpsest of the earlier section, but now the subject of reflection is the future rather that the past. The prospect of the conflicts and the pain of life seen from the beginning would indeed be terrible, and the prospect of "self-dominion", or complete responsibility over oneself, would be an even more terrible image. These sublime concepts are the subject for the present reflection, and De Quincey reverts to a statement of the meaning of the earlier writings he has accomplished:

> It is in part through the sorrow of life, growing out of dark events, that this basis of awe and solemn darkness slowly accumulates. That I have illustrated (XIII, 351).

He concludes his impassioned rendition of this idea, which informs so much of his work, with a beautifully effective image of the sublime antagonism of joy and suffering:

> But, as life expands, it is more through the strife which

> besets us, strife from conflicting opinions, positions, passions, interests, that the funereal ground settles and deposits itself which sends upward the dark lustrous brilliancy through the jewel of life, else revealing a pale and superficial glitter (XIII, 351).

De Quincey wrote at the beginning of the second part of the Suspiria that "In this SECOND part....I retrace an abstract of my boyish and youthful days so far as they furnished or exposed the germs of later experiences in worlds more shadowy",[43] and he now goes on to tell of the strifes of his boyhood, with the view of relating "the effect of these upon my subsequent visions of opium".[44] Of course, after the Suspiria had been abandoned as a separate project by De Quincey, the strifes of his youth were fully recounted in his Autobiography, where they no longer bore such a direct relation to his creation of images, dreams and symbols. Even in 1845, however, it is evident that De Quincey was growing more and more interested in completing an account of his early life, since he adds to his description of conflicts with his father, with his school, with his guardians, a fuller picture of the large house in London where he starved and suffered. His relationship with the owner of the house is the most notable addition to the account of this event already given in the Confessions.[45]

The story of these sufferings then merges with what was later called "Memorial Suspiria", a tableau representation of different, widely spaced moments in time, linked by the theme of suffering. The mystery which De Quincey evokes is again that of the appalling blindness of man concerning his future, and, using the device of simultaneity, he juxtaposes incidents from three generations of one family. He opens with a moment of sorrow in the second generation, when a young woman has just been rejected by her lover, and he then casts back to the evening nine years before when the young lady's mother died. The third generation is represented by the as yet innocent caperings of a child (the niece of the young woman who has since died). Images of suffering related through time by a common moment in the day-- nine o'clock in the evening--exploit the idea of the palimpsest, and reveal De Quincey's paradoxical attitude to the partial nature of human vision. It is probable that this episode from the Suspiria determined a similar one con-

cerning the K---- family, which De Quincey was to add to his revised Confessions a few years later. The representation of suffering in each case, however, must be understood in the light of "Savannah-La-Mar", and must be seen as sublime in its dissolution of chronological time. In the present episode from the Suspiria De Quincey is striving for an over-view of the meanings of human existence, an over-view which, as in the case of his own life, can only be achieved through a simultaneous image of its echoes and repeating patterns. In this piece, therefore, with its concrete examples drawn from one family, De Quincey successfully accomplishes an imaginative development of the idea of the palimpsest. Such an expression of the symbol of the palimpsest provides a natural conclusion and synthesis to the various ideas contained in the Suspiria up to this point.

"The Daughter of Lebanon"

I shall now briefly consider the remaining pieces from the Suspiria which were never printed in "Blackwood's", and in some instances were never published by De Quincey at all. The principal piece of this remainder is "The Daughter of Lebanon", which as I have noted, was printed directly after the Confessions in the Collective Edition, as a partial representation of the total Suspiria which should have stood in this place. "The Daughter of Lebanon" is entirely biblical in its setting, thereby fulfilling a tendency towards Christian mythology which has developed in the course of the Suspiria. De Quincey provides a typically sublime opening for this dream-vision, invoking the mysteries of time and eternity:

> Damascus, first born of cities....mother of generations, that wast before Abraham, that wast before the Pyramids! what sounds are those that, from a postern gate, looking eastwards over secret paths that wind away to the far distant desert, break the solemn silence of an orientel night? (III, 450).

"The Daughter of Lebanon" relates closely to both the other "Suspiria" and to the Confessions, and represents the merging of De Quincey's personal mythology with Biblical mythology, examplifying the furthest transformation of which his autobiographical writing is capable. The symbolic representation of the antagonism between

finite life on earth and heavenly immortality, the duality of the Christian consciousness, is continued here as the woman of the title finds herself torn between the two. The daughter is Ann of the Confessions transformed, a sinner who has fallen, but through no deep-seated wickedness. Her rejection by her father and betrayal by a lover (reflections of Ann's condition, and the young woman in the "Memorial Suspiria") "drove her whilst yet confessedly innocent, into criminal compliances under sudden necessities of seeking daily bread" (III, 453). Thus, in parabolic fashion, De Quincey proclaims the power of Christian redemption, as the daughter of Lebanon is baptised, and requests that she be returned to her father's house. The paradox of such a request, lying in the double interpretation of the word "father", is the essence of the sublimity of the parable, for at first the daughter of Lebanon seeks her father on earth, and is unable to accept the terms of the Christian contract. The apostle says to her, "'Lady of Lebanon, the day is already come, and the hour is coming in which my covenant must be fulfilled with thee.[46] Wilt thou, therefore, being now wiser in thy thoughts, suffer God thy new Father, to give by seeming to refuse; to give in some better sense, or in some far happier world?'" Like De Quincey himself during his sister's funeral, the daughter of Lebanon cannot separate her attraction for the earth from the love of her twin sister she has lost. However, in a moment of revelation, when the "masks" (III, 455) of the earth and the sky have been removed for her, she sees her sister in Paradise, and willingly forsakes the mortal sphere to re-enter the immortal love she had, in "infant days" (III, 454), experienced.

Thus, in this single parable, De Quincey fuses many strands from his own experience, many of the symbolic moments he has already celebrated elsewhere, and creates a triumphant vision of the resolution of the paradox and the meaning of human suffering. There is in fact no better example of De Quincey's poetic expression of the sublimity inherent in paradox, and the duality of human perception which creates that paradox.

Additional "Suspiria".

In his edition of De Quincey's Posthumous Works, Japp includes a number of pieces and fragments which would have been a part of the total scheme of the Suspiria. The first piece is entitled "The Dark Interpreter", a figure which is already familiar from an earlier section, and De Quincey had originally decided to devote a separate section of his work to this subject. Once again, he discusses The Dark Interpreter as a symbol for the unconscious mind, and he cites the case of a murderer who saw a "dark figure on his right hand, keeping pace with himself" during the execution of the crime. De Quincey rejects the idea that this figure was the devil in tangible shape encouraging the murderer:

> The fact is, in point of awe a fiend would be a poor, trivial bagatelle compared to the shadowy projections, umbras and penumbras, which the unsearchable depths of man's nature is capable under adequate excitement, of throwing off...[47]

Pain and suffering is the province of "The Dark Interpreter", and De Quincey reflects again upon the depths of childhood suffering in general, and his in particular. Again, also, De Quincey justifies this suffering on the grounds of its creative capacity, so that nothing essentially new emerges from this short piece.

"The Solitude of Childhood", the next extract, is in fact a commentary upon the subject of solitude as introduced in "The Afflictions of Childhood". Solitude encourages the death-wish in a child who may have been parted by death from a loved one. The theme develops out of the "Dark Interpreter" section, since here, too, De Quincey is writing of the creative powers of grief, which, in solitude, can cause the mind to bring an entirely new world into existence. The becalmed sailor in tropical latitudes is the example of such transformation given here:

> How motionless are the deeps! how vast-- how sweet are these shining zarrahs of water! He gazes, and slowly under the blazing scenery of his brain, the scenery of his eye unsettles. The waters are swallowed up; the seas have disappeared. Green fields appear, a silent dell, a pastoral cottage.[48]

The following section, which has the rather cumbersome title of "Who is this Woman that beckoneth and warneth me from the

Place where she is, and in whose Eyes is Woeful remembrance? I guess who she is", is a dream vision set in the Lake District in the vicinity of Dove Cottage. The subject is once again the dichotomy between sense and spirit, and is expressed by a woman who stands in the doorway of the cottage, alternatively beckoning De Quincey closer, and warning him away. The woman belongs to a spiritual world, which De Quincey cannot approach in his mortal condition. He has the impression that the visionary face can remember things long past, because it belongs to a sphere where time is no longer consecutive. This figure is, in fact a precise dramatization of the idea I have quoted from Swedenborg. In this capacity for total recall resides the real sublimity of the situation for De Quincey --"Chiefly it [the face of the woman] looked out at some unknown past, and was for that reason awful; yes, awful-- that was the word". This nightmare vision obscurely recalls the events surrounding De Quincey's first intimation of mortality, and it does much to explain further the duality of Dove Cottage as it is represented in the impassioned interlude section in the Confessions. It seems clear from this recovered "Suspiria" that De Quincey fully intended to complete a whole series of dream-visions, each of which would shed further light on the themes and symbols of his earlier work. "The Princess that lost a Single Seed of a Pomegranate", the last complete section reprinted by Japp, supports this view in that it provides further reflective poetry on the subject of reverberations through time. An action as small as a seed in a pomegranate has the capacity of creating echoes through the whole of a man's life, and in his reference to "an error of human choice",[49] he clearly evokes the pattern of echoes he has set up within his fictional writing.[50]

The Suspiria, indeed, builds upon this scheme of the echo, since the whole work is a re-exploration in different terms and metaphors of the central themes already introduced in the Confessions. In some cases it is clear that the development of such themes led De Quincey to add to the Confessions in the light of what he had achieved. The Suspiria, certainly, is a partial work, but I hope that by this substantially chronological examination of its various parts, the overall cohesion of De Quincey's major fictional

works has become a little more apparent. His theory of sublimity, as I outlined it in the first part of this thesis, is seen to be entirely and successfully transformed into the dream-vision world of the Suspiria De Profundis.

CONCLUSION

The Suspiria De Profundis provides a useful summary of many of the ideas discussed in this thesis, and it is clear that this work, had it been completed, would have stood as the final monument to De Quincey's pursuit and celebration of literary power. It embodies, in a variety of forms, all the modes of the sublime as described in the first part of the thesis, and clearly reveals how a few, central ideas dominated De Quincey's creative thinking. Through an examination of the various aspects of the sublime as De Quincey conceived of it, I have hoped, therefore, to explain the principles of his creative method, to demonstrate how ideas are transformed into the substance of fiction. So too I have hoped to show how and why dreams were such a vital ingredient of De Quincey's autobiography, and to shed light upon his choice of sometimes extremely bizarre subjects as matter for literature. De Quincey was a journalist and an autobiographer, and his originality in both these literary areas is essentially dependent upon the fact that he had the same goal in each. This goal was to expand the emotions of his readers by moving them deeply, and while doing so, to celebrate the paradoxical truth of his Christian vision. These purposes are revealed time and again through the different modes of the sublime and De Quincey's manipulation of them.

A genuine coherence thus emerges from amongst the rambling confusion of many of De Quincey's journalistic writings, a coherence which achieves its greatest effect in the English Mail-Coach and the other fictional works I examine separately in the second part of the thesis. But although such a coherence, and perhaps, therefore a unity, emerges from a study of De Quincey's more journalistic work, such a study does not reveal De Quincey to be a thinker of any particular originality. It rather shows him as a writer for whom certain ideas were ultimately true, and whose purpose was then to convey the truth of these few certainties to as wide a public as possible. In the

journalism, therefore, the prevailing impression obtained is one of repetition, of the "ideé fixe". However, I have hoped to show that an examination of these same ideas in the major fiction reveals a richness and variety growing from the basic pursuit of impassioned climaxes and sublime themes.

An awareness of the principle of sublimity in De Quincey's writings does not excuse the many occasions on which he makes unacceptable generalizations or thoroughly inadequate criticisms, but it does help to explain why such errors of judgement occured in the first place. It explains, too, a great deal about the creative method behind De Quincey's highly original form of autobiography, which mixes material from the conscious and the unconscious mind in an unprecedented fashion. By examining in this way the methods and structures of De Quincey's major autobiographical works, I hope to have provided, in addition to a study of the practical application of sublime ideas, a more detailed critique of these works than has previously been attempted.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Kant and Wordsworth

Despite his differences with Kant, De Quincey finds much to respect and emulate in the philosopher's writings. For this reason I have isolated, in this appendix, some of the principal divergencies and analogues. I have occasionally observed some similarities between De Quincey and Kant within the main text of the thesis, but I have confined the more complex arguments, and quotations, to this appendix. Where directly relevant, I have also included analogues from Wordsworth which are best considered in relation to Kant.

1. De Quincey's attack upon Kant derives at least partly from the fact that he does not give sufficient notice to Kant's proposition concerning the noumenal world, which does, to a certain extent, redress the attack which the philosopher made upon speculative metaphysics. Naturally enough, however, the proposition would seem to be in its indeterminacy, hardly the grounds for the kind of direct apprehension of an invisible world which De Quincey often describes. Coplestone summarizes the Kantian position on noumena thus: "We do not assert that there are noumena, which could be intuited if we possessed a faculty of intellectual intuition. At the same time we have no right to assert that appearances exhaust reality; and the idea of the limits of the sensibility carries with it as a correlative concept the indeterminate, negative concept of the noumenon".[1] Thus De Quincey's emotional reaction to Kantian philosophy is essentially right because Kant does exclude the mystical and the irrational as sources of real knowledge—"But though the word noumenon can be used in this way, the notion that human beings enjoy or can enjoy an intellectual intuition of noumena is precisely one of the positions which Kant is most concerned to exclude. For him at least all intuition is sense intuition".[2] Kant's idea of God, which is formulated through his third Transcendental Idea of pure reason, is

theistic and by no means vitally Christian (see Coplestone, VI, 294-5 for a specific account of the logical emergence of Kant's conception of God). Also, following the above argument concerning the noumenon, direct knowledge of God cannot be obtained.

De Quincey's deep attachment to the ritual elements of Christianity, as described in note 3 to chapter I, and his feeling for the symbols by which they are expressed, necessarily tends to widen the rift between himself and Kant. As I observe, Kant's God is theistic and general to the exclusion of all specific ritual—"But what does it mean to reverence God? [as far as Kant is concerned] It means obeying the moral law, acting for the sake of duty. In other words, Kant attached little value to religious practices in the sense of expressions of adoration and prayer, whether public or private".[3]

2. Kant's theory of the moral sublime and its relationship with terror builds upon the ideas of Burke, and provides a transition to the effect as it is found in De Quincey's work. In the Critique of Judgement Kant essentially follows Burke in his attribution of terror to the sublime, but develops the idea towards the creation of an aesthetic theory. Terror, Kant agrees, is certainly an essential part of the sublime, but he specifies more closely the nature of this terror and the extent to which the observer can be involved in it. As suggested by Dennis' "idea" of terror, the observer must not be in actual physical danger from the object of his contemplation, since fear of that danger will preclude a free response to the potentially sublime situation. Kant writes "If we are to estimate nature as dynamically sublime, it must be represented as a source of fear (though the converse, that every object that is a source of fear is, in our aesthetic judgement sublime, does not hold)"[4]. Kant admits the importance of Burke's empirical theory of the sublime, writing that "As psychological observations these analyses of our mental phenomena are extremely fine, and supply a wealth of material for the favourite investigations of empirical anthropology". Kant admits also that "all representations within us...are still subjectively associable with gratification or pain," but it is this very subjectivity which precludes the possibility of any general standard of taste. The sense of

personal well- being is therefore insufficient as a basis for judgement and cannot provide an a priori principle upon which taste can be founded. Kant concludes his refutation of Burke in the following way— "For, were not taste in possession of a priori principles, it could not possibly sit in judgment of others, and pass sentence of commendation upon them, with even the least semblance of authority".[5] It should be noted that Wordsworth, who seems very close to Kant in most of his pronouncements upon the sublime, also emphasizes the detachment an observer must maintain from an object of terror. He writes in his essay "The Sublime and the Beautiful",—"yet it may be confidently affirmed that no sublimity can be raised by the contemplation of such power [a precipice, a conflagration" etc.] when it presses upon us with pain and individual fear to a degree which takes precedence in our thoughts [over] the power itself"[6]. Although Kant theorizes more upon the aesthetic implications of such a point, the meaning is essentially the same.

Kant develops the idea beyond the fairly simplistic emotional theory of Burke, and makes its presence as part of the sublime the basis for a moral structure. Essentially, the appreciation of the Kantian sublime of fear consists of two stages. In the first place, the phenomena of nature may overwhelm the beholder with the sense of their enormous power—"Bold, overhanging, and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piled up the vault of heaven, borne along with flashes and peals, volcanoes in all their violence of destruction....make our power of resistance of trifling moment in comparison with their might. But, provided our own position is secure, their aspect is all the more attractive for its fearfulness; and we readily call these objects sublime, because they raise the forces of the soul above the height of vulgar commonplace, and discover within us a power of resistance of quite another kind, which gives us the courage to be able to measure ourselves against the seeming omnipotence of nature"[7]. The effect of nature in this manner upon the mind is to provoke it into a realization of its own infinity, but a different kind of infinity to that of physical nature. This is Kant's "nonsensuous standard", and the observation here of two modes of vision recalls De Quincey's insistence upon subtle distinctions between apparent similarities. Thus, Kant says, the power of nature "reveals a faculty of

estimating ourselves as independent of nature, and discovers a pre-eminence above nature that is the foundation of a self-preservation of quite another kind from that which may be assailed and brought into danger by external nature".[8] This point is of course a suitable epitome of the core of Kant's aesthetic theory, which stresses the subjective nature of this kind of experience, the sublime capacity of the mind itself, rather than the intrinsic sublimity of the object contemplated. The effect of this second stage of the sublime experience, which consists of the realization of one's own capacity for infinity and one's essential difference from nature, is expressed by Kant in the following manner— "In this way nature is not estimated in our aesthetic judgement so far as exciting fear, but rather because it challenges our power (one not of nature) to regard as small those things of which we are wont to be solicitous (worldly goods, health, and life),...Therefore nature is here called sublime merely because it raises the imagination to a presentation of those cases in which the mind can make itself sensible of the appropriate sublimity of its own being, even above nature".[9] Thus, as in De Quincey's account of the sublime, essential to the moral effect of the experience is the acquisition of a new perspective, one which entirely transcends the limited concerns of ordinary sensual existence. Wordsworth expresses very much the same idea in "The Sublime and the Beautiful", when he describes how an excess of fearfulness will destroy such a capacity for a new perspective. He writes, "But if that power which is exalted above our sympathy impresses the mind with personal fear, so as the sensation becomes more lively than the impression or thought of the exciting cause, then self-consideration and all its accompanying littleness takes place of the sublime, and wholly excludes it".[10] Thus terror or fear can, if viewed from a distance, produce the state of self-annihilation which is so often described by De Quincey as a prerequisite of sublime experience.

3. Kant's point concerning terror in the sublime rests upon considerations of the development of man's nature, so that man has to have reached a capability of finding great moral ideas within his own mind before he can achieve a true experience of the sublime. "In fact", Kant writes in the "Analytic of the Sublime", "without the development of

of moral ideas, that which, thanks to preparatory culture, we call sublime, merely strikes the untutored man as terrifying".[11] Just prior to this, Kant writes of the necessity for freedom within any relationship with God— "The man that is actually in a state of fear, finding in himself good reason to be so, because he is conscious of offending with his evil disposition against a might directed by a will at once irresistible and just, is far from being in a frame of mind for admiring divine greatness, for which a temper of calm reflection and a quite free judgement are required".[12] The argument here is essentially that which is central to Kant's aesthetic theory, the question of interested and disinterested assessment of a subject. Kant's aesthetic is refered to below, but the important point to notice with regard to the above quotation, and to the substance of chapter one, is the similarity of response required towards an aesthetic subject and a religious subject. Sublimity in each case depends upon a "free judgement". Wordsworth also writes on the subject of fear and the Deity. He hopes that "few minds....are so far degraded that with reference to the Deity they can be affected by sensations of personal fear, such as a precipice, a conflagration, a torrent, or a shipwreck might excite"[13].

In De Quincey's own writing, th point concerning the sophistication of man's relationship to the fear of the sublime is made as a part of his pagan/Christian dichotomy which I describe in the first chapter. A purely fearful relationship with a god is, as De Quincey states it, finite in tendency and therefore typically pagan in character.

4. The two stages of the Kantian response to the sublime provides an analogue to many of the dialectical ideas associated with De Quincey's theory. The duality emerges in chapter five, where I discuss the structure of De Quincey's aesthetic ideas, particularly those relating to didacticism and the idem in alio theory, and it is clearly associated with actual experiences of sublimity. The sense of horror and defeat which haunts his work is always superceded by a feeling of ultimate potential beyond the apparent realities. London, a sublime subject by virtue of its age, associations and vastness, produces in a man a "growing sense of his own insignificance" as he approaches the city—see De Quincey's account of his entry into London (I, 180). Wordsworth too writes of Lon-

don as an initially appalling prospect in The Prelude:

> Oh, blank coufusion! and a type not false
> Of what the mighty City is itself
> To all except a straggler here and there,
> To the whole Swarm of its inhabitants;
> An undistinguishable world to men....

However, even so terrible a sense of defeat is superceded by a greater appreciation of the sublime object. Although the city is:

> By nature an unmanagable sight,
> It is not wholly so to him who looks
> In steadiness, who hath among least things
> An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
> As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. 14

As in De Quincey's writing, a new perspective produces a new capacity to grasp the significance of the sublime object, indeed the new perspective reveals the sublimity. In general, however, although there are aspects of sublime horror in Wordsworth's writing, it is less extreme and less of a central theme than in De Quincey's work.

5. With relation to De Quincey's continuing insistance upon the dual nature of perception, and the confusion which can arise from confounding the literal and the symbolic, it is useful to notice that Kant was very much concerned with establishing a similar distinction. Kant's refutation of speculative metaphysics depends upon a "sharp distinction between the sensuous and intellectual levels in human knowledge. And he insists that we must be on our guard against applying to supersensible realities concepts which are applicable only in the sphere of sensitive knowledge".[15] Kant's discussion of the antimonies (to which De Quincey refers in his "Secret Societies" (VII, 181) and "Protestantism" (VIII, 264)) in the "Transcendental Dialectic" is intended to show that great confusion can arise from the application of transcendental ideas to the phenomenal world, or the other way around. In De Quincey, the paradoxes which can arise, evolve from the confusion of symbolical perception with literal perception. Kant establishes his position as rejecting both speculative metaphysics (in its claims as a science which can be known) and dogmatic empiricism (in its total reliance upon sensual experience as a source of knowledge) in the course of his antinomies (See Coplestone, VI, pp. 286-294, for an explication of these points).

6. De Quincey's view of didacticism also closely echoes Kant's theory although their use of terminology is somewhat different. See De Quincey's statement, "We affirm, therefore, that the didactic poet is so far from seeking even a secondary or remote object in the particular points of information which he may happen to communicate, that much rather he would prefer the having communicated none at all" (XI, 91). Here he is describing how a poet may introduce his subject by apparently dealing with fact, but this technique is merely a means to reach the powerful or moving aspects of the subject. It will be seen that very often De Quincey adopts this same method of writing, and will spend long periods in describing the facts of his autobiography so that in the end he may be able to present the sublime visions which emerge from them.

Kant had much earlier made the same kind of distinction in his Critique of Judgement between teleological judgement and aesthetic judgement, and even makes the former preclusive of sublimity, which is exactly De Quincey's point—"If the aesthetic judgment is to be pure (unmixed with any teleological judgement which, as such, belongs to reason), and if we are to give a suitable example of it for the Critique of aesthetic judgement, we must not point to the sublime in works of art, e.g. buildings, statues and the like, where a human end determines the form as well as the magnitude, nor yet in things of nature, that in their very concept import a definite end..."[16]. De Quincey uses the word "teleological" in a different way, but he agrees with Kant over the two kinds of judgement. However, it seems to me that De Quincey is less restrictive in his aesthetic theory than Kant, since he does admit that objects of utility (knowledge) can be aesthetic objects, since this part of their nature may be resisted and transcended.

7. Despite their differences, Kant's view of infinity is close to De Quincey's—"For though the imagination, no doubt, finds nothing beyond the sensible world to which it can lay hold, still this thrusting aside of the sensible barriers gives a feeling of being unbounded; and that removal is thus a presentation of the infinite".[17] Kant concludes from the ability of the mind to think of infinite as a whole as indicating "a faculty of mind transcending every standard of sense"[18] which is

just the faculty De Quincey describes as capable of appreciating the sublime. Furthermore, De Quincey's statement that "man's nature of something of infinity within itself, which requires a corresponding infinity in its objects", is more or less exactly anticipated by Kant's assertion that "Nature, therefore, is sublime in such of its phenomena as in their intuition convey the idea of their infinity".[19] When the mind approaches such phenomena it "feels itself empowered to pass beyond the narrow confines of sensibility", and what is revealed at this moment is the capacity of the mind which has approached the phenomenon in question. De Quincey's account of external space and time being important insofar as they reflect the infinite capacity of man's own mind is again essentially a Kantian proposition—

> where the size of a natural Object is such that the imagination spends its whole faculty of comprehansion on it in vain, it must carry our concept of nature to a supersensible substrate (underlying both nature and our faculty of thought) which is great beyond every standard of sense. Thus, instead of the object, it is rather the cast of mind in appreciating it that we have to estimate as sublime. 20

Such, of course, is in brief a statement of the subjectivity of the sublime as found in Kant, and which represents the main direction of S.H. Monk's book on the subject, and, indeed, when it comes to Kant's idea of space, De Quincey recognizes the philosopher's subjective viewpoint. He writes that Kant

> considers space as a subjective not an objective aliquid; that is, as having its whole available foundation lying ultimately in ourselves, not in any external or alien tenure (II, 103).

Kant's vision of the universe expanding in ever increasing units of dimension outwards from the earth is similar to De Quincey's evocation of the same idea in the "System of the Heavens", and in both cases the revelation of man's internal power is the key consideration. Kant writes:

> Now in the aesthetic estimate of such an immeasurable whole [the expanding systems of space] the sublime does not lie so much in the greatness of the number, as in the fact that in our onward advance we always arrive at proportionately greater units. The systematic division of the cosmos conduces to this result. For it represents all that is great in nature as in turn becoming little; or, to be more exact, it represents our imagination in all its boundlessness... 21

Thus it would seem, that despite their differences, De Quincey draws his subjective sense of the sublime direct from Kant, and generally agrees with the philosopher's description of the meaning of infinity.

8. The matter of the form of an object clearly relates to the idea of infinity, and is an important part of Kant's discussion of the sublime. De Quincey's images of infinity are, as I have observed, totally formless and ungraspable. As I mention in appendix B, De Quincey's idea of beauty is connected with the finite, and in this Kant has anticipated his position:

> ...the beautiful in nature is a question of the form of the object, and this consists in limitation, whereas the sublime is to be found in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves, or by its presence provokes, a representation of limitlessness, yet with a superadded thought of its totality. 22

Lack of graspable form produces an initial sense of defeat, and an "outrage on the imagination", which in turn results in a "momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful". As previously remarked, Kantian sublimity essentially exists in the mind of the perceiver, so that a sublime aspect of natural scenery, for example, does not "form of itself an object".[23] Wordsworth, however, establishes "a sense of individual form or forms" as the first of his three main sublime properties. He elaborates on this point, so that his second sublime property, duration, is in fact dependant upon the sense of form:

> I first enumerated individuality of form; this individual form was then invested with qualities and powers, ending with duration. Duration is evidently an element of the sublime; but think of it without reference to individual form, and we shall perceive that it has no power to affect the mind. Cast your eyes, for example upon any commonplace ridge or eminence that cannot be separated, without some effort of the mind, from the general mass of the planet; you may be persuaded, nay, convinced, that it has borne that shape as long as or longer than Cader Idris, or Snowdon, or the Pikes of Langdale that are before us; and the mind is wholly unmoved by the thought; and the only way in which such an object can affect us, contemplated under the notion of duration, is when the faint sense which we have of its individuality is lost in the general sense of duration belonging to the Earth itself. Prominent individual form must, therefore, be conjoined with duration, in order that Objects of this kind may impress a sense of sublimity; 24

APPENDIX B: The Sublime and the Beautiful

Since Proctor has fully discussed the critical meanings and contradictions of these two forms in De Quincey's writing,[1] I shall not repeat here all the relevant contexts and quotations. De Quincey's real meaning of sublime has emerged through many practical examples discussed throughout the text of this thesis, and the meaning thus derived is more complex than any rationalized definitions. The beautiful as a separate category has not been considered in view of De Quincey's relatively sparse attention to it, but I shall now notice one or two comparisons between the categories which may shed general light on arguments in the first part of the thesis.

Just as the sublime has been consistently associated with ideas of infinity, so the beautiful assumes its place within the dialectical theory as a category of the finite. De Quincey expresses this polarity in terms of sexuality:

> It is a great thought, a true thought, a demonstrable thought, That the Sublime, as thus ascertained, and in contraposition to the Beautiful, grew up on the basis of sexual distinctions,— the Sublime corresponding to the male, and the Beautiful, its anti-pole, corresponding to the female (X, 300-1n.).

This basic dichotomy is supported on a number of occasions, notably in the essay "Kant on National Character, in relation to the Sense of the Sublime and the Beautiful" (XIV, 46-60). Although it is a translation, this essay is an early example (1824) of De Quincey's apparent espousal of the idea that the beautiful is essentially finite in its nature. Here, beauty is associated with femininity and the French, so that this category tends to become associated with ideas not only finite but somewhat dishonourable. The sublime, in the essay, is firmly linked to masculinity and the English, while, through the medium of the French, worship of the beautiful becomes congruent with an essentially superficial attitude to existence. The Frenchman is thus "passionately fond of wit, and will make no scruple of sacrificing a little truth to a happy conceit" (XIV, 49), and "French history tends naturally to memoirs and anecdotes,

in which there is no improvement to desire but that they were—true" (XIV, 50). Women, on the other hand, receive no better treatment, and the female character is further identified in another context with those sensual and finite phenomena of the visible world which tend to preclude a sense of sublimity:

> As to poetry in its highest form, I never yet knew a woman—nor will believe that any has existed—who could rise to an entire sympathy with what is most excellent in that art. High abstractions, to which poetry...is always tending, are utterly inapprehensible by the female mind; the concrete and the individual, fleshed in action and circumstance, are all that they can reach: the ideal...is above them (X, 442).

To a man for whom the continuing pursuit of the sublime was so important, the birth of three daughters must have been a grievous disappointment.

Yet, as Proctor has observed, De Quincey holds contradictory ideas concerning the nature of beauty.[2] Proctor quotes an example of an apparently utilitarian kind of beauty, which is not in contradiction with the association with the finite described above—"In those objects which are refered wholly to a purpose of utility, as a kitchen garden for instance, utility becomes the law of their beauty (XI, 220). Clearly this idea relates to De Quincey's theory of didactic resistance which I discuss in chapter five, but does not seem to be compatible with the following statement, where the sublime and the beautiful lose their mutual polarity:

> Meantime, it is evident that neither the sublime nor the beautiful depends upon any secondary interests of a purpose or of a character expressing that purpose. They (confining the case to visual objects) court the primary interests involved in that (form, colour, texture, attitude, motion) which forces admiration, which fascinates the eye, for itself, and without a question of any distinct purpose: and instead of character—that is, descriminating and separating expression, tending to the special and individual—they both agree in pursuing the Catholic, the Normal, the Ideal (II,361n.).

In this context, the principal comparison is of the sublime and the beautiful, as thus linked, with the picturesque, which tends to assume the finite characteristics elsewhere associated with beauty. The above statement clearly agrees with the Kantian position of aesthetics where "Beauty is the form of finality in an object, so far as perceived in it apart from the representation of an end".[3] It seems perhaps best, therefore,

to see beauty as a category existing in a middle region, above the level of utility, and yet below the kinetic, transcendental possibilities of the sublime. Even so, a vagueness of definition in De Quincey's theory must be admitted.

The distinction between and comparison of the sublime and the beautiful goes back as far as Addison,[4] continues through Burke and Kant and is maintained by the romantics. The pairing of the two categories, and an analysis of, for example, the effects of landscape in terms of this duality is prominent in The Prelude.[5] Although, as I have observed elsewhere, De Quincey does not often discuss sublimity in terms of natural effects, there are examples of the pairing which are similar to Wordsworth's. He writes of the "stern simplicity and continual conflict with danger hidden in the vast draperies of mist overhanging the hills", and contrasts this with "the effeminate shepherd's life in the classical Arcadia, or in the flowery pastures of Sicily" (III, 283). In another context, he distinguishes again the "Sicilian mode, which tends to the beautiful," and "our stern northern mode, which tends to the sublime" (XI, 217). In general, however, De Quincey's concern is only with the sublime; as a mode of thought and a mode of literature.

APPENDIX C: Revisions of the Mail-Coach

It is interesting, in the light of De Quincey's preoccupations in The English Mail-Coach, such as I have discussed them, to notice a few of the changes he made between the first version of the essay in 1849, published in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine,[1] and the 1856 revision as reprinted by Masson in his edition. De Quincey's revision in this case is not a clear-cut example of additions tending to heighten the impassioned effects of the prose, although I shall observe examples of this occuring. There are also additions which tend to emphasize some of the principal sublime attributes of the mail-coach episodes; but, so too, certain passages which were omitted from the final version lend insight to the nature of De Quincey's approach to his subject. R.H. Byrns has written an article entitled "De Quincey's revisions in the 'Dream-Fugue'" [2] in which he considers the relation between the two main versions of The English Mail-Coach which I have mentioned, as well as the holograph ms. (National Library of Scotland) and the extra fragment reprinted by Japp.[3] Byrns observes from the holograph that a number of changes seem to increase the emotional intensity of the final version. He also notes revisions which increase the sense of dimension and movement, and then discusses rhythmical alterations, and other details, with the intention of proving a greater "artistic synthesis".[4] I have not attempted such a thorough-going analysis of revision processes, but rather considered certain revisions in the light of the various elements which constitute De Quincey's sublime vision.

The essential sublimity of the theme of the mail-coach itself, and its effect upon De Quincey's subsequent dream life and literature, was, in the original version, emphasized by the following passage, which also stresses the duality of gaiety and horror which is such a distinctive element in the first part of the essay:

> These were among the gaieties of my earliest and boyish acquaintance with mails. But alike the gayest and the most terrific of my experiences rose again after years of slumber, armed with

> preternatural power to shake my dreaming sensibilities; sometimes, as in the case of Miss Fanny on the Bath Road (which I will immediately mention), through some causal or capricious association with images originally gay, yet opening at some stage of evolution into sudden capacities of horror; sometimes through the more natural and fixed alliances with the sense of power so various lodged in the mail system [491]. 5

So, too, the purely sublime aspects of mail-coach travel, which perhaps De Quincey felt he had sufficiently indicated in the completed work, was stated again about the replacement of the mail coach by steam power—"Thus have perished multiform openings for sublime effects" [492]. This statement is indeed considerably more to the point than the final version which reads, "Thus have perished multiform openings for public expressions of interest..." (XIII, 284). Likewise, the presence of the following statement, removed from the final version, emphasizes the concept of indistinct terror, which is so much a part of De Quincey's sublime vision—"they first revealed the glory of motion" (XIII, 271), was originally followed by "suggesting at the same time, an undersense, not unpleasurable, of possible though indistinct danger" [485].

The largest omission from the original edition is, as I have already indicated, reprinted by Masson, because it is "too characteristic to be sacrificed altogether" (XIII, 290n.). So characteristic is this passage, indeed, and so immediately relevant to the themes and methods of the essay, that I have already referred to it at some length. It sheds considerable light upon the way in which the dream-images of De Quincey's essay have evolved, as images merge together to produce the horror which dominates so much of his imaginative writing. The heraldic device, expressing the duality of loveliness and horror, to which I have often referred, is contained in the omitted passage. So, too, is considerable emphasis on the theme of transition, or passing beyond a point of no return, which De Quincey represents as an encounter with "a mighty dial, sculptured with the hours, and with the dreadful legend of TOO LATE" (XIII, 290n., [494]). A second allusion to the "Too Late" theme, which of course was inevitably omitted in the light of the first excision, occured in the "Vision of Sudden Death" section. Following "where all hurry seems destined to be vain" (XIII, 303), there originally stood "self-baffled, and where the dreadful knell

of too late is already sounding in the ears by anticipation" [742]. The idea of fatal transition, as I have shown, became a more highly developed theme in the 1856 edition of the Confessions, and, of course, remains an important element in the Mail-Coach. While these evocations of finality, or irrevocable transition, are removed, certain small additions are included to heighten what De Quincey recognized as an important effect. The law-court imagery, used to express the irrevocability of the basic collision situation, is expanded in the new version. "The court was sitting; the case was heard; the judge had finished; and only the verdict was yet in arrear" (XIII, 313), is developed from a single reference to a trial in the original [748]. Likewise, "the strife was finished; the vision was closed" (XIII, 318) is an addition, along with the extra weight of the phrase "that is final" (XIII, 322).

The specific references to "Too Late", which I have noted, were probably withdrawn because they fell into the context of the discussion of image association, which De Quincey evidently felt interfered with the smooth flow of the narrative. It might just be noted in this context that this linking of images was originally described as "an accident of fanciful caprice" [492], but became "links of natural association" (XIII, 285). In the "Blackwood's" edition, there stood a preface to the "Vision of Sudden Death" which explained the connection between the various parts of the essay, and this small change, above, seems to indicate De Quincey's concern over the correct and almost scientific analysis of the dream effects which he is describing. It should be remembered that by 1856, De Quincey's account of his reasons for writing the Confessions was more biased towards the dream effects found in that work.

The large omission reprinted by Masson, including as it does considerable material relating to themes and methods, represent a withdrawal of the visible author from the final text. The other most notable omissions, from the final part of the Mail-Coach, seem to follow this pattern. In part V of the last section, for example, De Quincey originally allowed expression of his personal reaction to the tumult in the cathedral [754]. He described his initial fear, and then continued with a statement which provides an effective summary

of the core of his dual response to powerful situations:

> "Pomps of life, that, from the burials of centuries, rose again to the voice of perfect joy, could it be ye that had wrapped me in the reflux of panic?" What ailed me, that I should fear when the triumphs of earth were advancing? Ah! Pariah heart within me, that couldst never hear the sound of joy without sullen whispers of treachery in ambush; that, from 6 years old, didst never hear the promise of perfect love, without seeing aloft among the stars fingers as of a man's hand writing the secret legend—"ashes to ashes, dust to dust!" wherefore shouldst thou fear, though all men should rejoice [755].

The conclusion of this original version was thus a very much more personalized statement of the transcendence of his own instinctive urge towards the horrific and destructive. The climax was in this way a personal triumph over the haunting images which fill his work as well as a general revelation. "The generations of man" (XIII, 326) was succeeded in the 1849 version by the following:

> ah! raving, as of torrents that opened on every side: trepidation, as of female and infant steps that fled—ah! rushing as of wings that chased! But I heard a voice from heaven, which said—"Let there be no reflux of panic—let there be no more fear, and no more sudden death! Cover them with joy as tides cover the shore!" That heard the children of the choir, that heard the children of the grave [755].

The immortal stasis which results from the conflict resolved is thus somewhat more explicit in the original version, and less thereby depends upon the pure images of salvation which De Quincey provides. The removal of his personal reaction and involvement to the apocalyptic vision, though interesting in the light of his work in general, is perhaps justified in view of De Quincey's other statements about the selfless nature of sublime revelation. Other excisions also relate to personal details and preoccupations which De Quincey felt would impede the emergence of the symbolic nature of the essay as a whole. For example, De Quincey seemed to wish to restrain his natural proclivity towards close definition, which is such a common feature of his writing. Thus he removed the following typical distinction after some comments on the horror of sudden death—"I mean the objective horror to him who contemplates such a death, not the subjective horror to him who suffers" [741]. Also an omission noted by Masson (XIII, 306-7n.) involved a pedantic defence of the use of what De Quincey

fears might be a pedantic word, "diphrelatic".

Of the remaining small alterations, most relate to a process of intensifying the language, and thereby the sublime effect of the essay as a whole. "Indeterminate" is added before "mysterious" (XIII, 279), again to heighten the sense of the unknown. De Quincey's stress upon the human, feeling connection between man and horse on the mail-coach, and the greater immediacy of the speed of such a mode of transport (as opposed to steam haulage) is increased by several additions. "Yes, 'magna vivimus'; we do not make verbal ostentation of our grandeurs, we realize our grandeurs in act, and in the very experience of life" (XIII, 284), is inserted, and the essential importance of the emotions in a sublime experience is further emphazised by the phrase "electric thrillings" (XIII, 284). "The eyeballs of an animal" [491] is modified to the sublimer "the eyeballs of the noblest among brutes" (XIII, 284), and "echoing hoofs" [491] becomes "thunder-beating hoofs" (XIII, 284). Throughout the essay there are further detail touches of this kind, such as where "theatrical and holy", both usefully evocative, are added after "scenical and affecting" (XIII, 298).

The conclusion to "Going Down With Victory", though not as substantially revised as the ending to the "Dream-Fugue", shows again a delicate process of alteration. In this instance, at one of the principal climaxes of the essay, a slight change and addition greatly increases the effect. The original ending read, " in the mere simplicity of her fervent nature, she threw her arms around my neck, and poor woman, kissed me" [500]. The revision includes both a better turn to the last words, as well as a reference back to the real pathos of the situation, which lies in the woman's relationship with her son. The new version runs "in the mere simplicity of her fervent nature, the poor woman threw her arms round my neck, as she thought of her son, and gave to me the kiss which secretly was meant for him" (XIII, 300). In typical fashion, De Quincey points to the symbolic nature of the embrace, albeit a simple symbolism, where a "secret" meaning is expressed through an overt action or sign.

In conclusion, one fairly large omission should be noted from the final version of the Mail-Coach, a passage which in fact is very

typical of De Quincey's impassioned prose upon a sublime subject. Into his account of the secret meanings of the childhood lion dream, he placed the following vision of the sublime rite of Christian confirmation:

> The little postern gate, through which the baby in its cradle had been silently placed for a time with the glory of God's countenance, suddenly rises to the clouds as a triumphal arch, through which with banners displayed and martial pomps, we make our second entry as crusading soldiers militant for God, by personal choice and sacramental oath. Each man says in effect—"Lo! I rebaptize myself; and that which once was sworn on my behalf, now I swear for myself." Even so in dreams perhaps.... [743]

The movement of this description, involving the transformation of the "little postern gate" to the "triumphal arch" certainly anticipates the shifts in perspective and final apotheosis occuring in part IV of the "Dream-Fugue", and the richness of the imagery is typical of the later impassioned climax. However, possibly because he felt that sublimity was inappropriate outside of the conclusion to the essay, and that this brief and rather dissociated climax would detract from that conclusion, De Quincey decided to omit the passage.

APPENDIX D: The Confessions, chronology and revisions

1. Since the chronology of the various editions of the works to which I make reference in chapter seven is rather complicated, I give here a simple table and explanation which should help to avoid some confusion.

1821 First appearance of the Confessions in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine".

1845 The Suspiria De Profundis begun in "Blackwood's" as a continuation of the Confessions.

1849 The English Mail-Coach published in "Blackwood's" with no mention of its association with the Suspiria of which it was originally to have been a part.

1854 De Quincey begins work on volume V of his Collective Edition, which contained the revised Confessions. Published 1856.

Thus, while the additions which I discuss in the first part of chapter seven can be seen as having been directly influenced by the development of the Suspiria, the episodes considered in the second part of this chapter, which all existed in the original work, must be seen as leading up to, or introducing the Suspiria. I discuss the Suspiria in chapter eight both because it is more fragmentary than the Confessions and because the Confessions was originally to have been followed by it.

2. Ian Jack has written a valuable article entitled "De Quincey Revises His 'Confessions'"[1], in which, as the title suggests, he examines some of the differences between the 1822 edition of the book and the 1856 edition. He begins by observing some differences of intention as they appear in the prefaces to the separate editions. Jack suggests correctly that there is some room for confusion as to whether opium as a medical concern was the main subject, or whether it was to "emblazon the power of opium" on the mind. As Jack says, the "new insistance in

1856 on the medical value of opium is one of the most marked differences between the two versions of the Confessions"[2]. He then deals with the greater emphasis upon dreaming, which, as I observe, is a key to the meaning of the Confessions as De Quincey ultimately imagined it to be. Jack proceeds to account for the great expansion of material relating to De Quincey's early life. Relevant to my argument concerning the growth of the sense of guilt in the 1856 version, he observes that De Quincey writes more leniently about Manchester Grammar School, and concerning his escape from there, he is "contrition itself"[3] . Jack also mentions a "tendency to greater forbearance in judgements of people", listing examples, and also the "appearance of long digressions". He follows the judgement made by Althea Hayter that "They are mere padding, and weaken the effect of the book"[4]. Jack considers the enormous addition in bulk and quotes De Quincey's own statement on the subject in a letter to one of his daughters. Because volume V in the new edition would be far too short both for the price and uniformity with the other volumes, De Quincey admits that he was forced to expand the Confessions—"no remedy remained but that I should doctor the book, and expand it into a portliness that might countenance its price"[5]. De Quincey goes on to say that "I should, however, be misleading you if any impression were left upon your mind that I have eked out the volume by any wire-drawing process: on the contrary, nothing has been added which did not originally belong to my outline of the work, having been left out chiefly through hurry"[6]. Jack does not accept such an explanation, stressing that many additions such as may have been contemplated were the dream pieces which were to form the last part of the work. De Quincey himself, in the letter already quoted, feels able to recommend the revised Confessions for the sake of its "amusement", but "as a book to impress", he is not so sure. Certainly, as Jack asserts, (and De Quincey tends to have anticipated the point by apologizing for digressions (III, 268)) many of the additions are pure verbosity and not at all "impressive", but this is not a reasonable generalization as I have sought to indicate in the first part of chapter seven. Jack writes "If the revised version is truer to fact, the original version is truer to feeling"[7], but this again overlooks the powerful and emotional passages which I have examined

here. He does not seem to agree that De Quincey is right in seeing the Confessions in the same division of his writings as the Suspiria, but this is again something I do not accept.

In her article "The Whispering Gallery and Structural Coherence in De Quincey's Revised Confessions of an English Opium Eater",[8] Kathleen Blake discusses the Whispering Gallery symbol as it helps to justify De Quincey's claims for the increasing structural unity of his work. I independently came to similar conclusions, although, in any case, my account of the added passages is more comprehensive, and relates more clearly to The English Mail-Coach and the Suspiria.

Concerning the matter of De Quincey's involvement with writing autobiography at the time of his Confessions revisions, the following facts are relevant. From 1852 onwards De Quincey was working on his Collective Works, which included the revision and fresh writing on the Autobiography, which was printed again in Masson, volumes I and II. In 1851 and 1852 De Quincey had newly written the "Introduction to the World of Strife" and "Infant Literature" for "Hogg's Instructor". In 1852 or 1853, he had vastly expanded another autobiographical piece called "Laxton, Northamptonshire" for the new Autobiography. This piece had originally appeared in "Tait's Magazine" in 1834. Masson also supposes that the episode entitled "The Priory" (he reprints it in two parts, as he explains at I, 378n.) was written about 1853. Clearly, in view of this interest in filling in missing areas of his autobiography, De Quincey's additions to the Confessions are consistent with his current literary preoccupations.

APPENDIX E: List of "Suspiria"

1. Dreaming
2. The Affliction of Childhood
   Dream Echoes
3. The English Mail-Coach
   (1) The Glory of Motion
   (2) Vision of Sudden Death
   (3) Dream-Fugue
4. The Palimpsest of the Human Brain
5. Vision of Life
6. Memorial Suspiria
7. Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow
8. Solitude of Childhood
9. The Dark Interpreter
10. The Apparition of the Brocken
11. Savannah-la-Mar
12. The Dreadful Infant (There was the glory of innocence made perfect; there was the dreadful beauty of infancy that had seen God)
13. Foundering Ships
14. The Archbishop and the Controller of Fire
15. God that didst Promise
16. Count the Leaves in Vallombrosa
17. But if I submitted with Resignation, not the less I searched for the Unsearchable—sometimes in Arab Deserts, sometimes in the Sea
18. That ran before us in Malice
19. Morning of Execution
20. Daughter of Lebanon
21. Kyrie Eleison
22. The Princess that lost a Single Seed of Pomegranate
23. The Nursery in Arabian Deserts
24. The Halcyon Calm and the Coffin
25. Faces! Angels' Faces!

26. At that Word

27. Oh, Apothanate! that hatest Death, and cleanest from the Pollution of Sorrow

28. Who is this Woman that for some Months has followed me up and down? Her face I cannot see, for she keeps forever behind me.

29. Who is this Woman that beckoneth and warneth me from the Place where she is, and in whose Eyes is Woeful remberance? I guess who she is

30. Cagot and Cressida

31. Lethe and Anapula

32. Oh, sweep away, Angel, with Angelic Scorn, the Dogs that come with Curious Eyes to gaze

On the subject of the structure of the total work, apart from being considered as a pendant to the Confessions, De Quincey's note to the first publication of "Levana" should be remembered--"The reader who wishes at all to understand the course of these Confessions ought not to pass over this dream-legend. There is no great wonder that a vision which occupied my waking thoughts in those years should reappear in my dreams. It was, in fact, a legend recurring in sleep, most of which I had myself silently written or sculptured in my daylight reveries. But its importance to the present Confessions is this,--that it rehearses or prefigures their course. This FIRST part belongs to Madonna. The THIRD belongs to the "Mater Suspiriorum", and will be entitled The Pariah Worlds. The FOURTH, which terminates the work, belongs to the "Mater Tenebrarum", and will be entitled The Kingdom of Darkness. As to the SECOND, it is an interpolation requisite to the effect of the others, and will be explained in its proper place" (XIII, 369n.). It is particularly interesting in view of the theory of the interconnection of time which is developed in the Suspiria that De Quincey should create one part of the work as a prefigurement of the total structure. Consider this device in relation to the following statement from piece number 29 above--"what man, I say, has not some time hushed his spirit and questioned himself whether some things seen or obscurely felt, were not anticipated as by mystic foretaste in some far halcyon time, post-natal ot ante-natal he knew not; only assuredly he knew that for him past and present and future merged in one awful moment of lightning revelation".[1]

APPENDIX F: Printings of "Suspiria"

"Blackwood's"	Masson Equivalents
Vol. LVII, March 1845	
Suspiria De Profundis: Being a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater--"Introductory Notice" (269).	"Dreaming" (XIII, 333-340).
Suspiria De Profundis. Part I "The Affliction of Childhood" (274-284).	"The Affliction of Childhood" (I, 28-49).
April 1845	
Suspiria De Profundis etc. Part I Cont.	
Account of the funeral, the death of the cat and the problem of the books, later omitted entirely (489-501).	
Remarks on the structure of the Suspiria and on dreaming. (501)	Inserted XIII, 339-40.
An added dream (502).	"Dream Echoes of these Infant experiences" (I, 49-50).
June 1845	
"The Palimpsest" (739-743)	"The Palimpsest of the Human Brain" (XIII, 340-349).
"Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow" (743-747).	"Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow (XIII, 362-369).
"The Apparition of the Brocken" (747-750).	"Dream Echoes fifty years later" (I, 51-54).
Finale to Part I "Savannah-La-Mar" (750-751).	"Savannah-La-Mar" (XIII, 359-361).
Vol. LVIII, July 1845	
Part II Untitled material (43-44)	"The Vision of Life" (XIII, 350-351).
Account of conflict with father, conflict with guardians, and a brief mention of school-leaving. Justifies authenticity of the Confessions, and tells more of his life in London (44-51).	Some account of these conflicts (I, 150-155).
Merges into (51-55).	"Memorial Suspiria" (XIII, 351-359).

APPENDIX G: Dream Literature and C.G. Jung

1. The recurrent impressions provoked by De Quincey's dream patterns is that, during sleep, he comes directly into contact with a universal, or architypal unconscious. This is the common, mythical ground of human experience, represented in The English Mail-Coach by the pattern of the Fall, principally expressed through the dream of lying down before a lion (XIII, 304). To De Quincey, dreams are revelations in a very real sense, revelations of the symbolic meaning of certain events—symbolic, because they express fundamental, commonly understood aspects of spiritual existence. Thus, through dreams, De Quincey has a direct experience of a sublimity which is founded upon the broad, mythical areas of experience, and is not bound to the transitory experience of daily, external life. His argument, essentially, is that, far back in history, men were more directly in contact with the features of spiritual life which became the myths of the world, but in the modern age, the only means of contacting such "lost" experience is through communication with the unconscious, or "that mysterious camera obscura—the sleeping mind". Now, dreams have always been of value to prophets and poets, who have claimed that "truth" is revealed through this medium. The "vision" is, indeed, a genuine source of spiritual truth, such as Kant would not accept. Though the noumenal world was not deniable to Kant, no positive knowledge could be obtained from this invisible region, and, of course, to the scientific world, such "revealed" knowledge is equally suspect since it can never have any empirical basis. So the situation remained, until C.G Jung attempted to give the notion of archetypal experience, the experience of the unconcious, an acceptable scientific basis. He describes in his autobiography, how a dream consisting of various historical periods reaching back in time gave him his "first inkling of a collective a priori beneath the personal psyche. This I first took to be traces of earlier modes of functioning. Later with increasing experience and on the basis of more reliable knowledge, I recognized them as forms of instinct, that is, as arch-

types".[1] Kant established certain a priori forms of perception, and these he called Categories. Naturally these were based upon the workings of the conscious mind as it relates to the visible world, but Jung hoped to establish, through scientific research, that there were other a priori modes of perception, which in fact related to the noumenal world.

Jung wrote of the archetype in Civilization in Transition in a way which well describes the sublimity of De Quincey's dream-visions:

> The concept of the archetype...is derived from the repeated observation that, for instance, the myths and fairy tales of world literature contain definite motifs which crop up everywhere. We meet these same motifs in the fantasies, dreams, deliria, and delusions of individuals living today. These typical images and associations are what I call archetypal ideas. The more vivid they are, the more thay will be coloured by particularly strong feelings-tones...They impress, influence, and fascinate us. They have their origin in the archetype, which in itself is an irrepresentable, unconsious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche and can therefore manifest itself spontaneously anywhere, at any time. 2

The grand ideas revealed to De Quincey in his dreams are thus taken by him to be truths in the way that Jung later established them to be. The experience of the Fall in his life, as first manifested in his dreams, is therefore, De Quincey suggests, a derivation from a universal subconsciousness—"perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every generation, the original temptation of Eden" (XIII, 304). Certainly, his idea of the symbol emerges from his sense of direct apprehension of the noumenal world through dreams.

2. In the context of "The Apparition of the Brocken", Jung's definition of "shadow" is interesting:

> The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself and yet is always thrusting itself upon him directly or indirectly...The shadow is that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors...3

The guilt dimension of the shadow is particularly interesting in view of De Quincey's haunting sense of guilt. Also interesting, in view of De Quincey's dream about the Brocken and the Dark Interpreter is an important dream which Jung recounts in his autobiography:

> It was night in some unknown place, and I was making slow and painful headway against a mighty wind. Dense fog was flying along everywhere, I had my hands cupped around a tiny light which threatened to go out at any moment. Everything depended on my keeping this little light alive. Suddenly I had the feeling that something was coming up behind me, I looked back and

> saw a gigantic black figure following me. But at the same moment I was conscious, in spite of my terror, that I must keep my little light going through night and wind, regardless of all dangers. When I awoke, I realized at once that the figure was a "spectre of the Brocken", my own shadow on the swirling mist, brought into being by the little light I was carrying. 4

The common interest of De Quincey and Jung in the meaning and forms of dreams is strikingly emphasized by this one which they had in common.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Sigmund K. Proctor, Thomas De Quincey's Theory of Literature, (New York, 1966), p. 69.
2. John Jordan, Thomas De Quincey: Literary Critic, (Berkeley, 1952), p. 153.
3. One study devoted entirely to De Quincey's non-critical writing is Vincent A. de Luca's A Study of Thomas De Quincey's Imaginative Writings, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale, 1967). De Luca examines several main themes and image patterns in De Quincey's work, which helps towards an understanding of the coherence which runs through his creative writing.
4. See Ralph H. Wolfe, Priest and Prophet: Thomas De Quincey and William Wordsworth in Their Personal and Literary Relationships, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana, 1960). My points of comparison between the two authors are, for the most part, not covered by this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE

1. See part 1 of appendix A.
2. For example, the following doubtful statement -- "One fact which struck me by accident, and not until after a long familiarity with Kant's writings, is this -- that in all probability Kant never read a book in his life" (Masson, VIII, p. 93).
3. See pp. 28-42 in Proctor's book for an account of De Quincey's appreciation of the Kantian position. A further comment regarding De Quincey's deep emotional attachment to Christianity is provided by Goldman, when he writes about the Essenes paper -- "De Quincey's commitment to Christianity was so doctrinaire that he could not admit the existence in the Hebrew world of a sect whose doctrines so clearly anticipated those of Christianity" (Albert Goldman, The Mine and the Mint, [Southern Illinois University Press, 1965], pp. 78-9). Long before either of these accounts of De Quincey's relationship to both Kant and Christianity, W.A. Dunn, in Thomas De Quincey's Relation to German Literature and Philosophy, (Strasbourg, 1900), discusses his Christian emotionalism, which tended to readily embrace the "unknown" areas of human experience -- "his instinct for the sublime, for the feeling of certainty, for a belief that satisfies hope..." (Dunn, p. 72).
4. Proctor, at p. 30, suggests that De Quincey did not in fact have a very clear grasp of Kant's philosophy. This opinion is also put forward in René Wellek's "De Quincey's Status in the History of Ideas", Philological Quarterly, XXIII, (July, 1944), pp. 178-9. See also Wellek's Kant in England, (Princeton, 1931), pp. 171-80, for an account of De Quincey's contact with Kant's writings, together with his inconsistencies with regard to the

german philosopher. Dunn, as I observed in the previous note, has covered much the same ground, has discussed De Quincey's inconsistencies and failings in his analysis of Kant. It may be added that Wellek's account in fact adds nothing of value to Dunn's much earlier work on this subject.

5. Particularly important passages where De Quincey writes about the significance of Christian symbolism, besides that mentioned in note 3 above, are at Masson III, pp. 292-3 which I refer to again in chapter seven), the deleted description of the process of Confirmation in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine", LVII, p. 743 -- see appendix C -- and the detailed account of the funeral service in "Blackwood's", LVII, pp. 490-91 -- see chapter eight below.
6. Such an association of sublimity with Christianity is certainly not new with De Quincey, and, indeed, there is a long tradition of such association stretching as far back as Longinus. See S.H. Monk, The Sublime, (University of Michigan, 1960), p. 79. Monk also discusses Robert Lowth's Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, at pp. 80-82, and cites other examples of the sublime being considered inherent in Hebrew literature. John Dennis has a section title in The Advancement and Reformation of Poetry which reads, "Passion is more to be derived from a Sacred Subject than from a Prophane one" (Critical Works of John Dennis, ed. E.N. Hooker, [Baltimore, 1939], I, p. 216). See also Coleridge's remark that "Sublimity is Hebrew by Birth" (Table Talk and Omniana, [Oxford, 1917], p. 191.
7. Jordan describes the pagan/ Christian opposition at pp. 192-8 of his book, and points out that the idea goes back at least to A.W. Schlegel.
8. For example -- "The whole pantheon collectively could do nothing for moral influences", and "How again from gods disfigured by fleshly voluptuousness in every mode could any countenance be derived to an awful idea of purity" (Masson, XI, pp. 82, 83).
9. See part 1 of chapter four below for an account of the terror of the sublime.
10. See appendix A, part 3, for comment on Kant's statement on this subject.
11. In the Autobiography from 1785-1803, (printed in Masson, I and II, and hereafter refered to as Autobiography), De Quincey examines the reasons for the idea of sin being peculiarly Christian. He writes that "the Christian idea of sin is an idea utterly unknown to the Pagan mind." Sin, to the pagan, was merely the relaxation of the will and involved no higher idea of holiness (Masson, II, p. 73).
12. The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey, ed. A.H. Japp, (London, 1891), I, pp. 226-7. These two volumes will hereafter be refered to as Post., to distinguish them from Japp's biography.
13. See part 2 of chapter three for further comment on De Quincey's idea of sin.
14. J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God, (Harvard, 1963). Miller compares De Quincey, Browning, Arnold, Hopkins and Emily Bronte in his study, and in the "Introduction" quotes Vanity Fair to call this group "a set of people living without God in the world". Miller is refering here not to the absolute non-existence of God, such as a modern might assert, but to the Victorian sense that God had retreated somewhere and was no longer

accessible -- "God exists, but he is out of reach" (p. 1). Such a case is far from true for De Quincey, who did indeed feel that God was apprehensible through experiences of the sublime.

15. The description of the experience beside the bed of his dead sister was originally a part of the Suspiria De Profundis, and was printed in 1845 under the title of "The Afflictions of Childhood" (Blackwood's", LVII, pp. 274-84). I shall refer in later chapters to the "Blackwood's" printing of the Suspiria (Vols. LVII and LVIII) but it might be useful to know that the material not printed by De Quincey in his Collective Works (1853-60) can be found in Malcolm Elwin's edition of the Confessions of an English Opium Eater, (London, 1956).
16. Hillis Miller, p. 23.
17. See chapter three for a discussion of the dialectical structure.
18. Hillis Miller, p. 21.
19. See part 3 of chapter four below.
20. Again see chapter three on the dialectical theory and the nature of paradox.
21. Post., II, p. 118n.
22. Ibid., I, p. 227.
23. Proctor, p. 43.
24. Such statements as the following, quoted again later in the chapter, clearly reveal De Quincey's reliance on the feelings as a source of moral truth -- "To know is not always to feel; and without a correspondent depth of feeling, there is in moral cases no effectual knowledge" (Masson, VIII, p. 230). And perhaps his most celebrated statement on this subject occurs in his short critical piece "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth", where De Quincey is primarily concerned with the justification of a reliance on feeling as opposed to understanding. He writes, "Here then was a fresh proof that I was right in relying on my own feeling, in opposition to my understanding" (Masson, X, p. 391). De Quincey's other great anti-Kantian statement concerning his rejection of the understanding as the final source of knowledge, and his reliance, rather, on the feeling, occurs in "The Poetry of Pope" -- "the Scriptures speak not of the understanding, but of "the understanding heart", -- making the heart, i.e. the great intuitive (or non-discursive) organ, to be the interchangeable formula for man in his highest state or capacity for the infinite" (Masson, XI, p. 56). These ideas, and the concept of education through experiences of sublimity, are, of course, related to the well-established eighteenth-century tradition of sensibility, as seen, for example, in Rousseau's Emile.
25. Specifically on the subject of the literature of knowledge and of power, which I will discuss in a later chapter, De Quincey makes this statement -- "For which distinction, as for most of the sound criticism on poetry, or any subject connected with it that I have ever met with, I must acknowledge my obligations to many years' conversation with Mr. Wordsworth" (Masson, X, p. 48n.). Despite this admitted debt to Wordsworth, De Quincey's formulation of the literature of knowledge and the literature of power may well have been influenced by Hazlitt's essay "On Poetry in General", which appeared in 1818, not very long before

De Quincey's "Letters to a Young Man" (1823), which contains the first presentation of the dichotomy. Hazlitt's statement that "It is not only the progress of mechanical knowledge, but the necessary advances of civilization that are unfavourable to the spirit of poetry" (Lectures on the English Poets and The Spirit of the Age, Everyman's ed., p. 9) is identical with the sense/spirit dialectic which I discuss in the next chapter. Emphasizing the "power" of poetry as opposed to this "mechanical knowledge", Hazlitt writes, "Impassioned poetry is an emanation of the moral and intellectual part of our nature, as well as of the sensitive — of the desire to know, the will to act, and the power to feel" (Ibid., p. 6).

26. A phrase such as "sublime cluster of mountain groups" (Masson, III, p. 282) is one example. Others can be found in appendix B on the sublime and the beautiful, which deals with general definitions of these categories.
27. From The Prose of William Wordsworth, ed. W.J.B. Owen and J.W. Smyser, (Oxford, 1974), II, pp. 349-360. Subsequent references to these volumes will be to Owen and Smyser.
28. Ibid., p. 349.
29. Ibid., p. 350.
30. William Wordsworth, The Prelude, text of 1805, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, (Oxford Univ. Press), I, 433.
31. Ibid., II, 447.
32. Ibid., VII, 695.
33. Ibid., VII, 721-6.
34. "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", Owen and Smyser, I, pp. 124, 126, 128.
35. Certainly De Quincey recognized the specific moral function of Wordsworth's natural imagery. As he expresses it in an essay "The Story of a Libel": "The Primal duties of life, like the primal charities, are placed high above us — legible to every eye, and shining like stars with a splendour that is read in every clime and translates itself into every language at once. Such is the imagery of Wordsworth" (Masson, III, p. 161).
36. During his exposition of the literature of power and knowledge in "The Poetry of Pope", De Quincey makes the specific point that power, or the exercising of the sensibility, can arise either from "the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life", (which, if not refering specifically to nature itself, would include natural occurences in general) or from the "mimicries" of life, such as poetry and romance (Masson, XI, p. 56).
37. See Proctor's comparison of the two statements, at p. 107ff.
38. See "rescues them[the affections] from torpor" (Masson, XI, p. 57) for the closest verbal echo of Wordsworth.
39. See chapter five.
40. He writes of the action of tragedy on the sensibility at Post., I, p. 294, and in another place asserts the following — "And of this let every man be assured -- that he owes to the impassioned books which he has read many a thousand more of emotions than he can consciously trace back to them"(Masson, XI, pp. 59-60).

41. For further discussion of De Quincey's distinction between talent and genius, see chapter two.
42. Post., I, pp. 303-4.
43. Wordsworth writes that the poet is a man "endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul than are supposed to be common among mankind", "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", Owen and Smyser, I, p. 132.
44. The Prelude, I, 439. There is an intimation of this same sanctity attached to the poet in the opening lines of the poem, when Wordsworth celebrates his expanding creativity — "Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze/ That blows from the green fields and from the clouds..." (I, 1-2). See also the following usages in The Prelude — "Holy services" (I, 60), "ministry" (I, 494), "ministration", "sanctity" (I, 526-7), "hallowed" (I, 578), "obeisance", "devotion" (II, 394), "holy powers" (III, 83), "I made no vows, but vows/ Were made for me" (IV, 341-2), "On I walk'd/ In blessedness" (IV, 344-5) etc.
45. Ibid., II, 376-77.
46. See The Prelude, where Wordsworth makes large claims for his own selflessness:
    I never, in the quest of right and wrong,
    Did tamper with myself from private aims;
    Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
    Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully
    Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;
    But rather did with jealousy shrink back
    From every combination that might aid
    The tendency, too potent in itself,
    Of habit to enslave the mind, I mean
    Oppress it by the laws of vulgar sense,
    And substitute a universe of death... (XIII, 133-141)
    Blake wrote, in "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" that "The most sublime act is to set another before you" (The Complete Writings of William Blake, [Oxford, 1966], p. 151). See also Coleridge's remark concerning the true genius — "and because his feelings have been habitually associated with thoughts and images, to the number, clearness and vivacity of which the sensation of self is always in an inverse proportion" (Biographia Literaria, ed, J. Shawcross, [Oxford, 1907], p. 30).
47. "On Shakespeare and Milton", (Everyman's Library ed.), p. 53.
48. The Confessions of an English Opium Eater, ed. Alethea Hayter, (Penguin edition, 1973), p. 29. This edition of the first edition of the Confessions will be used for any further references to the 1821 text.
49. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 272.
50. De Quincey's use of the Joan of Arc story illustrates his own assertion that one of the greatest powers in the moulding the human feelings are "the actions of men emblazon'd by history" (Post., I, p. 292).

51. In this, De Quincey is aligning himself with a long tradition of of considering sympathy as an aesthetic principle. The best account of this tradition is to be found in W.J. Bate's "The Sympathetic Imagination in Eighteenth Century English Criticism", ELH, XII, (1945). Dryden represents an early example of this kind of thought when he writes of tragedy achieving an "abatement"ofpride. Tragedy also "insensibly works on us to be helpful to, and tender, over the distressed" (Essays, ed. Ker, I, 210). As Wellek points out, this idea is closely related to the Aristotelian idea of catharsis, which certainly implies purgation of egotism (A History of Modern Criticism, [Yale, 1966], I, p. 22). Abrams observes, however, that the real move towards the aesthetic application of the idea of sympathy, as opposed to the purely ethical, comes in the nineteenth century in England with the criticism of Coleridge and Hazlitt on Shakespeare (M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp, [Oxford, 1971], p. 245). Shakespeare is praised for his capacity to subsume himself within the character his representing. Hazlitt expresses this capacity as follows — "The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies" (On Shakespeare and Milton", [Everman's Library ed.], p. 50).

CHAPTER TWO

1. In "Pagan Oracles", it is worth noting, De Quincey does in fact concede more capacity for an apprehension of the invisible world to the pre-Christian period, than he does in any other place.
2. This particular aspect of Platonism in De Quincey, of seeing the world as a reflection or a mere shadow of an ultimate reality, is not dealt with in Proctor's brief survey of De Quincey's general antipathy towards Plato (Proctor, pp. 18-22). De Quincey discusses Plato in a number of places, principally in the essay "Plato's Republic" (Masson, VIII, 42ff.).
3. In an extension of the same idea, Wordsworth, in Book IV of The Prelude, writes of the dangers which the surface manners of life can represent. To become too involved in sensual pleasure, such as during his vacation from Cambridge, is to banish a more contemplative seriousness of mind, from which the sense of the sublime might spring. He writes:

> ...But a swarm
> Of heady thoughts jostling each other, gawds,
> And feast and dance and public revelry...
> ...these did now
> Seduce me from the firm habitual quest
> Of feeding pleasures...(IV, 572-9).

4. Clearly, this argument is closely aligned with the discussion of primitivism in poetry, which gained force in the late eighteenth century. See Abrams, pp. 83-4, for an account of how writers like William Duff and Hugh Blair celebrated the quality of primitive passion and poetry. Wordsworth, in his reliance

on the idea of the common nature of men at all times, develops the primitivist argument,(although as Abrams observes, he was not a "chronological primitive" Abrams, p. 105). Certainly chronology is implied by the quotation from De Quincey. However, although a kind of primitivism is implicit in his statement, the celebration of the distant past must be seen as part of De Quincey's search for the "ideal" patterns of human behaviour. Not only was there greater passion attached to the utterances of those earlier times, but the issues dealt with were more archetypal, more ideal.

5. See chapter five.
6. Compare Shelley's similar denunciation of utility, which is central to his "Defence of Poetry" -- "But poets have been challenged to resign the civic crown to reasoners and mechanists on another plea. It is admitted that the exercise of the imagination is most delightful, but it is alleged that that of reason is more useful..." (The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. Ingpen and Peck, [London, 1930], VII, p. 131).
7. Post., II, p. 193.
8. I realize that in the cases I cite, exact parallels are not always present in De Quincey's historical antitheses. For example, in the rhetoric discussion, the classical period is praised versus the modern, whereas, when the classical period is compared to the Christian, then the condemnation is obviously centred upon the former. Thus, though a consistent pattern and structure can be seen in De Quincey's dialectic, some inconsistency in literal meaning is apparent. De Quincey himself notes in the rhetoric antithesis that what the modern world might have lost in eloquence, it has gained in the sanctities of its religion (Masson, X, p. 99).
9. Post., I, p. 73.
10. C.G. Jung writes that "Knowledge does not enrich us; it removes us more and more from the mythic world in which we were once at home by right of birth" (Memories, Dreams, Reflections, [Fontana paperback, London, 1963], p. 281). In this antagonism he represents the conflict so often revealed in De Quincey's writing between knowledge and power, the same conflict which dominated the mid-Victorian period in the form of Darwin's Origin of the Species. It was felt at that time, and is still repeated today, that the scientific knowledge accumulated during the last two hundred years has dealt a mortal blow to religious ideas. Certainly, advances in the theory of evolution, in geology and in astronomy etc. have disproved the factual bases of much religious mythology, and can, as Jung suggests in the above quotation, erode man's mythical capacity. However, scientific knowledge need not be felt to encroach upon the areas of mythology or spiritual life in general, as is indicated in the main text of the present chapter. It is interesting that, although he comes to different conclusions, Kant is likewise much concerned with establishing the distinct difference between kinds of apprehension. See part 5 of appendix A for comments on this subject.

11. In a similar fashion, De Quincey criticizes Southey's treatment of the story of Joan of Arc, which could be, as I have noted, a good potential source of sublimity. Southey, concentrating upon the political issues leading up to the coronation of Charles VII, concludes his account just when the sublime episodes are about to begin -- "With this coronation, her triumph, in the plain historical sense, ended. And there ends Southey's poem. But exactly at this point the grander stage of her mission commences, viz. the ransom which she, a solitary girl, paid in her own person for the national deliverance. The grander half of the story was then sacrificed, as being irrelevant to Southey's political object" (Masson, V, pp. 241-2). Once again, the question of utility lies at the basis of De Quincey's critical judgement.
12. De Quincey writes in "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" of his belief in the general purpose behind natural appearances. The works of nature "are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing useless or inert, but that, the farther we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye sees nothing but accident" (Masson, X, p. 394). As Proctor rightly notes, however, De Quincey usually speaks of nature in terms of its effect upon the feelings, especially its potential for sublime effect, rather than of its hidden design (Proctor, p. 57).
13. Also see the passage at Masson, I, pp. 128-30, where De Quincey discusses the capacity of the magician in Aladdin to read the "secret hieroglyphics" of the boy's footsteps. He concludes that "the least things in the universe must be secret mirrors to the greatest". See part 2 of chapter four for further comment on this passage.
14. An amusing example of such a shift in perspective, and the sublimity to be derived from it, is given by De Quincey in the essay "William Wordsworth", which became part of the Literary and Lake Reminiscences in volume II of Masson. The passage which I refer to now, however, was not included in that edition, but can be found in the Recollection of the Lakes and Lake Poets, (Penguin edition, 1970), p. 160. In this account, De Quincey describes Wordsworth stretching himself on the ground in order to hear the approaching letter carrier, and on rising, suddenly noticing a star hanging near the horizon. The relaxation of attention, followed by this sudden vision, filled the poet with an extraordinary sense of power.
15. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 285.
16. I have paraphrased here a quotation De Quincey makes from Milton. The context is as follows -- "It is a beautiful circumstance in the symbology of the Jewish ritual, where all is symbolic and all significant, where all in Milton's language 'was meant mysteriously' "(Masson, VII, p. 122n.).
17. De Quincey describes an example of the Christian correspondence between a time of day and a sublime moral sense, in the following manner -- "This practice of crepuscular antelucan worship, possibly having reference to the eneffable mystery of the resurrect-

ion (all Evangelists agreeing in the awful circumstance that it was very early in the morning, and one even saying 'whilst it was yet dark',--a symbolic pathos which appeals to the very depths of human passion, as if the world of sleep and anarchy of dreams figured to our apprehension the dark worlds of sin and death,--" (Masson, VII, p.111). Thus too, the wind can become "an audible symbol of eternity" (I, 42), and cloud formations, though fleeting, can be "in a dim sense often so symbolic" (Masson, VIII, p. 19n.).

18. Masson's note--"Flavius Josephus, the Jewish Historian b. A.D. 37, d. about A.D. 100".
19. Again, De Quincey emphasizes the sensual world in contrast to the spiritual, in his account of pagan and Christion attitudes to death. The Greek sought to conceal the horror of death by obscuring its nature--"by throwing a thick curtain and a veil of beauty over the whole too painful subject" (Masson, II, p.74). The image of disguise is employed to describe the Greek representation of death as a statue of a beautiful youth, while the Christian used the skeleton and the hour-glass. Having an access through symbolism to an infinite world beyond death, the Christian need resort to no form of deception about the nature of death. If a man is too attached to the external forms of beauty for their own sake, then a concomitant sense of their inevitable decay is inevitable. It is with reasons such as this that De Quincey describes Coleridge's final removal from the Lakes in the Literary and Lake Reminiscences (Masson, II, p.203ff.).

CHAPTER THREE

1. The roots of such a dialectical method of exposition, involving continual broad antitheses, go back at least as far as Goethe. "Such polarities are Goethe's natural way of thinking in all his sketches of literary history", writes R. Wellek in his A History of Modern Criticism, (I, p.220). Such a description immediately recalls De Quincey. See Abrams (The Mirror and the Lamp)pp. 118-120 for a brief summary of the general importance of this theory to Coleridge. The same general importance to De Quincey will be shown in the following pages, but I am concentrating my attention upon the specific values and effects which De Quincey derives from the structure of opposition. See also Wellek, I, p. 3n., for remarks concerning the origin of "reconciliation of opposites" in theories concerning "similitude in dissimilitude", which I shall be discussing shortly.
2. See, particularly, chapter four below for a discussion of dimension or size.
3. See chapter four below for an account of De Quincey's theory of pain and suffering.
4. This idea is of course closely related to the romantic use of the concept of organicism, which particularly employs images of growth in nature to illustrate the structure of a work of art. Abrams describes the origins of the theory pp. 201-213, and Coleridge's use of the idea at pp. 168-177. His consistent oppo-

sition of the organic with the mechanic is, of course, essentially the same as De Quincey's emphasis upon this distinction.

5. See chapter six below.
6. Again the organic nature of the combination of the two opposing elements of the language is asserted by De Quincey in his account of the differing qualities of the Saxon and latin areas—"whilst the flesh, the blood, and the muscle, will often be almost exclusively Latin, the articulation of hinges of connexion and transition will be Anglo-Saxon"(XI, 298). This usage is reminiscent of Carlyle's analogy between the health of the body and the health of the nation in his essay "Characteristics".
7. "The former half of my work I have already described to you; the latter half endeavours to construct such a system of study as shall combine these two advantages; 1, Systematic unity; that is, such a principle of internal connexion as that the several parts of the plan shall furnish assistance interchangeably. 2, The largest possible compass of external relations (Masson,X,p.25). Like wise, Coleridge's description of the two poles of the transcendental philosopher—"two forces, the one which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or find itself in this infinity" (Biographia, I, 178).
8. Post., I, p. 172.
9. The full meaning of infinity has yet to be discussed, but its general significance for De Quincey has been indicated in section 1 of chapter one.
10. Such a description of the creative process is of course very similar, and no doubt influenced by, Wordsworth's statement on the subject in the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads"—"I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind" (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 148). The interaction of opposites, which produces progression, as represented in this statement, is exactly the process which appealed so much to De Quincey.
11. See Masson, III, p. 204 for De Quincey's description of Wordsworth's one-sidedness.
12. See Masson XI, p. 310, for De Quincey's criticism of the Wanderer's lack of foresight and breadth of vision.
13. Compare with such a typical De Quincey statement as, "They [some authors] attract by means of their repulsion" (Masson, V, p. 215).
14. The idea of the reconciliation of opposites goes back to A.W. Schlegel, at least. To quote Wellek on this author's theory—"Romantic poetry differs from classical by its delight in insoluble mixtures of everything antithetical: nature and art, poetry and prose, earnest and jest, memory and intuition, spirituality and sensuality" (II, p. 59). Schelling formulated the thesis-antithesis-synthesis concept, which is the base of much material discussed in this chapter and the next. Coleridge developed this theory as part of the organic theory already mentioned in

notes 4 and 5 to this chapter, and as essential to his theory of the imagination. He writes in the Biographia, "This power... [the imagination] reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities; of sameness with difference; of general with concrete..." (Biographia, II, p. 12). Of the tension between the subjective and the objective, the finite and the infinite, he writes in another place—"in the existence, in the reconciling, and the recurrence of this contradiction consists the process and mystery of production and life" (Biographia, I, p. 96). Like De Quincey, Coleridge finds The fundamental paradigm of the theory in the religious belief that underlies all his thought. In Table Talk he expresses the Schelling pattern in the proposition of God as prothesis, the Father as thesis, the Son as antithesis, and the Holy Spirit as synthesis (p. 62).

15. Post., I, P. 227.
16. Ibid., II, p. 151.
17. This paradox is also evoked in another context, in relation to Christ—"—man and yet not man, real above all things, and yet shadowy above all things" (Masson, I, p. 39).
18. Although Wellek asserts that the idea of genius and talent is commonplace since Kant (History of Criticism, II, p. 164), the philosopher does not, at least in the Critique of Judgement make this precise opposition. Certainly, he goes a long way towards defining genius as an irrational force of originality (The Critique of Judgement, ed. J.C. Meredith, (Oxford, 1969), pp. 168-169), and describes this power in the following way—"genius...is a talent for producing that for which no definite rule can be given: and not an aptitude in the way of cleverness for what can be learned according to some rule" (Ibid., p. 168). Part of De Quincey's definition is anticipated here, and the meaning of "talent", though not so designated, is implied. Coleridge follows the Kantian description, calling genius "the power of doing something new" (Table Talk, p. 180), but also adds the specific polarity of genius and talent. For a good summary of Coleridge's definition (which could indeed be De Quincey's own) see Abrams, p. 176. For Coleridge, talent lies in the understanding, while genius lies in the action of reason and imagination, talent applies the knowledge of others, but only genius creates in an organic way. See also Wellek, History of Criticism, II, p. 46, for a similar distinction found in A.W. Schlegel, and II, pp. 101-102, for an account of Jean-Paul Richter's discrimination between the partiality of talent, and the all-inclusive higher powers of genius.
19. See also Masson, III, pp. 34-35n., for similar, but slightly expanded comments on the distinction between genius and talent. As in the above passage (XI, 383), De Quincey again emphasizes the moral nature of genius—"genius is intellectual power impregnated with moral nature." He also stresses the distinctive quality of genius—"Hence the very word genius, because the genial nature in its whole organization is expres-

sed and involved in it. Hence, also, arises the reason that genius is always particular and individual; one man's genius never exactly repeats another man's but talent is the same in all men".

20. See Wellek, History of Criticism, II, pp. 14-15 for a brief account of paradox as an idea in the work of F. Schlegel, and its relation to irony.
21. A similar usage of the paradox of light obscuring revelation is found in the Confessions, when De Quincey is writing of the mind's power to retain past events, which appear to have been lost forever--"but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains forever; just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light of day which is drawn over them as a veil--and that they are waiting to be revealed, when the obscuring daylight shall be withdrawn" (III, 435). In this example, De Quincey provides a tangible correlative for the lower and higher modes of understanding which he hopes to define.
22. From "Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been neglected", first published in the London Magazine during 1823.
23. Coleridge, on several occasions, makes the same observation concerning apparent contradictions, and uses Plato and Aristotle as examples of higher and lower faculties of comprehension--"Plato's works are preparatory exercises for the mind. He leads you to see that propositions involving in themselves contradictory conceptions are nevertheless true; and which, therefore, must belong to a higher logic— that of ideas. They are contradictory only in the Aristotelian logic, which is the instrument of the understanding. (Table Talk, pp. 82-83.) In an interesting paragraph in the Biographia, Coleridge deals again with the two levels of apprehension, factual and ideal, as they relate to the truth of images in poetry—"That illusion, contradistinguished from delusion, that negative faith faith which simply permits the images presented to work by their own force, without either denial or affirmation of their real existence by the judgement is rendered impossible by their immediate neighbourhood to words and facts of known and absolute truth." (Biographia, II, p. 107). As the editor, Shawcross, observes, there is considerable similarity between this idea and Keats' "negative capability".
24. Post., II, p. 228.
25. Ibid., p. 233.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. In fact, the idea of terror as a part of the sublime goes back at least as far as Dennis. In "The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry" he writes that "We name those things wonderful, which we admire with fear" (Critical Works of John Dennis, I, p. 347). Terror is, in fact, one of Dennis's "Enthusiastical Passions" which can impress the mind through poetry. However, he makes the following distinction—"Fear then, or Terror, is a Disturbance of Mind proceeding from an Apprehension of an approaching Evil, threatening Destruction or very great Trouble either to us or

ours. And when the Disturbance comes suddenly with surprise, let us call it Terror; when gradually, Fear....(Ibid., I, p. 356). The great and moving effect of terror is because it "is perhaps the violentest of all the passions" (Ibid., I, p. 361). The greatest "Enthusiastic Terror" (which is caused by the idea of the object of terror) Dennis asserts, following Longinus, is to be derived from religious ideas.

Burke, of course, developed the idea of terror in the sublime to an even greater extent. To Burke, the sublime effect is rooted in emotion, so that the greater the emotion, the greater the sublime effect, and terror, he sees as the cause of the greatest emotional effect. Burke writes that " whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime" (A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful, (London, 1759), I,p.58). He expands this idea in his section specifically on the sublime itself, and claims that "Indeed, terror is in all cases whatsoever, either more openly or latently the ruling principle of the sublime" (Ibid., II, p.97). De Quincey would not go so far as to call terror "the ruling principle of the sublime"--although there may be a case for seeing suffering as such--since a number of other factors seem to weigh equally heavily with him.

For a general discussion of Kant's ideas on the sublime of terror, see part II of Appendix A.

2. For "figuring".
3. See note 6 to chapter five for remarks on impassioned prose.
4. See other remarks on the all-inclusive nature of genius in chapter three.
5. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 502.
6. De Quincey's typically romantic view of childhood as a period of innocence, when spirituality is uncontaminated by mortality, is expressed in many places--see, for example, in the Suspiria De Profundis as originally published--"I maintain steadfastly--that, into all the elementary feelings of man, children look with a more searching gaze than adults", and "children have a specific power of contemplating the truth, which departs as they enter the world"("Blackwood's", LVII, p. 496). In this context, De Quincey cites Wordsworth's "Immortality" ode. See also--"the two things which God made most beautiful among his works, viz. infancy and religion" (Ibid., p.284).
7. De Quincey writes of the "physical despondency arising out of the liver," that "this state of partial unhappiness, amongst other outward indications, expressed itself by one mark, which some people are apt greatly to misapprehend, as if it were some result of a sentimental turn of feeling--I mean perpetual sighs. But medical men must very well know that a certain state of the liver, mechanically, and without any co-operation of the will, expresses itself in sighs (III, p. 78).
8. Post., I, p. 25.

9. See also De Quincey's justification of suffering in his essay "Oliver Goldsmith". Refering to the hardest years of Charles II's life, he writes, "And yet my own belief is that, in the midst of its deadly agitations and its torments of suspense, probably enough by the energies of hope, or even of anxiety which exalted it, that period of bitter conflict was found by the king a more ennobling life than he would have found in the torpor of a prosperity too profound" (IV, 290). So, too, De Quincey sees moments in a child's growth as dependent upon the moments of suffering it has just undergone--"Now it was a constant remark of mine, after any storms of that nature (occuring, suppose, once in two months), that always on the following day, when a long, long sleep had chased away the darkness and the memory of the darkness from the little creature's brain, a sensible expansion had taken place in the intellectual faculties of attention, observation and animation" (Post., I, p. 11). Here, in a specific case, De Quincey expresses how he feels that the great emotional effect of terror or pain can effect evolution. See also the ending of "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," quoted in chapter eight.
10. Post., I, p. 7.
11. "Grief! thou art classed among the depressing passions. And true it is that thou humblest to the dust, but also thou exaltest to the clouds. Thou shakest as with ague, but also thou steadiest like frost" (III, p. 44).
12. See passage at III, p. 45.
13. See "The Afflictions of Childhood" section of chapter eight.
14. See De Quincey's analysis of just this image-combination in his long note upon how facts from ordinary life became transformed into a dream-horror (XIII, 290-291n.).
15. Certainly the images of "Kubla Khan" are called to mind by this passage.
16. The original account of this event occurs in the Confessions (III, 402), and the ultimate effect of the event upon De Quincey's mind is described later in that same work (III, 441).
17. I mean, in particular, the attribute of infinity, which I discuss in the third section of the present chapter.

    For the typicality of De Quincey's association of horror with Asia, and how this relates to the fracturing of the self which he expresses through his images of horror and pain, consider Jung's statement--"The figure of the yogi,then, would more or less represent my unconscious prenatal wholeness, and the Far East, as is often the case in dreams, a psychic state alien and opposed to our own" (Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 355).
18. I elaborate upon the creative power of dreaming in the next section, and, of course, in the last three chapters on the major fiction.
19. Book I of The Prelude contains examples of the fear and horror to be experienced in the world of nature, and Wordsworth summarizes the effect of such experience in the following way—

"Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
...not in vain,
...didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up the human Soul...
....
With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such dicipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart".

In a similar manner to De Quincey, Wordsworth celebrates the potential beneficience of pain when he writes of his

early intercourse,
In presence of sublime and lovely forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy,
Evil as one is rashly named by those
Who know not what they say (XIII, 145-149).

20. A small branch of De Quincey's fictional writing which I am not considering separately, are those pieces which directly arise from his taste for the gothic. Both the sublimity of suffering, as De Quincey sees it, and the sublimity of obscurity as I describe it in the next section, can be sees as the root principles of this gothic tendency. Klosterheim (Masson, XII) is De Quincey's longest attempt in this genre (140 pages), and contains such features as a vast, crumbling castle, and a typically antithetical situation where "Terror and superstitious dread" mix with "religious awe" (Masson, XII, p. 72-72). "The Avenger" developes many of the same ideas, stressing mysterious circumstances which no mortal being can understand, and, particularly, the power of terror—"Agencies of fear.... avail to raise and transfigure the nature of men; mean minds become elevated" (Masson, XII, p. 236).
21. Clarence DeWitt Thorpe, recognising this process in the sublime of Kant, concludes in his study of Coleridge's sublime, that the English author does not reveal an acceptance or use of it. ("Coleridge on the Sublime" from Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honour of George McLean Harper, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, (Princeton, 1939), p. 214). See appendix A for details of Kant's position on this subject.
22. This aspect of the sublime is, of course, stressed by Burke. He writes that "Darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light" (Philosophical Enquiry,II,102), and links such words as "dark, uncertain, confused, terrible and sublime" (Ibid., II, p. 101).
23. Jung writes interestingly of the nature of the vital principal of mystery in religion. In his autobiography he writes of a stay among the Pueblo indians of New Mexico, when he was amazed at the secrecy which they attached to their religious beliefs. The emotional power of such mystery is related as follows—"It was astonishing to me to see how the Indian's emotion change when he speaks of his religious ideas. In ordinary life he shows a degree of self-control and dignity that borders on fatalistic equanimity. But when he speaks of

things that pertain to his mysteries, he is in the grip of a surprising emotion which he cannot conceal" (Jung, 278).

24. Post., I, p. 226-227.
25. See section 3 of chapter two for my initial remarks on symbolism.
26. The language of the Hebrew is also described in terms which praise the sublimity of its vagueness--"The Hebrew is a sublime monochord, uttering vague vowel sounds as indistinct and shy as the breathings of an Aeolian harp when exposed to a fitful breeze" (Masson, X, p. 251).
27. The idea of obscurity is linked with symbolism on many occasions in De Quincey's writing. He refers to "appearances so grand, and in a dim sense often so symbolic" (Masson, VIII, p. 19n.) when discussing the nebula observed by Lord Fosse, and the cloud formations written about by Wordsworth.
28. See Jordan, particularly pp. 58-62, for a brief account of these three kinds of sublimity. He makes the distinction on p. 60 between the sublime of mystery and the sublime of horror, which I also have separated--following Burke and Jordan. See appendix B for general comments on the sublime and the beautiful.
29. Recollections of the Lakes and Lake Poets, (Penguin ed.), p. 165n. This is another passage which is not reproduced in Masson's volume II.
30. See also Wordsworth's discussion of much the same idea in "Essay Upon Epitaphs". In very similar terms to De Quincey, he describes the relationship of the obscure to the ideal. He writes: "The character of the deceased friend or beloved kinsman is not seen, no--nor ought to be seen, otherwise than as a tree through a tender haze or a luminous mist, that spiritualizes and beautifies it; that takes away, indeed, but only to the end that the parts which are not abstracted may appear more dignified and lovely; may impress and affect the more," (Owen and Smyser, II, p. 58).
31. It is also worth noting in this context, that during his defence of Milton's apparently disastrous use of opposites, De Quincey refers to the device as part of "this cryptical science of poetic effects" (see chapter five), the power of which, again, derives from the presence of a mystery to be penetrated. De Quincey also considers that the use of symbolic language is to "mean mysteriously".
32. Post., II, p. 26. Again, this discussion is in the next chapter.
33. It should be noted, however, that despite the symbolic potential found by De Quincey in opium and dreams, both combined and separately, he had a natural tendency towards the ideal or the symbolic which these two media served to stimulate. The following account by De Quincey of his reaction to Kate Wordsworth's death clearly states this tendency--"over and above my excess love for her, I had always viewed her as an impersonation of the dawn and the spirit of infancy; and this abstraction seated in her person, together with the visionary sort of connexion which, even in her parting hours, she assumed with the summer sun, by timing her immersion into the cloud of death with the rising and setting of that foun-

tain of life....(Masson, II, p. 443).

34. See also, in the essay "Goethe", De Quincey's expression "the passion of awe connected, by our very dreams, with the shadowy and the invisible" (Masson, IV, p. 401).
35. See Jung's statement on dreaming—"The dream is a little hidden door in the innermost and secret recesses of the psyche, opening into that cosmic night which was psyche long before there was any ego consciousness, and which will remain psyche no matter how far our ego consciousness may extend...All consciousness separates; but in dreams we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night ("Glossary" to Memories,Dreams, Reflections, p. 413).
36. Masson, III, pp. 75-76. See chapters seven and eight for my principal account of this intention, together with an assessment of its fulfilment.
37. See footnote 30 above. Although Wordsworth is not talking about dreams in this quotation, the distancing effect required to produce a sense of ideality is very similar.
38. Post., I, p. 25.
39. Post., II, p.85.
40. That De Quincey was haunted by visions of infinity from his earliest years is well exemplified by a passage from the original version of the Suspiria, where he is plagued, as a child, with the idea of having mistakenly ordered a book which consists of an almost endless number of volumes. Not without humour, as he looks back on his folly, De Quincey pictures the arrival of these books at his house—"Looking out, I should perceive a procession of carts and wagons, all advancing in measured movements; each in turn would present its rear, deliver its cargo of volumes, by shooting them, like a load of coals on the lawn, and wheel off to the rear by way of clearing the road for its successors... Men would not know my guilt merely, they would see it" ("Blackwood's", LVII, p. 500).
41. See Masson, VIII, pp. 7-13 for De Quincey's humorous reflections upon the age of the earth.
42. De Quincey seems to have been well familiar with contemporary developments in the science of astronomy, and as well as its appeal as a subject of sublime effects, he was also attracted to its more factual aspects. See for example his discussion of Kant and Herschel as astronomers, in an omitted footnote to the "System of the Heavens"—quoted in Richard H. Byrn's "Some Unpublished Works of De Quincey", (PMLA, 71[2]),pp. 1002-1003. But probably his attraction for the subject arose, not because of the factual aspects, but the sublime potential he saw as being inherent in astronomy. He describes astronomy as "a science so nearly allying itself to religion by the loftiness and by the purity of its contemplations..." (VIII, 39). Clearly, in terms of the science/religion conflict I have discussed elsewhere, De Quincey fears no inroads upon his faith being made by the facts of scientific advance.
43. T.S. Eliot's "objective correlative" is closely related to the

symbolic mode which De Quincey describes here.

44. For the close similarity of Kant's and De Quincey's view of infinity, see part 7 of appendix A.
45. Elsewhere De Quincey writes of the "yearnings after the infinite which are the pledges of all internal grandeur" (Post., I, p. 69).
46. Such qualities attached to genius are, of course, traditional. Monk quotes W. Duff's "An Essay on Original Genius" (1767), which enumerates the qualities of genius as "Irregular greatness, Wildness, and Enthusiasm of Imagination" (p. 131). De Quincey's emotional theory of genius and poetry, with its concomitant excess, is well reflected in this quotation from Robert Lowth—"For the passions are naturally inclined to amplification; they wonderfully magnify and exaggerate whatever dwells upon the mind, and labour to express it in animated, bold, and magnificent terms" (quoted by Monk, p. 81).
47. See appendix A.
48. See note 6 to chapter five for a brief discussion of De Quincey's style.
49. The Uncollected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. James Hogg, (London, 1892) I, p. 128.
50. See M.H. Abrams, The Milk of Paradise, (Perennial Library ed., 1973) for comments upon time-distortion as it relates to De Quincey's use of opium (pp. 6-11). Few critical conclusions are drawn, particularly as far as De Quincey is concerned. The book also deals with the effect of opium upon Crabbe, Thompson and Coleridge.
51. London is sublime also as "vast centre of mystery", as De Quincey describes the city in another context ("Blackwood's", LVII, p. 500).
52. See Masson, VII, p. 368.
53. Hogg, I, p. 128.
54. Post., II, p. 86.
55. Burke, in his section "On the Difference between clearness and obscurity with regard to the passions" observes the power of the indistinctness of verbal description as opposed to a drawing (Philosophical Enquiry, II, 4).
56. Owen and Smyser, II, p. 351. See part 8 of appendix A for a further account of Wordsworth's position.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Compare the statement made by De Quincey in his essay "Style"—"The exuberance of objective knowledge—that knowledge which carries the mind to material out of itself, such as natural philosophy, chemistry, physiology, astronomy, geometry, where the mind of the student goes for little and the external object for much—has had the effect of weaning men from subjective speculation..." (X, 222). Again, a historical process is implied, and one which gives a direction to De Quincey's continuing pursuit of sublimity. He feels that the modern age has lost its capacity for sublimity, or in the terms of the above quotation, for subjectivity. Note the closeness of De Quincey's

"exuberance of objective knowledge", here, and Wordsworth's "vivid but not profound", in the previous footnote. It should also be remarked that the list of subjects which De Quincey provides in the above statement are all connected with knowledge (facts) rather than with power. The deficiences of the objective approach are therefore quite explicit, since power is De Quincey's most valued literary concept.

The debate concerning subjective and objective has, of course, a long tradition, although as usual De Quincey tends to pass off his restatement of the matter as something quite new. See Abrams, pp. 242-244 for a brief discussion of the tradition, and for an indication of the difficulty surrounding the argument. One slight difficulty with regard to De Quincey is that his praise of the subjective, as opposed to preoccupation with the outward forms of the world, must be clearly distinguished from the false subjectivity of the self which I describe in chapter one.

2. Such a statement clearly recalls the constant demand in the eighteenth century for generality in poetry, perhaps most easily summarized by Johnson's remark in Rasselas--"'The business of the poet', said Imlac,'is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances; he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest.'" (Criticism; the Major Texts, ed. Walter Jackson Bate, p. 207). This element of the mimetic theory goes back to Aristotle, who wrote in book IX of the Poetics, that "poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (Ibid., p. 25). See Abrams, pp. 39-41 for the statements of Reynolds, Warton and others on this subject, and see, also, Wordsworth's agreement with Aristotle's statement--"Aristotle, I have been told, has said that Poetry is the most philosophic of writing; it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative" (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 138).
3. The principal sources in Masson for De Quincey's critical remarks on Pope are "Alexander Pope" (IV, pp. 237-287), "On the Poetry of Pope" (XI, pp. 51-97), "Lord Carlisle on Pope" (XI, pp. 98-155). Jordan discusses De Quincey's criticism of Pope, pointing out its biographical basis, in chapter VI of his book.
4. The notable exception to De Quincey's general condemnation of Pope's works is the case of "Eloisa to Abelard". Here De Quincey is able to praise , and respond enthusiastically to the poem because he finds sublimity in the struggle of Eloisa's religious aspirations with her human passions (Masson, XI, p. 85).
5. De Quincey follows prevalent opinion in his condemnation of eighteenth century poetry. As Masson says, the period between Dryden and Wordsworth was often considered as poetically degenerate (XI, p. 2), and De Quincey writes of "the restoration of higher transcnedental truth of nature by Wordsworth" (Masson, II, p. 272). Coleridge discusses eighteenth century poetic diction in the first chapter of Biographia Literaria, and, of course, Wordsworth's theory of the "language of men" derived from his rejection of

the artificialities he found in the poetry of the earlier period.

6. The expression "impassioned prose" is used by De Quincey in his "General Preface" to his Collective Works (reprinted at Masson, I, p. 14) with particular respect to his dream literature. I follow this use of "impassioned" throughout this thesis, to describe those passages or episodes which contain De Quincey's sublime climaxes. The impassioned style is, as its name suggests, one of great emotion, an emotion which can dissolve any sense of logical, factual developments in the interest of creating particular moods and powerful effects. De Quincey's vast exaggerations, and complex digressions are aspects of this style, as I suggest in chapter eight. See Abrams, pp. 132-134 for the Longinian aspects of the sublime which were adopted by the romantics as stylistic principles.
7. Horace Eaton, De Quincey's biographer, writes—"In the little paper On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth, De Quincey shows for the first time his critical powers. It is famous, deservedly famous; and it has in Shakespearean criticism established once and for all the artistic validity of that startling change of key following the murder of Duncan" (H. Eaton, Thomas De Quincey, [Oxford, 1936]).
8. Goldman, in The Mine and the Mint, describes the lamentable incompleteness of De Quincey's essay on Goethe, which, for example, leaves out all reference to Faust.
9. De Quincey refers to the phenomenon of the witches in his essay "Shakespeare" (Masson, IV, p. 78).
10. Jordan, on p. 106 of his book, observes that Hazlitt's Shakespearean criticism also depends a good deal on antithesis or antagonism, particularly applying the idea to his discussion of characters and their foils. Coleridge also notes Shakespeare's tendency to merge opposing elements in his plays —but the root of the idea, it should be noted, is to be found in the work of the Schlegels. A.W. Schlegel defended the idea of Shakespeare's conscious artistry by observing the playwright's use of antithesis—"He [Shakespeare] is more systematic than any other author: through those antitheses which contrast individuals, masses, and even worlds in picturesque groups; or through the musical symmetry of the same great scale, by gigantic repetitions and refrains; " (Quoted from Wellek's translation, History of Criticism, II, p. 65).
11. See Chapter three for the examples of the French Revolution and the description of the poet himself.
12. Worldsworth is making a similar point in his "Essay on Epitaphs", when he discusses the apparently opposing attitudes of two men on the subject of death. He concludes his account in the following way—"Each of these Sages was in sympathy with the best feelings of our nature; feelings which, though they seem opposite to each other, have another and finer connection than that of contrast" (Owen and Smyser, II, pp. 52-53). Note also the closeness of this idea to De Quincey's reiteration of the distinction between partial truth and whole truth (chapter three).

13. Of course this suspension of the understanding is at least related to Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief".
14. Proctor has accounted for De Quincey's emotional response to literature. I have hoped to explain the background and intention of De Quincey's method in a wider context.
15. See also Masson II, pp.73-74, where De Quincey's critique of ancient and modern tragedy depends upon the concept of sin in Christianity.
16. See, for example, the statement, "On coming to Oxford, I had taken up one position in advance of my age by full thirty years: that appreciation of Wordsworth, which it has taken full thirty years to establish amongst the public...(Masson, II, p. 57).
17. In vol. II of the Masson edition.
18. See Masson, XI, pp. 296ff. Here De Quincey claims that Wordsworth could not have literally meant that his poetic language was the language of men.
19. See Masson, XI, p. 3o4ff. The method employed here is similar to that of the Pope criticism.
20. See footnote 13 to chapter three.
21. Post., I, p. 26. Here De Quincey refers to Wordsworth's poem "Two April Mornings"—presumably it is the merging of the beauty of the day and Mathew's grief, in this poem, which attracts De Quincey's attention.
22. De Quincey notes the tradition of veneration for Milton (Masson, X, pp. 409-410n.) and explodes the notion that it was Addison who awoke the English nation to the greatness of this poet. De Quincey cites many editions of Milton which had appeared before Addison's criticism, and he mentions, in particular, Dryden's "eulogium" of 1688.
23. Although this essay is only twelve pages long.
24. De Quincey answers charges against Milton's apparently sacreligious mixture of pagan and Christian deities in his poem. It is a confused defence, citing Michaelangelo as a precedent of another great artist doing the same thing. And yet in the case of Michaelangelo, De Quincey admits that he does not "pretend to assign the precise key to the practice which he adopted" (Masson, X, p. 405). In the case of Milton, he defends the practice on the grounds that the poet had in fact "laid an early foundation for his introduction of the Pagan Pantheon into Christian groups: the false gods of the heathen world were, according to Milton, the fallen Angels"(Masson, X, p. 406). Here, again, De Quincey can be seen as the valiant explicator of paradox, though his enthusiasm here does not really seem to resolve the point very satisfactorily.
25. See the similar argument in "Postscript on Didactic Poetry" (Masson, XI, pp. 215ff.).
26. See part 6 of appendix A for an elaboration of this point in comparison with Kant.
27. Quoted by De Quincey at Masson, X, p. 47, and there translated as "Books, we are told, propose to instruct and amuse".

28. De Quincey's theory of the actual teaching of literature depends on an emphasis upon the organic nature of such instruction. The lesson to be taught is not of course contained in a set of facts—the moral education thus "should be immanent, not transient,—or, otherwise, that it should be vitally distributed through the whole organization of the tree...". The moral should thus be evenly and imperceptibly distributed throughout the work, "not gathered or secreted into a sort of a red berry....at the end of its boughs"(Masson, XI, p. 454). Poetry, of course, teaches through education of emotional response, which is specifically achieved during experiences of the sublime. "Poetry teaches by deep impulse, by hieroglyphic suggestion" (Masson, XI, p. 88). The idea goes back at least to Goethe, who rejects the Aristotelian notion of catharsis and therefore improvement being obtained from a tragedy. He indicates the impossibility of combining such literal instruction with poetry, and feels that the purgation in tragedy, such as Aristotle describes, should take place only in the play itself. Goethe finds didactic poetry to be a hybrid between poetry and rhetoric, and sees it as a difficult attempt "to weave something together from science and imagination, to combine two opposite elements into a living body". Goethe's concern over these two elements in literature clearly anticipate the knowledge/power distinction made repeatedly by De Quincey. De Quincey goes further, however, in seeing the possible integration of the two elements within one work, while admitting their essential incompatibility. Goethe allows that a work of art will indeed have a moral effect—"a work of art can and will have moral consequences, but to ask moral purposes of an artist means to spoil his trade". The ultimate responsibility for the moral effect of a work of art is that of the audience—"The reader must draw instruction from it, as he does from life". (Quotations and summary of Goethe's views on didacticism are drawn from Wellek, History of Criticism, I, p. 217).
29. De Quincey's use of the word "mechanic" specifically relates to his ideas on utility and stands in direct opposition to the organic.
30. Post., II, p. 193. De Quincey states the case in a slightly different way in the 1858 "Preface" to the Collective Edition of his writings (reprinted by Masson at XI, p.97), —"Upon attentive reflection it will be seen that the function of teaching is not the power in such poetry, but the resistance to be overcome; that it is not by teaching that didactic poetry moves, but in spite of teaching."
31. See Post., II, p. 193.
32. The idea of the idem in alio being a fundamentally important artistic principle is, of course, present in Wordsworth. The following important statement from the "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" shows the extent to which Wordsworth adopts the principle as a basis of all experience. He is talking, in the first place, about the pleasurable effect received

from metrical language—"Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection: namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings" (Owen and Smyser, I, p. 148).

33. Post., II, pp. 23-4. Here De Quincey quotes Coleridge (the passage can be found in Biographia Literaria, II, p. 256) and disagrees with him on the specific example of the waxwork. Coleridge suggests that the waxwork is disgusting as a work of art because there is no check of difference in something so essentially similar to reality. De Quincey feels that the reason why the waxwork fails is not because there is no check of difference (certainly there is, he says, but the sense of likeness comes before that of unlikeness which reverses the usual order of art), but because the waxwork is defeated by its literality, its lack of ideality (Post., II, p. 26). See also Coleridge's statement — "Imitation is the mesothesis of likeness and difference. The difference is as essential to it as the likeness; for without the difference, it would be copy or fac-simile" (Table Talk, p. 256). Coleridge expands the idea a little in the Biographia where he introduces the familiar idea of reciprocity — "imitation, as opposed to copying, consists either in the interfusion of the SAME throughout the readically DIFFERENT, or of the different throughout a base radically the same" (Biographia, II, p. 56).
34. Proctor gives a discussion of idem in alio at pp. 92-106. He describes two distinct aspects of De Quincey's praise of the effect. One is the implication that merely to employ such an unexpected mode as whistling to render a subject such as Waterloo, is in itself admirable and pleasure-giving (see p. 94). The other is contained in a quotation from De Quincey's own account of devices which are deliberately used to assert the difference between the artistic rendering, and the aspect of life of which it is an imitation. Proctor does not observe that De Quincey justifies the reproduction in alio on the grounds of the power of the contrast, rather seeing the effect as one of imaginative skill.
35. Though it is true that in some places it does appear to be mere contrast which is valued by De Quincey. See, for example, his comment on "apt quotation" which can be valuable for its idem in alio effect, at Masson, V, p. 237.
36. Post., II, p. 26.
37. See the list of five effects employed by the drama to "unrealize" itself — Masson, X, pp. 371-2.
38. Post., II, p. 23. De Quincey is quoting Coleridge — see note 33 above.

39. See note 2 above for an account of the critical background to the idea of particularity and generality.
40. Wellek accounts for Goethe's initial separation of symbol and allegory (History of Criticism, I, p. 211), and his description of the Kantian expression of the notion of symbolism is a good summary of what the Romantics were to make of the subject. Wellek describes Kant's use of the word "idea" — "An aesthetic idea is a representation of the imagination for which no definite thought (i.e. concept) can be adequate. Ideas are representations of the imagination which have the semblance of reality. But what happens in art is precisely that "rational" (speculative) ideas (i.e. those of invisible things, of the realm of the blessed, of hell, eternity, creation, etc.) are made sensuous by the poet. He can make sensuous death, envy (or any other vice), love, or fame. The term idea is near to the later term "symbol"; it points to the general problem of the Critique: to the union of the general and particular, and abstract and the sensuous, achieved in art"(Ibid., I, p. 231).
41. Note also Wordsworth's discussion of the relationship between the particular and the general in his "Essay Upon Epitaphs", the crux of which argument is contained in the following statement — "Let an Epitaph, then, contain at least these acknowledgments to our common nature; nor let the sense of their importance be sacrificed to a balance of opposite qualities or minute distinctions in individual character (Owen and Smyser, II, p. 59). The problems of the particular vs. the general were especially important for such writers of autobiography as Wordsworth and De Quincey, who were among the first to have to make the decision concerning precisely how much of their own lives should intrude into their works of literature.
42. Jordan briefly deals with the law of antagonism in De Quincey at pp. 104-113.
43. Here Jordan refers to Aristotle as formulator of the idea, and Beattie as one who refers to it. He also points to Hazlitt's use of the device in his Shakespeare criticism, when he discusses characters in terms of their foils or contrast.
44. See Abrams pp. 162-3 for an account of the beginnings of associationism in Hume and Hartley, and pp. 177-83 for its development among romantic writers.

CHAPTER SIX

1. See the opening to the Revolt of the Tartars, Masson, VII, p. 368.
2. See "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine" for October 1849 (LVI). Appendix E contains a list of "Suspiria" as originally planned.
3. See, for example, the following passage, which is a typical usage of this device -- "Whatsoever is once made the subject of consciousness can never again have the privilege of gay, careless thoughtlessness — the privilege by which the mind, like lamps of a mail-coach, moving rapidly through the mid-night woods, illuminate, for one instant, the foliage or sleeping umbrage of the thickets, and, in the next instant, have quitted them, to carry their radiance forward upon endless successions of objects". The use of the mail-coach in this image is part-

icularly interesting in the present context, However, it is curiously contradictory, in that the brief scenes which De Quincey does observe from his seat on the mail are exactly those which fix forever in his mind, never to be left behind.

It is interesting, in view of De Quincey's repeated use of light/ dark imagery (usually transition between the two), to notice that Burke specifically observes the sublimity of such a contrast, as well as that between noise and silence (Philosophical Enquiry, IV, 3). See note 37 to chapter seven for an important example from De Quincey's writing.

4. De Quincey clearly overlooked the possiblility of the steam locomotive itself becoming something of an image of sublimity, and becoming a centre of attraction quite beyond that of the individual carriages of the train.
5. De Quincey was indeed aware of the possible incongruity of his humorous interpolations, and writes in his "Preface" to the revised edition of the Confessions that "it is possible enough that, by unseasonable levity at other times, I may have repelled the sympathy of my readers" (Masson, III, p. 220). This remark, which relates directly to such instances found in the Confessions, should be remembered when considering all the writings of the later period.
6. See chapter three.
7. In chapter five.
8. The title De Quincey gives to the third section of the Confessions.
9. It should be noted that the crocodile as an image of horror was present in the first edition of the Confessions — "the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions" (Masson, III, p. 442).
10. See section 1 of chapter four.
11. Both sets of people are sitting in carriages with the windows drawn down.
12. An interesting example, from another context, of the way in which De Quincey had a natural tendency to remember by means of a symbolic tableau, can be found in the Autobiography. Here, he is describing two mentally deficient twins, servants in the house, who he comes across as they are embracing one another, having been summoned to different parts of the building. They rose, embraced and "parted to their separate labours" and a week later they died, as if De Quincey had witnessed their last farewell — "...what I saw was simply this; it composed a silent and symbolic scene, a momentary interlude in dumb show, which is interpreted itself and settled forever in my recollection, as if it prophesied and interpreted the event which soon followed" (Masson, I, p. 105). Such "symbolic scenes" are common in the Mail-Coach, and the other fictional works which I deal with.
13. See part 1 of appendix G for an account of the collective unconscious as revealed in De Quincey's dreams, and the relation of the idea to Jung.
14. At Masson, XIII, p. 314.
15. I refer to the school-leaving episode which is described fully in chapter seven.

16. The "Dream-Fugue", as De Quincey explains in his preface to the original edition of the "Vision of Sudden Death" ("Blackwood's",1849), was the"ultimate object of the whole essay". He describes it as "an attempt to wrestle with the utmost efforts of music in dealing with a colossal form of impassioned horror". The preface further elaborates upon how the various elements of his mail-coach experience combined to produce this final section.
17. See the discussion of the echo device in chapter seven.
18. The architectural images of infinity employed at this point are very close to those in the "Dream Vision of Infinity" at the end of the "System of the Heavens" (Masson, VIII, p. 34).
19. See chapters one and eight for further examination of this event.
20. See appendix C where revisions are considered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. See appendix D for an account of the chronology of the Confessions and work already done on the revision process.
2. Confessions of an English Opium Eater, ed. Alethea Hayter, (Penguin, 1971), p. 22. Also see appendix D.
3. See appendix D.
4. Jack's opinion is also found in appendix D.
5. The "experiences of erring childhood", and "an inheritance from the boyish follies" (Masson, III, p. 413).
6. For example, "my London hardships", Confessions, (Penguin Ed.) p. 35.
7. See "The Palimpsest of the Human Brain", discussed in chapter eight.
8. See section 3 to chapter four.
9. De Quincey was familiar with the ms. of The Prelude long before publication. The Literary Reminiscences (Masson, II) contains considerable reference to the "great philosophic poem" (II, p. 268), De Quincey's reading of which certainly predates the writing of the Confessions — in the 1839 version of his essay on Wordsworth, De Quincey says that his reading of The Prelude occured more than twenty years before (Masson, II, p. 268). J.E. Wells has written an article entitled "De Quincey and The Prelude in 1839" (Philological Quarterly, [1941], pp. 1-24) in which he discusses the original articles in "Tait's Magazine" (Masson's text is different) as they reveal De Quincey's knowledge of specific editions of Wordsworth's poems or the ms. of the 1805 Prelude. Wells shows that De Quincey's account of Wordsworth's life incorporates material from, among other sources, eight books of the 1805 Prelude. As Wells notes, Prelude quotations are made from the 1805-6 ms. and not ms. C, dated by Selincourt to 1817-19. In addition to this thorough knowledge of The Prelude, De Quincey would undoubtedly have been recently reading the final, 1850 publication of the poem when he undertook the revision of the Confessions.
10. The Prelude, VI, 19-23.
11. Ibid., VI, 32-41.
12. Ibid., VI, 338.
13. Note the unusual aspect of this description of sublimity — pure, untarnished joy — but the doubts and anxieties which are to make the moment lastingly intensive for De Quincey are soon to come.

14. The Prelude, I, 1-2, 6-8.
15. De Quincey again alludes to The Prelude's opening lines and their sense of liberation much later in the Confessions, after he has in fact entered the horror of his London experiences. Dwelling in the vast, empty house belonging to Mr. Brunell, he is almost starving and plagued by insufficient sleep. The numerous and huge rooms of the house are ironically refered to as his freedom — "'the world was all before us', and we pitched our tent for the night in any spot we chose" (Masson, III,p.354). This is a reference to "The earth was all before me" in Book I of The Prelude (I, 15).
16. I discuss this fragment of the Suspiria in chapter eight.
17. For example the "TOO LATE" legend from the Mail-Coach. See Appendix C.
18. De Quincey was thinking, no doubt, of the moment of leaving school when he wrote of the importance of such moments of transition in the "Notes for Suspiria", which predated the final version of the Confessions — "For every one of us, male or female, there is a year in which the light-hearted sense of the irresponsible ceases to gild the heavenly dawn. A year there is, settled by no law or usage, for me perhaps the eighteenth, for you the seventeenth, for another the nineteenth, within the gates of which, underneath the gloomy archway of which, sits a phantom of yourself" (Post., I, p. 25).
19. The echo, as a symbol, is in fact an element of De Quincey's belief in a secret or hieroglyphic language which speaks to man from indirect sources. His view of symbolism is indeed based upon such a belief, as I suggest in chapter two, and the echo is a part of that secret and sublime language through which the mysteries of the earth are revealed. In "The Essenes", De Quincey wonders how Josephus could have remained in ignorance of the existence of the group of people known as Christians — "the very echo of whose footsteps ought to have sunk upon the ear with the awe that belongs to spiritual phenomena, that belongs to the bells of convents in the Desert long since dilapidated and surviving only in the traditions of the Bedouins, that belongs (in the sublime expression of Wordsworth) to 'echoes from beyond the grave'" (Masson, VII, p. 107). Spiritual truth can thus be continued and re-expressed at a later time by means of some form of echo, another example of which De Quincey account for in the Autobiography. Here he describes the "echo augury", or the spiritual truth reverberated through time by means of, for example, books accidentally open at a certain page, or conversations overheard which have particular spiritual meaning for the hearer — "In these instances, the mystical word, that carried a secret meaning and message to one sole ear in the world, was always unsought for: that constituted its virtue and its divinity" (Masson, I, p. 123). In a similar way to these echo auguries, De Quincey received spiritual messages through his own personal echoes through time, which reach their climax, as I describe, in his imaginative writing.
20. Post., I, pp. 22-3.
21. Ibid., I, p. 23.

22. See appendix G.
23. This image in itself echoes the actual image of banners De Quincey is soon to describe from the earlier St. Paul's incident.
24. See chapter three for aspects of this polarity.
25. The letter and the circumstances surrounding its aquisition is a part of the 1856 expansion of the text (Masson, III, p. 303 ff.).
26. See appendix C.
27. See Masson, III, pp. 291-2.
28. Thus the following statement — "By accident a considerable part of the Confessions (all, in short, except the Dreams) had originally been written hastily; and, from various causes, had never received any strict revision, or, virtually, so much as an ordinary verbal correction" — (from the "Prefatory Notice to the New Edition", Masson, III, p. 219).
29. De Quincey writes the following — "Hers was a case of ordinary occurrence (as I have since had reason to think), and one in which, if London beneficence had better adapted its arrangements to meet it, the power of the law might oftener be interposed to protect, and to avenge. But the stream of London charity flows in a channel which, though deep and mighty, is yet noiseless and underground; not obvious or readily accessible to poor houseless wanderers" (Masson, III, p. 361).
30. For example, see also the mythical references in the Mail-Coach noted in the previous chapter.
31. Confessions, (Penguin ed.), p. 33. The list of the various kinds of dream to be expected in his writing is useful, since already two examples of the "waking-dream" have constituted a sublime moment in the Confessions.
32. See appendix D for comment on this revision.
33. See the introduction to the "Vision of Sudden Death" in "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine", December 1849, LXVI, p. 741.
34. See "London Magazine" for December 1821, where De Quincey writes of the "Third Part of my Confessions".
35. Volume V contains the Confessions.
36. Thus the following addition to the revised Confessions — "The main phenomenon by which opium expressed itself permanently, and the sole phenomenon that was communicable, lay in the dreams (and in the peculiar dream-scenery) which followed the opium excesses. But naturally these dreams, and this dream-scenery, drew their outlines and materials — their great lights and shadows — from those profound revelations which had been ploughed so deeply into the heart, from those encaustic records which in the mighty furnaces of London life had been burnt into the undying memory by the fierce action of misery" (Masson, III, p. 413).
37. By a general process of intensification, "thousand" becomes "ten thousand" in the final version. A particularly interesting alteration in the 1856 edition should be noted. The ending to the 1821 passage about Asia read as follows —"...I protest that so awful was the transition from the damned crocodile, and the other unutterable monsters and abortions of my dreams, to the sight of innocent human natures and of infancy, that, in the mighty and sudden revulsion of mind, I wept, and could not forbear it, as I kissed their [his daughters'] faces" (Penguin edition, p. 110). The revised version of these lines stresses

the sublimity which De Quincey experienced at such a moment of transition from the darkness of his fantasies to the light of ordinary day. In view of my discussion of the meaning of transition points in De Quincey's imaginative writing, the emendation, which uses once again the light/ dark imagery, is directly relevant. The last version reads — "No experience was so awful to me, and at the same time so pathetic, as this abrupt translation from the darkness of the infinite to the gaudy summer air of highest noon..." (Masson, III, p. 443).

38. The other description of dream-vision which I have not separately mentioned here concerns "friezes of never-ending stories" (Masson, III, p. 437) where images from Livy's Rome and the English Civil War, two historical areas which affected De Quincey particularly deeply, merge together in his sleep.
39. See Masson, I, p. 38.
40. Again the dream experience has archetypal qualities. See appendix G.
41. Note these changes in 1856 — "from my confusion" becomes "from deepening confusion", and "its possible issue" becomes "its undecipherable issue".

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. A full list of completed and proposed "Suspiria" is printed by Japp in his edition of the Posthumous Works,(I, pp. 4-5). See appendix E.
2. See appendix F which, for convenience, relates the original "Blackwood's" printing to the position of the same pieces in the Masson edition. Although I refer to the "Blackwood" order, I continue to provide Masson references when applicable. Page references to the sections in "Blackwood's" are given in appendix F.
3. See the argument in the essay "Rhetoric", where "pure abstractions", the core of De Quincey's approach to literary symbolism, have been lost sight of in modern oratory, which is totally involved with trivial facts (Masson, X, pp. 94, 98-9).
4. Japp writes in his introduction to his printing of new "Suspiria"— "The master-idea of the "Suspiria" is the power which lies in suffering, in agony unuttered and unutterable, to develop the intellect and spirit of man; to open these to the ineffable conceptions of the infinite, and to some discernment, otherwise impossible, of the beneficent might that lies in pain and sorrow" (Post., I, pp. 1-2). It appears that Japp agrees with De Quincey's general philosophy of pain and its meaning. Although I recount the same argument in the course of the present chapter, I do not wish to imply that I share this opinion.

   I have already mentioned the possible physical source of the sigh which gives the title to the Suspiria, and the attraction that the idea of the sigh had for De Quincey, as expressive or symbolic of complex inner meanings, is indicated also in a footnote to "The Vision of Sudden Death" — "'sigh-born";— I owe the suggestion of this word to an obscure remembrance of a beautiful phrase in 'Giraldus Cambrensis' — viz. suspiriosae cogitationes" (Masson, XIII, p. 310n.).

5. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 272.
6. Ibid.
7. De Quincey's essay on Charles Lamb (Masson, V, p. 215ff.) is a case in point where conventional unity is entirely dispensed with, and Lamb as a subject is often eclipsed by long passages on Hazlitt and Southey. In fact, however, it is only De Quincey's title which is misleading, since his real subject, and the one which gives the essay an actual unity, is style and the sublime capacities of literature in general.
   See also De Quincey's statement that "it is the very grandeur of Scripture that she can afford to be negligent of her chronology" (Post., II, p. 119n.).
8. "Blackwood's", LVII, pp. 272-3.
9. Ibid., p. 273.
10. See, particularly, appendix C for this theme in the Mail-Coach.
11. "Blackwood's". LVII, p. 277.
12. In an excellent footnote to this passage (which, of course, is also lost from the final version), De Quincey criticizes Milton for lowering the sense of Adam's disobedience to God. For what De Quincey calls "the sublime sacrifice of Adam" (Blackwood's", LVII, p. 277n.) can never escape the approval of the reader — "reviewing it calmly, we condemn — but taking the impassioned station of Adam at the moment of temptation, we approve in our hearts". This is a good example of the way in which De Quincey's literary criticism is determined by his feelings.
13. Quoted earlier in the present chapter.
14. De Quincey seeks to explain further this sense of infinity in a passage which he removed from the Autobiography, but which Masson considered sufficiently important to insert rather arbitrarily, after the story of the abbess in the first part of the Suspiria (Masson, XIII, pp. 338-9). De Quincey writes of space and time, as he has done on other occasions. However, the experience of his sister's death was clearly dissociated from any opium influence, and he justifies his inclusion of these remarks on the grounds that the inverse of the opium experience occurred on this occasion. What he had reason to believe was that an extended period of time "contracted to a minute", although the actual representation of pursuit through space would suggest to the reader a feeling of eternity. Masson, of course, does not reprint De Quincey's remarks insofar as they relate to this inverse effect.
15. This reference to antagonism was added in 1852.
16. See Hillis Miller's argument in chapter one above.
17. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 280.
18. Ibid., p. 281.
19. Ibid., p. 282.
20. Ibid., p. 489.
21. Ibid., p. 490.
22. Ibid., p. 491.
23. Ibid., p. 491 ff.
24. See note 6 to chapter four.
25. See note 40 to chapter four.

26. De Quincey pauses at this point and writes of his structural intentions (another dissociated passage which Masson reprinted (XIII, pp. 339-40), and shows very clearly his dialectical method — "Here pause, reader! Imagine yourself seated in some cloud-scaling swing, oscillating under the impulse of lunatic hands; for the strength of lunacy may belong to human dreams...Up and down you will see, heights and depths, in our fiery course together. He observes that he has reached the depths of his nursery experiences (and justifies them as the "natural coefficient of the opium" as far as producing dreams is concerned) and had intended to produce a corresponding upswing — maybe an account of some happier incidents from childhood.
27. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 489.
28. Ibid., p. 741. The idea of the palimpsest probably came from Coleridge. His account of associationism in the early chapters of Biographia Literaria is relevant to ideas concerning the continuing presence of past information (see George Poulet, "Timelessness and Romanticism", Journal of the History of Ideas, XV, pp. 3-22, for an account of Coleridge's sense of time distortion, and its relation to the power of the imagination). Coleridge's tragedy Remorse deals with the imperishability of past action, and is thus very close in theme to De Quincey's autobiographical writing. "The Ancient Mariner" is also connected with this central preoccupation of De Quincey's. Poulet, in the above article, quotes the following from the philosopher Swedenborg, which he feels had a direct influence upon Coleridge's idea of the totality of memory which a celestial (and therefore timeless) body, as opposed to the terrestrial (and time-fixed) body, would possess — "The interior memory... is such that there are inscribed in it all the particular things, yea, the most particular, that man hath at any time thought, spoken and done... with the most minute circumstances, from his earliest infancy to extreme old age. Man hath with him the memory of all things when he comes into another life" (Arcana Coelestia, [London, 1803], 2474). Clearly, this idea is closely related to the capacity of the woman in De Quincey's vision contained in number 29 " Suspiria" — see appendix E — and it is certainly very close to his general idea of the palimpsest.

    Poulet goes on to discuss other romantic writers, but selects De Quincey as one whose "blending of feeling and thought [on the subject of eternity revealed in time] appears as a natural achievement". He links De Quincey's ideas on simultaneity, or the avoidance of successiveness in time, with both Coleridge and Swedenborg, quoting particularly from De Quincey's partial translation of Kant's Dreams of a Ghost-Seer, which was published under the title of "Kant's abstract of Swedenborgianism". De Quincey translates Swedenborg's doctrine thus — "In the inner memory is retained whatsoever has vanished from the outer; and all of which is presented to the consciousness of man nothing is ever lost. After death the remembrance of all which ever entered his soul, and even all that had perished to himself, constitutes the entire book of his life" (Masson, XVI, pp. 63-4).

This was published in 1825, four years after the Confessions, where De Quincey had already introduced the idea of the total recall experienced by the girl who was nearly drowned (Masson, III, p. 435). De Quincey refers to this event again in the "Palimpsest" section of the Suspiria. Poulet assumes that because of the similarity between the account given by Kant and De Quincey's own use of the idea, that De Quincey had read Kant before 1821.

The Poulet essay, interesting as a brief assemblage of the various references to timelessness in most romantic writers, does not in fact attempt to show the extent to which De Quincey's thought and feeling on the subject of time and eternity was in in fact a "natural achievement". For De Quincey, the palimpsest of the human brain revealed its potential very actively in the course of his life, so that the recurrence of particular and very often unpleasant memories provides a vital element in the structure of his best works.

29. The fact that the person concerned was probably De Quincey's mother may explain the powerful effect which the phenomenon had over him (see Masson's note, XIII, p. 347n.).
30. Again see the Confessions for the discussion of the psychological effect which total recall produces (Masson, III, p. 435).
31. See note 28 above.
32. Masson places this piece last in his grouping of the Suspiria, justifying his move on the grounds that De Quincey himself pointed to the central importance of this "dream-legend" (see end of appendix E). Masson also considers this paper to be "all in all, the finest thing that De Quincey wrote" (XIII, p. 362n.) and thus deserves its position at the end.
33. De Quincey writes of "that benignity in powers invisible which even in Pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it" (Masson, XIII, p. 362).
34. In Masson's edition (I, pp. 51-4) it follows the Autobiography section "The Affliction of Childhood", and, as Masson rightly observes, "his [De Quincey's] adaptation of this shred from the "Suspiria" to its present connection is rather forced" (Masson, I, p. 51n.).
35. The phenomenon was presumably told to De Quincey by Coleridge, since the former never left Britain (see note at Masson, I, p. 52n.).
36. "Blackwood's", LVII, p. 749.
37. See part 2 of appendix G for examples of some similarities with the theory of Jung.
38. See the recovered fragment "The Dark Interpreter" in Japp, vol. I, pp. 7-12, which I discuss briefly in the present chapter. Having made a comparison with a writer of the present century (Jung), it is perhaps even more interesting to notice the account of the unconscious mind in one of De Quincey's contemporaries. James Hogg's Confessions of a Justified Sinner contains a number of correlations with De Quincey's psychological analysis. In Hogg's book (which was first published by Longman's in 1824, andwhich could well have been influenced by De Quincey's more famous Confessions of three years before),

Robert Wringhim is a murderer who has killed his half brother. The following is the account of Wringhim's encounter with the dark side of his personality — "As I thus wended my way, I beheld a young man of mysterious appearance coming towards me. I tried to shun him, being bent on my own contemplations, but he cast himself in my way, so that I could not well avoid him; and more than that, I felt a sort of invisible power that drew me towards him, something like the force of enchantment, which I could not resist...That stranger youth and I approached each other in silence, and slowly, with our eyes fixed on each other's eyes. We approached till not more than a yard intervened between us, and then stood still and gazed, measuring each other from head to foot. What was my astonishment, on perceiving that he was the same being as myself!"(James Hogg, Confessions of a Justified Sinner, /Oxford Univ. Press, 1969/ p. 116). Interesting, too, is an incident in the first part of the book where George, the brother who will be murdered, is confronted by an apparition while sitting on the top of Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh. The idea of his half-brother Wringhim, who has been following him, causes him to look to one side — "What an apparition was there presented to his view! He saw, delineated in the cloud, the shoulders, arms and features of a human being of the most dreadful aspect. The face was the face of his brother, but dilated to twenty times the natural size... (Ibid., p. 41). Turning, terrified, from the image which seems to float on air, George collides with the real person of his brother. The natural effect, of course, is exactly the one which both De Quincey and Jung refer to. Hogg's use of the phenomenon is somewhat different, though the imminent evil present in his book is well expressed by the shadowy figure.

In 1814 Hogg met both Wordsworth and De Quincey and had been publishing in "Blackwood's" since the year before. In December 1822 he began to figure as the shepherd in "Blackwood's" "Noctes Ambrosianae", in which De Quincey was also later to appear as one of the characters.

39. "Blackwood's", LVII. p. 750. See appendix G for comment on the Dark Interpreter.
40. Ibid., p. 750.
41. Again the original "Blackwodd's" printing makes this connection clear, since in Masson, the Dark Interpreter is not introduced into his reprinting of parts of the Suspiria.
42. This title was added later by De Quincey and printed first, from his mss.,in the Black's additional volume to the Collective Works in 1871.
43. "Blackwood's" LVIII, p. 43.
44. Ibid., p. 45.
45. The addition concerning the house in London is mainly intended, according to De Quincey, to authenticate his account of his adventures in London by providing exact details of location.
46. The covenant is the promise of the apostle to restore the daughter of Lebanon to her father's house within thirty days. During this period, however, she contracts a mortal illness.

47. Post., I, p. 13n.
48. Ibid., p. 14.
49. Ibid., p. 13n.
50. Japp also includes some "Notes for Suspiria", all of which cover themes and ideas I have already considered. The first fragment expresses the paradox and mystery of God and the mystery of death which are in conflict. Finally the latter is subsumed within the former, and the paradox is resolved — "'Behold these were two mysteries; and one is not; and there is but one mystery that survives forever'"(Post., I, p. 24). The main points from the other "Notes" I have quoted at various places in the main text.

APPENDIX A

1. Frederick Coplestone, A History of Philosophy, (London, 1964), VI, pp. 268-9.
2. Ibid., pp. 267-8.
3. Ibid., p. 344.
4. Meredith, p. 109.
5. All references are to Meredith, pp. 131-2.
6. Owen and Smyser, II, p. 354.
7. Meredith, pp. 110-111.
8. Ibid., p. 111.
9. Ibid., pp. 111-112.
10. Owen and Smyser, II, p. 354.
11. Meredith, p. 115.
12. Ibid., p. 113.
13. Owen and Smyser, II, p. 353.
14. The Prelude, VII, 695-699, 708-712.
15. Coplestone, VI, p. 202.
16. Meredith, p. 100.
17. Ibid., p. 127.
18. Ibid., p. 102.
19. Ibid., p. 103.
20. Ibid., p. 104.
21. Ibid., p. 105.
22. Ibid., p. 90.
23. Ibid., p. 91.
24. Owen and Smyser, II, p. 351.

APPENDIX B

1. See Proctor, pp. 74-92.
2. In particular, Proctor, pp. 76-7.
3. Meredith, p. 80.
4. See Monk, pp. 56-9. Such, perhaps, is the beginning of the literary distinction, but the two categories of the sublime and the beautiful have in fact been important as individual elements since ancient times. In his book The View Over Atlantis, (Abacus edition, 1973), John Michell discusses ancient perception of lines of force in the landscape, which, in China, determined

the sites of buildings and tombs. He writes, "The magnetic force known in China as the dragon current, is of two kinds, yin and yang, negative and positive, represented by the white tiger and the blue dragon. The lines of force follow, for the most part, mountainous ridges and ranges of hills. The yang or male current takes the higher routes over steeper mountains, and the yin or female current flows mainly along chains of hills. The most favourable position is where the two streams meet. The surrounding country should display both yin and yang features, ideally in the proportion of 3/5 yang and 2/5 yin. Gentle, undulating country is yin, and sharp rocks and peaks are yang" (Michell, p. 47). The sexual distinction is particularly interesting. The location of the beautiful (yin) as a middle category, and one therefore admitting of some ambiguity, as in De De Quincey's theory, is emphasized by the following — "The ideal spot for a tomb is at a junction of the two currents, the blue dragon to the left and the white tiger to the right. It should face south with a hill behind and lower, picturesque country in front" (Ibid., p. 48).

5. See W.J.B. Owen, "The Sublime and the Beautiful in The Prelude", in "The Wordsworth Circle", (Temple University, Philadelphia, Spring, 1973), pp. 67-86.

APPENDIX C

1. "Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine", October and December 1849, (XVI). Page references to this version are given in square brackets.
2. PMLA, (1962), pp. 97-101.
3. Post., I, pp. 323-5.
4. In the "Saturday Review" of February 1895 appeared an article "How De Quincey Worked", written by Edward Dowden. In this short piece, where he recognizes De Quincey's narrative method of creating "sublime contrasts for the emotions", Dowden describes De Quincey's elaborations for the sake of emotional effect (a precursor in this not mentioned by Byrns). Dowden also reprints the confirmation passage which I have quoted, and observes most justly the magnificent transformation of the postern gate into the triumphal arch. Such dramatization of architectural forms, Dowden likens to the lines from The Excursion — "Towers begirt/ With battlements that on their restless fronts/Bore stars". He does not remember that De Quincey himself refers to the Wordsworth line "Battlements that on their restless fronts bore stars" in the Confessions, where he notes the "sublime circumstances" of the description (Masson, III, p. 439). Dowden also notes some of the small verbal accentuations which I have mentioned.
5. This is inserted before the paragraph beginning "The modern modes of travelling..." (Masson, XIII, p. 283).

APPENDIX D

1. PMLA, 72 [1], pp. 122-146.
2. Ibid., p. 126.
3. Ibid., p. 128.
4. Ibid., p. 132.
5. Alexander A. Japp, De Quincey's Life and Writings with Letters, revised edition, London, 1890), pp. 387-8.
6. Ibid., p. 388.
7. Jack, p. 145.
8. Studies in English Literature,(Rice Institute), Autumn 1973, pp. 632-642.

APPENDIX E

1. Post., II, p. 16.

APPENDIX G

1. Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 185.
2. "Glossary" to Memories, Dreams, Reflections, p. 411.
3. Ibid., p. 417.
4. Memories, Dreams Reflections, pp. 107-8.

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