FATAL CONSEQUENCES: ROMANTIC CONFESSIONAL WRITING OF THE 1820s

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates what happened when, in 1798, Thomas Malthus identified a series of tropes surrounding the pursuit of desire which would later inform the confessional writers of the 1820s. Over this period, I argue that we witness a transition from a religious mode of confession to a more secular discourse. Chapter One considers Malthus's view of man as an economic and reproductive agent, exploring his representation of the somatic tropes articulated in the work of the prose writers succeeding him. Chapter Two examines how Thomas De Quincey's opium-based confessions represent a potential short-cut to life-writing. However, his dread of literary obscurity is revealed through themes of impotence, restricted expansion and enforced containment. Furthermore, I show how drug-induced reveries are for De Quincey potentially a transitory and insubstantial basis for a sustained discourse. Chapter Three develops the theme of impotence within a sexual context, through an exploration of William Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris.* This motif symbolises Hazlitt's personal and literary failure, as well as reflecting the wider political and social disillusionment of the 1820s. Chapter Four examines Charles Lamb's confessional writing, and its themes of over-eating and drinking. These apparently more innocent consumption-centred narratives conceal a darker, sexualised discourse. They also represent the emergence of such tropes as indicators of individual and national identity. The final chapter concerns James Hogg, particularly his often over-looked text, *The Shepherd's Guide*, which contains the origins of his later *Confessions of a Justified*

Sinner. Hogg’s work on animal husbandry anticipates questions of authorship, literary self-writing and writing methodology. Overall, this thesis reappraises Malthus’s status as a literary figure and emphasises his role as a primogenitor of Romantic confessional writing; in doing so it provides a fresh investigation of confession as a key genre of 1820s prose writing.

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INTRODUCTION

In his 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus included a statement he regarded as an incontrovertible rejoinder to William Godwin's advocacy of the inherent rationality of human beings:

> The cravings of hunger, the love of liquor, the desire of possessing a beautiful woman, will urge men to actions, of the fatal consequences of which […] they are perfectly well convinced, even at the very time they commit them.[1]

As an ordained minister of the Church of England, this is not a surprising observation for him to make given his insight into the frailties of human nature. However, this seemingly innocuous comment would turn out to be more prophetic than he might have imagined. By the end of the 1820s, by which time his *Essay* was in its sixth and final edition, the tropes surrounding the pursuit of desire that he identified were evident in the key themes around which a series of writers - Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and James Hogg - had fashioned their confessions, and indeed, to a considerable extent, their sense of personal identity.

As Paul Youngquist has suggested, for the confessional Romantic, 'cognition is a material process, not just a mental one' making, for instance, 'the mind of a transcendentalist a matter of digestion.' Indeed, as I will argue, it is explored as a matter of appetite across a wider spectrum. The reading public's penchant for 'the anguish of the alienated autobiographist' was such that the decade gave rise to parodies that appeared in magazines such as

[1] T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*, ed. by Geoffrey Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 104-105.

Blackwood's which had published the original revelations, and soon became celebrated in themselves.[2]

I will argue that the 1820s was the zenith of the confessional genre, and moreover that it is no co-incidence that this process reached its height during the Romantic era. Susanna Egan has highlighted how the: 'literary confession came into its own when the Romantics discovered their urgent need to explore and express both the unique and the universal qualities of individual human nature'.[3]

Developing further the connection between confessions and the Romantic period, Gregory Dart describes this 'craze for autobiography' as: 'a daring if foolhardy experiment in the pursuit of virtue through candour', which he traces back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1789).[4] Rousseau emerges as a: 'revolutionary martyr whose self-immolation at the burning stake of sensibility had helped others to discover a new democracy of feeling.'[5]

What I am specifically interested in here, and what I offer a new account of, are the distinctive thematic choices made by each individual author. How and why does Lamb adopt and adapt the trope of gluttony when writing as 'Elia', or Hogg permeate his confessions with pedantic allusions to obscure diseases of sheep? De Quincey would appear to regard the notoriety conferred by the label of opium-eater as preferable to literary obscurity, while Hazlitt invited ridicule with his revelation of impotent, unrequited love. Furthermore, I wish

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[2] Paul Youngquist, 'De Quincey's Crazy Body', *PMLA*, 114, (1999), 346-358 (347)
[3] Susanna Egan, *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), p. 193.
[4] Books 1-6 of the *Confessions* were published in 1782 and books 7-12 in 1789.
[5] In William Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris and related writings*, ed. by Gregory Dart (Manchester: Carcanet, 2008), pp. 6-7.

to explore how these writers both exploit and subvert the confessional mode, and how their work can be read as a commentary on the confessional writing process itself.

This study has two main elements. Firstly, it offers a discussion of significant issues surrounding the construction of literary and autobiographical identities, and explores how 1820s confessional writers anticipate future theories of self within their texts. Adam Phillips has remarked how writing on food and sex is 'akin to our dreams', linking us 'to our histories and our physiologies.'[6] This idea will be explored through reference to other notable and similarly unconventional life writers such as Rousseau. Congruent with the current thesis, Hazlitt identified a theme within Rousseau's *Confessions* whereby the latter celebrates those very desires which Malthus denigrates, while hinting at their potential for self-destruction. For Hazlitt, every feeling in Rousseau's mind 'became a passion. His craving after excitement was an appetite and a disease.'[7]

Secondly, the study addresses the question of those features of an author's textual discourse, such as language choice and syntax, which are particularly engaging and receptive to multiple interpretation and contrasting readings. Previous methodologies applied to the Romantic confessional genre have often focussed on a psychoanalytical and/or deconstructionist interpretation (I offer a summary of these in this introduction). The study builds on Stephen Greenblatt's reading, that 'psychoanalysis is the historical outcome of certain characteristic Renaissance strategies', but instead locating and pre-figuring a proto-psychoanalyst analysis

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[6] Adam Phillips, 'On Eating and Preferring Not To', in *Promises Promises* (London: Faber, 2002), p. 290. This quotation will be examined further in Chapter Four.
[7] William Hazlitt, 'On the Character of Rousseau' in *The Round Table: A Collection of Essays on Literature, Men and Manners* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1817), p. 46.

within self-writing of the 1820s.[8] I also locate confessional writing within the context of the magazine and circulation wars of the period, including the attendant intellectual rivalry between the two capital cities of Edinburgh and London as publishing and cultural centres. Economically, the emergence of the middle-class also facilitated the development of representations of the self as a potentially exploitable and marketable commodity.

This study raises significant questions regarding the nature of autobiography. For example, the ever-shifting notion of what constitutes a piece of life-writing, together with the relationship between a life and its transformation by, and into, a confessional text. These concepts can be viewed as having altered fundamentally over time. For instance, the debate which surrounded the initial publication of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) often centred on the extent to which the events described were factually accurate, epitomised by the exasperated reviewer in the *British Critic* who complained: 'it is really very difficult to distinguish, that part of his book which consists of sober truth, from that which is, perhaps, merely the effect of the large quantities of opium which he had […] been in the habit of taking.' [9] This is something which would be of minor interest to the modern literary commentator or scholar, given the undermining and the denial of the notion of the inviolate Grand Narrative.

In the 1980s Avrom Fleishman offered a reading of autobiography as unwittingly revealing to a devious author a profound personal truth, whether or not the writer chooses to recognise it:

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[8] Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in early modern culture* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 195.
[9] Anonymous review in the *British Critic*, 2nd Series, XVIII, Nov. 1822 in *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers Part A; The Lake Poets, Vol. 1,* ed. by Donald H. Reiman, (New York and Abingdon: Routledge), 2015, p. 200.

'autobiography is inevitably an emanation of its author, so that it reveals his uniqueness by a *natural* process even without his intended or executed design to do so.'[10] This also begs the question as to the legitimacy of these writers' literary enterprises. Does De Quincey's exploitation of his opium dreams, or Hazlitt's recounting and reworking of his failed seduction of Sarah Walker, justify their place in the autobiographical or confessional canon? One means of approaching this question, as a useful frame of reference, would be using Marilyn Butler's terminology (borrowed from M.H. Abrams):

> For the classicist […] the work of art resembles a mirror, which is passively mimetic or reproductive of existing 'reality', and for the romantic a lamp, which throws out images originating not in this world but in the poet. Art becomes subjective rather than objective, and intuitive rather than rationally planned.[11]

It could be argued in their defence, that De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb, manage to represent a synthesis between the Romantic and earlier eighteenth-century writers, in that their *deliberate* use of opium, sex and gluttony to form the basis of their autobiographical writing combines, in effect, both the subjective *and* the planned. This strategy does, however, contain an element of risk in that reliance on palliatives is a constricting as well as a liberating process.

In 'Theories of Autobiography' Laura Marcus writes of autobiography 'transcending' rather than 'transgressing' classification and the authors considered here could be seen as illustrating this interpretation.[12] One must also ask whether the modern reader, in particular has the right to feel short-changed in being given a contrived substitute for a lived life, rather than a supposedly truer account of that life itself. After all, it is no

[10] Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 19.
[11] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 7.
[12] Laura Marcus, 'Theories of Autobiography' in *The Uses of Autobiography*, ed. by J. Swindells (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 14.

longer critically sustainable to advocate a pure, untainted (in terms of veracity) form of autobiographical confession as, for instance, historically highlighted by Susan Levin when describing the genre's traditional reader/author contract: 'the particular relationship of confessor/author as well as the promise truthful recounting suggested by the title seems to push otherwise sophisticated readers into setting up a one-to-one correspondence between narrator and author.'[13]

When the autobiographical genre became linked with the confessional model, the Cartesian notion of subjectivity was prominent. Witness Rousseau's contention in the opening pages of his *Confessions*: 'I am not made like anyone I have seen; I dare believe I am not made like anyone existing. If I am not better, at least I am quite different.'[14] It is evident that a human perceiving, and being perceived by others, as a unique, autonomous individual with private thoughts, was a necessary pre-condition and concomitant to the development of the autobiographical genre. Likewise, the genre and the critical reaction towards it have evolved alongside shifting notions of subjectivity and the deconstruction of the self. Furthermore, the continuing use of the title 'Confessions', with its religious connotations, would increasingly be regarded as an anachronistic approach in a more secular culture.

Nevertheless, De Quincey's choice of the term *Confessions* to describe his autobiography *does* suggest a desire to be admitted into, and associated with, an already well-established tradition of St. Augustine, St Teresa of Ávila and even of Rousseau. In turn, Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) appear to be an attempt to benefit

[13] S.N. Levin, *The Romantic Art of Confession* (Columbia: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), p. 8.
[14] *The Confessions of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Anonymous Translation into English of 1783 and 1790* (New York: Heritage Press, 1955), p. 3. J.J. Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. J.M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1953), p. 17 has 'I am made unlike any one I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different.'

from De Quincey's success only three years earlier. It is clear from a letter De Quincey wrote to William Tait that he had read St. Augustine's *Confessions* and he alludes to Rousseau's *Confessions* most prominently in his 1840 essay 'On Modern Superstition'.[15] Alethea Hayter points out the paradox within De Quincey, namely the desire to identify with an established literary canon while maintaining a xenophobic distance from its more notable practitioners:

> The title which De Quincey chose for his narrative has inevitably provoked comparisons with the *Confessions* of Rousseau; and perhaps De Quincey's claim to be unique, an unparalleled special case, and to strict frankness, do owe something to Rousseau's example. But he disavowed the connection […] referring scornfully to 'the spectacle of a human being obtruding on our notice his moral ulcers or scars' with 'the spurious and defective sensibility of the French.'[16]

However, identifying with the confessional mode, is a convention De Quincey, Lamb and Hogg explicitly adopt through their use of the term 'confessions' to describe their work. This approach also carries with it connotations which invariably raise the reader's expectations and the author's responsibilities as a consequence. For example, that the text will serve as some sort of a warning, but primarily that they will be privy to some approximation to the truth. This, in turn, raises the question of what or whose truth is being presented; a theme which is interrogated, for example, via the intricate weaving of texts, textual commentary and meta-narrative devices in Hogg's *Confessions*.

Confessional writing does, through its very nature, highlight what are considered existential or metaphysically contingent questions: whether for the archetypal post-Enlightenment Romantic dissecting his reflected image in the mirror, or the psycho-analytical Lacanian approach which advocates autobiography as a response to anxiety about the potentially disintegrating self. In other words, is the function of the

[15] 1834 letter of Thomas De Quincey to William Tait in the National Library of Scotland, Acc.1275.
[16] Thomas DeQuincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, ed. by Aletha Hayter (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 17.

confessional text to reveal the self? Or is the self, instead, in Marcus's phrase 'a product of our discursive practices'? Marcus extends this idea by highlighting the question concerning whether it is, in fact, 'textual expression' which determines human nature in the first place. If so, it would be fair to accept confession as representing 'not […] veracity as such […], but rather the individuation of personal mythology', and hence by implication accept whatever mode, content or form is offered up as 'confession' by a writer under this overall, generic heading.[17]

After initially self-identifying their autobiographical writing as existing within the confessional mode, each of the authors in the present study then advance cannily down his own, highly individual, textual path. This anticipates David Amigoni's critique of auto/biography's 'generic instability and hybridity', of which De Quincey's *Confessions*, in particular, represents a prototypical form.[18] Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* (1823), likewise, comprises a merging of forms and genres such as playscript, letters sent and received by the author, along with generous intertextual references and borrowings, not all of which are acknowledged. Malthus's original *Essay*, despite its economic and mathematical focus, contains a strong element of zealous religious rhetoric which would not be incongruous if uttered by the protagonist in *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Furthermore, the *Essay* is ultimately predicated on a patriarchal dispute. The fact that it was written, constitutes a form of personal confession, reflecting and recognising the strength of Thomas Malthus's antipathy towards his father and the latter's championing of Rousseau.

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[17] Laura Marcus, *Auto/biographical discourses: theory, criticism, practice* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 202 and p. 162.
[18] David Amigoni, 'Victorian Life Writing: Genres, Print, Constituencies' in *Life Writing and Victorian Culture*, ed. by D. Amigoni (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 1.

Levin contends that the archetypal Romantic confessor possesses the trait of viewing and presenting 'the universe in terms of their inner turmoil, projecting their anxieties onto their physical surroundings.'[19] Thus, at times, the seismic political, economic and social upheavals of the period are also reflected in an appropriate emotional form for the Romantic authors considered therein. However, it is notable that, in marked contrast to Rousseau, the progenitor of secular confession, there is a lack of direct engagement with politics among the confessional writers of the 1820s. As will be shown in Chapter Three, Hazlitt, the most radical of the group, betrayed his republican and egalitarian ideals. This was not only through his pursuit of a younger, lower-class female but also due to the specific language and tropes he employed to describe the object of his sexual obsession. Moreover Hazlitt, as a liberal, found himself on the receiving end of both literary and political censure. De Quincey, despite witnessing and experiencing the impact of early nineteenth-century social and economic transformation in creating a class of social outcasts, was reluctant to translate his genuine personal sympathies into action within the political sphere. He remained a monarchist and Tory sympathiser all his life. Hogg adopted, and defined himself as, the lower-class persona of the 'Ettrick Shepherd'. He also claimed affinity with oppressed figures from both contemporary Scottish life and the nation's history. Yet, he too dismissed the necessity for immediate political change, preferring to identify with the Tory ruling class who he felt represented his rural, rather than social and economic, status. However, while not wishing to underestimate or minimise the significance of historicist factors and context, it should be acknowledged that the crisis for the writers was primarily authorial.

[19] Levin, p. 12.

In this sense, Malthus was prophetic in anticipating the introspection of the Romantic confessional authors succeeding him. Their turmoil primarily revolved around questions such as their literary permanence and perceived legacy, as well as their status as writers. These considerations were being constantly negotiated and redefined by their changing fortunes and relationship with their readers. The potential ephemerality of their texts depended on the reception of the author and the vagaries of the emerging journal and periodical market as much as it did on the quality of their prose itself. This created a constant sense of fluidity and instability, leading to the threat of textual and authorial dissolution. Hogg and De Quincey had reasons to both embrace and reject their constructed personalities and nom-de-plumes. They represented markers of celebrity, but became equally restrictive and imprisoning appellations and identities.[20] De Quincey, in particular, would find the demands of professional authorship such as meeting deadlines and providing corrections all too disagreeable. Lamb's focus on the joys of over-imbibing alcohol, and the ingestion and digestion of food (especially roasted meat), were only superficially innocuous. They masked a darker, fetishized discourse with as troubling and potentially destructive tropes as De Quincey's opium or Hazlitt's sexual fixation. Lamb would find himself directly labelled as the 'Drunkard' of his imaginative confessional essay, ironically a more damning revelation for the period than De Quincey's addiction.

It is important to bear in mind that, in this respect at least, confessional writers appear determined to use such potential turmoil, together with a fragmenting or dismantling of identity, to their literary advantage. They develop rather than simply adhere to the terms employed by Marcus. 'Autobiography would then become a strategy for creating the

[20] Literally in the case of De Quincey who, in the later part of his life, would find himself on the run from duns and creditors. He lived the last years of his life in Edinburgh under constant threat of imprisonment. See Chapter Two.

illusion of unity and coherence', Marcus writes, 'despite the fragmentations of identity.'[21] De Quincey, Hazlitt, Lamb and Hogg do not succeed, ultimately, in creating one, overall cohesive illusion of unity and identity. Rather, they exploit the opportunities that such potential disintegration offers. By adopting and exploring numerous role plays and identities, these writers, paradoxically, construct a much larger and more comprehensive authorial and literary 'personality', both amorphous and fluid, than would otherwise be possible. Levin identifies this new 'personality' as being inevitable, the result of linguistic constraints: 'romantic confessors hold out the possibility that a narrator can produce a body of material that cannot fall apart, an identity that cannot be dissipated. But language diffuses despite what human coherence can be managed.'[22]

The act of writing and publishing a confession represents a strategy for achieving a metaphysical transcendence over life and death through the survival of an author's life and name via a secured literary legacy. B. J. Mandel refers to 'Rousseau's assumption that if he writes long enough, he will outstrip time'.[23] Rousseau, notably, took the notion of timelessness somewhat literally. After the *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) had won the prize offered by Dijon Academy, thereby ensuring his fame and reputation, he announced that he would sell his watch: 'Heaven be praised, I shall not need to know the time anymore.'[24] Rousseau assumed his identity and subjectivity, both as an individual and a writer, had been secured via this recognition and would therefore resist the corroding impact of time.

[21] Marcus, p. 166.
[22] Levin, p. 36.
[23] B J Mandel, 'Full of Life Now' in ed. by Olney, p. 67.
[24] Rousseau, in trans. by Cohen, p. 339.

There are key moments when the confessional writer regards his literary *alter ego* as separate or distinct from himself, and the particular question of Lamb's complex inter-relationship with his alias 'Elia' will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. These devices can be seen as performing a valuable function for the reader, namely 'the tension between an autobiographer's ''real'' and linguistic selves is thus highlighted.'[25] This tension or ambiguity encapsulates the dilemma associated with such a deliberate, constructed identity, namely that it ultimately represents a mixed-blessing.

De Quincey, Lamb and Hazlitt exemplify the Romantic Confessional tradition in that, to use Levin's terms, 'the history of one person can be a warning, [...] so instructive and of such potential benefit to others.'[26] However, the 'warning' that is served to the reader is not necessarily *primarily* one concerned with the dangers of opium eating, over-indulgence in food and drink or sexual fixation. It is perhaps more to do with the pitfalls of adopting, or being adopted by, an alias or persona which, while guaranteeing at least a degree of immortality, ultimately destroys the original self. This is a theme which was being dealt with by a contemporary of De Quincey's – James Hogg's 1824 *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* - the subject of Chapter Five. It would also be explored in several later nineteenth-century fictional representations of the double, for example Edgar Allan Poe's *William Wilson* (1839) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890).

The personified threatening presence of this theme of duality haunts De Quincey's *Confessions*:

[25] Levin, p. 24.
[26] Levin, p. 12.

> Will ye, choir that intercede – wilt thou, angel that forgives – 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.[27]

The confessional author's re-invention of himself in the form of his alter-ego *may* be inevitable. Egan, for instance, writes that 'all autobiographers, of necessity, by the very act of autobiography, reconstruct themselves in some form or another'.[28] Yet it is not given that this is, *per se*, a liberating action. Not everyone can claim, as Marcus does *apropos* Louis Althusser, that 'he writes to regain his identity.'[29] The writers of the 1820s represent an archetypal illustration of the pitfalls which are necessary to avoid when dealing with autobiography. Egan's qualification regarding the nature of the genre is an apt warning for the reader-critic to heed: autobiographies 'have very little to do with life as it is lived; they are all imaginative verbal constructs; all of them are fictions.'[30] Yet the fictions constructed by the writers in this study are more illuminating than any factual confession, in revealing their author's sense, and representation, of himself.

There have been several recent works of criticism relevant to the confessional mode of the 1820s which inform my argument, and which in turn my thesis extends, complicates and in some cases with which it disagrees. James Treadwell, for example, upholds the impossibility of fixing a definition of Romantic autobiography. He contends that it is only possible to consider individual autobiographical texts rather than define a specific genre of autobiography of the period.[31] This, by implication, includes the sub-genre of Romantic confession, and while I have dealt with texts separately I have tried to show precisely how they are inter-related and share a range of unifying features. I have also, by dealing with the

[27] Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey: Confessions of an English Opium-Eater 1821-1856*, ed. by Grevol Lindop (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 109.
[28] Egan, p. 20.
[29] Laura Marcus, 'Theories of Autobiography' in ed. by Swindells, p. 20.
[30] Egan, p. 5.
[31] James Treadwell, *Autobiographical Writing and British Literature, 1783- 1834* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. vii-viii.

texts chronologically, charted the reasons behind the shift in focus within Romantic confessions during the 1820s. However, I agree with Treadwell that the overlap between the dates in which autobiographical and confessional writing flourished and those years which define Romanticism is not merely coincidence, and that questions of representation and subjectivity are key features of both traditions.

Felicity James's key work on Charles Lamb places him firmly in the radical tradition emerging in the 1790s, describing him as an 'unsettling, discomforting' and 'provocative' figure.[32] James identifies this dissent as resulting from his Unitarian background, which informs his allusive, collaborative - and hence socially idealistic - style. I develop a theme which James mentions in passing, namely the 'sometimes disturbing images of children' occurring within Lamb's work, and extend and analyse this aspect of his writing as an unsettling trope of unbridled consumption and sexual fetishism.[33]

One aspect of James's focus on Lamb, that he is an inveterate reader and re-writer of his friend's work, is developed by Tim Fulford. In particular, Fulford employs the term 'literary coteries' to denote the inter-textual relationship between groups of writers, editors and publishers which forged Romantic poetry. I develop this specifically in terms of James Hogg, who both benefitted and suffered as a result of this form of literary interaction. While undoubtedly a victim of this era identified by Fulford as an 'age of personality', Hogg used his prose writing to subvert this process and assert his persona as the 'Ettrick Shepherd.' I also consider De Quincey's role in the Lake coterie and Hazlitt's position within the so-called 'Cockney School.'

Fulford describes the creative process by which the Romantic poets of the 1790s coterie

[32] Felicity James, *Charles Lamb, Coleridge and Wordsworth: Reading Friendships in the 1790s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 3.
[33] James, p. 3.

generated their work: ‘it was by echo, borrowing and allusion that they interacted, collaborated, and imitated each other, generating common themes, honing a shared style, and experimenting with new genres.’[34] This model of analysis has allowed me to work on a different decade and show interconnections of a coterie kind among a group of writers not formerly recognised in that way. While the confessional prose writers of the 1820s shared some of the traits highlighted by Fulford, they were grouped together by their use of the literary confessional mode rather than actual friendship. Moreover, I am more inclined, perhaps ungenerously, to define such allusive strategies when practiced by the writers in this study as plagiarism.

My contention that the tropes and rhetorical devices present in Malthus’s 1798 *Essay* are also evident within, and an influence upon, the confessional writers of the 1820s develops a link between Malthus and Romantic writing highlighted, for example, by Philip Connell. Connell has analysed the relationship between the Lake Poets, in particular Wordsworth, and Malthus. Connell emphasises the centrality of economic science to the emergence of the notion of ‘culture’ itself, thereby enabling an environment in which literary discourse could flourish. Connell also questions the assumption that a strict antithesis exists between arguments in the 1798 *Essay* and the perspective offered by the Lake Poets. For example, he cites examples of Wordsworth’s early poetry such as ‘The Old Cumberland Beggar’ (1800), which is read by Connell as being entirely compatible in its advocacy of poor law reform with Malthus’s opinions in the original *Essay*. Furthermore, Connell argues that the 1805 *Prelude* is structured, significantly, around Book XII in which Wordsworth details his adoption of the persona of poet in response to his creative engagement with Malthus, and ‘wilfully fails to transcend certain fundamental claims of Malthusian doctrine.’[35]

[34] Tim Fulford, *Romantic Poetry and Literary Coteries: The Dialect of the Tribe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 18.
[35] Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of ‘Culture’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 56. See also his ‘Wordsworth, Malthus, and the 1805 Prelude’ in *Essays in Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2001)

I explore how Malthus continued to exert a considerable influence upon the Romantic tradition of the 1820s. In particular, how his tropes of reproduction and self-replication reached fruition in the discourse strategies of textual and authorial multiplication in the confessional genre of the period. Malthus predicted an increase in population which would outstrip food production and supply, yet found - perhaps surprisingly - these ideas figuratively embodied within the literary formulations of his successors.

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This thesis is arranged thematically and, in part, historically. Chapter One considers Malthus's view of man as an economic and reproductive agent, exploring his representation of the somatic tropes which inform the work of the prose writers and essayists succeeding him in the twenty to thirty years after the *Essay on the Principles of Population* was first published. I advocate a reading of Malthus as an alternative, yet equally valid, Romantic author as Wordsworth and Coleridge, whose *Lyrical Ballads* were published the same year as Malthus's *Essay,* in 1798. This discourse anticipates the formulation of a confessional mode firmly entrenched within corporeal, as opposed to spiritual, concerns. Malthus also recognises the developing commercial relationship between the reader as consumer and the author as vendor within the emerging periodical and journal market-place. Malthus might, initially, appear an incongruous choice given his received status as an economic, rather than literary figure. However, his penchant for rhetorical and discursive devices, together with his use of imaginative tropes, are key features of his writing that are seemingly at odds with his reputation as a dry economic scholar. This chapter also offers an analysis of the conflict between Malthus and Rousseau, another key influence on the confessional writers of the 1820s, and traces its origins to an unresolved dispute between Malthus and his father. I argue

that Malthus' advocacy of a particular set of economic and political views is inextricably linked to the nature of his relationship with his father and the socio-cultural expectations of the period. Ultimately, the visionary Malthus is unable to understand that the objects of his disgust, those triad of desires, might constitute viable material for secular confessions. However, this is a task fully embraced and exploited by De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb.

Chapter Two examines how De Quincey's opium-based confessions represent a potential short-cut to life-writing, revealing that he was less than enamoured with the whole writing process and its attendant problems of deadlines and publication. Despite this, he dreaded the idea of literary obscurity and this anxiety is exhibited through a fixation with notions of impotence, restricted expansion and enforced containment within his *Confessions*. De Quincey's relationship with his text is rendered ambiguous by his thematic use of opium as a subject-matter, as imaginative, drug-induced reveries are potentially a transitory and insubstantial basis for a sustained discourse. As Julian North has noted, 'De Quincey's representation of opium's power over his mental faculties must also be looked at sceptically as a self-serving mythic construction.'[36] Moreover, while escaping the limitations and restrictions imposed by a more conventional life, the use of opium simultaneously closes previous possibilities, such as De Quincey's scholarly potential. De Quincey's extensive use of footnotes and digressions is also analysed, with a view to such textual devices revealing a meta-commentary on his writing process that is essential to achieving an understanding of his persona of the opium-eater. *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was originally published in two parts in the *London Magazine* in September and October 1821, and subsequently reprinted in book form by Taylor and Hessey in 1822. My initial frame of reference is, naturally enough, the original edition. However, key additions and re-workings

[36] Julian North, 'Opium and the Romantic Imagination: The Creation of a Myth', in *Beyond The Pleasure Dome: Writing and Addiction from the Romantics*, ed. by Sue Vice, Matthew Campbell and Tim Armstrong (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), p. 110.

in the later, 1856, version of the text both illuminate and develop an understanding of De Quincey's confessional writing and these insights are considered where appropriate.

Chapter Three develops the topic of sexual impotence and unrequited love within the writing of William Hazlitt, especially *Liber Amoris*. Exploring how these motifs symbolise both personal and literary failure, this chapter also provides a reflection on the wider political and social repression and disillusionment of the 1820s. Hazlitt reflects the early nineteenth-century convergence of textuality and sexuality, and I explore how impotence in a series of domains becomes a measure and definition of self-worth in *Liber Amoris*, as well as his other writings. Hazlitt combines references to both procreative and literary power as his desire for sexual success with Sarah Walker, his landlady's daughter, is matched by his wish to provide pleasure and satisfaction for his reader. Ultimately, he is found wanting in both cases, as his emasculation and enfeeblement encompasses his role as both writer and suitor. Hazlitt's humiliation is compounded by the capital his political opponents and critics managed to extract from the episode, symbolised by the destruction of his bust of Napoleon; an action, moreover, reflecting Hazlitt's wider, if surreptitious, rejection of his radical principles.

Chapter Four traces Charles Lamb's confessional writing, which he produced as essays and under a variety of pseudonyms. Compared with occult *doppelgängers*, frustrated, class-driven sexual desire and drug addiction, Lamb's tropes of over-eating and drinking may initially appear rather subdued, if not inconsequential, through their familiarity. Nevertheless, I seek to show that these apparently more innocent modes of confession contain darker and unsettling motifs. Lamb epitomises the fruition of two of Malthus's triad: 'the cravings of hunger' and 'the love of liquor', which he elaborates and fetishises via a series of consumption-centred narratives containing darker, sexualised motifs. Lamb adopts a number

of personae to construct this specific discourse, ‘Edax, Elia’ and ‘Hospita’, and the precise nature of his relationship with these aliases is addressed. His focus on bodily digestive functions not only marks the transition away from religious confessions, it also mirrors the emergence of such somatic tropes as indicators of individual and national identity. Notions of ‘taste’ represent a defining aesthetic indicator of subjectivity in the Romantic era. I will consider how food and alcohol addiction, like opium for De Quincey, offers a vast range of confessional literary opportunities, yet paradoxically correlates with a self-destructive drive both for the individual physically and, more importantly, in his role as author.

My final chapter concerns James Hogg, whose *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* alone appears to secure him a place within the 1820s canon of self-writing. There is a sense that De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb have exhausted the possibilities of the corporeal, secular confession, as the genre returns to its more religious origins, with Hogg being the last author in this study, chronologically, to publish his confessions. Hogg’s text was only acknowledged as a significant contribution to the canon of Romantic literature during the second half of the twentieth-century, with the narrative also being lauded for its psychological insights. However, what I wish to explore for the first time is how Hogg’s earlier writing, especially his pioneering, yet obscure, *Shepherd’s Guide* (1807), contains the origins of this more famous confessional work. I argue that the source and tropes of Robert Wringhim’s, and indeed his editor’s, memoirs can be located in Hogg’s writing on shepherding, husbandry and the diseases of sheep. The seemingly inconsequential *Shepherd’s Guide*, at least in terms of literary merit, anticipates and pre-figures questions of authorship, literary self-multiplication and writing methodology. Such formulation and negotiation of identity, in turn, comprise the body of the present thesis. These aspects, and knowledge of Hogg’s more literal role as the Ettrick Shepherd, provide an innovative approach to explaining, revealing and justifying his

literary persona as the Justified Sinner. All of the tropes and themes highlighted above are to be found notably in Malthus's *Essay*, another ostensibly non-literary text, to which I now turn.

CHAPTER ONE

THOMAS MALTHUS: THE UNLIKELY ROMANTIC

I

The Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus's modest literary, as opposed to economic reputation, may at first belie the pivotal role he played in shaping the literature of the Romantic period, and notably the genre of confessional writing. In re-assessing his contribution to Romanticism, it is possible to argue that Malthus identified several critical thematic concerns which would subsequently come to dominate Romantic confessional discourse during the 1820s. Despite Malthus's ecclesiastical background, these themes were decidedly somatic, reflecting a transition from religious confession to a more secular mode, as epitomised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*. This chapter will discuss how throughout his original *Essay on the Principles of Population* (1798) and via subsequent expansions and revisions, Malthus anticipates, articulates and embodies the literary, social and economic anxieties and tropes of the 1820s. Furthermore, in Part II, consideration will be given to how William Hazlitt, another focus of this study, represents a particular response to Malthus, exemplified through new analysis of the former's essay 'The Fight'(1822) which is analogous to the debate between the two authors. As the unlikely Romantic, Malthus's work offers a view of himself as essentially elusive and enigmatic, as opposed to staid, static or centred. Physically, his cleft palate is potentially a symbolic reflection of his divided authorial personality, though not immediately revealed by his speech, nor as iconic in its significance as Bryon's celebrated limp due to a deformity of the right foot.[1] Despite the latter's disparaging reference to Malthus's commitment to 'lives ascetic/Or turning marriage into arithmetic', on

[1] Robert J. Mayhew, *Malthus: The Life and Legacies of an Untimely Prophet* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 59.

investigation, the multifarious Malthus is a prototypical, if unlikely, Romantic writer and figure. [2]

The *Essay*, as the work which established his reputation as author and economist, has its origins in the conflict Malthus had with his father Daniel's advocacy of, and friendship with, Rousseau; a link with the confessional genre which would reach its Romantic fruition with the self-writing of Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb.[3] Paradoxically James Hogg, the last chronologically of the writers discussed here to publish his confessional text, represents a return thematically to the religious origins and impetus behind the original 1798 edition of Malthus's *Essay*.

That the confessional genre flourished in the 1820s, the decade which witnessed the publication of the sixth and final edition of Malthus's work, highlights the extent to which the discourse fixations of contemporary confessions were predicated on a trio of obsessions initially identified within the epochal *Essay*. In a key passage, Malthus emphasises the primacy of bodily cravings in the form of a destructive yet addictive triplet:

> The cravings of hunger, the love of liquor, the desire of possessing a beautiful woman, will urge men to actions, of the fatal consequences of which […] they are perfectly well convinced, even at the time they commit them.[4]

[2] *Don Juan*, Canto XV, 38 in *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 828. Carole R. McCann reiterates this point, criticising Malthus for reducing 'sex to an algebraic constant'. Carole R. McCann, 'Malthusian Men and Demographic Transitions: A Case Study of Hegemonic Masculinity in Mid-Twentieth-Century Population Theory', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 30 (2009), 142-171 (150) [accessed 10/6/2019]

[3] Rousseau's relationship with Daniel Malthus dominates the (appropriately titled) 'Family Circle' section of Patricia James's *Population Malthus*. See note 18.

[4] T.R. Malthus *An Essay on the Principles of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society with Remarks on the Speculations of Mr Godwin, M. Condorcet, and Other Writers*, ed. by Geoffrey Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 104-105.

The tropes of food, alcohol and sex inform the confessional writings of Lamb, Hazlitt and Hogg through the descriptions of greed, drunkenness and lechery (albeit tempered by both physical and literary impotence). For instance, the essays of Lamb's Elia bear out Malthus's contention that 'the decision of the compound being is different from the conviction of the rational being.'[5] Hazlitt, with the benefit of both the hindsight and critical chastisement afforded by the reaction to *Liber Amoris*, would no doubt agree with Malthus's injunction to men: 'remove their bodily cravings, and they would not hesitate a moment in determining against such actions.' Likewise, Hogg's Robert Wringhim, a devout and pious Calvinist prior to his dissolute behaviour, would concur with Malthus's statement: 'ask them their opinion of the same conduct in another person, and they would immediately reprobate it.'[6] Moreover, the consequences of De Quincey's preoccupation with opium is also foreseen as Malthus condemns that 'inactive torpor' which can 'amuse itself only in bewildering dreams and extravagant fancies.'[7] The parallels between Malthus and De Quincey are emphasised by a significant commonality; namely Malthus's reference to his 'very bad fit of the tooth-ache at the time I am writing this.' A similar medical factor initiated the sequence that De Quincey states first lead him to take opium in the autumn of 1804.[8]

Whereas the reader hears no more about this condition from the stoical Malthus, analgesic opium is the foundation of De Quincey's literary career. A prescient Malthus exposes the fallacy of such stimulants and their debilitating effect on De Quincey: that they could be 'applied continually with equal strength or […] would not exhaust and wear out the subject.'[9] Therefore, Malthus should be recognised not solely as the progenitor of the theory he

[5] Malthus, p. 105.
[6] Malthus, both p.105
[7] Malthus, p. 68.
[8] Malthus, p. 94.
[9] Malthus, p. 93

summarised as 'the perpetual tendency in the race of men to increase beyond their means of subsistence' as the geometric advance in population becomes ever increasingly at odds with the arithmetic increase in food supply. [10] Rather, he should be viewed as more prophetic in anticipating what might be regarded, by both literary and political conservatives, as the wider social dislocation and moral decline supposedly reflected in the introspection of the Romantic confessional writers succeeding him.

It is significant that the only annotation in either of the two Malthus family editions of the 1798 edition of the *Essay* are three side linings of the term 'vice', the framing lexis for the authors in this study.[11] Significantly, John Harrison is clear that these are Malthus's personal additions.[12] Moreover, in the original 1826 edition of the *Essay* there is a definition of 'vice' which is entirely apposite to the addictions of the decade. Vice, Malthus notes, represents 'those actions, the general tendency of which is to produce misery, and which are therefore prohibited by the commands of the Creator, and the precepts of the moralist.'[13]

Nevertheless, Malthus foreshadows the philosophical and literary potential arising from individual desire that was exploited in the 1820s, but regards the resulting transferal to literary ends, or sublimation as it would later be called, as necessarily socially worthwhile and improving. He suggests that 'when the mind has been awakened into activity by the

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[10] Malthus, p. 140.
[11] T.R. Malthus*, An Essay on the Principles of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society: with Remarks on the Speculation of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other Writers* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 29. P. 37 and p. 139.
[12] John Harrison, *The Malthus Library Catalogue, The Personal Collection of Thomas Robert Malthus at Jesus College, Cambridge* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1983), p. xxiii.
[13] T. R. Malthus, *An essay on the principle of population: or, A view of its past and present effects on human happiness: with an inquiry into our prospects of respecting the future removal or mitigation of the evils which it occasions* (London: John Murray, 1826), Index.

passions, and the wants of the body, intellectual wants arise; and the desire of knowledge, and the impatience under ignorance, form a new and important class of excitements.'[14]

Malthus, however, mis-judged the nature and appeal of the 'excitements' which would come to dominate the writing of those in thrall to corporeal desires. While Malthus concedes that 'those roughnesses and inferior parts that support the superior […] contribute to the symmetry, grace and fair proportion of the whole', he surely has in mind something more edifying than the confessions and 'excitements' of a drunkard, a glutton or an opium-addict.[15] As Ben Wilson remarks, Malthus along with figures such as the social historian Francis Place, epitomised the solid middle-class values which drove the moral revolution apparent in the 1820s.[16] Unsurprisingly, questions of sexual intrigue resulting in unrequited romance of the type documented by Hazlitt in *Liber Amoris* are also addressed, and dismissed, within the essay: 'if we unwisely direct our efforts towards an object in which we cannot hope for success, we shall […] only exhaust our strength in fruitless exertions and remain at as great a distance as ever from the summit of our wishes'.[17] Once again, when contemplating the possibility of social equality, 'a consummation devoutly to be wished', Malthus is taken with 'emotions of delight and admiration, accompanied with ardent longing for the period of its accomplishment. But alas! That moment can never arrive.'[18] The extent to which this frustration and impotence might be regarded as a literary coda, or indeed epitaph, for the confessional writers of the 1820s is a central facet of reassessing Malthus's contribution to the Romantic oeuvre.

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[14] Malthus, pp. 151-152.
[15] Malthus, p. 152.
[16] Ben Wilson, *Decency and Disorder: The Age of Cant 1989-1837* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 367.
[17] Malthus, p. 140.
[18] Malthus, p. 74.

Other tropes unite these writers. As with De Quincey and Lamb, there is also a problematic element contained within the arena of the Malthusian mode of address, and concomitant questions of self-representation. Thomas De Quincey adopted the aristocratic form of his surname and revelled in his alter-ego of the 'opium-eater', while Hazlitt published his autobiographical *Liber Amoris* anonymously, in what was ultimately a self-defeating act of pusillanimity. James Hogg wrote under the nom de plume The Ettrick Shepherd, with his status as the author of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) being originally concealed. The Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus, while 'always known as Robert or Bob', likewise published his *Essay* anonymously in 1798.[19] He was subsequently referred to by the sobriquet 'Parson' (often in a pejorative sense, for example by Marx) or 'Professor', the latter after his appointment at Haileybury, teaching history and political economy for the East India Company. However, Malthus is also widely accredited as 'T.R. Malthus', as in the 1803 edition of the *Essay* or simply, and more popularly, 'Thomas Malthus'[20]. For Robert J. Mayhew, this profusion of titles, alongside the revisions, rewrites and inclusions from 1798 to 1826, clearly distinguishes 'the Malthus of the 1798 edition from the Malthus of the later editions', a self-duplication worthy of De Quincey who similarly revised and expanded his *Confessions* between 1821 and 1856.[21] Both authors exploit the freedom multiple designations and re-writes allows them, expanding a source text to a potentially limitless degree and re-casting themselves in the process. Malthus initiates a writing process, adopted and adapted later by De Quincey and Hogg, by which revision and expansion form key aspects both of the text's being and its context. Namely, a text about multiplication, whether an ever-increasing population, limitless dream sequences or manifold identities, that in itself multiples.

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[19] Patricia James, *Population Malthus: His Life and Times* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 1.
[20] For example, the most recent Penguin edition of the Essay, published in 2015, is ascribed to 'Thomas Malthus'.
[21] Mayhew, p. 206.

The date of the publication of the Malthus's original *Essay*, 1798, significantly coincides with the appearance of *Lyrical Ballads*, the anonymous collaboration between William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The latter text is widely regarded as inaugurating what is retrospectively designated the Romantic Movement. Malthus's contribution to this is often relegated to a grudging addendum.[22] However, my contention is that Malthus, via the adjustments, revisions and expansions to the six editions of his *Essay* until 1826 (he cited 162 works for the final edition) constructs and constitutes an alternative and equally valid Romantic narrative.[23] Furthermore, analysis of his engagement with Wordsworth reveals a more complex literary interconnection than the bifurcation that is often assumed, for instance in Mayhew's reflection that 'intellectually their two visions of nature's relationship with society were poles apart'.[24]

Malthus's influence in shaping and prophesying key aspects of Romantic literature, especially within the tradition of confessional and self-writing, is profound. Perhaps Malthus's polemic appealed to a readership experiencing, and anticipating further, dramatic change appropriate to the shift in epoch. As John Bowles, a contemporary nay-sayer, commented regarding the imminent transition to the nineteenth century: 'a change of century is calculated to fill every considerate and feeling mind with emotions.'[25] This is especially true when witnessing the potent and potentially overwhelming combination (as Mayhew has

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[22] For instance, Malthus merits a passing reference and single footnote in Duncan Wu's compendium of Romantic poetry and prose: *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. by Duncan Wu (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012)
[23] Mayhew, p. 111.
[24] Mayhew, p. 75.
[25] John Bowles, *A View of the Moral State of Society at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (London: F. and C. Rivington, 1804), p. 2.

described it), of ‘the French revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the Industrial Revolution, and the birth of modern economic thought.’[26]

The later part of the eighteenth century also proved a critical etymological period. 1779 introduced a new word definition in Dr Johnson’s dictionary, that of the neologism ‘addiction’ with the modern connotation of compulsive dependency.[27] The term, since broadened, specifically referred to tobacco thus acknowledging the powerful cravings induced by the substance. Prior to this, the definition of ‘addiction’ was confined to the concept of devotion, a significant semantic shift which partially mirrors the transmutation of Malthus’s *Essay* from the 1798 theodicy, or explanation of the presence of evil in the world, to the secular 1802 edition. This ostensibly minor enrichment of the lexicon assumes the status of all-embracing trope within the 1820s discourse of De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb, and thereby elevated it into the pantheon of Romantic mythopoeicism.

Those who wish to reinvent or resurrect Malthus are often loath to identify or categorise him as a bona fide representative of the Romantic tradition. While, for instance, David Wells bemoans the fact that ‘even in those fields of his greatest fame – economics, biology, and demography – his work has commonly been misunderstood, misinterpreted or trivialised’, it is ostensibly to reclaim Malthus as a political thinker. [28] Superficially, this is understandable, given the nature of Malthus’s central tenet which seems devoid of literary connections, exemplified by his pragmatic dismissal of ‘Mr Pitt’s Poor bill’ for ‘tending to increase

[26] Mayhew, p.75.
[27] *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, <oed.com/view/Entry/2179> [accessed 7/8/2019]
[28] David Wells, ‘Resurrecting the Dismal Parson: Malthus, Ecology, and Political Thought’, *Political Studies*, 30 (1982) 1-15 (1) <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1982.tb00515.x> [accessed 10/6/2019]

population without increasing the means for its support […] and, consequently, to create more poor.’[29]

Moreover, his pronouncements on imagination and fancy appear dismissive, if not outright hostile, and are not confined to his *Essay*. In his professional role as preacher, his rhetoric is unequivocal, such as his undated ‘Sermon on the Text Deuteronomy 29.29’: ‘shall we leave the plain dictates of our reason to follow the wild suggestions of our fancy […] to wander in pathless tracts without either light or footing?’ [30] His tone is hardly more conciliatory in his 1798 rejection of William Godwin’s utopianism, since Godwin ‘has not proceeded in his enquiries with the caution that sound philosophy seems to require […] And his conjectures certainly far outstrip the modesty of nature’; or because the ‘fabric of imagination vanishes at the severe touch of truth’. [31] Geoffrey Gilbert discerns in Malthus a disavowal of the notion ‘followed by the French thinkers Condorcet and Rousseau and the English anarchist William Godwin […] that society was on a path towards ‘perfection’.’[32] Wells portrays Malthus as possessing a self-image of the ‘reluctant iconoclast, smashing the […] unreal images of the utopian visionaries, using the principle of population as his hammer.’[33] Yet this doctrine is, in a sense, undercut by Malthus’s own crafted, figurative touches, such as the presence of alliteration and personification. The seemingly anti-Romantic rhetoric appears fragile, as vulnerable and transitory as the images of nature which follow: ‘the corn is plucked before it is ripe […] The rosy flush of health gives place to the pallid cheek and hollow eye of misery.’[34] To appropriate a Malthusian observation from his *Travel Diaries*, this is a

[29] Malthus, p. 43.
[30] T.R. Malthus The Unpublished Papers in the Collection of Kanto Gakuen University Vo1.II, ed. by John Pullen and Trevor Hughes Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 21
[31] Malthus, p. 74 and p. 80.
[32] Geoffrey Gilbert, introduction to Malthus, p. vii.
[33] Wells, p. 10.
[34] Malthus, p. 80.

contradistinction which runs throughout his work like the veins of silver 'very small' and 'scarcely perceptible but to the eye of a connoisseur', something he discerned in a mine outside Christiana (Oslo) during his Scandinavian tour of 1799.[35]

Other, prominent, Romantic tropes are present in Malthus's discourse. When he is not, as it were, adopting the mask of public persona, the private Malthus at times presages the Hazlitt of such works as 'Why Distant Objects Please' (1821) or the epistolary Scottish section of *Liber Amoris*. For instance, he reports, in a not unsympathetic manner and register, a discussion he had with a 'Mr Nielson, who was a great Democrat and admirer of Thomas Paine.' Then journeying from Lillehammer, Malthus is almost in rhapsodic mode when describing his experience of travelling. He notes how he,

> Came down a steep hill to a turn of the river which was incomparably beautiful, and led […] into the most inchanting (*sic*) valley that can well be conceived […] The trees of all kinds were luxuriant in foliage,- the fields were of the finest verdure, which threw an air of softness over the whole picture, and made it appear one of the happiest and most enchanting spots that can well be imagined.[36]

Yet, as if immediately conscious of having revealed sublime, and hence potentially forbidden, thoughts, there is a bathetic conclusion to the episode, in the form of a solitary paragraph: 'At Mosthuus we had eggs and bacon. Dinner and maid 2*s*. 6*d*.'[37]

Perhaps what Malthus is denigrating is not so much the power of imagination but, in Mayhew's terms, 'the disjunction […] between experiences and abstract theories'.[38]

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[35] *The Travel Diaries of T.R. Malthus*, ed. by Patricia James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 115.
[36] *Travel Diaries*, pp. 127-128.
[37] *Travel Diaries*, p. 128.
[38] Mayhew, p. 63.

Malthus's verdict on Condorcet's treatment by the French National Assembly on which he sat is axiomatic (in spite of the torturous syntax): 'it is a singular instance of the attachment of a man to principles which every day's experience was so fatally for himself contradicting.'[39] This approach informs the anti-Romantic passages in the *Essay*, the necessity of applying what Malthus regarded as reason to social ills, rather than an overt, personal hostility to the notion of wonder at nature. His statement, 'the sons and daughters of peasants will not be found such rosy cherubs in real life as they are described to be in romances' is intended more as a direct plea for an acceptance of reality than some form of proto-Gradgrindian manifesto.[40] It would seem that Malthus accepts and understands the potential and capacity of imagination. After all, Malthus utilises the appropriate lexis and tropes, even while supposedly rejecting them; referring, for example, to the 'beautiful phantom of the imagination. These ''gorgeous palaces'' of happiness and immortality, these ''solemn temples'' of truth and virtue'.[41] This is not a strategy of evoking such images merely to emasculate them. Rather, it would suggest, that his adversity to creativity and vision is when it is employed as a means to what he regards as a purely imaginary and therefore pernicious end.

Philip Connell has mapped some potential connections between Malthus and Romantic poetry. It is possible to broaden these connections to encompass romantic prose, specifically the form of confessional self-writing. Connell views Malthus as an interlocutor between Christian rationalism and poetic self-discovery. Like Mayhew, he emphasises the social and cultural commonalities between Wordsworth and Malthus, even noting that they shared the same London publisher, Joseph Johnson. Moreover, Connell detects an (admittedly) 'partial,

[39] Malthus, p. 63.
[40] Malthus, pp. 35-36.
[41] Malthus, p. 75. Here, Malthus borrows from Prospero's speech in T*he Tempest*, Act 4 Scene1.

tacit and uneasy […] poetic accommodation with Malthusian argument'.[42] Connell focuses on what he regards as the critically neglected Book XII of the *Prelude*, in which Wordsworth addresses the questions raised by Malthus's *Essay.* Wordsworth neither mentions the author nor the text, partly 'as a means of sustaining that sense of knowing intimacy with his audience which is such a constant feature of [the] narrative style.'[43] Nonetheless, as Connell notes, Wordsworth emphasises the impossibility of love in two circumstances which Malthus also recognised as inimical to the well-being of the labouring poor; namely, excessive poverty (although this might seem hardly worth stating for its own sake), and especially in the circumstances of rapid urbanisation. 'In cities, where the human heart is sick' and where 'labour in excess and poverty/From day to day pre-occupy the ground/Of the affections', Wordsworth is adamant that 'Love cannot be'.[44] Such Malthusian concerns, including 'impatience with selective definitions of national wealth', permeate Book XII. [45] Therefore, in summarising Malthus's writing career it is appropriate - given such inter-connection between Malthus and Wordsworth - that Donald Winch chose a Wordsworthian metaphor, that the 'young curate who, paradoxically, made his name with an anonymous pamphlet near the turn of the century was the father of the man who died in 1834.'[46]

The origins of Malthus's seminal text require investigation, in that they reveal a further connection with Rousseau, a major precursor to the confessional writers considered in this study. Malthus's comments on the conception of his *Essay on the Principle of Population*

[42] Philip Connell, 'Wordsworth, Malthus, and the 1805 Prelude' in *Essays in Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 261.
[43] Connell, p. 251.
[44] Wordsworth, The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805), ed. by Ernest De Selincourt, corrected by Stephen Gill (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1970), p. 223.
[45] Connell, p. 262.
[46] Donald Winch, *Malthus: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2013), p. 110.

appear unremarkable, yet on closer analysis are disingenuous. In the original, 1798 Preface, he states:

> The following Essay owes its origin to a conversation with a friend, on the subject of Mr Godwin's Essay, on avarice and profusion […] The discussion started the general question of the future improvement of society; and the Author at first sat down with an intention of merely stating his thoughts to his friend, upon paper in a clearer manner than he could do in conversation.[47]

The 'friend' referred to in the prolegomenon was in fact Malthus's father, while the 'conversation' resembled more of an argument, details which potentially illuminate a covert function and purpose of the *Essay*. [48] James attributes this revelation of an unresolved paternal dispute to the Bishop William Otter of Chichester, who had known Malthus since their days as undergraduates at Jesus College, Cambridge. Rev. Otter subsequently wrote a Memoir of Thomas, which acted as a preface to the latter's second edition of *Principles of Political Economy*, published posthumously in 1836.[49] Moreover, the quarrel was not confined to Godwin's essay in *The Enquirer*. The pair clashed not only over the question of the social improvement of humanity as viewed by Godwin but also, it has been suggested, Daniel Malthus's advocacy of Rousseau of whom 'he was a warm admirer […] to the point of indulging in craven hero-worship'.[50] Indeed, Rousseau adopted the role of quasi-god-father to the infant Thomas, or rather an 'extraordinary fairy godmother […] who had come to his cradle when he was ten days old, while paying a visit to the Malthus's home in Surrey'.[51]

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[47] Malthus, p. 3.
[48] James, p. 61.
[49] James, p. 26.
[50] Mayhew, p. 54.
[51] Sergio Cremaschi, Utilitarianism and Malthus' Virtue Ethics: Respectable, Virtuous and Happy (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), p36. Another notable visitor was David Hume.

Thomas Malthus developed an antagonism towards Rousseau, that other key influence on the confessional writers of the 1820s. The reasons reflected a mixture of personal and socio-political antipathy. The fact that Daniel Malthus was infatuated with Rousseau is not in doubt. However, as Gregory Dart has suggested, 'Rousseau's work enjoyed a favourable reception in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century [...] But after the French Revolutionaries had adopted [Rousseau] as their philosophical and political mentor [...] his reputation in England suffered a dramatic decline.'[52] Yet, Malthus's father's devotion was of a higher and enduring kind. For example, Daniel was 'bitterly mortified' when Rousseau chose not to spend the night at The Rookery, his house outside Dorking.[53] In contrast, Daniel took his whole family to Derbyshire to see Rousseau, as well as having journeyed to Motiers-Travers to spend six hours with his idol in 1764. Daniel offered to house hunt for Rousseau and his mistress Thérèse le Vasseur in London and buy books for him, a degree of commitment which was not reciprocated. The unequal nature of the relationship has been previously acknowledged but underemphasised, possibly to spare the Malthus family any embarrassment. In the James' archive are notes which were moderated for the published edition of *Population Malthus,* in which one letter to Rousseau is described as 'like a love letter' and another, on complaining of not being written to, disregarded as a 'v. short + pathetic' missive.[54] Even more damning is the reference to a 'pathetic letter of unrequited love', with Daniel Malthus offering services to Rousseau, while 'not wanting to be a nuisance.'[55] Indeed, at times it appears as if Daniel believes a form of subsumption of his identity is occurring, for example when he writes 'if ever I am famous, it will be as the friend

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[52] Gregory Dart, *Rousseau*, *Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 13.
[53] James, p. 11
[54] Patricia James, *Institute of Intellectual History, University of St Andrews*, Archive II, 6 (2016) 2488-2775 (2574) [accessed 3/7/2019]
[55] James Archive, (2570) [accessed 3/7/2019]

of Rousseau.'[56] This raises the possibility that Thomas resented his father, with either a sub-conscious identification of Rousseau with the father-figure or transference of paternal hostility towards a more socially acceptable (for late eighteenth century England) Genevan republican object. Rev. Otter reveals, tellingly, that, as well as being Rousseau's friend and correspondent Daniel was 'one of his executors, and in some of his tastes, especially that of botany, is said to have *resembled him*.' [57]

Malthus's comment on the initial developmental stages of humanity is perhaps also applicable personally and therefore a valuable referent for the inquisitive reader: namely that 'the infancy of man in the simplest state requires considerable attention'.[58] Moreover, Daniel Malthus owned a copy of Rosseau's *Emile,* the fashionable pedagogical dogma which, when applied, might be enough to engender a sense of resentment on behalf of the recipient.[59] Either way, whether replacement or residual antagonism, there is an inherent irony in Thomas Malthus railing against the regicide (a form, after all, of national parricide) of the French revolution. His fury at the overthrow of the *ancien regime* and the execution of Louis XVI, its 'fear, cruelty, malice, revenge, ambition, madness, and folly', appears paradoxical when practising a private form of it himself. [60] The infantile element is also suggested via the scatological nomenclature used by Malthus when analysing the situation in France:

> The forcing manure used to bring about the French Revolution, and to give a greater freedom and energy to the human mind, has burst the calyx of humanity […] the whole is at present a loose, deformed, disjointed mass, without union, symmetry, or harmony of colouring.[61]

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[56] James, p. 12.
[57] W Otter, 'Memoir of Robert Malthus', in T R Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy Considered with a View to Their Practical Application* (London: William Pickering, 1836), pp. xxi-xxii. My italics.
[58] Malthus, p. 24.
[59] Malthus collection at Jesus College, Cambridge. B.2.24-27.
[60] Malthus, p. 63.
[61] Malthus, p. 112.

The more feminine, delicate imagery of the calyx, cup-like sepals of the flower which envelope the bud, seems overwhelmed by the fouler substance. Thus the odious male subsumes and displaces the fragile, fragrant female.

Personal prejudice and self-interest also correlate with preferred social and economic policy in terms of Thomas Malthus's attitude towards the practice of primogeniture. As the second son of six children, Thomas was excluded from any inheritance, and it is possibly more than coincidence that he praises the situation in the English North American colonies: 'in Pennsylvania there was no right of primogeniture; and in the provinces of New England , the eldest had only a double share.'[62] The personal had indeed become political and was perhaps reciprocated. Daniel Malthus, significantly, did not bequeath his Rousseau collection to his son, it was left instead to an orphan cousin considered a worthier beneficiary. Kathleen Doig and Dorothy Medlin refer to a Jane Dalton, to whom Daniel Malthus gave 'all my botanical books in which the name of Rousseau is written, [and] a box of plants given me by Mons. Rousseau.'[63]

In view of this family context, there are several potential explanations of Thomas Malthus's antagonism towards Rousseau. The question which then arises concerns his refusal to refer to the French writer and philosopher by name in his *Essay*. The fact that Rousseau is not directly mentioned in the 1798 or subsequent editions of the *Principle of Population*, indeed he is consigned to the generic category of 'other writers' in the original title, paradoxically emphasises his importance within Malthusian family lore. As the son of a country gentleman

[62] Malthus, p. 47.
[63] *British-French Exchanges in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Kathleen Hardesty Doig and Dorothy Medlin (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. 5.

and a thoroughly middle-class ordained member of the Church of England himself, Thomas exhibited the necessary decorum in avoiding a public family feud. Alison Bashford and Joyce Chaplin have recently remarked on these circumstances: 'Thomas Robert Malthus did not attack Rousseau directly; family members certainly would have seen that as lacking in filial respect.'[64] Malthus did go so far as criticising those who over-estimate the 'happiness of a savage nation'- a gentler rebuke of Rousseau's ideal of the noble savage.[65] However, Mayhew notes this diagnostic is 'a ubiquitous one in the eighteenth century after Jean-Jacques Rousseau […] that what are called social evils are just the price paid for abandoning the savage state.'[66] Yet there are several intimations that the patriarchal relationship is being questioned, if not actively subverted, within the narrative discourse of the *Essay*. Thomas Malthus refers approvingly to those formidable and confident nations of shepherds thus: 'a tribe that was rich in cattle had an immediate plenty of food. Even the parent stock might be devoured in a case of absolute necessity.'[67] Rather than the avuncular Parson Malthus a more resentful, parricidal figure is emerging, aggrieved by a fractious family dispute, like the justified sinner in Hogg's narrative. This conflict is something which the minister might be acknowledging via the figurative father desertion implied in the statement 'a great emigration necessarily implies unhappiness of some kind […] in the country that is deserted.'[68] The literary allusions to Hamlet in the *Essay* may be more loaded and significant than on first appearance. Perhaps it is provident that such hostility remains latent within Malthus's writing. After all, his judgement on cock-fighting is 'it is both ridiculous and barbarous,' no doubt whether literal or literary. [69]

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[64] Alison Bashford and Joyce E. Chaplin, *The New Worlds of Thomas Robert Malthus: Rereading 'The Principle of Population'* (Princetown and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), p. 128.
[65] Malthus, p. 24.
[66] Cremaschi, p. 181.
[67] Malthus, p. 25.
[68] Malthus, p. 17.
[69] Malthus, p. 105.

Thomas Malthus's 1798 treatise represents a conjunction of two thematically distinct narratives or discourses, those traditionally centred on bodily and religious questions. While the confessional writers of the 1820s would focus, primarily, on the former, in Malthus's *Essay*, the religious/secular dialectic is uneasily resolved by a doctrine which views humanity as essentially post-lapserian, while simultaneously advocating an Adam Smith-inspired model of natural liberty and self-interest. As we shall see, the tension between these opposing strains and the ensuing configuration of Malthusian *homo-economicus* embodies a wider move away from religious to secular confession as epitomised by De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb, ultimately resulting in the omission of the concluding theodicy altogether from succeeding editions.

The dichotomy between the religious and secular modes is evident, for example, in Malthus's habit of invoking God to support an economic and social thesis, such as in the penultimate chapter of the *Essay*:

> The processes of ploughing and clearing the ground, of collecting and sowing seeds, are not surely for the assistance of God in his creation; but are made previously necessary to the enjoyment of the blessings of life, in order to rouse man into action, and form his mind to reason.[70]

Malthus also frequently employs the Lockeian trope of the acorn, a motif adopted by the latter to scrutinise and debate the boundaries between, and definitions of, personal and public ('common') property. In his Second *Treatise of Civil Government* (1690) Locke writes:

> He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated then to himself. No body can deny but the nourishment is his. I ask then, when did they begin

[70] Malthus, p. 145.

> to be his? when he digested? or when he eat? [...] or when he brought them home? or when he picked them up?[71]

John Locke is cited approvingly by Malthus as possessing 'intellectual energies' and, for instance, forming the just idea that 'the endeavour to avoid pain, rather than the pursuit of pleasure, is the great stimulus to action in life'.[72] The amalgamation of archetypal Lockeian economic imagery with the religious is evident in Malthus's footnote to a discussion on miracles: 'to this all powerful Being, it would be equally easy to raise an oak without an acorn as with one. The preparatory process of putting seeds into the ground is merely ordained for the use of man.'[73]

Yet, the final two chapters containing the theological exhortations were excised from the 1803 edition of the *Essay*. There is no doubt that this deletion of the religious and spiritual elements marked a shift away from the sermon genre to an emphasis on the corporeal. The issue is why this occurred and to what extent it actually reflected the author's developing opinions. Malthus's arguments were, not in themselves, new ideas. Rather, they constituted reflections on an issue which had been deliberated upon since St. Augustine, but were now known as theodicy, deriving from *dike* (justice) and *theos* (God) which means 'a defence of God's justice vis-à-vis evil in the world.'[74] Malthus's contribution to the debate was to connect theodicy to questions of economic theory and political and social improvement.

In his preface to the 1803, second edition, of the *Essay* Malthus refers to the text thus: 'in its present shape it may be considered as a new work', then regrets that he had not published it

[71] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 288. My connection.
[72] Malthus, p. 145.
[73] Malthus, pp. 101-102.
[74] 'Malthus's early normative ethics', p. 79.

as such.[75] In keeping with the tone of the expanded, much larger work (now two volumes), with its prominent use of statistical, historical and ethnographic evidence, the sub-title had been rewritten to include the more scientific and objective aim of analysing population: 'with an Inquiry into our Prospects respecting the future removal or Mitigation of the Evils which it occasions'.[76] Indeed it is difficult to dispute James's impression that 'these two books are the work of two different men'.[77] Not only were the concluding theological chapters absent, but potentially religious references were expunged or amended during the course of subsequent revisions, with the text now embracing a more secular mode, and predicating the more physical preoccupations of the writings of De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb. For example, the 1817 edition omitted the phrase 'not from any original depravity of man' to be replaced by 'not from any fault in human institutions'.[78]

The shift away from the spiritual is accompanied by the recognition of a relatively enlightened formulation regarding the rate of increase in population. In the original *Essay*, Malthus emphasised the existence of two checks on population growth, the first preventative check whereby individuals can foresee potential difficulties attending the rearing of families, the second a positive check by which life is curtailed via vice or misery (that is social and natural adversities). In the 1803 edition Malthus added another, the potential for moral 'restraint' or the delaying of marriage which he argued as humane compared with 'the evils which result from any of the other checks to population.'[79] For our purpose, it is immaterial that, in Mayhew's judgement, Malthus's view is based upon erroneous reasoning, as

[75] T.R. Malthus *An Essay on the Principle of Population; or A View of its past and present Effects on Human Happiness; With an Inquiry into our Prospects respecting the future Removal or Mitigation of the Evils which it occasions*, ed. by Donald Winch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 8.
[76] Malthus in ed. by Winch, p. 1.
[77] James, p. 81.
[78] Malthus, in ed. by Winch, p. 67.
[79] Malthus, in ed. by Winch, p. 22.

'England was already the land of delayed, prudential, and economically determined marriage par excellence.'[80] While Malthus's revisionism might appear initially as only a slight concession to the notion of free-will, it is symptomatic of a wider displacement of the focus on God to the prominence of Man and his bodily desires.

However, this does not necessarily imply a concomitant *personal*, as opposed to authorial, conversion to a potentially secular world-view on the part of Malthus. The jettisoning of the religious references may, instead, reflect more literary expediency than questioning of faith, a strategy which suggests motives which are politic rather than impious. Or, as it will be argued, they could represent a fundamental division within his character which, ultimately, could not be reconciled. An analysis of his sermons indicates that he remained faithful to a literal biblical doctrine, even allowing for the expectations of the genre and his role as minister. J. M. Pullen and Trevor Hughes Parry dismiss the suggestion that Malthus's interest in his religious responsibilities and indeed his beliefs declined as he grew older. His sermons are models of 'earnestness and thoughtfulness […] not merely an assemblage of hackneyed clerical phrases' and 'suggest no late weakening of his commitment to the ministry.'[81]

Not only did Malthus set aside his religious opinions when writing successive editions of the *Essay*, there is also the possibility that he modified them in the first place for the 1798 version, tempering his convictions to avoid alienating a wider, and hence more secular, reading public. For instance, in chapter nineteen of the original *Essay*, Malthus argued against the notion of an unforgiving deity who would consign his creations to Hell: 'it is

[80] Mayhew, p. 16.
[81] T.R. Malthus, *The Unpublished Papers in the Collection of Kanto Gakuen University*, Volume II, ed. by J.M Pullen and Trevor Hughes Parry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 2.

perfectly impossible to conceive that any of these creatures of God's hand can be condemned to eternal suffering.'[82] Yet Malthus continued to *preach* a belief in the doctrine of annihilation until at least Good Friday 1832, two years before his death and six years after the final edition of *Essay on Population*. In this sermon he mentions how the Scriptures have provided humankind with the 'capacity of escaping future punishments,' while in another homily Malthus refers to the possibility of 'our future everlasting happiness' with the implicit existence of an opposite, less attractive, alternative.[83] Malthus also quotes approvingly from Matthew, Chapter 7, Verses 13-14 in which his congregation is exhorted (by the disciple) thus: "strive to enter in at the straight gate", because, as Malthus advises somewhat ominously, 'whether the number of those that shall be able to enter in, be greater or less, your concern is to take care, that you are *one* of that number.'[84]

Like the personae constructed by the confessional writers of the 1820s, there is a sense that an unambiguous division, as opposed to simple distinction, exists between the persona of Reverend Malthus and T.R. Malthus, A. M., the political and economic philosopher; a striking duality in personality and identity rather than a mere divergence in differing professional roles. Pullen and Parry, significantly, reject the simplistic explanation that he was merely 'an actor and cynically duplicitous'. A more psychological, if not metaphysical, interpretation is relevant to an understanding of Malthus. In the first edition of the *Essay*, defending the proper philosophical grounds for supposition in argument, he ridicules the thesis that 'man will ultimately become an ostrich.'[85] While admittedly not attaining such a level of transformation himself, the twin characters of Malthus constitute a manifestation

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[82] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 156.
[83] Malthus, in ed. by Pullen and Parry, Vol II, p. 14 and p. 19.
[84] Malthus, in ed. by Pullen and Parry, Vol II, p. 22. Emphasis in the original. For Hazlitt's potentially blasphemous use of similar celestial imagery, see Chapter Three.
[85] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 12.

which would appear to question his own belief in the fixed laws of nature. Indeed, there is a suggestion within Malthus's sermonic rhetoric that he is aware of the consequences of this betrayal or sacrifice of his theological self via a devotion to his economic narratives or 'accounts' (a phrase with, tellingly, both pecuniary and literary connotations.) Anticipating the judgemental religious oratory of Hogg's Robert Wringhim, Malthus states: 'we must all one day appear at the awful tribunal of heaven to render an account of our obedience'.[86] Furthermore, the reference within the statement of desiring a 'gracious sentence at the final judgement' represents a meta-textual plea for forgiveness for his faithlessness in abandoning Christian tropes in the 1803 and later editions of the *Essay*, sub-consciously enacting a form of discursive atonement. [87] Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate Malthus as an individual who retained two distinct, if unresolved, identities as well as sets of ideas. Such a categorisation would, of course, suggest a strong affinity with the Romantic literary and confessional tropes of the 1820s.

Thus Malthus is not merely much maligned, but misunderstood as well. The term *Malthusian* has been misrepresented as an eponymous synecdoche for birth control and contraception, even among modern intellectuals who ought, as it were, to be better informed. Aldous Huxley, for example, took lazy refuge in the term when he chose 'Malthusian belt' as the contraceptive device in *Brave New World* (1932). Wells regards such folkloric etymology as a 'dubious distinction', reflecting Malthus's status as both 'famous and forgotten,' similar to the other authors considered in this study.[88] The paradox becomes more intriguing given Malthus's ardent opposition to all such practices on religious grounds. Indeed, initially, he is unable to refer to the idea of contraception or birth control directly, refusing, as it were, to

[86] Malthus, in ed. by Pullen and Parry, Vol II, p. 7.
[87] Malthus, in ed. by Pullen and Parry, Vol II, p. 11.
[88] Wells, p. 1.

confer legitimacy upon the practice. Instead, the usually forthright Malthus takes refuge in a euphemistic expression (even exceeding the expectations of early nineteenth century propriety), by referring to the 'improper arts' which 'conceal the consequences of irregular connexions'.[89] However, such was the rapid nature of the misappropriation of his name, Malthus felt compelled to include an appendix to the 1817 edition in which he resolved to establish his position:

> I have never adverted to the check suggested by Condorcet without the most marked disapprobation. Indeed I should always particularly reprobate any artificial and unnatural modes of checking population, both on account of their immorality and their tendency to remove a necessary stimulus to industry.[90]

Malthus's inability to control his *Essay's* modes of reception is further evident in the ambiguous place the text occupies within the literary canon. It was neither conceived nor intended as a work of literature, but rather to serve an immediate, more functional, economic and demographic purpose. This is evident from the practical origins of the *Essay,* the fact that it was 'dashed off in the first person' as if writing a letter.[91] Malthus's conservative contemporary, Edmund Burke, likewise conceived his pamphlet *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) in the form of a letter.[92] Given Malthus's stated antipathy towards works of the imagination, the anticipated relationship with his reader might be interpreted as similarly utilitarian, resembling the unromantic connection between employer and employee: 'I possess what he wants; he possesses what I want. We make an amicable exchange.'[93] Or, commensurate with the emerging bourgeois ideology of the time, reading as a process akin to the transfer or exchange of commodities. But like the forger, supposedly

[89] Malthus, in ed. by Winch, p. 24.
[90] Malthus in ed. by Winch, pp. 368-369.
[91] James, p. 63.
[92] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 84. Burke writes in his preface, 'it may not be unnecessary to inform the reader that the following reflections had their origins in a correspondence between the author and a very young gentleman at Paris'.
[93] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 120.

imprisoned, that he encountered on his 1799 tour of Norway, Malthus appears to have enjoyed 'the liberty of amusing himself […] in any way he pleased' in terms of challenging and avoiding both academic and popular categorisation.[94] His incorporation into the annals of literature had inauspicious beginnings. Some contemporary reviewers, even those potentially sympathetic to the Malthusian perspective on rigid and immutable social class stratification and distinctions, were alarmed by Malthus's seemingly callous rhetoric which was interpreted as likely to foment revolution.

For instance, the Scottish magistrate and conservative, Patrick Colquhoun, in an article for the December 1812 *Quarterly Review*, took exception to the Reverend's 'detestable' doctrine, whereby the rich are 'to be called upon for no sacrifice; nothing more is required of them than that they should harden their hearts. They have found a place at the table of nature and why should they be disturbed at their feast?'[95] The Tory Robert Southey, who corrected the proofs for the article, praised it as an 'attack upon Malthus, upon the manufacturing system' which produced a 'Luddite feeling in the mob.'[96] Similarly, modern commentators such as Mayhew adopt a less than hagiographical tone towards his subject and his initial forays into authorship prior to the *Essay*: 'Malthus first trotted out some rather conventional homiletics […] drowsy sermons and aesthetic ramblings.'[97]

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[94] Malthus, in ed. by James, p. 159.
[95] Patrick Colquhoun, 'Propositions for ameliorating the Condition of the Poor, and for improving the moral Habits, and increasing the Comforts of the labouring people by Regulations calculated to reduce the parochial rates of the Kingdom, and generally to promote the Happiness and Security of the Community at large, by the Diminution of immoral and penal Offences, and the future prevention of Crimes Etc. Etc.', *The Quarterly Review*, 8 (1812), 1-544 (332) [accessed 12/06/19]
[96] *The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, *Romantic Circles* 4 (2009), letter 2199. [accessed 12/06/19]
[97] Mayhew, p. 50.

The critical response to the *Essay* in the two decades immediately following its publication was largely defined in terms of political partisanship, akin to the reaction provoked by Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*. Dart remarks how 'Malthus's reputation did nothing but grow during the 1810s and 1820s. Initially his champions had been the Whigs; gradually, however, he made converts among the Tories.'[98] There were, of course, those who took issue with his diagnosis of, and prescription for, the ills of society, such as Coleridge, Hazlitt and Cobbett. However, there was a tendency for political and aesthetic judgements to overlap, such was the disapprobation he engendered amongst some readers. Rather than displays of literary impartiality or objectivity, critics of his tone and rhetoric were primarily those who differed from him politically or ideologically, noting, for instance, how his *Essay* 'transformed itself into a Mandevillian tirade.'[99] The Romantic consensus was epitomised by Shelley's contention in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) that he would 'rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with […] Malthus.'[100] Attempts to revive Malthus's status in the arena of letters were often thwarted, particularly within literary historiography as 'attitudes to the […] Malthusian controversy have often been conditioned by the idea of an antagonistic encounter between English Romanticism and the new sciences of nineteenth-century society'.[101] As documented earlier, Connell has made progress in re-establishing Malthus's literary significance and incorporation within the Romantic tradition and perhaps it is now an opportune moment to consider his re-admittance to the pantheon.

[98] Dart, p. 157.
[99] Dart, p. 143.
[100] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 232.
[101] Philip Connell, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of 'Culture'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 15.

II

Malthus's role as an economist has, until now, largely overshadowed most literary considerations. However, it can be argued, his status within the Romantic genre should be reassessed due to his prescient identification of crucial, and at times uncomfortable, tropes emerging within the confessional writing of De Quincey, Hazlitt and Lamb in the 1820s. It is this foreshadowing which now invites analysis. Malthus is aware that the 'first great awakeners of the mind seem to be the wants of the body' and it is the attempted fulfilment of these desires that will constitute the bulk of the self-writing of this literary trio. [102] Once again, there is an element of duality present, evident here within Malthus's lexical choices to describe these bodily wants. Potent doublets are employed, alternating the Latinate register reminiscent of his sermon, such as 'corporeal propensities', with the more Anglo-Saxon vernacular of 'bodily excesses'. Moreover, Malthus's acknowledgement both of the existential fact of appetite and an appreciation that the population will not abstain from sexual relations, implies an on-going necessity and role for secular, written confession. He postulates in the first chapter of the *Essay*: 'first, that food is necessary to the existence of man'; and secondly, 'that the passion between the sexes is necessary, and will remain nearly in its present state.'[103] It is not that he applauds this state of affairs, instead he bemoans that 'towards the extinction of the passion between the senses, no progress whatever has hitherto been made.'[104] The Hazlitt of *Liber Amoris*, for example, amongst many others, might question Malthus's definition of 'progress'.

[102] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 144.
[103] Malthus, p. 12.
[104] Malthus, p. 13.

It is, however, Malthus's reference to 'hunger', 'liquor' and 'possessing a beautiful woman' which encapsulates the focus of this discussion. He anticipates the self-destructive tendencies inherent within the opium-eating that will both empower and debilitate De Quincey. Referring to the power of intellectual energies or 'stimulants', he draws a conclusion which has a prophetic application to De Quincey's addiction: 'could such stimulants be continually applied, instead of tending to immortalize, they would tend very rapidly to destroy the human frame.'[105] The Christian Malthus, however, had not entertained the possibility that they might serve mutual purposes, immortalising De Quincey by conferring secular, literary fame. With an, at times, uncanny prescience, Malthus addresses the conditions that will flourish in the self-writing of Hazlitt and Lamb. As with De Quincey, he is disadvantaged by his religious convictions and underestimates the possibilities and desirability of translating physical desires into effective and commercially viable self-writing. Malthus is adamant, for example, that 'the most wholesome and invigorating food, eaten with an unrestrained appetite, produces weakness instead of strength.'[106] No doubt, this is an authentic observation when considered literally, however for *literary* purposes (as with Lamb) the aphorism is questionable. In his 1824 'Sermon on the Text of 1 John 4.10' Malthus counsels his audience that 'Man, in this life is placed in a situation in which he is constantly exposed to excitements which are awakening all his passions and affections.'[107] Malthus cannot conceive that in the narratives validated and offered by confessional or life-writing, such desires might constitute the stuff of success rather than disgust or disapprobation. He is sceptical of Godwin's vision of a future in which 'simple, healthy, and rational amusements take the place of drinking, gaming and debauchery.'[108] As a writer, he is disadvantaged by an unwillingness, or perhaps an inability, to countenance the authorial potential resulting from such an immoral

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[105] Malthus, p. 96.
[106] Malthus, p. 89.
[107] Malthus, ed. by Pullen and Parry, Vol II, p 16
[108] Malthus, p. 77.

panoramic, other than to rail against it. In the 1803 edition of the *Essay*, Malthus offers a precis which foresees Hazlitt's predicament in *Liber Amoris*: 'if violations of chastity were equally dishonourable in both sexes, a more familiar and friendly intercourse between them might take place without danger' or 'without its being immediately supposed that they intended […] intrigue'.[109] Perhaps Malthus, somewhat ironically, deserves another title: namely that of the avatar of potential, if unfulfilled, Romantic visions.

It might be reasonable to infer that the only supper of which Malthus wholeheartedly approved was the Lord's Supper of Holy Communion. Yet, once again, there is a disparity between the public and private personae utilised by Malthus. In the *Essay* he offers his definition of 'living comfortably' (solely for, unsurprisingly, the benefit of common people) as having 'a piece of meat every day for their dinners.'[110] Significantly, he does not specify what constitutes a 'piece'. While, this is appropriate, if modest, given the context and period, it is hardly an invitation to partake of 'Nature's mighty feast', a phrase which, as we have seen, would return to haunt him. However, Malthus was less an advocate of culinary frugality or capable of maintaining a front of faux indifference on a personal level, as his Scandinavian *Travel Diaries* reveal. Anticipating Hazlitt's disappointment at Dorothy Wordsworth's culinary offerings, he complains of scarce and sparse dining at Karup and appears more concerned on his journey that he 'hardly ever met with tolerable butter […] it always appeared dirty', than the ill-health of the local children.[111] Malthus notes his sense of despair on being served a 'very poor dinner' with a first dish of dried salmon, an indignity which was

[109] Malthus, in ed. by Winch, p. 219.
[110] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 36.
[111] Malthus, in ed. by James, p. 68 and p. 78. See Chapter Four for a discussion of Hazlitt's dining experience with the Wordsworths.

only rectified when 'a fine roasted turkey' set his party's 'minds and […] bodies at rest.'[112] Finally, he saves his awe and admiration for a spectacle of earthly delights, which sate his rhetoric as much as his appetite: 'At supper, after 3 courses of soup, fowls, ham, fish lobsters, etc, etc a quarter of a calf came to astonish us; but we could only admire and had no strength left to eat.'[113] He is equally enamoured with the profusion of alcohol on offer, which is at odds (to say the least) with his public pronouncements on the value and virtue of prudence and sobriety: 'in one little retreat we found liqueurs […] tobacco and beer' and 'some fine champaign.'[114] Or, his reference to a 'bowl of bishop made of burgundy; and one of champaign – madeira and claret in profusion.'[115] While, from the modern reader's perspective, this peppering of gastronomic references does add a certain spice to what is, otherwise, a rather mundane fare of travel details, it is difficult to avoid or forgive the duplicity. The hypocrisy, allied with the privileged parson's patronising comments on the indolence of servants ('their work is easy and their food luxurious') and his reactionary assertion, however modified, that 'a class of proprietors and a class of labourers must necessarily exist', seem deserving of Marx's condemnation in labelling Malthus a 'shameless sycophant of the ruling classes.'[116]

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, from the 1790s there has been an on-going counter-Malthusian narrative, an official discourse of opposition, hostility and contempt. The specific nature of these attacks and the rationale behind them act to reduce Malthus to a caricature rather than the complex precursor of Romantic confession which is how he should more aptly be viewed. However, consistent with the ambiguity surrounding Malthus's status, Engels in *Outlines of a*

[112] Malthus, in ed. by James, p. 89.
[113] Malthus, in ed. by James, p. 163.
[114] Malthus, in ed. by James, p. 101.
[115] Malthus, in ed. by James, pp. 103-104. 'Bishop' is punch or mulled wine.
[116] Malthus, in ed. by Gilbert, p. 33 and 118. Marx, (From) *Theories of Surplus Value*, Vol. II in M*arx and Engels on Malthus*, ed. by Ronald L. Meek (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1953), p. 123.

Critique of Political Economy (1844) in fact pays tribute to the former's inadvertent contribution to an understanding of the relationship between capital and labour. Apropos Malthus's treaty on (over)population, Engels comments 'thanks to this theory we have come to recognise in the dependence of man upon competitive conditions his most complete degradation.'[117] At times, it is possibly too easy to dismiss the rejection of Malthusian doctrine on the part of Marx and Engels due to the insulting register often employed, for example the self-consciously sibilant description of the *Essay* as Parson Malthus's 'schoolboyish, superficial plagiary.'[118] However, their objections are ultimately predicated on what they regard as his erroneous assumption that economic laws specific to modes of production in late eighteenth century England are somehow universal or eternal. As Weir emphasises, such a claim would be anathema to Marx who believed simply that 'other modes of production would have other modes of reproduction.'[119] Likewise, the reproduction of, and fascination with, the notion of self via confessional writing in the 1820s is, arguably, a development allied to the transformation from the 1790s agrarian society of Malthus to the emerging bourgeois, individualistic ethos of the later Romantic period.

As previously noted with Southey's response, adverse criticism of Malthus is by no means confined to traditional leftist advocates. Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1836) includes a scathing parody in the description of Hofrath Heuschreke's 'Institute for the Repression of Population.' Carlyle is characteristically brutal and damming in his character sketch of Heuschreke/Malthus: 'What counsel to any man […] could this particular Hofrath give; in whose loose, zigzag figure; in whose thin visage […] you traced rather confusion worse

[117] Engels, (From) *Outlines of a critique of Political Economy* in Meek, p. 62.
[118] Meek, p. 83.
[119] D. R. Weir, 'Malthus's Theory of Population' in *The World of Economics*, ed. by J. Eatwell, M.Milgate and P. Newman (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 405.

confounded, at most, Timidity and physical Cold?'[120] Carlyle reiterated his antipathy to Malthus in his long essay 'Chartism' (1840), dismissing his 'Population Principle' as 'dreary, stolid, dismal.'[121] Malthus's commitment to economic and scientific rationality and statistics was sufficient to earn him the ire of the Scottish philosopher. However, Carlyle's dismissive triad might also be taken as a suitable summation of the Reverend's legacy, a 'preventative check' highlighting the failure of his writing to reach a wider, more literary, readership.

By far the most infamous rebuke of Malthus was Hazlitt's initial response to the *Essay*. This is ironic given, as argued here, Malthus's prescient role in the formulation of later confessional writing so strongly associated with Hazlitt. Such a pivotal paradox for the present argument requires further scrutiny. In March 1807 William Cobbett had asked Hazlitt to contribute a critique of the economist to his *Weekly Political Register*. This was followed by two further articles (or 'letters', although they were substantially longer) in May, which were published collectively three months later under the title *A Reply to the Essay on Population*. Duncan Wu regards these pieces as Hazlitt's 'most accomplished compositions thus far – less formal than earlier ones and full of the brio that makes his voice so compelling.'[122] Furthermore, Hazlitt's acerbic tone in the *Reply* is commended by Wu as 'vintage rabble-rousing'. Here was another instance of the Malthusian paradox, namely inspiring a writer to achieve their finest work in the form of a renunciation of his own. Such is the antagonism Malthus arouses in Hazlitt, it releases the latter from the bonds of accuracy, and instead permits and facilitates an advanced level of artistic creativity. This is why William Albrecht is right to reclaim the *Reply* from those academics, such as James Bonar

[120] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, (London: Dent, 1984), p.18.
[121] Thomas Carlyle, 'Chartism' in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Alan Shelston (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), p. 229.
[122] Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 115.

and Norman Himes, who use the 'misrepresentations of Malthus's arguments' to ignore or underestimate it.[123]

Hazlitt's preoccupation with Malthus did not diminish over time. Eighteen years later, in the decade marking the zenith of literary confession Hazlitt, chafing from the critical and personal reaction to *Liber Amoris*, returned to his former nemesis, in a series of profiles of distinguished individuals comprising the volume designated *The Spirit of the Age*. In his chapter on the author, 'Mr Malthus', Hazlitt reiterates, via literary allusion to *As You Like It*, some criticism of Malthus: 'the encouragement of friends convinced him that what he had at first exhibited as an idle fancy was in fact a very valuable discovery, or how his *Essay on Population* 'like the toad ugly and venomous had yet a precious jewel in its head.'[124] He also repeats the accusation that Malthus did little more than rehash the ideas of earlier eighteenth-century writers, especially 'a Scotch gentleman of the name of Wallace', from whom he 'found the argument entire (the principle and the application of it) in an obscure and almost forgotten work […] entitled *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature, and Providence*.'[125]

However, in his second major treatment of Malthus, Hazlitt had clearly tempered the register employed when dealing with his subject. The portrait previously created of a once pious and pompous parson had mellowed and been transformed via more reasoned and reasonable prose.[126] Unfortunately, this re-codification of his response to Malthus might, if anything, be

[123] William Price Albrecht, 'Hazlitt and Malthus', *Modern Language Notes*, 40 (1945), 215-226 [accessed 12/6/19]
[124] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age or Contemporary Portraits* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 161.
[125] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 165.
[126] For example, 'Does Mr. Malthus really think that he has such an absolute right and authority over this subject of population that, provided he mentions a principle […] he is at liberty to say that it has or has not had any operation, just as he pleases, and the state of the fact is a matter of perfect indifference.' William Hazlitt, *A*

considered at times too temperate. *The Spirit of the Age* originally appeared without Hazlitt's name attached, as 'anonymity protected publishers and printers from the law of libel.'[127] However, it might be posited why in fact the publisher Henry Colburn bothered with the strategy given Hazlitt's concessionary tenor. For example, the inclusion of conciliatory statements such as 'Mr. Malthus's style is correct and elegant, his tone of controversy mild and gentlemanly; and the care with which he has brought his facts and documents together, deserves the highest praise.'[128] Granted, this might exemplify Kenneth Johnston's assertion in *Unusual Suspects* that Hazlitt wrote 'with the keen sense of a professional man of letters for what he could get away with' and thus avoided the fate of many of Johnston's eponymous figures who incurred the enmity of the British establishment 'for their reformist views, and opposition to [...] unsuccessful and economically disastrous wars against republican France.'[129] This reading underscores Hazlitt's literary and personal survival instinct during the social and political turbulence of the early nineteenth century, thereby ensuring his authorial longevity and freedom. Hazlitt might insist, somewhat disingenuously, when contemplating the lack of development during the course of his career, that:

> What sometimes surprises me [...] is to find myself so little changed in the time. The same images and trains of thoughts stick by me; I have the same tastes, likings, sentiments, and wishes that I had then. [130]

What certainly had changed, however, was Hazlitt's adoption of a more circumspect voice in which to frame his expostulations. Overall, Hazlitt managed to accommodate his discourse within the prevailing cultural hegemony, although not without commination. He was acutely

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Reply to the Essay on Population by the Rev. T. R. Malthus in *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt: A Reply to Malthus, The Spirit of the Age Etc.*, ed. by A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1902), p. 20

[127] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 174.

[128] William Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 175.

[129] Kenneth R. Johnston, *Unusual Suspects: Pitt's reign of Alarm and the Lost Generation of the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. xix. Johnston, with perhaps an undue disregard for modesty, claims his place within a great tradition when referring to his study, *viz*.: 'Only a few other books like this have been written, the masterpiece of the genre being William Hazlitt's *The Spirit of the Age*.'

[130] William Hazlitt, 'A Farewell to Essay Writing' in *The Fight and Other Writings*, p. 540

aware of literary and cultural boundaries, particularly in 1825 after the censor and ridicule he endured as a result of the autobiographical *Liber Amoris* published two years earlier.

Significantly, there are implicit autobiographical references in the 'Mr. Malthus' section of the *Spirit* that suggest Hazlitt has reassessed his perception of libidinous excesses since he asserted in 1807 that 'we can stay our stomachs better than we used to, we do not gorge indiscriminately on every kind of food without taste or decency.'[131] As we shall see in Chapter Three, Hazlitt later suffered ignominy for his portrayal of a determined yet tasteless (and ultimately futile) romantic pursuit of his landlord's daughter Sarah Walker, which is acknowledged obliquely in the *Spirit*. He refers to the possibility that Malthus will 'in all probability go down to posterity with more or less renown or obloquy', a hermeneutical phrase which transcends a simple binary opposite with the ambiguity of the lexical choice of 'renown' and its possible connotations of notoriety.[132] A combination of disrepute and censure ('obloquy') is precisely the fate suffered by Hazlitt, his appraisal of Malthus thus a potential self-referential acknowledgement of the disparagement and slander he experienced as a writer who likewise, according to his detractors, 'dug into the mine of truth, and brought up ore mixed with dross!'[133] That Hazlitt's response to Malthus was dictated as much by personal considerations as direct political antagonism is supported by Dart's analysis. Dart considers that Hazlitt was unable consistently to portray Malthus in the negative manner adopted (say) by Cobbett because Hazlitt, 'despite professing a notional commitment to the classless ideal of the French Revolution […] found it increasingly difficult to transcend his

[131] Hazlitt, *Reply,* p. 59.
[132] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 159.
[133] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 159.

own class bias.[134] Appropriately enough Dart employs the lexis of hesitation and lack of fulfilment, as well as an ominous summation, to emphasise Hazlitt's dilemma:

> Between the popular agitation of William Cobbett and the Christian Toryism of Southey, middle-class republicans like Hazlitt were very uneasily caught. He shared many of their misgivings about Malthus's theory, but was unable to follow either of them to their final destination.[135]

In turn, Hazlitt concedes that Malthus does not exhibit the equivalent impotence and lack of success in his discourse that he experienced with *Liber Amoris*, nor indeed any comparable fragility of ideological commitment as noted by Dart. In a sentence suggesting the frustration at his own unsuccessful literary project *Liber Amoris*, and the romantic disappointment it details, Hazlitt states of Malthus: 'one has not to *beat about the bush* about his talents, his attainments, his vast reputation, and leave off without knowing what it all amounts to.'[136] The choice of lexis, coupling Malthus's literary fecundity with virile consummation of his potential, contrasts with Hazlitt's implied acceptance of his failure as a writer. In his *Reply* to Malthus, Hazlitt desperately attempts to turn his paucity of romantic and sexual (or indeed, asexual) experience to a virtue, taking comfort and relief from the 'agreeable scope to the imagination' provided by female dress, referring significantly to 'counterfeit shapes' and how as a result his 'love was entangled in the folds of the swelling handkerchief'.[137] It is ironically Hazlitt who is guilty of the charge he ultimately levels at Malthus in the *Spirit*, that of lack of potency and feebleness: 'a writer, who shrinks from following up a well-founded principle into its untoward consequences from timidity or false delicacy, is not worthy of the name of a philosopher'.[138] Prophetic words indeed given Hazlitt's lack of financial and critical success with the work he envisioned would finally establish his literary reputation, a

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[134] Dart, p. 160.
[135] Dart, p. 160.
[136] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 159.
[137] Hazlitt, *Reply,* p.101. Hazlitt also remarks 'I never fell in love but once […] It was not a raging heat, a fever in the veins: but it was like a vision […] like thoughts of childhood […] a world that might be.' *Reply*, p. 103.
[138] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, pp. 160-161.

three volume *Life of Napoleon*. In fact, only the first and second volumes appeared during his lifetime (two years before his death in 1830) and the project lost him a considerable amount of money, £200, when his publishers Hunt and Clarke went bankrupt. Moreover, the publication date of 1828 coincided with Wellington's prime ministership, which might have, privately, if not publicly, given Hazlitt even more cause to reflect on the political and military failures of his biographical subject, as well as his own misjudged advocacy of this hugely ambitious yet flawed and thwarted Frenchman. Even the usually sympathetic Wu concedes that for an intended *magnum opus*, 'its reception was underwhelming' and hardly the stuff from which enduring literary legacies are fashioned.[139] Ironically, Hazlitt's literary legacy would remain *Liber Amoris*, due largely to the notoriety surrounding the book.

There are examples of measured criticism in the *Reply* which pre-figure the approach of the *Spirit*. When for instance Hazlitt scrutinises Malthus's logic and finds it wanting. For example, in the first of his tripartite 'Letters' of the *Reply*, Hazlitt questions 'how much of the vice and misery in society is actually owing to human institutions, or the passions, follies […] of human nature, independently of the principle of population.'[140] However, such restrained rhetoric is the exception when considering the text as a whole. The tone overall is mean-spirited and ungenerous, for example when Malthus's theory of the relation between wage rises and increase of provisions for the labouring poor is dismissed as 'miserable quackery' and 'flat nonsense'.[141] Such level of contempt is perhaps hardly surprising given the nature and context of Cobbett's inflammatory journal which, from 1804, had become increasingly critical of government and establishment policy, displaying the ardour and conviction of a convert from Toryism to radicalism. Yet, ironically, Hazlitt weakens his argument by failing

[139] Wu, p. 404.
[140] Hazlitt, *Reply*, p. 67.
[141] Hazlitt, *Reply*, p. 46.

to heed his own advice and advocacy (in quoting Algernon Sydney approvingly) of a 'purity, simplicity and noble dignity' of style.[142] This is not irrelevant merely because the *Reply to the Essay on Population* is deliberately written as the more confrontational piece. Hazlitt, once again, appears to pay little heed to his own counsel from, on this occasion, the essay 'The Fight', an essay which inadvertently delineates the clash of discourse between, and the mutable fortunes of, the two writers.[143]

If this might be regarded as an inappropriate or incongruous citation for a purely literary, and hence essentially more genteel, exchange, then it should be emphasised that it is Hazlitt himself who introduces pugilist imagery into his discussion of Malthus. Commenting on the first edition of the *Essay on Population*, Hazlitt states 'it was well got up for the purpose, and had an immediate effect. It was what in the language of the ring is called *a facer*.'[144] Yet Hazlitt in his earlier essay on boxing had, in a fortuitous parallel, described the manner in which the losing participant, the 'Gas-man', initially entered the ring, comporting himself inappropriately and inviting the charge of hubris. While the eventual victor Neate 'began quietly to undress,' the Gas-man in contrast:

> Came forward with a conscious air of anticipated triumph, too much like the cock-of-the-walk. He strutted about more than became a hero,

[142] Hazlitt, *Reply*, p. 81.
[143] It should be stated in the interests of fairness that the antagonism was (in the public sphere) essentially one-sided, originating from Hazlitt. Malthus's published stance towards his critics appears considerably more sanguine. See for example his 'Note, 1825': 'To return abusive declamation in kind would be as unedifying to the reader as it would be disagreeable to me' in *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. by Donald Winch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 387.
[144] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 161. Emphasis in original. John Whale has commented how boxing in this period 'provides a particularly illuminating indicator of the complex relationships between rank, leisure and competing masculinities as they are determined by national identity.' Furthermore, 'the meaning of boxing […] is necessarily imbricated with other similar and related cultural practices.' See John Whale, 'Daniel Mendoza's Contests of Identity: Masculinity, Ethnicity and Nation in Georgian Prize-fighting', *Romanticism*, 14:3, (2008), 259-271, (259) <https://www.euppublishing.co.> [accessed 28/10/2019]

> sucked oranges with a supercilious air, and threw away the skin with a toss of his head.[145]

Hazlitt was similarly dismissive of his opponent Malthus in the early stages of their comparable learned contest, the opening exchange represented by the 1807 *Reply*. An impartial reader might concur, in a manner similar to the sporting spectacle described in 'The Fight', that 'in the first round every one (*sic*) thought it was all over', with Hazlitt landing the more telling and bruising lexical blows.[146] However, the fortunes of the combatants were reversed over time: 'it was not till the Gas-man was so stunned in the seventeenth or eighteenth round, that his senses forsook him […] and the battle was declared over.'[147] Similarly, Malthus had to wait until 1823 when Hazlitt authorial 'senses forsook him' with the prurient revelations of *Liber Amoris* and the accompanying critical backlash. It was precisely because Hazlitt did not, in Carole R. McCann's formulation, embody 'a specific, exemplary, bourgeois masculinity that tames passion with reasoned self-discipline', as advocated by Malthus, that he was so maligned.[148] In contrast, by this time Malthus was comfortably ensconced in his professorship at Haileybury, giving him the means to 'inculcate his views among those who would propagate them across the Empire', the scholary or literary equivalent, one might say, of a knockout.[149]

The notion of Hazlitt engaging in, or continuing, a fight of a separate nature (yet still relevant to our present discussion) is developed by Wu. He notes that Hazlitt exhibited a desire to attack Malthus because the latter embodied a 'philosophical tradition that saw humanity as selfish, evil, and grasping – the same bogey condemned by (his) father when doing battle

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145 Hazlitt, 'The Fight' in *The Fight and Other Writings*, ed. by Tom Paulin and David Chandler (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 150.
146 Hazlitt, 'The Fight', p. 151. For instance, his rhetorical upper-cut: 'it is not […] my fault that Mr. Malthus has written nonsense, or that others have admired it.' *Reply*, p. 23.
147 Hazlitt, 'The Fight', pp. 152-153.
148 McCann, p.150
149 Wu, p. 116.

with Calvinism.'[150] While the Hazlitt of *Liber Amoris* does, admittedly, little to discredit this notion, it can be argued that Hazlitt's polemics are driven by the rationale that he is continuing and promulgating his Unitarian father's ecclesiastical beliefs as opposed to the Malthusian antagonism towards the patriarchal figure(s) as has been argued here. There is the concomitant reasoning that Hazlitt is over-compensating in his zealous critique of Malthus, that he is conscious of not fulfilling his father's wishes that he should pursue the vocation of minister, for which purpose, after all, he enrolled at Hackney New College. This sense of assuaging guilt is potentially reinforced further in the *Spirit* as Hazlitt makes much of Godwin's fascination with Judge Blackstone's doctrine of lineal consanguinity which stresses the blood ancestry of each individual. No doubt it is astonishing 'to consider the number of lineal ancestors which every man has within no very great number of degrees'.[151] However, perhaps Hazlitt's musings on such geometrical progression does not merit the one-tenth proportion allocated to it in his otherwise limited discourse on *Mr. Malthus*. This apparently otiose exposition might instead represent a strategy on the part of Hazlitt to reassure himself that he is not simply a product of, and hence answerable to, his father, in a symbolic act of familial re-alignment.

Hazlitt in his *Reply* presents a confluence of anti-Malthusian narratives relevant to this patriarchal dialectic. He admonishes Malthus on his hostility towards 'savage tribes', challenging the latter's dismissal of the noble savage ideal together with its anti-Roussean rhetoric, thereby firmly aligning himself with the viewpoint of Daniel Malthus against his recalcitrant son. Hazlitt's peroration is an avowedly personal critique of Malthus junior, a pertinacious rebuttal of the latter's insistence on the 'grossness and inconvenience of the

[150] Wu, p. 115.
[151] Hazlitt, *Spirit*, p. 173.

savage state'.[152] It suggests Hazlitt is assuming the task of rebuking a wayward progeny, with that peculiarly masculine moral authority which combines both condemnation and admissions of fatherly disappointment:

> There is something in this mis-placed and selfish fastidiousness, that shocks me more than the objects of it. It does not lead to compassion but to hatred [...] Aversion too easily changes into malice.[153]

Or in a reversal of roles, it is now, ironically, the confirmed parson who is on the receiving end of the sermon from the abortive minister.

In the same year as the ill-fated *Life of Napoleon* was published, Hazlitt's *Farewell to Essay Writing* appeared in the 'London Weekly Review'. There is the expected note of self-pity and pathos in the opening passage, redolent of *Liber Amoris*, with, for example, the imitative assertion 'I turn back from the world that has deceived me,' alongside would-be stoical expressions of acceptance of personal impotence and failure: 'am I to be always [...] smiling, delighted, at the want of personal success?'[154] The presence of such a commonplace lament, however, belies the significance of this eulogistic text to the present study. Fittingly, Hazlitt anticipates emotional respite and physical relief in the reliable and sustainable practice of self-gratification and, moreover, ultimately through his revelation of this habit to the reader. The conventional written page of biography and journalistic prose has seemingly failed him. As with his unsuccessful love life he is now alone with the symbolic blank handkerchief mentioned in his *Reply*, with little other than the consolation of unhealthy introspection.

[152] Hazlitt, *Reply*, Note 1, p. 44.
[153] Hazlitt, *Reply*, Note 1, p. 44.
[154] Hazlitt, 'A Farewell to Essay Writing', in *The Fight and Other Writings*, p. 537 and p. 541.

In a final act of confession, Hazlitt alludes to a potential strategy to offset the 'present vexation, the future disappointment', namely absorption in other pursuits 'extreme and even morbid, that I have brooded over […] and to which I can scarcely do justice without the utmost violence of exertion'.[155] Significantly, and comparably with Charles Lamb in 'Edax on Appetite' (1811), this would be a solitary vice but one displaying tell-tale signifiers of disclosure that reinforce a private, onanistic nexus of imagery: 'I should retire into myself and perhaps acquire a nervous and uneasy look'.[156] As if to emphasise this baleful condition, Hazlitt concludes his essay with a bathetic statement in which the configurations of poetic romanticism are rendered corporeal with a trope that will constitute a major element in the confessional writing of this investigation. Referring to his perambulations with Charles and Mary Lamb, he writes: 'I used to walk out to look at the Claude Lorraine skies over our heads, melting from azure into purple and gold, and to gather mushrooms […] to throw into our hashed mutton at supper.' Yet, for Hazlitt in public, as well as for Malthus in the more private sphere of his diary entries, such minor pleasures and consolations should perhaps not be readily dismissed. However, for De Quincey, the focus of the next chapter, there is a discernible lack of such understatement, or indeed any form of reservation, in his enthusiastic embracing and promoting of his literary alter-ego, the Opium-Eater. Furthermore, De Quincey's *Confessions* are designed for unrestricted consumption and re-branding and, like the nature of opiate addiction itself, able to both provoke and intrigue his readers.

[155] Hazlitt, 'Farewell', p. 538 and p. 541.
[156] Hazlitt, 'Farewell', p. 541. For a discussion on Lamb's essay, see Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO

THOMAS DE QUINCEY'S OPIUM CONFESSIONS: A SHORT-CUT TO LIFE-_ WRITING

In his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821, revised 1856) Thomas De Quincey presents two key elements of self-writing: namely the author's desire to portray himself as capable of dominating his autobiography and a corresponding fear of insignificance occasioned by his failure to achieve this purpose. The prominence of an author in his autobiography is often explored through strategies of self-expansion and self-containment and both strategies are decisively present in *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater*. An analysis of this approach and its precise methods of literary and linguistic expression will form a significant part of this chapter. This serves to demonstrate that De Quincey's position in relation to his autobiography is rendered ambiguous by his thematic use of opium as the dominant subject-matter of his life. Opium provides a writer with unlimited potential for narrative exploration by virtue of its capacity to induce dreams but simultaneously it closes down more conventional possibilities of expanding a lifework, such as scholarly achievement. Ultimately it incapacitates its user by inducing an 'opiate lethargy.'[1] Moreover, the inherently ephemeral nature of such dreams, the fragility of their recoil as exemplified by Samuel Taylor Coleridge's note to 'Kubla Khan' (1816), may explain De Quincey's recourse to tropes and metaphors of *figurative* expansiveness to compensate for this potential vulnerability.[2] Or, as Julian North suggests of Coleridge, De Quincey is likewise aware of 'the myth of opium's creative potential' and has, at times, to resort to more manufactured literary allusions as a counterweight to the canard.[3] The contradictory and problematic nature of such a discourse revolving around an appetite for opium, reflects a prospective self–doubt within the emergent 1820's confessor: namely whether this constitutes a bona-fide basis for

[1] Frederick Burwick, *Thomas De Quincey: Knowledge and Power* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. xi.
[2] *Kubla Khan: Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment* was completed in 1797 but published 19 years later.
[3] North, 'Opium and the Romantic Imagination', p. 110.

life-writing or if such an assumption is, in fact, like the effect of the drug itself, merely illusory.

De Quincey's literary reliance on opium to fill his *Confessions* has a logical parallel in his fascination with murder, as manifest in, for example, his long essay *On Murder As Considered As One Of The Fine Arts* (1827). Both acts are indicative of a desire to short-cut the usual effort and work required to create, manufacture and sustain a successful and notable (or in the case of the murderer, notorious) life. Furthermore, it will be argued that De Quincey's footnotes and digressions do not represent an afterthought or addendum in his literary methodology and should not be viewed either as stylistic aberrations or mere idiosyncratic irritations. Rather, they provide fundamental and revealing insights into a new reading of De Quincey's autobiographical art.

'A Notice to the Reader' from the *London Magazine* of October 1821 was included in the original August 1822 Taylor and Hessey edition of the text, but omitted from subsequent versions. In it De Quincey provides readers with a foreshadowing of the contorted syntax, obscure allusions and lexical pedantry to which, it appears, he hopes they will become addicted. It is worth quoting from at length in view of the insight it provides into De Quincian discourse:

> The incidents recorded in the Preliminary Confessions, lie within a period of which the earlier extreme is now rather more, and the latter extreme less, than nineteen years ago: consequently, in a popular way of computing dates, many of the incidents might be indifferently referred to a distance of eighteen or of nineteen years; and, as the notes for this narrative were drawn up originally about last Christmas, it seemed most natural in all cases to prefer the former date [...] But in one instance, viz. where the

> author speaks of his own birthday, this adoption of one uniform date has led to a positive inaccuracy of an entire year.[4]

De Quincey deliberately cultivated and crafted his persona in the public's mind as the eccentric Romantic outsider, 'the Opium Eater', encompassing both personal and literary traits. He was in thrall to the image of 'the Opium Eater' more than he was to opium itself or indeed reading, which represented the other great addiction, and expenditure, of his life. One of his modern biographers, Grevel Lindop, mentions De Quincey's desire for attention from an early age - attention which, ominously in light of his future reliance on opium, he realised could be gained from another short-cut source, specifically that of sickness and illness, both genuine and feigned.[5]

This is not to detract from De Quincey's achievements as a writer. He undoubtedly borrowed from, amongst others, his contemporaries and sometimes-friends Wordsworth and Coleridge. North, for instance, notes how even 'the famous apostrophe, 'O! just, subtle and mighty opium!', the rhetorical centrepiece of the *Confessions* […] contains in the space of a single sentence three quotations from Wordsworth.'[6] However, De Quincey was himself in turn equally borrowed from and imitated, providing inspiration to an extraordinary range of writers. Lindop summarises his 'remarkably pervasive' influence: 'a vein of fantasy, introspection and unease tingeing the work of Poe, Stevenson, Dickens, Baudelaire, Proust, Dostoevsky, Burges and many others.'[7] Significantly, the major beneficiary of De Quincey's analysis of dreams, Sigmund Freud, did not acknowledge the extent of his debt despite, for example, De Quincey inventing the term 'sub-conscious'; a Romantic prefiguration of the ubiquitous phrase 'the un-conscious' now associated with Freud. Throughout Freud's writing

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[4] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of An English Opium Eater* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1822).
[5] Grevel Lindop, *The Opium Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Weidenfeld, 1993), p. 4.
[6] North, 'Opium and the Romantic Imagination', p. 113.
[7] Lindop, p. 392.

there is only one passing reference to De Quincey, a mention of the latter's neologism 'anecdotage', in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905). Laura Marcus, referring to Freud's 'notorious predilection for cocaine', reads this strategy as a form of distancing himself from possible identification with the opium-eater.[8] Whilst acknowledging Stephen Greenblatt's contention that psychoanalysis is a product of Renaissance culture, it can be argued that the terms which Greenblatt uses to formulate his argument apply more to De Quincey than Martin Guerre, his mid-sixteenth century case study: 'such articulation of identity as exists occurs in states of self-abandonment - in dreams and parapraxes - and the self seems lost not only to others but to the cunning representations of others within the self.'[9] Indeed, this could serve as a form of delineation of the crises of dislocation and fractured identity embedded within 1820's confessional writing.

De Quincey's opium-based *Confessions* escape the limitations and restrictions necessarily imposed by a conventional life-style by making possible a much more expansive and open-ended form of autobiography. Dreams, imaginary visions and the amplification of imaginative power provide the material for an opening out of repressed (potential) subject matters which otherwise subsist underneath the materials of everyday life. De Quincey in effect admits this, albeit unwittingly, in an addition to his original 1821 preface: 'amongst the most potent of anodynes, we may rank hemlock, henbane, chloroform, and opium. But

[8] Laura Marcus, *Sigmund Freud's the Interpretation of Dreams: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 213-214.
[9] Stephen Greenblatt, *Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture*, in *Learning to Curse: Essays in early modern culture* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 180.

unquestionably the first three have a most narrow field of action, by comparison with opium.'[10]

Here, De Quincey's championing of opium is, ostensibly, to do with its superior properties as an analgesic. However, by the end of this paragraph he is offering more than a hint as to the drug's real appeal: 'what I contemplated in these Confessions was to emblazon the power of opium – not over bodily disease and pain, but over the grander and more shadowy world of dreams.'[11] Dreams, therefore, rather than opium are the defining element in *The Confessions*. This view is further supported by De Quincey's own comment: 'those pompous dreams and dream-scenes which were in reality the true objects - first and last - contemplated in these Confessions.'[12] This suggests that opium represents a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. De Quincey's pedestrian and hence insubstantial explanation regarding what drove him to opium-use, namely 'being suddenly seized with tooth-ache,' pales into insignificance when compared to the rhetoric he employs in lauding the sublime pleasures of opium:

> That my pains had vanished, was now a trifle in my eyes:- this negative effect was swallowed up in the immensity of those positive effects which had opened before me - in the abyss of divine enjoyment thus suddenly revealed. Here was a panacea […] for all human woes: here was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered.[13]

Yet De Quincey's discovery of the physical joys of opium is, ultimately, second only to his joy at the realisation that opium *dreams* contain within them the potential to fill a written 'life.' Frances Wilson comments how De Quincey successfully transformed, or re-cast, an everyday nineteenth century occurrence, the consumption of opium, into a 'personal and

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[10] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater (1856)*, ed. by Grevel Lindop, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey: Vol.2 Confessions of an English Opium-Eater 1821-1856* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 99. Henbane is a toxic plant known also as 'stinking nightshade'.
[11] De Quincey, *Confessions*, p. 99.
[12]De Quincey, *Confessions*, p. 110.
[13] Thomas DeQuincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and Other Writings*, ed. by Robert Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 38 and p. 39.

unique transgression.'[14] Moreover, John Whale hints at the vast potential waiting to be exploited and released, remarking on the opium-induced 'sense of time which operated beyond the normal categories […] and how space and time are both altered by the drug.'[15] In this respect opium is immeasurably superior to wine, providing far greater opportunities in the realm of literary expansiveness. The possibilities, both realised and potential, for expansion is a vital concept present throughout *The Confessions*, often manifest in the form of extended metaphors of multiplication, amplification and repetition. For instance, De Quincey lauds opium thus: 'the expansion of the benigner feelings incident to opium is no febrile access.'[16] Having deliberately appropriated laudanum, the drug previously associated with Coleridge, De Quincey then disdains wine, which in contrast *reduces* the potential to undertake satisfactorily the autobiographer's task: 'the tongue and other organs become unmanageable; the intoxicated man speaks inarticulately; and with regard to certain words, makes efforts ludicrously earnest, yet oftentimes unavailing, to utter them.'[17]

Moreover, wine induces impotence, hence the veiled reference to 'other organs'. Alcohol therefore represents the antithesis of the expansiveness required by De Quincey in his quest to fill-out and fill-up his written 'life.' As Whale remarks, apropos the potential of life-writing, autobiography 'is a means of constantly expanding the depths of personality rather than simply a means of fixing to allow for rational investigation.'[18] De Quincey's constant role-playing and re-invention of himself is a crucial element of his persona, as well as a convenient means of expanding his importance and position within his *Confessions*. The irony, given De Quincey's manipulation of opium in this manner, is that he accuses Coleridge

[14] Wilson, p. 234.
[15] John C. Whale, *Thomas DeQuincey's Reluctant Autobiography* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 70.
[16] DeQuincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 41.
[17] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 222. This assertion would appear to be borne out, at times, by the register employed by Lamb. See Chapter Four.
[18] Whale, p. 61.

of 'pure fabrication of his own dreams', either in a classic example of Freudian projection or, alternatively, narcissistic assertion - as if De Quincey's drug-induced dream narratives must somehow be more genuine than those of his rivals.[19] Indeed, opium dreams are presented as somehow superior to those that have been purely invented - despite the genuine creative process that this would actively involve.

Amplification is a major component of the expansiveness motif present in the *Confessions*, evident in, for example, the following dream description with its suggestion of the sublime: 'buildings, landscapes, etc., 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.'[20] This trope culminates in De Quincey's description of his visit to the Whispering Gallery in St. Paul's Cathedral during July 1800. De Quincey elaborates on the phenomena via the inevitable footnote:

> To those who have never visited the Whispering Gallery […] it may be proper to mention, as the distinguishing feature of the case, that a word or a question uttered at one end of the gallery in the gentlest of whispers, is reverberated at the other end in peals of thunder.[21]

De Quincey's perception of the characteristics of this phenomena reflects contemporary thought, a notion re-enforced by the presentation of the Whispering Gallery's qualities in an 1820 guidebook to St. Paul's, which describes the iron gallery's 'extraordinary reverberation of sound, too generally known to need repetition.'[22] Notably, both De Quincey and the anonymous author of the guidebook employ the same term, 'reverberation, with its suggestion of the power to invoke a physical response. De

[19] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 106.
[20] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 68.
[21] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 156.
[22] *A Popular History and Description of St. Paul's Cathedral with Explanations of the Monumental Designs* (London: John Nichols and Son, 1820), p. 15.

Quincey's overly literal-minded biographer, Lindop, initially insists that: 'De Quincey's account of the Whispering Gallery is wrong. The Gallery does not magnify sounds. It carries them round, with uncanny crispness and clarity, at their original volume.'[23] This, however, is perhaps to miss the point. De Quincey is using his experience of the Gallery metaphorically to emphasise the enormity of his decision to leave school in Manchester, legitimately employing elements of more contemporary mythology which visit him during an open-eyed dream. Thus, the first steps of his departure from school are comparable to 'the softest of whispers' which might, he is all too aware, rebound upon him at the other end of his 'long life-gallery [...] in volleying thunders.'[24] Lindop, admittedly, concedes the following explanation to account for De Quincey's oversight: 'the alteration must have been *unconscious*, for he could hardly have counted on public forgetfulness of a well-known tourist attraction.'[25] The reference to the importance of the unconscious is revealing, perhaps offering an explanation as to why De Quincey might view this as a metaphor of amplification when, in reality and literally, it isn't. This may represent further evidence or manifestation of his unconscious desires; as indeed, according to Freud, is the role fulfilled by dreams.

Alethea Hayter identifies an incident two years later in which she sees De Quincey's anxiety about the future manifest itself in similar form. Temporarily lodged in an inn ball-room at Shrewsbury, while waiting for the Holyhead night-mail during a storm, De Quincey contemplates the room with an increasing sense of dread as the 'unusual altitude, and the echoing hollowness' threw him 'into the deadliest condition of nervous emotion'.[26] Once again, 'the terror of an irrevocable decision came upon him [...] and

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[23] Lindop, p. 35.
[24] De Quincey, 2016, p. 156.
[25] Lindop, p. 35.
[26] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 193.

fixed the symbolic link between a huge building and a fatal choice.'[27] What is then explained away by Hayter as the product of opium-induced, over-imagination may, given the present argument, be seen as having a more metaphysical cause, namely De Quincey's fear of his inability to achieve sufficient expansiveness and a corresponding sense of insignificance, which would then be mirrored by a lack of dominating presence within his *Confessions*.

Edmund Baxter, who refers tellingly to 'De Quincey's strategies of self-preservation', summarises neatly the relationship between the *Confessions* and its author, whereby the latter, due to an inherent existential uncertainty, is unclear as to his status within the text, thereby exposing, in the process, the conflict at the heart of all autobiography, if not all literary writing:

> Like the autobiographical text, which seems to De Quincey to require amplification and modification, the self always needs something more, another figure which might allow it to function despite its untenable nature. The text of the *Confessions* is itself such a figure (a figure of work); De Quincey as a reviser is another, as is the analogous figure of the reader. In short, what is required is a compensatory figure, the function of which is to interpret the self properly, a creditor of some sort to provide it with some *vital property*.[28]

The notion of whispering can be seen as constituting an important aspect of De Quincey's personal mythology, as well as reflecting the religious connotations of 'confession' which, after all, is a quiet, subdued act. The significance of whispering is also central to the current thesis, in that a fundamentally private act becomes potentially available within the public arena via the publication of written confessions. What ought to be whispered is, in effect, given a clarity, voice and audience in the 1820s which it did not possess before.

[27] Aletha Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 247.
[28] Baxter, p. 31. Emphasis in the original

Whispering is mentioned extensively not just in the *Confessions* but also in *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827) and *The English Mail Coach* (1849). De Quincey, surely, wishes the impact of his own writing to have a similar resonance and redemptive power, with longevity so as to reverberate down the centuries, comparable to that effect produced by the Whispering Gallery (whether actual or fictitious is extraneous.) As if to cement the connection, he even associates the term 'whispering' with a flattering image of himself in the mind's eye of his reader:

> If the public (into whose private ear I am confidently whispering my Confessions,[…]) should chance to have framed some agreeable picture for itself of the Opium-eater's exterior – should have ascribed to him, romantically, an elegant person or a handsome face – why should I barbarously tear from it so pleasing a delusion? [...] pleasing both to the public and to me.[29]

The enclosure of the expression 'into whose private ear I am confidently whispering my Confessions' within auricular parenthesis in itself represents a form of commentary on, and awareness of, the textual confessional process.

The potential strength and potency of a whisper is likewise highlighted in the *Postscript to On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts* (1854). The reference here is to the murderer, John Williams, hiding in his victim's house:

> As the Alpine avalanches, when suspended above the traveller's head, oftentimes (we are told) come down through the stirring of the air by a simple whisper, precisely on such a tenure of a whisper was now suspended the murderous malice of the man below.[30]

The association between the creative process and the 'art' of whispering is not only made through similar metaphors of amplification but further suggested by the

[29] De Quincey, *Confessions* 2013, p. 61.
[30] De Quincey, *Postscript to On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Art*s, in *On Murder*, ed. by Robert Morrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 126.

preponderance of alliteration and sibilance in this passage, devices by which writing can be made deliberately to draw attention to itself and the process of its creation. De Quincey perhaps acknowledges the link with some sense of trepidation, as he is well aware that excessive use of one literary tool in particular (alliteration) is a linguistic trademark which might easily alienate some readers. He offers his readers of the *Confessions* the following footnote as an apology:

> Some people are irritated, or even fancy themselves insulted, by overt acts of alliteration, as many people are by puns. On their account, let me say, that, although there are here eight separate f's in less than half a sentence, this is to be held as pure accident. In fact, at one time there were 9 fs in the original cast of the sentence, until I, in pity of the affronted people, substituted *female agent* for *female friend.*[31]

The irony here, of course, is that this piece of apologia and generous concession demonstrates a further example of his amplification technique. Therefore, there is also the danger that De Quincey will merely alienate his readers even more. Likewise, the ploy of adopting the character of 'the Opium-Eater' as literary persona is potentially fraught with difficulties as his drug abuse, or mis-use, invites the charge of the unreliable narrator for a genre (autobiography) that is expected to be essentially truthful and revealing.

An equally problematic outcome results from the whisper in *The English Mail Coach* as the horses take fright in a portent of doom signalling the approach of another carriage:

> A whisper it was – a whisper from, perhaps, four miles off - secretly announcing a ruin that, being forseen, was not the less inevitable. What could be done - who was it that could do it - to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses? What! Could I not seize the reins from the grasp of the slumbering coachman? You, reader, think that it would have been in *your* power to do so.[32]

[31] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 167.
[32] De Quincey, *The English Mail Coach*, ed. by Morrison 2013, p. 209. Emphasis in the original.

The whispering-as-writing metaphor is especially powerful here given the reproachful direct address to the reader, in addition to De Quincey's status as being hopelessly at the mercy of unalterable forces. Moreover, the ominous outcome looming ahead potentially reflects just how precarious De Quincey, at one level, considers his literary status to be. Perhaps De Quincey, in this instance, anticipates and interprets the notion of the 'death of the author' rather too literally. In that eponymous essay Roland Barthes does refer to Marcel Proust, who, in a strategy reminiscent of De Quincey's creation of the character of the opium-eater:

> Was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring […] the relation of the writer and his characters […] instead of putting his life into his novel, as is so often maintained, he made of his very life a work for which his own book was the model.[33]

The Confessions abounds with examples of amplification designed literally to expand the text: such as footnotes and footnotes to footnotes, unnecessary or at least questionable digressions, and anecdotes. This has lead Levin to comment tellingly: 'for De Quincey, digression is confession […] The discourses of utilitarianism, various religions, science, imperialism, dreaming and scholarship collide and jockey for position.'[34]

This ploy, of utilising numerous footnotes to expand his *Confessions*, has already been adopted by the second page of the original 1821 edition. Even the text's full title constitutes something of a mouthful – *The Confessions of An English Opium Eater: Being An Extract from the Life of a Scholar.* Furthermore, the inclusion of this quintessentially academic practice of footnotes partly justifies De Quincey's claim that his *Confessions* represent, in form at least, a 'scholarly extract'. Furthermore, the

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[33] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' trans. by Stephen Heath in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Harper Collins 1977), p. 144.

[34] Levin, p. 36.

narrative also expands metaphorically: dreams, as we have noted, have unlimited potential in this respect for exposition, recitation and interpretation. The inclusion of footnotes may reflect more than textual ballast or pretensions to academic *gravitas*. The footnotes provide relief from, as well as a commentary on, the main literary text, a distraction from the effort required to engage with the more demanding mode of confessions (and at times De Quincey's idiosyncratic style), compared to a more conventional fictional narrative.[35] The presence of this strategy is the *reader's* opiate; deconstructive and liberating, yet potentially addictive as the desire to follow the digression of the footnote threatens to undermine interest in the main textual exposition itself. Fittingly, the dose increases as the reader's tolerance strengthens, with the number of footnotes multiplying fivefold between the 1821 and 1856 editions.

Therefore, it is De Quincey's initial grandiose and heightened vision which establishes the tone for the remainder of his text. In the first page of the *Confessions* he makes reference to opium's 'treacherous disguises' under which 'multitudes are seduced into a dependency which they had not forseen upon a drug which they had not known.'[36] At the risk of attributing purely selfish motives to De Quincey, there is the possibility that, contained within the moral outrage, there exists recognition of a vast, readily available, potential readership. De Quincey's intention, after all, could be regarded as an attempt to 'seduce' his audience into a dependency on a habit no less additive than the actual drug itself: namely reading. Or, more specifically, reading about *his* opium addiction and

[35] In his 'Prefatory Notice' to the 1856 edition of the *Confessions*, De Quincey concedes the stylistic faults in the 1821 version, acknowledging that at times 'a heavy or too intricate arrangement of sentences may have defeated the tendency of what […] would have been affecting', p. 101.
[36] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 103.

dreams. It is, therefore, not just the purveyors of 'lozenges […] for the relief of pulmonary affections' who are guilty of the 'misleadings of mercenary fraud.'[37]

De Quincey, ironically, stands damned by his own accusation, particularly given the precept that he exploits opium to avoid, or evade, having to compile a more conventional life account, with the concomitant risk of greater public indifference to a less sensational written or lived life. For good measure, De Quincey not only includes dream-descriptions of Rome, Lebanon, China and 'Hindustan' but fills his text with episodes and figures from classical reading; some of which, he insists, could have improved the 'dreamy expanse of whitewashed walls' in his schoolroom.[38] Here De Quincey, by expressing such personal preference, is not evoking the precursor of autobiography, namely 'memoirs', which according to Marcus 'offer only an anecdotal depiction of people and events.'[39] Rather, De Quincey's instinct, it would appear, is to fill-up or complete any gap, whether actually physically existing or potentially present within his writing. He duly obliges, addressing both problems in the process: 'the naked walls clamoured for decoration: and how easily might tablets have been moulded - exhibiting (as a first homage to literature) Athens, with the wisdom of Athens, in the person of Pisistratus […] sad Electra's poet.'[40]

Expansion and expansiveness are key motifs throughout the *Confessions*, with De Quincey employing these tropes in an effort to offset the possibility of his transitory and insubstantial - for the purpose of sustaining a written life - drug-induced reveries. As a pioneer of the new mode of secular confession, De Quincey appears uncertain about his

[37] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 103.
[38] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 120.
[39] Marcus, p. 3.
[40] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 121.

subject matter in this respect. Hence, the 1856 revised edition of the *Confessions* is developed in the format of a more conventional written life, rather than via magnified or more numerous descriptions of the realm of opium dreams. For example, the section from the 1821 text, 'The Pleasures of Opium', and the passage entitled 'Introduction to the Pains of Opium' were barely revised, despite the text overall increasing from 40,000 to 80,000 words.[41] The reader is left, therefore, with the impression that while the later edition has indeed swollen significantly, the opium element has, paradoxically, become diminished.

De Quincey's uncertainty about his chosen topic is further evident from the numerous occasions on which the image of expansiveness is evoked either directly or via a plethora of related cultural, literary and historical symbols, tropes and metaphors; all of which, of course, result in the actual, literal expansion of the text itself. There is the possibility that this desire, ever-present within the *Confessions*, could be interpreted in terms of another (in this case psychoanalytical) theory of compensatory device; a response to De Quincey's lack of physical stature. Measuring four foot, eleven inches, it was often an obvious target for scorn. For example, the 'dwarf Opium Eater' was the unflattering and unkindly title ascribed him by Thomas Carlyle.[42]

How De Quincey methodically goes about the *literal* process of expanding his text can best be illustrated by a superficially minor incident from *The Confessions*. It is innocuous in itself but, ultimately, extremely revealing as De Quincey over-reacts to an imaginary wrong inflicted on him by the Bishop of Bangor. This gentleman has merely and, as De Quincey himself admits 'reasonably', counselled the latter's landlady to be

[41] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, pp. 93-94.
[42] Lindop, p. 272.

wary of travellers on the Holyhead Road. De Quincey then proceeds to use this pretend slight as a justification for several pages of meditation on who is potentially the better Greek scholar (the Bishop is also head of Brasenose College, Oxford) in which he fantasises about sending the Bishop a letter written in classical tongue. This culminates in the following lengthy and entirely fanciful reflection:

> On receiving, therefore, my Greek remonstrance, he was sure to have taken some interest in the writer; and he was too equitable to have neglected any statement, Greek or not Greek, which reflected, with some apparent justice, upon his own conduct as not sufficiently considerate. He would, therefore, almost certainly have replied to me in courteous terms; regretting the accident which had made me houseless; but reminding me that all communications made to a dependent within a man's own gate, and never meant as grounds of action, but simply as cautions - general and not special - are in law and usage held to be privileged communications, and equally whether written or spoken.[43]

There are also issues of social class at play here. De Quincey may be regarded as the epitome of the Romantic outsider, but he is one who is acutely aware of his own precarious social position and constantly engaged is shoring up his fragile status. There is, for instance, his unashamed habit of name-dropping, of both people and fashionable places:

> I wrote, therefore, to the only confidential friend that I had - viz., Lady Carbery. Originally, as early friends of my mother's, both she and Lord Carbery had distinguished me at Bath and elsewhere, for some years, by flattering attentions.[44]

There is also a whole appendix to *The Confessions* devoted to the etymology of his family name. Despite being born plain "Quincey", the "De" was added by his mother in a shift of nomenclature similar to Daniel Defoe, adopted to sound more aristocratic.

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[43] DeQuincey, *Confession*s, 2016, pp. 178-179.

[44] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 144. 1821 version refers only to a 'woman of high rank'. This subsequent naming may simply represent a disregard of etiquette from a safe historical distance. More likely, it reflects an ageing De Quincey's desperate desire to shore up his precarious social position.

Significantly, when his mother reverted to plain ‘Quincey’ in 1806, ‘Thomas retained the pseudonymous particle ‘De’’.[45]

Thus De Quincey the gentleman is unlikely to be enamoured by the prospect of his landlady getting the better of him or indeed considering herself, albeit through her ecclesiastic connections, his social superior. But the crucial point, which goes almost unnoticed, is that the whole episode is a fanciful and fictitious extrapolation. It is pure invention, which De Quincey expands even further, to the extent of concocting an imaginary ‘resolution’ as ludicrous as it is propitious: ‘he (the Bishop) would have had it abundantly in his power to place the ordinary college advantages of Fellowships, etc, within my reach’. (This, ironically, from a writer who had previously fled from Oxford after the first day of his Finals.) Given, he does ultimately concede, ‘all this, however, was thrown into the world of dreams and fables’, but the admission is too little too late for the increasingly bewildered reader.[46]

In his *Second Paper on Murder as a Fine Art* (1839) De Quincey mentions the work of an obscure French philosopher and theologian, Marin Mersenne’s *Commentary on Genesis*, which he insists in including in a laboured parody of a speech debating the merits of various weapons for committing murder or ‘tooling’:

> Father Mersenne, that learned Roman Catholic, in page one thousand four hundred and thirty-one […] mentions, on the authority of several Rabbis, that the quarrel of Cain with Abel was about a young woman; that, by various accounts, Cain had tooled with his teeth, […] by many others, with the jaw-bone of an ass; which is the tooling adopted by most painters. But it is pleasing to the mind of sensibility to know that, as science expanded, sounder views were adopted. One author contends for a pitchfork, St Chrysostom for a sword, Irenaeus for a scythe and Prudentius for a hedging-bill.[47]

[45] Wilson, p. 66.
[46] De Quincey, *Confessions*, (2016), p. 179.
[47] DeQuincey, *Second Paper On Murder Considered As One of the Fine Arts*, ed. by Morrison (2006), p. 91.

It is significant that in the inevitable accompanying footnote, one point De Quincey insists he is *not* satirising is the extent of the voluminous text he is quoting from: 'page one thousand four hundred and thirty-one - *literally*, good reader, and no joke at all.'[48] His engagement with humour, which here encompasses a discussion on the motive and weapon of choice of the first murderer, Cain, stops short at the mention of the length of a work of theology. His direct address to the 'good reader' would suggest that he is being sincere rather than ironic in his admiration for the text's length. After all, the continually impoverished De Quincey would not deliberately wish to alienate or antagonise his sole source of livelihood. So, Biblical fratricide is considered fair-game but ridiculing what inspires genuine awe in the less-than-prolific De Quincey is another thing entirely.

Mocking something which he aspires to achieve would, one suspects, constitute in De Quincey's eyes the real taboo, despite his intention to achieve his lengthy text via opium dreams rather than hard work or study. Crucially, he refers to Mersenne's text as 'operose'- meaning 'industrious'. Certainly, De Quincey never completed what he wanted to be remembered as his *magnum opus*, *Suspiria De Profundis*, which eventually comprised a mere fragment of autobiography. James Olney's maxim that autobiography is 'endless [...] by its nature' has never been so apt as when applied to De Quincey although, perhaps, not quite in the way that Olney imagined.[49]

There is, therefore, a downside to the autobiographer who wishes to exploit the potential of opium for his own, literary, purpose. That is: the opening up of a new life through the use of opium simultaneously destroys, or closes, the previous possibilities. In the case of

[48] Emphasis in the original
[49] J. Olney, *Autobiography and the Cultural Moment: A Thematic, Historical and Bibliographical Introduction* in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. by J. Olney (Princetown and Guildford: Princetown University Press, 1980), p. 25.

De Quincey, those previous possibilities are centred on his ability as a scholar. De Quincey raises this question of his academic potential early on in *The Confessions*. He explains how his proficiency in Greek was recognised by his headmaster at Manchester Grammar School, Mr Lawson. Furthermore, he is at pains to emphasise that his prowess is a result of innate ability rather than classroom cramming:

> The *command* over a language, the power of adapting it plastically to the expression of your own thoughts, is almost exclusively a gift of nature […] I succeeded and beyond my expectation. For once - being the first time that he had been known to do such a thing, but also the very last - Mr. Lawson did absolutely pay me a compliment. And with another compliment more than verbal he crowned his gracious condescensions - viz. with my provisional instalment in his highest class.[50]

The young De Quincey immediately justifies his headmaster's faith in moving him, and his presence in 'the supreme place' of highest classics set is confirmed. Yet, while this role of schoolboy prodigy is carefully cultivated here, it would be ungenerous to dismiss it, as Whale does, as a 'scholary pose.'[51] As with other aspects of his life, De Quincey's deficiency lay in his lack of application rather than paucity of ability. Lindop comments how:

> At Oxford, having performed better on his oral examination than anyone else within the recent memory of his examiners, he refused to submit to a second day of testing and cost himself the degree. He had, however, good reason to regard himself as a more thorough master of classical languages through his own study of literature than most of those who had gone further than he in supervised study.[52]

Perhaps De Quincey's decision to subtitle his *Confessions*, *Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*, is significant in that it represents wishful thinking: an acknowledgement of missed opportunities sacrificed to his appetite for opium, all the more poignant for its resolute, yet understated, note of defiance. The terms in which De

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[50] DeQuincey, *Confessions*, 2016, pp. 127-128.
[51] Whale, p. 200.
[52] Lindop, p. 25.

Quincey refers to his last day at Manchester Grammar School are highly appropriate given this context: 'Prayers had finished. The school had dissolved itself. Six o'clock came, seven, eight. By three hours nearer stood the dying day to its departure. By three hours nearer, therefore stood we to that darkness.'[53]

The bleak tone is created by both the use of the passive tense and the alliterative, plosive, lexicon of death ('dissolved', 'dying'); together with the symbolism of finished, yet possibly unanswered, prayers. Moreover, it is heightened by De Quincey referring to 'darkness': that is, metaphorical darkness in the sense that his flight from school leads ultimately to his opium-addiction, and represents the first ominous step in that direction. 'We', the reader as much as De Quincey himself, are denied the 'illumination' potentially provided by De Quincey the outstanding classical academic and have to make do, in its place, with the compensatory light cast on the somewhat shadowier world of the opium-eater. That this is considered, at least by De Quincey himself, to be a less prestigious and welcome outcome, and one from whose consequence he can never escape, is suggested by the continual employment of the 'darkness' motif throughout the text. De Quincey attributes his decision to elope from Manchester as down to 'some dark oracular legislation external to myself.'[54] Moreover, he states explicitly and with an emphasis via personification, which should leave the reader in no doubt as to the profound association of the term 'darkness', 'these great powers, Night and Darkness, that belong to aboriginal Chaos, were representative of the perils that continually menace poor afflicted human nature.'[55]

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[53] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 154.
[54] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 143.
[55] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 153.

Later, a pleasant day in Wales is threatened by ‘the darkness that was hurrying to swallow up its beauty’ and which, significantly, provides De Quincey with the ‘very language of resignation’ in order to delineate his experience. The figurative darkness which opened up after he originally abandoned his studies continues to haunt him. Susan Egan draws a parallel between De Quincey’s leaving school and an equivalent pivotal moment, similar to an epiphany, in Rousseau’s *Confessions*: his abandonment aged sixteen outside the city gates of Geneva:

> When I was twenty paces away I saw them raise the first bridge. I trembled as I watched its dreadful horns rising in the air, a sinister and fatal augery of the inevitable fate which from that moment awaited me […] There and then I decided never to return to my master.[56]

De Quincey had certainly read Rousseau’s *Confessions*. In his preface, ‘To The Reader’, from the 1821 edition of *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, he refers to those ‘acts of gratuitous self-humiliation’ present in French literature, noting that nothing ‘is more revolting to English feelings, than the spectacle of a human being obtruding on our notice his moral ulcers, or scars.’[57] Moreover, in an essay entitled ‘Modern Superstition’, published in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* in April 1840, he sneers at the French philosopher’s lack of sophistry in taking a ‘shy’ at a tree to determine whether or not he was damned: ‘a mode of questioning the oracles of darkness’ which suggests ‘extravagant silliness.’[58] Yet the similarity between the two writers is striking: in both cases the literal closing of the doors is considered prophetic, invoking metaphorical, even biblical, consequences with De Quincey in particular suffering repercussions of a distinctly religious/Christian nature: ‘a slight mistake can be turned into a monstrous sin by simple equation with the fall of man […] forcing him to accept the inevitable

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[56] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, trans. by J. M. Cohen, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1953), p. 49.
[57] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 4. Morrison has no doubt that this is a reference to Rousseau. See *Explanatory Notes*, p. 262.
[58] Thomas De Quincey, ‘Modern Superstition’, Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, 47 [1840], 562-574 (563) <http://babelhathitrust.org> [accessed 28/19/2019]

consequence of his loss of innocence and leave Eden behind him forever.'[59] That the symbolic 'Eden' is representative of a narrative De Quincey could at least partially substantiate, his prowess as a classical scholar, adds to the poignancy and intensity of his departure. Thus, another facet of the De Quincey mythos is created.

However, this is not to say that De Quincey's new-found cause and enterprise is entirely without hope. Unlike Greek scholarship, the creative potential for opium dreams is unlimited, enabling De Quincey to achieve a vast range of experience. For example, the dreams which transport him to China, Egypt and 'through all the forests of Asia' are comparable with the work of travel and exploration which he purchases as a child.[60] This work, mentioned in *Suspiria De Profundis*, dealing with a 'vast body of voyages' appears to De Quincey as an ever-increasing number of volumes and is described as being 'indefinite as to its ultimate extent.'[61] Opium dreams hold a similar potential for imaginative travel, as De Quincey recounts how, in his reveries, he journeyed throughout Asia and parts of Africa. Therefore De Quincey's description of the history of navigation as tending 'to infinity' can also be applied to the nature of his dreams which open up the possibility of travelling through space and time.

The imaginative, energising, potential of opium is further explored when it leads De Quincey like fawns 'that have run before some mounted hunter for many a league, until they have tempted him far into the mazes of a boundless forest'. Just as the landscape is described in terms of unseen boundaries, the possibilities of opium are presented as

[59] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 16.
[60] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 73.
[61] Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria De Profundis* ed. by Morrison, 2013, p. 123.

continuing indefinitely. Indeed, they continue beyond the range of human perception since the fawns 'suddenly vanished; leaving the man utterly bewildered'.[62]

In *Suspiria De Profundis*, there is an enhanced suggestion of opium as elusive, yet increasing the possibilities for expansion and use within a life to an infinite range. Yet, the accompanying difficulty of translating this dream-potential in to sufficiently adept *written* material appears to be only fully acknowledged by De Quincey in 1845, rather than in his 1821 *Confessions*.

> During this third prostration before the dark idol, and after some years, new and monstrous phenomena began slowly to arise. For a time these were neglected as accidents or palliated by such remedies as I knew of. But when I could no longer conceal from myself that these dreadful symptoms were moving forward forever, by a pace steadily, solemnly, and equably increasing I endeavoured, with some feeling of panic, for a third time to retrace my steps.[63]

Moreover, the evocation of the elusive nature of opium is reflected in the constantly changing image which dominates one of his opium dreams:

> The waters now changed their character – from translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now came a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself slowly like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact; it never left me until the winding up of my case. Hitherto the human face had often mixed in my dreams, but not despotically nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. [64]

Significantly, this is the second occasion on which de Quincey employs the language of self-reflexivity ('began to unfold itself') to signify critical or momentous circumstances over which he feels powerless.[65] For De Quincey, the image is gradually altering and therefore it is difficult for him to receive any single likeness which can be fully

[62] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 242.
[63] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 83.
[64] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 71.
[65] De Quincey refers to his last day at Manchester Grammar School thus: 'the school had dissolved itself.' See page 12 of this chapter.

comprehended or grasped. In this passage the water at first provides a 'mirror' which presumably reflects De Quincey himself. In expansion, the water takes on an autonomy which in unfolding *itself*, submerges the reflected face of De Quincey beneath a plethora of opening, expanding and generalised forms of the 'human face' in general. It is as if 'self' in this passage has both the autonomy and multiplicity of generative possibility that renders it quite 'other' than the self conventionally reflected in the mirror. De Quincey, in turn, then reflects this in the prose which he then 'unfolds' to the reader through the development of a sequence of images which cover both space and time: 'faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries'.

The sense of regret and resignation that occurs throughout *The Confessions* is epitomised by the evasive figure of Ann, the London prostitute who also embodies the paradox inherent within De Quincey's writing. Ann is credited by De Quincey with saving him from death, yet in return he is unable to rescue, or even locate, her. De Quincey considers that some part of his London life, and particularly his search for Ann, might be 'answerable' for this proliferating image of a human face: 'I suppose that, in the literal and unrhetorical use of the word myriad, I must, on my different visits to London, have looked into many myriads of female faces, in the hope of meeting Ann.' De Quincey's search for Ann has potential for filling out his autobiography in the possibilities of pacing the 'never-ending' terraces of the capital. De Quincey remarks that perhaps he and Ann were: 'within a few feet of each other – a barrier no wider, in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity!'[66] This indicates that the theme of searching for an elusive figure has endless potential and is indeed unbounded. This is

[66] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 35. Etymologically, the word 'myriad' derives from the Ancient Greek *myrias* meaning ten thousand. Therefore it would appear that, despite his protestations, De Quincey is, after all, using the term figuratively.

perhaps why De Quincey acknowledges the importance of the role played by 'Ann the Outcast' as a subject of his *Confessions*. Furthermore, in his *Prefatory Notice* to the 1856 edition of *The Confessions*, he admits that her case:

> Formed 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 re-moulded, composed and decomposed – the great body of opium dreams.[67]

Here, the language employed supports Barrett J. Mitchell's contention that in his portrayal of a prostitute 'buried in the working environment' of London, De Quincey does indeed 'strengthen the links between the capital and the grave.'[68] Yet, paradoxically, Ann is also a liberating figure legitimising De Quincey's expansive wanderings and, moreover, validating the text's more literal claim to the status of a 'Confession.' Ann appears in the role of the 'interceding, redemptive Madonna' and De Quincey stresses how she 'stretched out a saving hand' to him with an 'instantaneous power of restoration.'[69] De Quincey then wishes to bestow his 'benediction' on the girl. Fittingly, De Quincey eulogises Ann in terms unparalleled in the text:

> 'O noble-minded Ann -, with that order of women; let me find, if it be possible, some gentler name to designate the condition of her to whose bounty and compassion – ministering to my necessities when all the world stood aloof from me – I owe it that I am at this time alive.'[70]

The question of whether Ann of Oxford Street is a fiction or a 'personification synthesising De Quincey's observations of various young street walkers […] (or) factually true' is largely irrelevant.[71] Indeed, there may be an element of ruse here with De Quincey wishing his readers to be pre-occupied with this narrative red-herring while, in his own way, leading *them* on a similarly fruitless quest to fill up his *Confessions*.

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[67] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 102.
[68] Barrett J. Mitchell, *Full of Life Now* in ed. by Olney, p. 61.
[69] Egan, p.181 and De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 23.
[70] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 22.
[71] Lindop, p.87.

And, crucially, it should therefore come as little surprise that De Quincey's superficially romantic love of wandering needs to be accompanied by a proviso, of sorts. Lindop, perhaps naively, discerns in this character trait an admirable 'assertion of freedom.'[72] Freedom, no doubt; but freedom from what exactly? De Quincey is keen to enlist the aid of travel metaphors when referring to his opium-induced confessional journey ('we are embarked in the self-same boat'), yet it seems that the 'freedom' he so ardently desires and values on his travels is primarily a freedom from, and without, responsibility: 'here was the eternal motion of winds and rivers, or of the wandering Jew liberated from the persecution which compelled him to move […] Happier life I cannot imagine, than this vagrancy, if the weather were but tolerable'.[73] Essentially his wanderings release him from the painful necessity of facing up to the demands of a conventional life and responsibilities, just as his confessional opium *wonderings* are a license to expand and extend his narrative freely with minimal creative authorial exertion.

De Quincey's concern for the limitless includes a penchant for vast landscapes and vistas, into which he can fulfil his desire for both imaginative and literary expansion. He states tellingly: 'I have always found it easier to think over a matter of perplexity whilst walking in wide open spaces, under the broad eye of the natural heavens.'[74] De Quincey's fascination both reflects and transcends the Romantic notion of the sublime as 'that power in nature and art which inspires awe and deep emotion and which is manifest in grand and wild natural scenes.'[75] Therefore De Quincey embraces such imaginative and geographical landscapes and can contemplate the possibility of filling up his textual life, as regards himself, as the vast I (or 'broad eye') of autobiography. This is re-

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[72] Lindop, p.190.
[73] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 125.
[74] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, pp. 161-162.
[75] Aidan Day, *Romanticism*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 49.

emphasised later when he notes: 'the clouds by which chiefly the eye expounds the distance of the blue pavilion stretched over our heads are in summer more voluminous, more massed, and are accumulated in far grander and more towering piles.'[76] There is an implied link here between the clouds which the 'eye expounds' and the interpretation of the subject's opium induced dreams. This suggests that De Quincey's opium dreams contain a similar potential for accumulating 'towering piles,' particularly as the adjective 'voluminous' evokes the image of volumes of autobiography, while the term 'expound' likewise has connotations of spoken or written discourse. Thus the literariness of the language deliberately resonates with the message tacitly contained within the passage.

Yet, it is his perspective on nature which is frequently enlisted in De Quincey's attempts to expand his *Confessions*. Following on from the above passage is a particularly relevant example. De Quincey states that he descended 'into some obscure lane' that brought him 'gradually to the banks of the river Dee', continuing 'on the right hand of the river runs an artificial mound, called the Cop.'[77] The juxtaposition of the natural and artificial here suggests the interplay and conflict between the forces present in De Quincey's authorial drive, namely the 'purity' of the natural, drugless act of creative writing and the lure of (the ultimately less-demanding) opium-induced dreams which can supplant and replace this effort. De Quincey's utilisation of footnotes can be seen as almost a form of compromise between the two, being pedestrian and explanatory rather than creative, and here he exploits the opportunity to ponder, in a footnote characteristically lacking in brevity, which bank is, in fact, the right and which is the left, a conundrum which he significantly admits has possibilities '*without end.*'[78] He is satisfied, however, with 'merely' giving the conventional military, philosophic,

[76] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 74.
[77] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 162.
[78] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 162. My emphasis.

geographic and historic opinion, ostensibly to elucidate the reader, whilst serving the pragmatic purpose of conveniently elongating his text. Like the use of opium itself, De Quincey is re-working the everyday aspects of his life into something extra-ordinary. He transforms, or indeed revolutionises, aspects of the mundane by incorporating them into his personal mythology.

Moreover, De Quincey is either oblivious to, or unconcerned with, the irony of re-modelling his *Original Preface* (another strategy of expansion which he freely concedes to doing) and then continuing to retain the title for use in the 1856 edition. For good measure, and no doubt to extend its length, he also included an additional *Prefatory Note* in the later edition. Indeed, the amount of detail provided by the four new footnotes almost threatens to undermine the impact of the *Preface* itself, particularly as they unwittingly provide a more valuable insight into De Quincey's personality, as opposed to authorial persona, than the *faux* humility of the carefully crafted opening declaration:

> I here present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period of my life; and according to my application of it, I trust that it will prove, not merely an interesting record, but, in a considerable degree instructive. In *that* hope it is that I have drawn it up.[79]

It would seem instructive and appropriate to the present thesis to comment upon the proliferation of punctuation and subordinate clauses, which might not simply reflect the influence of Latinate syntactical practice on De Quincey's style but also conveniently elongate and extend what is, after all, a rather conventional introductory remark. Granted, the punctuation might constitute one of the few occasions when De Quincey, ironically, was at the mercy of his printers (rather than the other way round) and the requirements of their house style. William St Clair has highlighted how printers in the

[79] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 3.

early nineteenth century were ‘the final authority on spelling and punctuation, and often made changes without the author’s consent.’[80] Ultimately, as Jerome J McGann has demonstrated in relation to Bryon’s verse, a text ‘always comprehends a larger scriptural territory, one which is bibliographically (as well as linguistically) encoded’ and therefore meaning (as in this instance) is affected through its form of transmission and resulting incarnations.[81]

Notions of expansion give rise to parallel images of restraint. De Quincey’s fear of containment is realised in one opium-induced instance when he is buried ‘in the depths of the mountains’ in Wales, and the theme re-occurs within his dreams in which he envisages himself buried at the ‘heart of eternal pyramids’.[82] De Quincey’s anxiety concerning being buried and obscured is understandable in view of his personal experience of the little girl kept below stairs at Mr Brunell’s house, described in the *Confessions*. Brunell is an attorney whom De Quincey uses as an intermediate for negotiations with a money-lender and, in a manner reminiscent of his own nomenclatural machinations and indeterminate status:

> Called himself, on most days of the week, by the name of Brunell, but occasionally […] by the more common name of Brown. Mr. Brunell-Brown, or Brown-Brunell, had located his hearth (if ever he possessed one), and his household goods (when they were not in the custody of the sheriff), in Greek Street.[83]

Here De Quincey plays with his knowledge of antiquity, by referring to two key elements of the classical *Greek* household presided over by the Goddess Hestia. Beyond this punning, and relevant to the present argument, it is as if the proliferation of self via numerous titles is not simply a ruse employed by the un-(or semi-)scrupulous individual but rather an

[80] William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 177.
[81] Jerome J McGann, *Byron and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 89-90.
[82] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 73.
[83] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 195.

existential strategy guaranteed to ensure the maintenance and survival of at least some form of discernible identity. In this respect Brunell perhaps represents a kindred spirit to De Quincey with his numerous aliases, an identification which might explain his generous offer to the latter to 'make use of his large house as a nightly asylum from the open air.' In contrast to the activities of both men with their multiple appellations, the girl endures a restricted existence and 'never emerged from the dismal Tartarus of the kitchens to the upper air.' Moreover, the question of her background, age ('apparently ten years old; but sufferings of that sort often make children look older than they are') and, significantly name, is vague. She is merely referred to as the 'forlorn child' or 'forsaken child' and at times De Quincey omits any qualifying adjective as she becomes the generic, ubiquitous 'child'. Hence De Quincey literally abandons this child through the lack of a modifier, ultimately reflecting her fate within the text as one whom De Quincey confesses 'I could never trace'; and here the verb is equivocal signifying a figure which was impossible either to find or to recreate.[84]

Even when De Quincey offers a suggestion regarding her personal history it is that she is illegitimate, which is itself a signifier of uncertain status. Moreover, she has little hope of ever acquiring an identity while she remains below stairs. This emphasises the importance of, and hence De Quincey's fixation with, names, which are an index of social recognition, particularly to a writer. Literary and artistic survival is dependent on the continuation of a writer's life, in terms of both the on-going publication of, and interest in, his works, after his own death, and this is only possible through the survival of his name. Yet escaping from obscurity is not always viable, a fear which seems to haunt De Quincey as he describes Piranesi's *Dreams* (sic) in which the artist is pictured on a never-ending flight of steps, a disquieting trope reminiscent of the endless reverberations around the Whispering Gallery.

[84] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016 , p. 198, p. 200, p. 199 and p. 202.

The fact that the De Quincey is offering the reader an account which is itself a retelling from Coleridge, a potential literary rival, must surely go some way towards validating his concerns. De Quincey fears losing himself figuratively, as the hapless Piranesi is literally in the picture: 'there, again, is the delirious Piranesi, busy on his aspiring labours; and so on, until the unfinished stairs and the hopeless Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.'[85] After hearing about this plate De Quincey has even more reason to fear containment and oblivion as a writer, as it is not always possible to climb to or achieve recognition. Here, significantly, the stairs merely lead Piranesi to never-ending obscurity.

In his striving towards adopting multiple roles (the desire appears more instinctual as opposed to a mere literary penchant) rather than presenting a single 'authentic' self or psyche, De Quincey anticipates John H. Gagnon's and W. Simon's deconstruction of the 'belief in the natural and universal human.' That is, 'a woman or man who has innate transhistorical and transcultural attributes and needs.'[86] Furthermore, Gagnon and Simon also cite the increasing interest in reading in the Nineteenth Century and its corresponding promulgation of various viewpoints and potential identities as enabling individuals to consider themselves as multi-formed subjects, although there was continuing 'tension between the multiplicity of internal voices and the necessity […] to speak in one voice […] In some cases, persons (found) themselves limited by the singular voice.'[87] Levin emphasises this particular trait in De Quincey's writing, of resisting a static, single definition; offering something of an explanation as to its origins: 'fluid boundaries, not religiously controlled centeredness, define his confession. Through

[85] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 70. The title of the plate is in fact *Imaginary Prisons*.
[86] J H Gagnon and W Simon, *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2005), p. 3. and p. 1.
[87] J.H. Gagnon, 'The Self, Its Voices and Their Discord' in ed. by Carolyn Ellis and Michael G Flaherty *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience* (Newbury Park and London: Sage, 1992), pp. 234-235.

confession, De Quincey gets at […] the reality of the dispersing self as opposed to the fiction of the unified, autobiographical self.'[88]

Whilst acknowledging the premise that it is perhaps advisable to exercise caution when applying psychoanalysis to an author, this highlights what could be considered a basic tenet or definition of the autobiographical narrator. Indeed the musical term *fugue*, itself indicating a *repeated* theme with slight variations, which De Quincey appropriates to describe a section of *The English Mail Coach* joining 'sense impressions and solemn if imprecise emotions in a hallucinatory suspension of reason,' might be applied, equally appropriately to De Quincey's individual narrative technique.[89] That is, in relation to the term's modern psychological connotation of a 'dreamlike altered state of consciousness, lasting from a few hours to several days, during which a person loses his memory for his previous life and often wanders away from home.'[90] Such a distanced, almost fragmenting, sense of self, as if viewing the self as 'other', is a key motif in De Quincey's confessional writing.

In his new footnotes for the 1856 *Confessions*, reflecting on the events described some thirty-five years earlier, De Quincey reveals a telling mixture of exasperation and petulance at the foibles and shortcomings of those with whom he is forced to have literary dealings, such as the unofficial censor who omitted the name of a philosopher from the 1821 edition of the *Confessions*, substituting the appellation with a hyphen:

> Who is Mr.Dash, the philosopher? Really I have forgot. Not through any fault of my own but on the motion of some absurd coward having a voice potential at the press, all the names were struck out behind my back in the first edition of the

[88] Levin, p. 19.
[89] Margaret Stoneyk, *Nineteenth Century English Literature* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1983), p. 40.
[90] *Collins English Dictionary*, ed. by P. Hanks (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1986).

> book…I was not consulted; and did not discover the absurd blanks until months afterwards when I was taunted with them very reasonably by a caustic reviewer. Nothing could have a more ludicrous effect than this appeal to shadows – to my Lord Dash, to Dean Dash, and to Mr. Secretary Dash.[91]

Here, the ostensibly reasonable De Quincey not only displaces the blame onto some hapless and, ironically, nameless publisher but also reveals in the process certain attitudes that might be regarded as primal authorial concerns such as the fear of obscurity through non-recognition of name. Robert Morrison notes that 'De Quincey wrote his last name with both an upper and lower case 'd', and friends, correspondents, and critics regularly produced other variations: 'Quince', 'Quincy', 'De Quincy', 'Dequincey' and so on.'[92] Whilst the proliferation of names by which De Quincey was known can be considered signifiers of self-proliferation, they are also strategies by which De Quincey might, reasonably, multiply the expectation of literary recognition and remembrance. The combination of blank spaces and nameless, unrecalled, figures within a text justifiably alarms a nervous De Quincey; nervous both of the prospect of being forgotten and, potentially, of the hard work required to offset this risk. This, in turn, highlights another, quintessentially, Romantic notion: that of duality.

De Quincey certainly had many reasons to depart or escape his physical circumstances, particularly when pursued by bailiffs in his later life. Whale identifies a 'combination of evils which exerted itself upon him […] the need to clothe and feed his family, to avoid imprisonment for debt, to overcome illnesses.'[93] His correspondence with those whom he solicited credit often exhibited the riled tone familiar to his publishers or editors. John Wilson had the misfortune to be both. In a letter of 27th November 1820, De Quincey harangued him: 'am I base enough to expect or to ask any man that he should entangle

[91] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 97.
[92] Robert Morrison, *The English Opium Eater: A Biography of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009), p. xviii.
[93] Whale, p. 13.

himself in difficulties to disentangle me?', before admitting that he has in fact written a bill on Wilson without the latter's knowledge.[94] Furthermore, the key passages underlined by De Quincey in the original manuscript all relate to financial matters, taking precedence over his supposed 'chief subject of anxiety […] that infamous attack on you in the London mg. by John Scott', which is relegated to a later paragraph.[95]

Toward the end of his life, De Quincey was forced to seek refuge in the grounds of Holyrood Palace in Edinburgh as a last, desperate means to avoid his creditors. However, an equally revealing insight into De Quincey's earlier methods of maintaining financial stability is offered via a letter to William Blackwood of 1st January 1821, in which his intricate juggling of credit and debt is highlighted:

> I am pledged to pay £10. to-morrow night at 9 o'clock in order to meet a small bill to that amount drawn some time ago and the sum of money on which I depended paying it cannot […] be lent to me until after the 5th of this month […] If I send you this article by 2 o'clock will it be convenient to you to return the 10 guineas I am pledged to pay?[96]

De Quincey's absconding from school and university, his subsequent ramblings, both literally and literary, together with his physical addiction to opium are likewise all facets of his personal desire to escape. The descriptions of the effects of the drug and of his opium dreams also provide a textual escape, in that they can be seen as constituting more immediate, ready-made literary material. Such a manifestation of this desire is perhaps understandable, or at least hardly surprising, given De Quincey's catalogue of (albeit largely self-inflicted) woes: early opportunities squandered leading to continuing difficulties in older age. This latter time was a period, according to Whale, of personal

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[94] Letter from De Quincey to John Wilson, 27/11/1820. National Library of Scotland, MS 9819, folios 85 and 86.
[95] NLS, MS 9819, folios 85 and 86.
[96] Letter from De Quincey to William Blackwood, 1/1/1821, National Library of Scotland, MS 4006, folio 172.

isolation in which he increasingly found himself 'distanced through illness and debt from his publishers and his family.'[97]

Impotence through old age represents a natural condition. However, throughout *The Confessions*, impotence manifests itself both literally, for example the traditional definition of physical failure during sexual activity, and more figuratively, when the subject displays an inability or reluctance (whether consciously or not) to fulfil his creative potential and is therefore thwarted in authorial achievement. As stated, for De Quincey, opium is a literary compensatory device, which allows him to circumvent the more rigorous demands of the writing process. Composing articles and reviews, correcting proofs or performing the functions of editorship (De Quincey, notably, lasted just a year at the *Westmorland Gazette*) comprised less attractive alternatives to the imaginative literary possibilities presented by opium-dreams. Here, for instance, De Quincey rhapsodies how

> 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.[98]

Yet even this potential can be thwarted by what De Quincey terms 'The Pains of Opium', his choice of lexis to describe the accompanying lethargy and despair induced by the drug. However, in view of his life-long inclination to torpor, this begs the question whether he is ultimately taking a form of refuge in citing the paradox of opium; namely that it is providing abundant writing material while, frustratingly, *not* the requisite ability to realise or fulfil it creatively.

[97] Whale, p. 8.
[98] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 68.

This would prove problematic for De Quincey who, for instance, neither welcomed nor embraced the challenges of professional authorship. A desire for 'little work' (see below) represents a key motif in the *Confessions* and corresponds with De Quincey's journalistic habits. De Quincey's relationship with his publishers, particularly Blackwood, was far from being amiable. This is evident from the fact that the *Confessions*, originally intended for *Blackwood's* and promised by De Quincey in December 1820, were eventually published in the *London Magazine*, with the first instalment appearing in September 1821. John Whale attributes this to De Quincey's 'lack of tact', although it should also be noted that De Quincey additionally blamed William Blackwood for the death of John Scott, the editor of the *London*, in a duel revolving around the rivalry between the two journals. Furthermore Whale, in a chapter entitled 'The Publisher's Devil' (a name which indicates De Quincy's reputation among the periodicals in which he was published,) reveals a series of complaints concerning De Quincey's failure to finish work on time. De Quincey's dissatisfaction, particularly with *Blackwood's*, arose because 'he found uncongenial the demands which such a journal necessarily exercised; its constant calls for copy and proof, the speed at which it made deadlines and alterations'.[99] His response to one such reprimand by William Blackwood is revealing of the author's character, both disingenuous and waspish:

> 'A good article' you say, 'is always in time.' Well: mine is a good one and therefore in time […] Nevertheless, if you are more particular about quantity than quality, I am perfectly ready to oblige you by changing my style and produce […] dull reviews, morality etc. as I saw in in your December No as fast as you please.[100]

The uniqueness of his personal experiences is something De Quincey stresses:

> No man surely, on a question of my own private experience, could have been pretended to be better informed than myself. Or, if there really is such a person, perhaps he will not think it too much trouble to re-write these confessions from first to last, correcting their innumerable faults; and, as it happens that some parts of the

[99] Whale, p. 9 and p. 16.
[100] Letter from Thomas De Quincey to William Blackwood, 6th January 1821, National Library of Scotland, MS 4006, folio 169.

> unpublished sections for the present are missing, would he kindly restore them – brightening the colours that may have faded, rekindling the inspiration that may have drooped; filling up all those chasms which else are likely to remain as permanent disfigurations of my little work.[101]

The use of the term 'little' is already problematic. In the context of the voluminous Augustine or Rousseau the word 'little' may apply precisely to the size and extent of the *Confessions*, particularly the 1821 edition, as a published work. In a sense, the *Confessions* represent a meta-commentary on writing; a text which makes the reader confront the question of what exactly constitutes a finished or completed piece of literature. Other than mortality, there is no reason why De Quincey could not have continued revising and expanding his *Confessions* indefinitely. However, since the passage is itself concerned with the process of the work's completion rather than the finished work itself, it is possible to see the phrase 'little work' as a reference to the amount of work *actively* necessary in order to create De Quincey's autobiography. After all, the centre of this work is not De Quincey's life's *work* but the very dreams, fantasies and luxuries of opium-eating which have displaced that solid work. There is none of the exertion required to achieve fame and success as (say) a scholar, especially of the sort - rote learning - required at Worcester College, Oxford in 1808, exertion which was inimical to De Quincey. In one of his letters to Dorothy Wordsworth in the spring of this year, De Quincey complains about the work expected of him at university: 'for the most part it consists of learning by heart immense (*systems* they are called but in reality) collections of unassorted details which […] must be gained by separate acts of memory'.[102] De Quincey also makes an early acknowledgement of the procrastination which will become a feature of his writing career, in this case complaining about reading thirty-three Greek tragedies: 'for, having now to do before about the 10th. of May what I doubted being able to do between

[101] De Quincey, *Confession*s, 2016, p. 104.
[102] *De Quincey to Wordsworth: A Biography of a Relationship with the Letters of Thomas De Quincey to the Wordsworth Family*, ed. by John E. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 87. Emphasis in the original.

December and that day, I have been obliged in my distribution of labor for the next six weeks to crowd the reading through all the tragedies into one week.' The fact that the plays mentioned are short only emphasises the extent of his antipathy to the necessary demands of academic study, to which he has taken a strong aversion. Later in the same letter De Quincey summarises his dilemma, namely that his are motives are 'to be *Illustrious* at the beginning of May next – but not enough to transfer pleasure on the means of atchieving (*sic*) that end.'[103] The on-going conflict between desire and a lack of will power to perform constitutes a defining trait of both De Quincey's personal and professional habits. As if to acknowledge his reluctance to engage in demanding literary tasks, De Quincey has in fact just offered to let the reader correct and rewrite his confessions for him via a phrase more transactional than rhetorical ('would he kindly restore them') .

This strategy suggests De Quincey is a writer who actively recoils from certain, unavoidable aspects of the creative writing process. The effect of employing the strategy previously highlighted, of allowing the reader to 'restore' the text, is to shift the moral position of reader and writer, making the reader responsible for the faults within the work. This also puts the onus on the reader to reconstruct or restructure the fragmentary nature of the text. In shifting the moral position the reader can be made responsible for the faults of the work since its gaps, absences or discontinuities can only remain in the case of the deficiencies of the reader's imagination to fill them. Moreover, in the very fact of opening these spaces for the reader's imagination, De Quincey allows for much more open potential in the act of completing his work. Since his readers will be multiple and diverse the range for the size and significance of the work will rely on them, and is conceivably limited only by the failure of his autobiography to get more and more sympathetic readers. However, through this device De

[103] *Letters* ed. by Jordon p. 87 and p. 88.

Quincey, rather than the reader, is ultimately the 'pretender' (or deceiver: 'no man surely […] could have been pretended to have been better informed than myself'), as the former apparently continues the traditional author-reader relationship by presenting a calculated strategy of literary creative displacement as merely a casual and reasonable offer. Moreover, one which presumably only an unforgiving or hostile reader or critic might misconstrue. The attraction of opium to De Quincey can, therefore, be seen in its capacity as an agent of literary/textual expansion and enlargement, with potential in this respect. However, opium paradoxically contains and shrinks the work too. The passage reversing the traditional author-reader relationship which has just been considered is, in a sense, *pivotal*, in that it simultaneously presents concepts of expanding potential, and a concern with a restricted and bounded energy.

Impotence in the *Confessions* ranges over a whole series of occasions, when power is insufficient to its task. For instance, there is a suggestion of a general impotence in the key passage from the *Confessions* previously quoted (footnote 101), as De Quincey refers to 'rekindling the inspiration that may have drooped.' However, its abiding and underlying image is that of sexual impotence. Here De Quincey addresses the third element of the Malthusian triad quoted in the introduction ('the desire of possessing a beautiful woman') which by necessity, due to his opium addiction, he must concede. In spite of Malthus' assertion that 'the passion between the sexes is necessary', there is no real opportunity for De Quincey to enlarge upon this particular libidinous trope.[104]

[104] T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. by Geoffrey Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 12.

De Quincey, regretfully acknowledging the consequence of his addiction, recognizes that he cannot take opium 'in the character of one seeking *extra* power and enjoyment' but rather as one 'shrinking from extra torment.' The image of impotency is paramount when opium makes him shrink from his studies 'with a sense of powerless and infantine feebleness.' Therefore, although opium endows its user with a degree of flexibility, through the potential to shrink, it does not cater for opposite sexual expansion. Perhaps this explains why De Quincey is so bitter and critical in his response to an attack made by Coleridge (and published in 1838 and hence four years after Coleridge's death) on his character, as he knows that it is pretence on the part of Coleridge to accuse him of taking opium 'as an adventurous voluptuary, angling in all streams for variety of pleasures.' Here the description contains an implied sexual element, yet Coleridge, as an opium eater himself, must realise that opium enfeebles rather than empowers its users. As De Quincey ambiguously comments, 'Coleridge is wrong […] in his little fact and his big doctrine.'[105] The 'little fact' suggests a symbolic reference to the debilitating effect of opium on phallic expansion, in a deliberate interplay between the semantic and the somatic, as both Coleridge's assumption, and De Quincey's opium inhibited physical prowess, are in reality insubstantial.

De Quincey does recognise the central yet contradictory state of impotence within his opium induced dreams. That is, he is theoretically endowed with the means for potentially unlimited creative and imaginative endeavours without having the capability to perform and achieve these heights:

> I (as is usual in dreams where of necessity, we make ourselves central to every movement) had the power, and yet had not the power, to decide it. I had the power, if I could raise myself, to will it; and yet again had not the power, for the weight of

[105] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 103. 2013, p. 64. 2016, p. 104. and p. 104.

> twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt. 'Deeper than ever plummet sounded,' I lay inactive.[106]

It is telling, and, given De Quincey's detailed knowledge of Shakespeare surely beyond the realm of co-incidence, that the final allusion is a quotation from *The Tempest* indicating Prospero's resolution to break his 'staff' and cast away his magic book, both practical and symbolic agents of his masculine and patriarchal power and authority.

A lack of literary power and the failure to finish a work is applicable to De Quincey who never managed to complete what he hoped would be his masterpiece and sequel to the *Confessions*, *Suspiria de Profundis*. This text of this work eventually comprised only a third of its intended length and in Whale's phrase exists 'only in a fragmented form.' Alexander Jupp's introduction to the 1891 edition of *The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey* highlighted the fragmented and incomplete nature of the project: 'of the thirty-two 'Suspiria' intended by the author, we have only nine that received his final corrections.'[107] While the first part appeared as planned in *Blackwood's* March 1845 edition, a litany of disputes delayed further publication. For example, De Quincey objected to the limit of sixteen pages placed on each instalment and argued about the exclusion of lengthy footnotes. Ten years later De Quincey had still not completed the full text and emphasising the chaotic nature of both his personal and professional life, Lindop notes:

> Unpublished parts of the *Suspiria* had become scattered in the course of the decade. Some of the manuscript had to be redeemed, at a cost of £8.10s., from the Sherrif's office, where it was being held against some debt. De Quincey expected to find a section called 'The Daughter of Lebanon there, but it was missing. It eventually

[106] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 76.
[107] The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey Vol. 1*, ed. by Alexander H. Japp.

> turned up […] but not before it had been partly burned in one of his fits of carelessness.[108]

In his Prefatory Notice to the 1856 edition of the *Confessions* De Quincey expanded on this incident in a lengthy digression, presenting the loss of valuable or indeed (given his propensity for not completing tasks) irreplaceable manuscripts in rather a disassociated manner: 'my attention was first drawn by a sudden light upon my book: and the whole difference between a total destruction of the premises and a trivial loss […] was due to a large Spanish cloak.'[109] The reader might be forgiven for sensing that the note of relief with which this calumny is reported ('a trivial loss') has more to do with matters avoided rather than saved, as De Quincey now has an excuse for abandoning the task of amalgamating the disparate parts intended for *Suspiria* into a coherent whole. This is particularly implied as he had previously emphasised in the preface how much effort the process of revising his *Confessions* has cost him, physically and emotionally: 'this improvement has been won at a price of labour and suffering that, if they could be truly stated, would seem incredible.' Yet De Quincey's insistence on recalling the minutia of the circumstances might not merely be another instance of his pedantry:

> Falling not *on*, but *amongst* and *within* the papers, the fire would soon have been ahead of conflict; and, by communicating with the slight woodwork and draperies of a bed, it would have immediately enveloped the laths of ceiling overhead, and thus the house, far from fire-engines, would have burned down in half-an-hour.[110]

It is as if the 'communication' of the description of the fire serves a specific function, namely a ritualistic, almost totemic purification which replaces, or supersedes the necessity of communicating the 'Suspiria' themselves. Likewise, the cloak 'thrown over, and then drawn down tightly', which extinguishes the fire, also signals, in its finality, a form of negation of

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[108] Lindop, p. 379.
[109] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 102.
[110] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 102.

the possibility of completing the text.[111] This might serve as an epitaph - acceptance of failure tantamount to impotence - evident in De Quincey's approach to the whole writing process.

That both the sexual and literary implications of impotence are key De Quinceian tropes is reflected by their inclusion in an incident described in one of the *Suspiria* essays 'The English Mail Coach', published in 1849, concerning a young couple inside a carriage:

> The stranger is a brave man, and if indeed he loves the young girl at his side – or, loving her not, if he feels the obligation, pressing upon every man *worthy to be called a man*, of doing his utmost for a woman confided to his protection – he will at least make some effort to save her. If that fails, he will not perish the more, or by a death more cruel, for having made it; and he will die as a brave man should, with his face to the danger and with his arm about the woman that he sought in vain to save. But if he makes no effort – shrinking without a struggle from his duty – he himself will not the less certainly perish for his baseness of poltroonery.[112]

If, as this passage suggests, impotence or lack of physical ability or manly action results not merely in 'shrinking', but contains the potential for 'perishing' as well, then there are ominous implications for literary works. This could present the possibility that literary artefacts, De Quincey's own writing included, might indeed also perish. For Freud, impotence is a form of repression, being partially a result of an overplay of guilt operating upon desire. This might explain why other methods of restraint and containment such as burial alive are specifically marked as threatening and impeding the creative process by De Quincey.[113] He refers particularly to an incident in which language is insufficient to the task of description and communication, recounting in *Suspiria De Profundis* (1845) the tale of the immured nun who can only be saved by the abbess who 'bears a master key (which) will

[111] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 102.
[112] De Quincey, *The English Mail Coach*, 2013, pp. 210-211.
[113] For example, Freud refers to the 'inhibitory influence of certain psychical complexes', such as unresolved Oedipal guilt, in 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love II) in *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1977), p. 248.

open every door in every corridor.'[114] Yet the possession of this key does not ultimately benefit the abbess, who instead merely discerns a 'dusky object'. This signifies that she is too late to save her friend, but as this dusky object is such an obscure revelation it, worryingly for the prospective author-narrator, defies interpretation. Likewise, the abbess' recognition that there is no hope is too profound for expression: 'the sentiment which attends the sudden revelation that all is lost silently is gathered up into the heart; it is too deep for gestures or for words; and no part of it passes to the outside.'[115]

Perhaps this explains De Quincey's refuge in a strategy of self-proliferation, and a series of multiple self-representations, which even the creator of the 'English-Opium Eater' is ultimately unable to contain within the restraints of ordinary discourse and lexical structures. The genie is well and truly out of the (laudanum) bottle; transcending even Levin's attempt to appropriate De Quincey's terminology which, significantly, itself seems inadequate and impotent ('impassioned prose' hardly does the text justice) to the task of capturing this sense of narrative chaos and the frantic, paradoxical disintegration and multiplication of an author's identity:

> To deal with these demands of confession, to reflect the Opium-Eater's perceptions and the social, religious, political, and cultural complexities that compose them, De Quincey constructs what he considers to be a new kind of writing – 'impassioned prose' [...] that appropriates dreams by putting words into a more complex network of relationships than the usual linear sequence provides.[116]

De Quincey, significantly, further adopts the role of an actor in the 'terrific drama' which occurs when the Bore, that 'nervous affection in rivers' comes upon him.[117] It is as an actor that he proceeds to adopt multiple role-plays in the text. He acknowledges

[114] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 84.
[115] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, pp. 84-85.
[116] Levin, p. 36.
[117] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, pp. 164-165.

himself to be 'Pope […] of the true church on the subject of opium.'[118] It is tempting to diagnose these symptoms of fashioning new personas to adopt as the literary manifestation of a deeper malaise: that through numerous role-playing De Quincey, in John Barrell's phrase, 'ceased to be *himself*.'[119]

This, however, may be to miss the point. It is precisely through such devices that De Quincey reveals most about himself, namely his barely containable egoism, especially when he assigns himself the role of prophet and avatar who, like Moses, 'was […] laid […] amongst reeds and Nilotic mud' or when he considers himself a soothsayer from classical antiquity: 'being an oracle, it is my wish to behave myself like an oracle, and not to evade any decent man's questions in the way that Apollo too often did at Delphi.'[120] Moreover, this self-proliferation is similar to the additions to the text of various footnotes which increases the body of the writing and has obvious echoes in the fact that for the 1856 edition of his *Confessions*, De Quincey revised and rewrote the original 1821 version to a considerable extent.

As we have seen, it is through the potential of opium dreams that De Quincey realises his desire to expand both his text literally and the range and scope of his imaginative landscapes. Furthermore, in a related strategy, he reacts against the attempted fixing of his literary personae, again anticipating a more post-modern notion of subjectivity or, by resisting the pressure to be truthful (to confess all), subverts the reader's expectations. An incident which illustrates this is when he evades defining the nature of his relationship with a female servant: 'I am at this period - viz., in 1812 - living in a

[118] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 220.
[119] John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 19. Emphasis in the original.
[120] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 73 and 2016, p. 243.

cottage; and with a single female servant (*honi soit qui mal y pense*).'[121] The inclusion of the statement in brackets ('shame be on him that thinks evil'- the motto of the Order of the Garter) in the original Old French leaves the question of De Quincey's relationship with his housekeeper deliberately open.[122]

While the phrase may represent a form of acknowledgement of the re-invented chivalric tradition, which had been imaginatively reworked by William Godwin in his 1794 novel *Caleb Williams*, the employment of this subtle device ensures that De Quincey is neither classed immediately as a lecherous opium-eater nor, however, is the possibility of some sort of affair with the girl actually or definitely refuted.[123] This ambiguity leaves it to the reader to interpret – which could be an evasion of De Quincey's self-appointed role of oracle, or could be evinced as humour or innuendo. It throws the emphasis on questioning the honour of the reader's interpretation as opposed to De Quincey's honour in his relationship and conduct with the woman. The enigmatic, coded nature of the reference is heightened precisely because there is none of the sexual explicitness famously evident in Rousseau's *Confessions*. Nothing in De Quincey (notably a 'little Englander' in his politics as well as his, potentially contrived, coyness) matches the deliberately constructed salaciousness of the former text. Amigoni notes how 'Rousseau writes an epic about himself, insisting that nothing is too shameful […] to be included if it helps show how he developed into the individual he is.' While, in contrast, De Quincey redresses what was considered 'Rousseau's disgusting frankness' by 'distancing

[121] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 51.
[122] The quotation is also found surrounding the shield of the Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom.
[123] Admittedly De Quincey was dismissive of the novel, stating that he 'could see in it no merit of any kind.' However, many years later he apparently remained fascinated by the text. See *Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits 1845, 1859* in *De Quincey as Critic*, ed. by John E. Jordan (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 361-368.

and disguising' events of his life.'[124] Regardless of the specific *sexual* implications of opium eating, it is clear that here De Quincey avoids being assigned to any specific categories; something which he also attempts to achieve via a series of discursive role-plays. De Quincey's authorial voice experiments with, and alternates between, different styles and forms such as physician, literary historian and critic, classical scholar and writer of economic tracts, leaving his identity fluid and open to interpretation, which parallels the fluidity of his creative narrative style. Within De Quincey's opium dreams there also occurs multiple role-plays: 'I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed.'[125] This instance of numerous short declaratives is notable for including a range of simultaneous and contradictory positions encompassing both submissive and dominant roles. In this, it would not be out of place in the writing of late Nineteenth Century 'decadents' such as Oscar Wilde or Joris-Karl Huysmans.

The two elements of role-playing and expanding the self are combined when De Quincey adopts the guise of playwright. This enables him to fill out his *Confessions* with minimum dialogue and, perhaps more importantly, modest effort. He imagines Coleridge, suffering from some opium-cravings, arguing with a porter:

> Porter. – But, really now, you must not, sir. Didn't you say no longer ago than yesterday –
> Transcend. Philos. – Pooh, pooh! Yesterday is a long time ago. Are you aware, my man, that people are known to have dropped dead for timely want of opium?
> Porter. – Ay, but you tell't me not to hearken –
> Transcend. Philos. – Oh, nonsense. An emergency, a shocking emergency, has arisen…if you don't remove that arm of yours from the doorway of this most respectable druggist, I shall have good grounds of action against you for assault and battery.[126]

[124] Amigoni, pp. 4-7.
[125] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2013, p. 73.
[126] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 108.

Here there is a significant contrast (and hence the opportunity of a potential textual gap to be filled by the reader) between the frantic Coleridge, acting as Baxter observes as an 'irrational, excessive, tyrant', and the calm, composed and composing De Quincey.[127] De Quincey, in a manner, attempts to exploit the gap in both the text and respective status of the two writers by inventing roles he imagines Coleridge assigning to *him*. This is not only further evidence of multiple role-playing, but also facilitates the dual function of both making the poet appear foolish - significantly elevating De Quincey's status - whilst helpfully filling out the body of the *Confessions*. In one instance De Quincey, in the imaginary guise of Coleridge, envisions himself in a trio of disreputable, synonymous roles in which he almost appears to revel:

> Imagine the case that I had really *had* done something wrong, still it would have been ungenerous – me it would have saddened, I confess, to see Coleridge rushing forward with a public denunciation of my fault: - "Know all men by these presents, that I, S.T.C., *a noticeable man with large grey eyes*, am a licensed opium-eater, whereas this other man is a buccaneer, a pirate, a filibuster, and can have none but a forged licence in his disreputable pocket. In the name of virtue, arrest him!"[128]

Here, the triad of characteristics, 'a buccaneer, a pirate, a filibuster', which De Quincey devises for Coleridge to level against him might be read as tacit recognition, or acknowledgement of guilt regarding the accusation that De Quincey had adopted the literary role of opium eater in imitation of the poet. Therefore, the text explores concepts of legitimacy versus fraud which operate on multiple levels, including an authorial level.

Multiplicity of identity is also explored in the role-play of De Quincey as mathematician. After receiving a letter 'bearing this address in a foreign handwriting - *A Monsieur Monsieur de Quincey, Chester'* he remarks: 'I was astonished to find myself translated at

[127] Baxter, p. 69.
[128] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 106. Emphasis in the original.

the touch of a pen not only into a *Monsieur*, but even into a self-multiplied *Monsieur*, having a chance at some future day of perhaps being cubed into Monsieur.'[129] Wilson comments that the timing of this mis-understanding was opportune as De Quincey had just absconded from Manchester Grammar school and had 'wanted a new identity.'[130] Furthermore, the missive contained a banknote for forty guineas intended for the aristocratic Frenchman. While the cubing of the title affords a humorous play on events, it also evokes both expansion and curtailment. Cubing multiplies, but on another level creates a box which ultimately contains and restricts. So De Quincey considered himself cubed by the whole incident, albeit not necessarily in the manner suggested, fearing punishment and imprisonment if apprehended. Furthermore, although De Quincey is expanding there is also the potential of being figuratively 'cubed' in another way, that is being restricted by, and enclosed within, the confines of his *Confessions*

This motif occurs throughout many aspects of De Quincey's life, for example in terms of self-proliferation via the number of his offspring - De Quincey had eight children, not including numerous 'surrogates' such as Catharine Wordsworth whose death, at age three, devastated him - or proliferation through his number of residences. Edward Sackville West includes, appropriately enough, an index entry entitled 'multiplication of abodes' referring not just to the time De Quincey spent between Edinburgh, London and the Lakes but to his frequently changing addresses within these locations, especially the two capitals.[131]

[129] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 148.
[130] Wilson, p. 78.
[131] Edward Sackville West, *A Flame in Sunlight: The Life and Works of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Bodley Head, 1974), p. 357.

In addition, the reference to being 'translated by a touch of a pen' is notable in that this metaphor is applicable to De Quincey's writing of himself. As a pen connects an author to his writing it is a means of proliferating the self, although this also ensures that the writer is separated from the persona of his writing. This is manifest within the *Confessions* in the form of the 'doppelganger', a figure essential to an understanding of De Quincey's literary and personal dependence on opium, which is implied as being his alter-ego: 'Opium I pursued under a harsh necessity, as an unknown, shadowy power, leading I knew not wither.'[132]

It is ironic, although perhaps appropriate, that De Quincey's double, that of the 'opium-eater', has become more renowned than the man himself. Potentially worthier works of his such as his essays on the Lake poets published in *Tait Magazine* (1834-1840), most of whom De Quincey knew intimately but ultimately fell out with, would have been largely ignored or neglected if it hadn't been for the notoriety gained by the author via his opiate addiction.[133] Hence, there is much for De Quincey *the writer* to be grateful, and dependent on, opium for. After all, there is unlimited potential for autobiography in that De Quincey's double operates without restriction.

This is emphasised when De Quincey refers to the Dark Interpreter, a shadowy, nightmarish figure and personified projection of his own consciousness: 'generally the Dark Interpreter said in De Quincey's dreams only what he himself has said when waking, but sometimes this being spoke words that De Quincey neither had used, nor could use.'[134] The ambiguity of De Quincey's relationship with this 'other' is evident

[132] De Quincey, *Confessions*, 2016, p. 214.
[133] These were later published in *Selections Grave and Gay from Writings Published and Unpublished* in 1854 and then posthumously as *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets* in 1862.
[134] Hayter, p. 125.

from the autobiographical fragment *Suspiria De Profundis*: ‘this dark being the reader will see again in a further stage of my opium experience; and I warn him that he will not always be found sitting inside my dreams, but at times outside, and in open daylight.’[135] The power of this figure is that it is not merely confined to dreams and, unlike the Brocken Spectre of North Germany, does not manifest itself only under certain conditions. As De Quincey explains ‘the sun must be near to the horizon, […] the spectator must have his back to the sun; and the air must contain some vapour - but *partially* disturbed.’[136]

It is notable that De Quincey did not sign himself using his original name in the 1821 edition of his *Confessions*, instead he wrote under the title of ‘opium-eater’ and the significance of a name to his burgeoning sense of literary identity is key here. Yet, twenty-four years later in *Suspiria de Profundis*, he made the following, telling remark concerning the death of one spider (at the hands of a housemaid) on fifty flies, ‘it troubled my musing mind to perceive that the welfare of one creature might stand upon the ruin of another.’[137] This is relevant to his perception of the independent role of the opium-eater, rising from the ruins of his previous life. But it is obvious that there is a strong element of grieving for what has been lost and cannot be replaced: and an even greater degree of incomprehension as to why he has had to sacrifice himself in the first place, as ‘the case of the spider remained thenceforwards even more perplexing to my understanding than it was painful to my heart.’[138]

[135] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 148.
[136] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, footnote p. 145. Emphasis in the original.
[137] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 118.
[138] De Quincey, *Suspiria*, 2013, p. 118.

Perhaps this metaphor resonates with De Quincey so powerfully because he sees himself as being like the spider whose work removes the nuisance of the flies, yet is considered a pest to be killed. In this scenario, which De Quincey found so ‘perplexing’ and ‘painful’, there is the implication that ultimately the usefulness and purpose of the spider within the household - keeping flies at bay - is not recognised or accepted. Likewise, an oracle is only powerful if there is a listener, a writer if there is a reader. The interplay of power and impotence informs De Quincey’s realisation of his inability to control the formulation of his identity and the consequent direction and substance of his confessional discourse, reflected through, among other signifiers, his fixation with the trope of impotence. An analysis of this decisive theme as present and developed within William Hazlitt’s writing, especially his 1823 *Liber Amoris*, forms the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

WILLIAM HAZLITT'S 'LITTLE BUONAPARTE': IMPOTENCE AND IDENTITY IN ROMANTIC CONFESSIONAL WRITING

Malthus's third example in his *Essay* warns of the consequences arising from 'the desire to possess a beautiful woman.'[1] This theme will be explored in this chapter through the question of unfulfilled sexual expectations and impotence. The trope of impotence can be used as a measure of self-identity and self-worth within the genre of Romantic autobiographical and confessional writing. This is evident in the work of William Hazlitt, particularly when considered within the historical and social context from which Hazlitt's writing, in particular *Liber Amoris*, emerged. For A.C Grayling, *Liber Amoris* represents a 'strange, notorious, uncomfortable and unique confession.'[2] However, Hazlitt's claim to the last of Grayling's extensive list of adjectives is questionable, with *Liber Amoris* reworking some key motifs of the 1820s confessional genre.

The book appeared to justify, or at least epitomise, the conservative *Blackwood's* criticism, made in January 1823, of the fashion for confession and public self-abasement. Thomas Colley Grattan observed: 'this is confessedly the age of confession […] Writers no longer talk in generals. All their observations are bounded in the narrow compass of self. They think only of number one.' Notorious cases are then singled out, including 'the author of Eloise', the 'wine-drinker' and 'the Opium-eater'.[3] As Gregory Dart has noted, '*Liber Amoris* summed up all that was worst about the current craze for autobiography: Rousseau (1788),

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[1] Malthus, p. 104.
[2] A. C. Grayling, *The Quarrel of the Age: The Life and Times of William Hazlitt*(London: Phoenix Press, 2001), p. 274.
[3] Thomas Colley Grattan, 'The Confessions of an English Glutton' (1823), *Blackwood's Magazine*, [1823] 86-93 (86). <http://babel.hathitrust.org>, [accessed 14/3/2019]

De Quincey (1821), Lamb's *Confessions of a Drunkard* (1822).'[4] Hazlitt's text anticipates James Hogg' *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) in his strategy of invoking God in order to protect the integrity and sanctity of his literary enterprise, claiming a 'promise was given that not a word should be altered, and the pledge was held sacred.'[5] However, De Quincey had already explored the futility of pursuing a woman of lower social class, the London streetwalker Ann, in his earlier *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. The lack of fulfilment of Hazlitt's amorous advances towards the nineteen-year-old Sarah Walker is reminiscent of Charles Lamb's exploitation of the pleasures of excessive consumption. Hazlitt, who had previously relished the prospect of eating partridge, and revelled in the anticipation of his supper, now woefully admits: 'I have lost the taste of my food by feverish anxiety; and my favourite beverage, which used to refresh me […] has no moisture in it.'[6] Hazlitt's inability to enjoy those sensuous pleasures which extend beyond his sexual appetite, both reinforced and multiplied the nature of his periodical impotence. His failure to conform to a range of mores regarded as socially conventional, and his insistence on making literary gain from these inadequacies, ensured that he was a target of the secondary industry of publishing spoofs or parodies of 1820s secular confessions. *John Bull* included an account featuring 'Mr. Billy Hazlitt' and 'Sally' in 'The Tailor's Lodging House.' Both De Quincey and Lamb had likewise inspired similar satires, notably *Blackwood's* 1823 parody *Confessions of an English Glutton* which explicitly criticised this apparently *de rigueur* mode.[7]

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[4] William Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris and related writings*, ed. by Gregory Dart (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 2008), p. 6.
[5] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 41. Hazlitt also describes 'the ridgy steep of Salisbury Crag' in the section entitled 'To Edinburgh', both key locations in Hogg's *Confessions*.
[6] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris* p. 69.
[7] This example of an important Romantic sub-genre is considered in more detail in the discussion on Lamb in Chapter 4. Such textual *doppelgängers* might also be seen as the literary equivalent of Hogg's beguiling process of lamb substitution, or 'spare lamb', as described in chapter 5.

The fragmentary and often derivative nature of the final published confessional text is also a feature evident within Hazlitt's discourse. The origins and antecedents of *Liber Amoris* can be traced back to earlier essays in which the figure of Sarah Walker is mentioned, such as 'On Living to Oneself' (1821) and 'On the Past and Future' (1822). The February 1822 essay, 'On Great and Little Things', which appeared in *The New Monthly Magazine* and was promoted as part of the *Table-Talk* series, provides some particularly relevant insights. Gregory Dart is astute to point out that while 'Hazlitt's obsession with Sarah is referred to only once [...] the entire matrix of the essay [is] unconsciously structured by it.'[8] Indeed, the title itself can be read as a summation of the, ironically formidable, impotence theme and imagery which dominates the discourse of *Liber Amoris*.

Once again, notions of frustrated will are directly linked to questions of appetite: 'very trifling circumstance do give us great and daily annoyance [...] A lump of soot spoiling a man's dinner, a plate of toast falling into the ashes.'[9] However, the most emotive rhetoric reserved for describing the lack of attaining 'little things' employs terms reminiscent of unreleased sexual passion and tension: 'the blood is heated, the muscles are strained. The feelings are wound up to a pitch of agony with the vain strife.'[10] Such is the pressure exerted upon Hazlitt as he fails to succeed in the conquest of his carnal and, arguably, his literary prize. For Hazlitt, Sarah Walker represented an investment in terms of physical, emotional and discursive capital, and his failure in the pursuit of each of these strategies resulted ultimately in a sorrowful, minimal return, if not a loss in terms of his own reputation.

[8] Dart, in Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 134.
[9] William Hazlitt, 'On Great and Little Things, in ed. by Dart, p. 135.
[10] Hazlitt, 'On Great and Little Things', p. 136.

The question of whether the protagonist in *Liber Amoris* is a portrayal of Hazlitt himself, an 'emanation of Hazlitt's persona as writer' or 'a more detailed figure' is of secondary importance.[11] Notions of the character's relationship to the author were eclipsed by the publication of Hazlitt's actual letter to John Patmore regarding Sarah Walker in *John Bull*. This shaped readers' opinion much more than the expurgated version which had appeared two months earlier in the authorised edition of *Liber Amoris*. Hazlitt might have attempted, superficially, to thwart enquiries as to the identity of the writer of *Liber Amoris* by adopting the pseudonym of a 'North Britain', but pretending to be a Scot was undermined by the fact he had already informed friends, prior to publication, that he was the book's author.[12] Moreover, by refusing to change the initials of characters, or indeed the designations of place-names, Hazlitt hardly discouraged the notion that the 'H.' identified in the text was 'now formally a character and not Hazlitt himself.'[13]

The topic of impotence holds particular historicist connotations for a writer such as Hazlitt. During his lifetime, impotence was linked to a variety of debilitating conditions, as well as occupying a major strand of discourse within what might be considered as the-state-of-the-nation narrative. Roy Porter charted the development of the perception of impotence between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. The condition was originally regarded as a straight-forward malady with purely physical origins and consequences, albeit with some socio-legal implications such as questions of paternity. This was an approach epitomised by Nicolas Venette's *Tableau de l'amour conjugal* (1686), which was translated into English in 1703,

[11] Marilyn Butler, 'Satire and the Image of the Self in the Romantic Period: The Long Tradition of Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* in *English Satire and the Satiric Tradition*, ed. by Claude Rawson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 214.
[12] Grayling, p. 297.
[13] Butler, p. 219. Butler regards the problematic nature of Hazlitt's affiliation to his character in *Liber Amoris* as highlighting the period's 'sceptical approach to the self.'

and viewed impotence functionally and pragmatically as a 'constitutional defect.'[14] However, by the early nineteenth century, addressing the question of impotence became a primary strand within the enterprise to 'create a literature and a discipline of sexual information and advice', a discourse concerned with generating profits and expanding readership via a profusion of books and pamphlets.[15] In the terminology of Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, this marked a convergence of a textuality and sexuality which remains in place. Impotence was increasingly bracketed with, and promoted alongside, instances of infertility and venereal disease as emotive examples of 'sexual miseries and afflictions' which blighted the population, requiring treatment both actually and in print to counter 'misinformation from false friends, overconfident confidantes or rapacious quack doctors.'[16]

Through the analogy between the sexually impotent Hazlitt and the abandonment of meaningful, or indeed full, literary intercourse between reader and writer, Hazlitt produces a notable synthesis in terms of the relationship between the actual and the metaphorical. This interplay between a twin lack of sexual and literary procreation had previously been emphasised by the author of *A New Treatise on the Venereal Disease, Gleets, Seminal Weaknesses, the Dreadful Effects of Self-Pollution, and the* Causes *of Impotency, Barrenness, Etc*. This eighteenth-century text defines impotence not solely in terms of erectile dysfunction but also includes lack of pleasurable sensation during ejaculation as well as insufficient seminal emission. Most significantly for the present argument and ominously for any male writer, the treatment of this last manifestation also inculcated within the subject of one of the

[14] Roy Porter and Lesley Hall, *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 70.
[15] Porter and Hall, p. 4.
[16] Porter and Hall, pp. 92-93.

cases cited in the *Treatise*, pain so strong ‘his sight greatly impaired, insomuch that he could neither read nor write.’[17]

The link between impotence as a measure of self-worth, or the lack of it, and therefore a defining sense of identity is a theory proposed by David Hume in his 1751 *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*: ‘What Derision and Contempt, with both sexes, attend Impotence; while the unhappy Object is regarded as one deprived of so capital a Pleasure in life, and at the Same Time, as disabled from communicating it to others.’[18] Significantly, Hume describes one of the disadvantages of impotence as being its property of preventing the *communication* of pleasure, again suggesting a powerful connection between the sexual and authorial modes.

It should be noted, however, that not all writers necessarily viewed the condition of impotence in a purely negative light. The closely related question of population control was seen as being of paramount concern due, to a large extent, to Thomas Malthus’ fiercely debated *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Malthus advocated sexual continence, and abstinence, as a means of controlling the population. As highlighted in Chapter One, and informing the present argument, he described population as growing via geometric progression as opposed to the arithmetic progression of food and agricultural supply. Demand, ultimately, would outstrip production if left unchecked. Thus impotence could act as a useful and effective counter-weight to a burgeoning humanity, vis-a-vis Malthus’ rhetorical question which suggests divine approval for, or indeed intervention in, the

[17] J. Hamilton Smyth, *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease, Gleets, Seminal Weaknesses, the Dreadful Effects of Self-Pollution, and the Causes of Impotency, Barrenness, Etc*, (London, 1780), p.39. Printed for the author.
[18] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (New York: Cosimo, 2006), p.81

condition: ‘is it some mysterious interference of heaven, which […] strikes the men with impotence, and the women with barrenness?’[19]

The context of this polemic was vital, informing as it did not just economic factors but wider socio-political issues. As E.P Thompson pointed out in *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Malthus’ theory meant that ‘the problem of unemployment was a natural, rather than artificial, one, arising from the ‘surplus’ of population; as such it was insoluble.’[20] Furthermore, with the recent events of the French Revolution haunting the ruling class, the thought of large numbers of unemployed and hungry poor was, in itself, hardly an enticing prospect. Therefore, impotence for those such as Malthus did have some more beneficial considerations. Malthus combined the two key themes of population control and limited food supply via a reference to the benefits of ‘delayed gratification’ necessitated by the practice of celibacy until later marriage, with its concomitant postponement of intercourse. This would result in time spent:

> Saving the earnings which were above the wants of a single man, and in acquiring habits of sobriety, industry and economy, which would enable him in a few years to enter into the matrimonial contract without fear of its consequences. The operation of the preventative check in this way, by constantly keeping the population within the limits of the food [...] would give a real value to the rise of wages.[21]

Thus impotence and chastity, given Malthus’ views and advocacy, would appear to constitute a means to a similar end and hence are regarded in something of a positive light, with implications that serve the overall good of Great Britain and Ireland.

[19] T.R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. by Donald Winch and Patricia James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 62.
[20] E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p. 853.
[21] Malthus, p. 218.

Printed by the radical publisher John Hunt, Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* is a key work from the Romantic confessional canon with its themes of impotence, enfeeblement and phallic diminution. The hostile political reaction the book received was partly due to this initial association with the seditious, pro-revolutionary brother of the poet and editor Leigh Hunt. The narrative charts the author's failed attempt to develop and consummate a relationship with Sarah Walker, the daughter of his London landlord. The theme of unrequited love is evoked through images of enfeeblement, emasculation, impotence and male passivity which occur frequently within the text. Initially, Sarah's presence disarms and distracts Hazlitt: 'my faculties leave me; I think of nothing, I have no feeling about anything but thee.'[22] However, this is increasingly superseded by a sense of powerlessness and impotence as he fails in his efforts to woo her. The trope of both literal and metaphorical enfeeblement afflicts Hazlitt when, for example, he states 'I cannot bear it - it withers me like lightening' or indeed in his direct address to Sarah Walker: 'you see how I droop and wither under your displeasure.' Here, Hazlitt's use of metaphors of shrinkage, and ephemeral manifestations ('like lightening'), suggests more than sexual impotence. These figurative forms encompass notions of personal despondency and decay, for instance when he admits *apropos* his fixation with Sarah: 'it festers and consumes me.'[23] Furthermore, there is the note of distress in his comment on her physical rejection of him, notably how 'she […] shrunk from my embraces.' Whilst this is the intransitive form of the verb, the reader can reasonably infer a sense of Sarah's recoil, mirroring the author's own lack of emotional and corporal success which is, in turn, viewed literally and metaphorically as shrinkage.

[22] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris* p. 42.
[23] Hazlitt, p. 66.

The register of rejection couched in terms of enfeeblement is another motif Hazlitt had previously employed in his essay, ‘On Great and Little Things’. He describes the circumstances of one ‘who cannot lift his drooping head to gaze on the gaudy crown of popularity’, while later asserting ‘I am not utterly worthless, unregarded; nor shall I die and wither of pure scorn.’[24] The irony here is that Hazlitt’s defiant statement is immediately undermined and itself made feeble by the presence of his own footnote concerning this passage, in which he dismisses his rhetoric as ‘merely a specimen of the mock-heroic style […] nothing to do with real facts or feelings.’[25]

The metaphors are extended with the lexis employed to portray enfeeblement being combined in the following reflection on his unfortunate, love-less state: ‘is it not that very circumstance […] that has withered me up, and made me a thing for love to shrink from and wonder at?’[26] Ironically, it is the object of his affection, Sarah, who displays those attributes of solidity which Hazlitt himself sorely lacks, as he complains he has been ‘mocked by her (the false one) in whom I have placed my hope, and who hardens herself against me’. Here, the use of the verb ‘hardens’ neatly encapsulates both the unyielding front which Sarah presents to Hazlitt as well as evoking connotations of male sexual firmness. Moreover, it is telling that ‘hope’ is, in the final analysis, the only thing the narrator has ‘placed’ within Sarah, despite there being ‘so thin a partition’ between failure and success, as indicated by his potentially blasphemous remark: ‘the gates of Paradise were once open for me too, and I blushed to enter, but with the golden keys of love’.[27] Or indeed, in his extension of this

[24] Hazlitt, ‘On Great and Little Things’, pp. 143-144 and p. 143
[25] Hazlitt p. 147.
[26] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 68.
[27] Hazlitt, *Amoris* p. 68, p. 65, p. 67 and p. 65.

metaphor, bemoaning how finally 'Paradise barred its doors against me.'[28] In view of his upbringing, Hazlitt's reference to the 'gates of Paradise' could be construed as a deliberate and potentially blasphemous corruption of Matthew 16 v.9, with Christ saying to Peter 'And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.' If this is indeed the case, then it suggests an even deeper theological malaise with doubt transforming into parody and mockery, a motif that would be explored by many later Victorian writers. As Russell M. Goldfarb remarked apropos a revealing passage from Charlotte Bronte's *Villette* (1853), and still relevant to assuaging modern-day sceptics: 'if a reader cannot recognize vaginal imagery here, there is little chance that he will ever accept a Freudian reading of literature'.[29]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the lack of consummation of the relationship implied above, Hazlitt feels that Sarah's 'STONEYHEARTED' approach has in effect emasculated him. Surely it is the failed love object rather than the reference to Edinburgh that deserves, in Hazlitt's eyes, this deliberately capitalised epitaph? For example, Hazlitt's impotence is made evident in the following exchange: 'S: Some disappointments are hard to bear up against. H: If you talk about that, you'll unman me.'[30] This sense of enfeeblement and negation of masculinity, both implied and explicit, is heightened by Hazlitt's style of dialogue; that is, fragmented utterances as opposed to the more solid qualities of prose. Hazlitt's choice of lexis is also significant when, for instance, on the destruction of his little Bonaparte he adopts an emasculated register by 'shrieking curses' on Sarah's name and emitting a scream 'so pitiful and piercing […] that the sound of it terrified' him, as well as bringing all the

[28] Hazlitt, p. 65
[29] Russell M. Goldfarb, *Sexual Repression and Victorian Literature* (New Jersey: Bucknell University Press, 1970), p. 152.
[30] Hazlitt, p. 54.

inhabitants of the lodging-house rushing to his room.[31] There is also the question of the strict and rigid, to the point of inflexibility, binary-opposed definition of Sarah's femininity. He describes her using the telling phrase: 'no expression was ever more soft or perfect', in which the quality of 'softness' is naturally and, in Hazlitt's opinion properly, associated with the female sex. Therefore, he draws and damns himself as un-manly, soft in terms of being both weak and apologetic, admitting somewhat pathetically 'I am sorry for my want of power to please.'[32] Here, potentially, Hazlitt can be seen to combine a reference to both procreative and literary prowess as his desire to please sexually or romantically is matched by a wish to provide pleasure and satisfaction as a writer to his reader.

The inability to resist such feminisation of the male narrator is mirrored by Hazlitt's reference to his *amour's* restoration of his broken statue of Napoleon. He reads this action as a token of reconciliation regarding his previous unsuccessful advances, as like 'healing old wounds indeed.'[33] Here, the use of the image anticipates Byron's *Don Juan* (1824), when the protagonist's youthful ignorance of sexual matters is figuratively compared in Canto I to being 'tormented by a wound he could not know.'[34] This phrase represents a potential symbol of both female sexuality (the 'wound' of female genitalia) and emasculation, as well as a stigmata. This is later further explored in Canto V in which Byron notably depicts a feminine, de-masculised and passive version of his hero who is, by turns, seduced, enslaved and attired in 'effeminate garb' within the Sultana Gulbeyaz's harem. Hazlitt's fantasies of femininity equate with a form of masochistic, if alliterative, martyrdom: 'she has shot me through with a

[31] Hazlitt, p. 90.
[32] Hazlitt, p. 89 and p. 56.
[33] Hazlitt, p. 100.
[34] *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 399.

poisoned arrow […] another winged wound would finish me.'[35] Hazlitt was familiar with Titian's *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian* (1570-72), commenting that in comparison to the latter's *St. John Preaching in the Wilderness* (1540), it is 'much finer, both as to execution and expression. The face is imbued with deep passion.'[36] Here, the possibility of a 'winged wound' almost appears an enticing prospect.

Don Juan, as a character, could be considered curtailed by female dominance, having been brought up by a controlling mother who restricted and contained his reading by expurgating the 'grosser parts' of the texts. Juan's later seduction by Donna Julia on board a ship to Cadiz is described in terms both suggestive, yet highly unrepresentative, of potent male sexuality and virility, as his 'salt tears dropp'd into the salt sea.'[37] The pleasure Byron derived from prolonging the act of creating his text, together with the accompanying authorial revisions, are conceivably how he ultimately redeems his masculinity. This, paradoxically, reflects the accusation he levels at Robert Southey in the *Don Juan* 'Dedication' that he is a 'dry bob', or someone who experiences 'coition without emission.'[38] Zachary Leader notes that the poem is exceptional in terms of its reworking: 'the opening cantos […] are among the most heavily revised of Byron's writing', and this allows the poet to reclaim his sense of self-worth. While *Don Juan* is a female dominated poem 'in stylistics as well as narrative or plot terms', the revisions are also 'the work of a no less obvious 'masculine' wilfulness and singularity.'[39] Yet, equally, there is a penalty exacted from a person of Lord Byron's status, in the form of the lower class social connotations attached to revising a text. This would be viewed as a

[35] Hazlitt, p. 66
[36] William Hazlitt, *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England. Notes of a journey through France and Italy: Volume 10 of the Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Percival Presland Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967), p. 26. The 1540 painting is also known by the title *St. John the Baptist in the Desert*.
[37] *Don Juan*, p. 389 and p. 437.
[38] See McGann's note p. 1044.
[39] Zachery Leader, *Revision and Romantic Authorship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 105 and p. 120.

form of work, as opposed to the more spontaneous and inspired, and hence aristocratic, process of unique creative, original composition. In contrast, the middle-class status of Hazlitt would necessitate a more pragmatic approach to writing, primarily as a means to a monetary end.

Significantly, in *The Spirit of the Age*, when discussing Byron's merits as a writer as compared to Sir Walter Scott, Hazlitt employs imagery located in dark, dank, internalised enclosure alongside metaphors of rents, tears and folds. When reading Byron, we 'are still imprisoned in a dungeon; a curtain intercepts our view; we do not breathe freely the air of nature or of our own thoughts.' In contrast, Scott 'draws aside the curtain, and the veil of egotism is rent; and he shows us the crowd of living men and women.'[40] For Roland Barthes it is precisely those taxonomies of literary discourse such as tears or fissures which provide the greatest moments of gratification for the reader: 'what pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut [...] Is not the most erotic portion of a body where the garment gapes?'[41]

The notion of Hazlitt's unmanning includes instances when he alludes to a reversion to his childhood, adopting the role of infant. The motif is, appropriately enough, introduced early in Part I of *Liber Amoris*, although it informs the text as a whole. However, unlike the Wordsworthian trope that the 'child is father of the Man' from 'My Heart Leaps Up' (1807), or indeed, De Quincey's reduction through opium use to the state of 'infantile feebleness', Hazlitt's indulges in a form of self-abasement in which the saccharine nature of his sentiments are emphasised via a cloying, childish expression. He admits to Sarah 'you can mould me as you like. You can lead me by the hand, like a little child; and with you my way

[40] William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 107.
[41] Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text,* trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), pp. 7-9.

would be like a little child's.'[42] The appropriation of such an unappealing register would appear designed to alienate the most sympathetic reader who might, reasonably enough, refuse to be lead as easily by Hazlitt's narrative hand. This regressive style of phraseology is extended to scenarios in which Hazlitt is not directly addressing Sarah, and therefore where his linguistic selection might be expected to assume a more adult tenor. In *Letter II* to P.G. Patmore, he recalls asking Sarah, 'would she go to play with me sometimes […]?' Once again, Hazlitt utilises a child-like register and syntax. Even when insisting that he should be taken seriously, Hazlitt is unable to avoid the paradox of simultaneously employing infantile references. For instance, he pleads with Patmore 'do not mock me, for I am a very child in love.'[43] Such regressive tendencies culminate in *Letter VI*: 'I thought of the time when I was a little happy careless child; of my father's house, of my early lessons, of my brother's picture of me when a boy.'[44] The disappointments and frustrations of adult life are displaced by a recreation of, and fantasising over, an idyllic upbringing and the lure of juvenile irresponsibility.[45]

The literary un-manning of Hazlitt is potentially more troubling to a writer than his lack of more mundane physical performance. His powers of discourse seem irrelevant when faced with the task of seducing Sarah. He laments, for example, that she 'cannot be won by fine speeches', something which he could readily supply.[46] The measure of his virility in terms of writing is impressive, yet simultaneously worthless, as a means by which to woo Sarah. Hazlitt boasts how, 'I regularly do ten pages a day, which mounts up to thirty guineas a

[42] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris,* p. 46.
[43] Hazlitt, p. 57.
[44] Hazlitt, p. 65.
[45] Such naive expression might be interpreted as Hazlitt trying to evoke the simple and innocent pleasures of childhood in the manner of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794), especially in respect of the Biblical references.
[46] Hazlitt, p. 45.

week' and moreover that such productivity means that he might 'grow rich at this rate, if I could keep on so; *and I could keep on so*.'[47] Significantly, this later assertion of literary virility is italicised in the text. His inability to impress Sarah as to the worthiness of his suit is perhaps matched only by his powerlessness to create an effective portrayal of his antagonist. Hazlitt has Sarah complain, ironically, that he portrays her in regards to her relationship with her lodgers as if she were 'a light character.'[48] The suggestion is one of moral laxity, yet surely she resists Hazlitt's powers of effective characterisation too. Having 'scarcely any words of her own' she appears to be waiting like 'an actress for her part to be written', although ironically she exposes the essence of Hazlitt's feebleness via a simple, albeit alliterative, register when declaring 'I don't think Mr. H's love lasts long', which evokes a range of interpretations from inconstancy and fickle affections to lack of virility.[49]

The narrator might ask of Sarah: 'have you two characters, one that you palm off upon on me?' Yet the reader might equally be excused if remarking that she scarcely seems to possess *one* character. Hazlitt's inability to move beyond an essentially caricatured depiction of his antagonist, is a trait shared with his friend 'F', who was procured in 1823 to try and seduce Sarah in a further attempt to ascertain her character. 'F's' failure is as complete as his mentor Hazlitt's attempts, both sexually and discursively, as the latter admits that 'F' too 'could make nothing of her.'[50] Furthermore, the onanistic resonance of the phrasing 'palm off' is apt, with the reader's expectations of literary fulfilment through the efforts of the author as facilitating and active partner being frustrated. Hazlitt discloses the extent of his exasperation in a revealing passage: 'I am tossed about (backwards and forwards) by my passion, so as to

[47] Hazlitt, p. 55.
[48] Hazlitt, p. 96
[49] Butler, p.215 and Hazlitt, p. 113
[50] William Hazlitt, 'The Journal of F., March 4-16, 1823' in ed. by Dart, p. 116.

become ridiculous.'[51] The reader, likewise, might feel ridiculous through a forced compliance in Hazlitt's clumsy attempt to enlist their support and manipulate their sympathy. Sarah explains to Hazlitt how a previous admirer used reading as a means to expediate romance: 'he used to make me read with him.'[52] Hazlitt might wish for, and indeed attempt, such a seduction of his reader, but ultimately fails is his strategy.

Overall, there is very little emotional or physical release provided within the narrative for Hazlitt's pent-up frustration and anguish. Both the reader and (presumably) Hazlitt would welcome the relief provided by a narrative denouement whereby some form of consummation, or at least solidifying, of Hazlitt and Sarah Walker's free-floating relationship occurs. Similarly, the length of the text itself would, self-reflectively, appear to attest to those themes of unfulfilled potential and expectations with which it is primarily concerned. Hazlitt, in 'On Great and Little Things' (1822), potentially anticipates such objections to his later work. He argues that 'some artists think it a test of his genius to paint a large picture […] It is not the size of the canvas, but the quantity of truth and nature put into it.'[53] Hazlitt might, therefore, justify the size of *Liber Amoris* to the sceptical reader. However, the problem was that, for many reviewers in particular, there was, in fact, more than enough prurient truth present within the narrative and that it did not present Hazlitt in anything approaching a favourable light.

The text, short and potentially unsatisfying in view of the absence of a coherent, unified discourse structure, comprises a mixture of genre forms – narrative; letters; playscript; an

[51] Hazlitt, p. 73. OED online has 'toss-off' as coarse slang for masturbation as early as 1735, in *The Rake's Progress*
[52] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 48
[53] Hazlitt, 'On Great and Little Things', p. 150.

extract from *Triolus and Cressida* and even notes 'written in a blank leaf of *Endymion*.' It is inapposite to explain, or attempt to justify, such narrative disconnection merely by claiming, as Grayling does, that the text 'impressionistically weaves backwards and forwards.'[54] The fact that Hazlitt's proposal to Sarah consisted of a quotation borrowed from Chaucer, reinforces the reader's sense of encountering and engaging with an unconvincing, recycled, literary format. Other intertextual references abound throughout the narrative, for example, to *Othello* (1604), *Hamlet* (1600) and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774). The text even extends into the graphological mode, with the 'cameo-like' portrait in the 'renaissance style' of a young woman included in the title page.[55] However, the expectant reader should not be mis-led by the form of the image, nor indeed by the subtitle of *Liber Amoris*: '*The New Pygmalion*.' As Marilyn Butler unsentimentally remarks of these spuriously claimed antecedents: 'De Quincey with his sluttish Muse in Oxford Street, Hazlitt with his in Southampton Buildings, Holborn, are both modern literary men, aeons away from the idealization of the poets, or the canvasses of historical painters.[56] Given the myriad jumble of competing formats and registers, Hazlitt's imperative 'I will make an end of this story' might be read as a desperate assertion that here is, finally, something over which he is able to exert a degree of originality and power in his writing.

Impotence, as in the case of De Quincey, is not, however, confined to the field of physical sexuality. It also covers a range of instances in which power is not considered sufficient in performing a particular task. Emotionally too, Hazlitt feels himself inadequate with both his personality and emotions found to be lacking: 'her hatred of me must be great, since my love of her could not overcome it!' Hazlitt's acceptance of his status in relation to Sarah, 'I am

[54] Grayling, p. 297.
[55] Cook, p. 195.
[56] Butler, p. 223.

nothing to you', implies more than self-abnegation, rather a resignation bordering on a sense of self-annihilation.[57] The effect of such prolonged debilitation is likened to existing on the cusp of oblivion, or suffering under the Sword of Damocles: 'I cannot describe the weakness of mind to which she has reduced me. This state of suspense is like hanging in the air by a single thread that exhausts all your strength to keep hold of it; and yet if that fails you, you have nothing in the world else left to hold on to.'[58] Unsurprisingly, this impotence, which finds expression initially within a failed personal relationship, extends to an overwhelming sense of failure in all aspects of his life, as shown in the following angst-ridden passage:

> The light startles me; the darkness terrifies me. I seem falling into a pit without a hand to help me. She has deceived me, and the earth falls from under my feet; no object in nature is substantial, real, but false and hollow, like her faith on which I built her trust.[59]

Hazlitt, the son of a notable Unitarian minister, would appear to be comparing his loss of faith in Sarah Walker with a loss of far greater proportions, akin to a religious reckoning; as suggested by the existential lexicon of his despair which potentially anticipates Thomas Carlyle's interpretation of the spirit of the age as represented by an 'Everlasting No', to set against the 'Everlasting Yes', a theological and spiritual formulation defined in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34).

Reception history is relevant here to establish Hazlitt's influence on the longer nineteenth century. Certainly, Carlyle was familiar with Hazlitt's writing so the possibility of the latter's influence on the much more famous writer via a direct or sub-conscious borrowing exists. For example, Tom Paulin refers to the 'malicious' character sketch of Hazlitt which Carlyle included in a letter of 1824 (the same year Hazlitt married his second wife, a Mrs

[57] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 43.
[58] Hazlitt, p. 63.
[59] Hazlitt, *Liber Amoris*, p. 66

Bridgwater). The recipient of the correspondence, who Paulin does not identify, was in fact Carlyle's friend Thomas Murray and the exact date of the communication 24th August 1824:

> William Hazlitt takes his punch and oysters and rackets and whore at regular intervals; escaping from bailiffs as he best can, and writing when they grow unguidable by any other means. He has married [lately] (for the second time, his first spouse and taylor's daughter being both alive): I never saw him, or wished to.[60]

If indeed Carlyle was influenced by Hazlitt, and the reference to Sarah Walker (the tailor's daughter) implies a familiarity with *Liber Amoris*, then such character assassination appears all the more uncharitable and ungenerous. Meanwhile, in a further example of the Scottish writer's concern with his English counterpart, Duncan Wu notes how Carlyle dismissed Hazlitt as being a member of the 'cockney school' of writers.[61] Of course, such disparagement does not necessarily imply an absence or negation of influence on the author of *Sartor Resartus,* especially as the title itself is, significantly in view of Sarah's father's occupation, a translation from the Latin of the phrase 'The tailor re-tailored.'

Again, it is perhaps unremarkable that, in what would now be regarded as a conventional Romantic strategy, Hazlitt seeks a form of Pantheistic refuge in the 'hardness' found in Nature or, at least, the idealised version existing within his own imaginative landscape of the natural. The following passage from *Liber Amoris* is particularly reflective of this theme:

> The road to Tarbet is superb. It is on the very verge of the lake – hard, level, rocky with, with low stone bridges constantly flung across it, and fringed with birch trees, just then budding into spring, behind which, as though through a slight veil, you saw the huge shadowy form of Ben Lomond. It lifts its enormous but graceful bulk direct

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[60] 'T.C. to Thomas Murray 24 August 1824', *The Carlyle Letters Online: A Victorian Cultural Reference*, <carlyleetters.dukejournals.org.> [accessed 28/02/2019] Carlyle is, in this letter, equally scathing about another author relevant to the present study, namely Charles Lamb ('a ricketty creature in body and mind.')

[61] Wu, p. 433.

> from the edge of the water without any projecting lowlands, and has in this respect much the advantage of Skiddaw.[62]

There is a potential element of projected fantasy suggested here in this psychological landscape, with Hazlitt in awe of the scene with its sublime appeal. A fringe of budding birch trees perhaps signifying the virility of nature from which emerges the powerful and magnificent phallic symbol of the 'enormous but graceful bulk' of the mountain, seemingly personified by virtue of the presence of its Gaelic title. The use of images directly appropriated from nature to represent the 'beauty, size and vigour' of the human body was a trope that had been frequently employed in eighteenth century literature.[63] For example, Karen Harvey notes how the tree was accepted as a popular metaphor for the phallus. National or regional trees apparently differed in size, with 'Kent and Ireland boasting the most impressive specimens.'[64] Such gendered spatial codes in which the figurative and literal became incorporated and indistinguishable were themselves considered unexceptional in eighteenth-century erotica, as the original status of the body was 'replaced with an isomorphism between the body and places.'[65] Geographical features, even whole continents, were routinely assigned to delineate the human body. In *Liber Amoris*, Scotland in particular appears to be the repository of these sexualised landscapes, possibly because it is the country in which Hazlitt will receive his divorce thereby enabling a successful consummation of his passion for Sarah Walker. Hazlitt's rhetoric borders on the frenzied in his depiction of topographical highlights, transcending the standard Romantic notion of the sublime. He experiences an 'ecstatic vision' of Roslin Castle, which lies 'low in a rude, but sheltered valley, hid from the vulgar gaze.'[66]

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[62] Hazlitt, p. 85.
[63] Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 129.
[64] Harvey, p. 132
[65] Harvey, p. 171
[66] Hazlitt, p. 72

Ultimately, as with the process of writing about Sarah, the effect of the landscape serves merely to inflame and heighten Hazlitt's carnal fervour without, however, having the capacity to quench it: 'the noble scenery in this country mixes with my passion, and refines, but does not relieve it […] the river winded its dull, slimy way like a snake along the marshy ground.'[67] In this description, the sense of bathos is highlighted by the serpent, and serpentine imagery suggestive of frustrated sexual desire. The allusion is enhanced by Hazlitt's previous description of Sarah as a 'young witch' with 'serpent arms', a portrayal reminiscent of Part II of Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1800) in which the Baron announces to Lady Geraldine: 'With arms more strong than harp or song/Thy sire and I will crush the snake!' Significantly, the narrative poem then refers to another key trope of Hazlitt's, that of shrinkage: 'And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head/Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye.'[68] In a review purportedly written by Hazlitt in *The Examiner* (1816), Coleridge's poem was, ironically, dismissed as revealing 'something disgusting at the bottom of his subject.'[69]

The disappointment is exacerbated by the relief that open spaces and grand vistas have the capacity to provide Hazlitt from his confinement in an inn at Renton in Berwickshire, where he occupied a room for three months in the spring of 1822. Similarly, his visit to the outdoor location of the fight, near Hungerford in Berkshire, as described in the eponymous essay of 1822, enabled him to escape the stifling, repressive enclosure of his lodgings at Southampton Buildings, with the associations of restrictive and restricted social mores, and the tantalising yet equally tormenting presence of Sarah.[70] As a denizen of lower middle-class lodging

[67] Hazlitt, p. 74
[68] Hazlitt, p. 72 and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Christabel' in *The Portable Coleridge*, ed. by I.A. Richards, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p.124 and 125.
[69] *The Examiner* 2nd June 1816, <www.bl.uk/collection-items>,[accessed 14/3/2019]
[70] Hazlitt's obsession with pugilism can also be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim that element of masculinity lost in response to Sarah's rejection. 'The Fight' and its analogy with Hazlitt's relationship to Thomas Malthus is discussed in more detail in Chapter One.

houses, his occupancy would, ironically, be a permanent reminder of his precarious, transient social position.

In view of Hazlitt's previous lack of sexual fulfilment and suggested gender role reversal, it might not be solely conjecture to discern in this description an element of Freud's notorious 'penis envy'. Freud's classic definition of the condition naturally applies to young females: 'when she makes a companion with a playfellow of the other sex, she perceives that she has come off badly and she feels this as a wrong done to her and as a ground for inferiority.'[71] Yet, there can be perceived within Hazlitt's (previously documented) lament at his shrinking and un-manning at the hands of Sarah a certain similarity with Freud's further account of the process of penis envy in which Hazlitt has likewise undergone 'a momentous discovery […] which is […] destined to make him from that time forward fall a victim to envy' as he considers what he is lacking as both a man and a writer when others succeed where he has failed.[72] This is reinforced by what follows in the description of the road to Tarbet, namely a further celebration of thrusting, dominating images filling up the blank vista such as 'the point of a rock, the arch of a bridge' and finally and perhaps most significantly in view of Hazlitt's impotent sexual advances 'the Cobler, whose top is like a castle shattered in pieces and nodding to its ruin'. Therefore, this too finally turns out to be a disappointment despite the initial promise and lure of the scenery, once again thwarting Hazlitt's and the reader's expectations, and presented in the form of some suitably pedestrian prose as befitting such an anti-climax: 'the snow on the mountain would not let us ascend; and being weary of waiting

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[71] Sigmund Freud, 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex' in *On Sexuality: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works*, trans. by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), p. 320.
[72] Freud, p. 335.

and of being visited by the guide every two hours to let us know that the weather would not do, we returned.'[73]

Hazlitt's tone in this episode is reminiscent of William Wordsworth's description of unwittingly crossing the Alps at the Simplon Pass in the 1805 *Prelude,* in its sense of unfulfilled expectations and anti-climatic experience. The question as to whether Hazlitt had read, or had read to him, extracts from *The Prelude* as work-in-progress remains unresolved. Commentators such as Wu assume that Hazlitt was familiar with the text, citing, for example, Wordsworth's 1804 letter to Hazlitt in which he mentions 'The Poem of my own life'.[74] However, a note of caution is advisable, as while Hazlitt 'may have heard or read manuscript portions of what became *The Prelude*, as yet there is no decisive evidence.'[75] The essay, 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' (1823), does not illuminate the reader on this issue, although it does succeed in recapturing the sense of optimism Hazlitt experienced on first meeting Coleridge and Wordsworth at Nether Stowey in 1798. Wordsworth, in particular, imbued Hazlitt with an initial wonder and enchantment which remained with him for at least twenty-five years, despite the occasional disagreement over, for example, the quality of the former's 1817 poem 'The Excursion'. Hazlitt rhapsodises 'I thought within myself, 'with what eyes these poets see nature!' and ever after, when I saw the sun-set stream upon the object facing it, conceived I had made a discovery, or thanked Mr Wordsworth for having made one for me!'[76] However, Hazlitt was also aware that the literary success and recognition that the authors of the *Lyrical Ballads* had achieved had, conversely, eluded him: 'so have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on

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[73] Hazlitt, p. 85.
[74] Wu, p. 90.
[75] Kevin Gilmartin, *William Hazlitt: Political Essayist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 294, note 35.
[76] William Hazlitt, 'My First Acquaintance With Poets', in *Selected Writings* ed. by Ronald Blythe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 59.

what pleased me best.'[77] More importantly, what literary capital he had accrued would soon diminish considerably after the publication of *Liber Amoris*. Yet, he recognised and shared the despair of his fellow author. In 1818, five years prior to the publication of *Liber Amoris*, he alluded in the essay 'Mr Wordsworth' to the sense of bitterness pervading Wordsworth's reaction towards the critical response to his poems: 'the sense of injustice and of undeserved ridicule sours the temper and narrows the views. To have produced works of genius, and to find them neglected or treated with scorn, is one of the heaviest trials of human patience.'[78] In the same essay Hazlitt mentions how 'the forked Skiddaw hovers in the distance' – significantly the landscape he will return to describe in *Liber Amoris*.[79]

The Simplon episode represents a prominent topos (to borrow Morton Paley's term) within Book VI of *The Prelude* as Wordsworth relates the 'deep and genuine sadness then I felt' as he realises that, along with his companion Robert Jones, he has unknowingly crossed the Alps.[80] Kenneth Johnston interprets this as a symbol of a deeper personal disenchantment and alienation: 'it had to do not simply with *crossing* but with being lost, or with losing control of their carefully crafted itinerary. This loss quickly intensified in Wordsworth's mind into thoughts of losing one's way more generally, losing one's way in life, or even losing one's mind.'[81] This sense of malaise is heightened by the description of the 'narrow chasm [...] this gloomy Pass' into which Wordsworth then descends, a potential manifestation of a dark

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[77] Hazlitt, 'Poets', p. 56. However, it is difficult to agree with Jon Cook who discerns, nihilistically, in this extract 'an existence that somehow failed to happen.' Hazlitt's disappointment is, after all, tempered by a series of appealing palliatives. See Jon Cook, *Hazlitt in Love: a fatal attachment*, (London: Short Books, 2007), p. 187.
[78] Hazlitt, 'Mr Wordsworth' in ed. by Blythe, p. 230.
[79] Hazlitt, p. 224.
[80] Wordsworth, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind (Text of 1805)*, ed. by Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 98. See the introduction to Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[81] Alan Gardiner, *The Poetry of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Bryan Loughrey (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p. 91.

sub-conscious: ‘And every where along the hollow rent/Winds thwarting winds, bewilder’d and forlorn.’[82] However, Wordsworth might be said to transcend this individual set-back. For example, Gardiner notes how in ‘the magnificent climax to the passage Wordsworth finally realizes that what the landscape expresses is nature’s eternal life and ultimate unity.’ In contrast, Hazlitt’s woeful conclusion, on meeting Sarah, to his Tarbet sojourn ‘all this appeared to me very unsatisfactory and evasive’ might serve as an epigram for both the frustrated author and the reading experience.[83]

In any psychoanalytical reading, such as those offered above, the note of caution urged by Stephen Greenblatt in ‘Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture’ (1986) ought to be borne in mind, with the reader or critic not being unwittingly seduced by ‘the universalist claims of psychoanalysis (which) are unruffled by the indifference of the past to its categories.’[84] Goldfarb summarises the sceptical viewpoint as being ‘intellectually aware of the pitfalls of the intellectual fallacy.’[85] Greenblatt does, however, crucially add ‘it is only when proprietary rights to the self have been secured [...] that the subject of psychoanalysis, both its method and the materials upon which it operates, is made possible.’[86] In the case of Hazlitt, and De Quincey, the application of a psychoanalytical approach is relevant and appropriate given Greenblatt’s caveat. The authors of both *Liber Amoris* and *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* are products of the Enlightenment Age, a period in which the nature of the self is questioned, individual autonomy advocated and the creation of imaginary and numerous selves has therefore become a real possibility. In Lacanian terms, the mirror which is held up to the self and in which the self may be reflected, and by implication fractured, has been

[82] Wordsworth, p. 100.
[83] Gardiner, p. 91.
[84] Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in early modern culture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 183.
[85] Goldfarb, p. 59.
[86] Greenblatt, p. 185.

designed and created. For Greenblatt, Man as an object operating rigidly within a set of fixed hierarchical and structural constraints and relations which in turn define his identity, is undergoing a transformation into man as an individual subject who is the producer of his own sense of self – and worth. Furthermore, there remains the persistent premise that:

> The elusive significance we call 'meaning' can itself change with time. Neither language nor learning remains constant over the years, and thus 'meaning' will be affected by both words and concepts as they […] become newly available.[87]

An inability to expand his text in a manner reminiscent of De Quincey is a characteristic present in Hazlitt's 1821 essay 'Why Distant Objects Please'. In this instance he is usurped in the field of letters, although once more the treatment of the subject is potentially symbolic and phallic. The physical and metaphysical spheres inter-act with each other as perfunctory authorial performance is juxtaposed with images of masculine sexual imagery. Namely, the 'childish amusements' of kite flying resulting from 'the twinge at my elbow, the flutter and palpitation, with which I used to let go the string of my own, as it rose into the air and towered among the clouds' and here both the tenor and the vehicle of the metaphoric function are that of expansiveness. Yet, tellingly, Hazlitt admits that he is unable to 'enlarge' any further as 'Mr Leigh Hunt has treated it so well in a paper in the *Indicator*.'[88] The essay referred to here, 'A Nearer View Of Some Of The Shops', allowed Hunt to indulge in some boyhood nostalgia inspired by the vendors of toys and endowed, like Hazlitt's recollections, with virile male symbolism:

> There it is, in that corner of the window,- the same identical sword, to all appearance, which kept us awake the first night behind our pillow […] the shape and appurtenances of the sword being genuine, the whole sentiment of massacre is in it's (*sic*) wooden blade, as if it were steel of Damascus.

[87] Goldfarb, p. 63.
[88] William Hazlitt, 'Why Distant Objects Please', in *Selected Writings*, both p. 152.

Yet the theme of unrealised expectations is also present as Hunt later refers to the disappointment awaiting the visitor to those sculptors' shops who lure their customers by displaying artificial fruit: 'the incautious epicure who plunges his teeth into a "painted snow-ball" in Italy […] can hardly receive so jarring a balk to his gums, as the bare apprehension of a bite at a stone peach.'[89] The expression employed literally by Hunt, 'a bite at a stone peach', might equally serve as an appropriate metaphor for the outcome of Hazlitt's disillusioned romantic endeavours. Furthermore, even in the case of such a seemingly innocuously titled essay, ('Why Distant Objects Please') themes of impotence and frustrated hope are revealed as major tropes within Hazlitt's writing. These are similar to those present in *Liber Amoris,* albeit tinged with nostalgia for his north Shropshire childhood:

> If I see a row of cabbage-plants or of peas or beans coming up, I immediately think of those which I used so careful to water of an evening at W-m, (*sic*) when my day's tasks were done, and of the pain with which I saw them droop and hang down their leaves in the morning light.[90]

Thus, fifteen years after Hazlitt left Wem (in 1793) and then fifteen years after he was rejected by Sarah Walker (in 1808) he was still, apparently, nursing a powerful sense of loss in 'Why Distant Objects Please' and *Liber Amoris*. Moreover, both texts employ a language of enfeeblement which is rich, ironically, with potent and symbolic connotations.

Wu has commented how, on publication in May 1823, *Liber Amoris* was 'vilified […] for ideological reasons: by discrediting its author, Tory journalists deprived liberalism of its most articulate spokesman.'[91] Critics of Hazlitt's radical, republican and, most dangerously, pro-Bonaparte politics were eager to exploit the (admittedly ready-made) opportunity to add

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[89] Leigh Hunt, 'A Nearer View of Some of the Shops', *The Indicator* No.XXXV, June 7th 1820, (London: Joseph Appleyard, 1822), pp. 273-274 and p. 274.
[90] Hazlitt, *Objects*, pp. 151-152.
[91] Duncan Wu, *William Hazlitt: The First Modern Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 338.

further to his public humiliation and embarrassment. However, not all such reaction can be dismissed as a form of expedient political strategy. The text was read morally too, and for many the sense of shock and revulsion was genuine, exacerbated by the author's openness about his identity. Despite the text being published anonymously, Wu states 'Hazlitt's essays had been alluding to Sarah for months, and reviewers knew the book was his before it reached the bookshops.'[92] For Tom Paulin, however, any sense of embarrassment created by Hazlitt in *Liber Amoris* results rather from a *failure* to fulfil political, and indeed linguistic, expectations. Hazlitt, therefore, occupies the unfortunate and unenviable position of facing hostile criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. He is cast in the role of being either overly, or insufficiently, radical. Hence, at times, Hazlitt's obsession with Sarah subverts and depreciates his professed radicalism and republicanism as revealed by his ideological mis-application of lexical and semantic forms, all for relatively trivial personal gain, to someone occupying a lower social and sexual status within the strict hierarchical and patriarchal limits imposed upon early nineteenth century society. For instance, Hazlitt insists that her power over him is 'that of a sovereign grace and beauty', while bemoaning how Sarah's supposedly 'tyrannous love sits throned, crowned with her graces, silent and in tears.[93] Hazlitt also misappropriates those, paradoxically, sacred secular signifiers of the ideals of the French revolutionary, and post-revolutionary, era when he tactlessly reminds Sarah that 'you sit on my knee and put your arms around my neck, and […] let me take other liberties with you.'[94] This crude distortion of political terminology ('liberties') sits extremely uncomfortably with the image of a man purportedly so distraught after the French defeat at Waterloo that he 'put on a crepe band as a sign of mourning, and went about unwashed, unshaved and in a state of intoxication for several week', believing that 'Bonaparte had been the champion of liberty

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[92] Wu, p. 336.

[93] Such an inversion of the normal connotations of power and position also manifests itself when the anti-monarchist Hazlitt exhibits alarmingly royalist tendencies, being driven to express extremes of loyalty to Sarah whose 'queen-like grace' he swears 'to live and die for.' (p. 58.)

[94] Hazlitt, p. 49

and enlightenment.'[95] Hazlitt's commitment to the cause and ideology of the Emperor had not diminished during the years following 1815. He continued to laud the 'greatest man in modern history' in 'On Great and Little Things', especially admiring his fortitude when, unlike Hazlitt himself, he faced his 'reverses of fortune with gay magnaminity.'[96] In his politicisation of confession, Hazlitt appears determined to maintain the link, established by Rousseau, between radical politics and avowedly sexual confession. This is something avoided by the Tory school of confessors such as De Quincey or Hogg, whose personal foibles are highlighted via the lascivious themes of drug or occult related narratives.

Paulin is dismissive of Hazlitt's 'stilted' style, citing examples such as the descriptions of Sarah as an 'enchanting little trembler' and the (according to Paulin) 'obnoxiously overblown' declaration: 'though art an angel of light, shadowing me with thy softness.' Furthermore, he compares Hazlitt's choice of register unfavourably to Richardson's characterisation in *Clarissa* (1748), while casting Hazlitt in the role of ideological and class traitor:

> But where Richardson reveals the cheap, nasty vulgarity of these encroaching terms of endearment, Hazlitt merely assumes the persona of the aristocratic rapist […] By adopting such language, Hazlitt has transgressed very seriously. He has joined the royalist enemy and adopted its kitsch language.[97]

Both Wu's and Paulin's analyses are relevant in underscoring the extent of the wretched Hazlitt's failure. In particular, his impotence due to a humiliating lack of achievement (not, unfortunately, alleviated by the passage of time) both as a virile male and a potent writer. His failure in the former role had serious consequences for Hazlitt the author as these two strands

[95] White, p. 12
[96] Hazlitt, 'On Great and Little Things', p. 138.
[97] Tom Paulin, *The Day-Star of Liberty: William Hazlitt's Radical Style* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), all p. 44.

of his life - literary and sexual success - have effectively become inextricably linked. The 'line in Hazlitt's writing between theatre and life had long since become indistinct,' especially as his letters to P.G. Patmore detailing his pursuit of Sarah which form the basis of Part II of Liber *Amoris* are written in 'a highly conscious literary manner.' [98] The reader might concur with Hazlitt, on the level of a literary response at least, when he states: 'the Pamelas and Fannys of Richardson and Fielding make my blood tingle.'[99] But his own representation of love between the social classes in *Liber Amoris* is more likely to elicit a reaction similar to the impact of his love-letter to Sarah, having 'about as much effect as if they had been addressed to stone.'[100]

Hazlitt is disingenuous in his attitude towards his readership. In his diary of March 1823, he appears thrilled when his friend 'F', on having asked for a newspaper or a book from Sarah, is given 'the *Round Table*, with my name and sincere regards in the title-page.'[101] This, however, is quickly followed by a sense of dejection when he is informed that she cannot recall her favourite essay from the collection. Yet, his official pronouncement on female admirers given the previous February is decidedly more curmudgeonly: 'if I know she has read anything I have written, I cut her acquaintance immediately. This sort of literary intercourse with me passes for nothing.' His further portentous remark that instead he 'would have her read my soul' is contradicted by the fact he married Isabella Bridgwater, a devotee of his writing, in the spring of 1824.[102]

[98] Butler, p. 215.
[99] Hazlitt, 'On Great and Little Things', p. 145
[100] Hazlitt, p. 145.
[101] Hazlitt, 'Journal', p. 110.
[102] Hazlitt, p. 145.

As noted, contemporary reaction to *Liber Amoris* was hardly encouraging. Negative reviews appeared in, amongst others, The *New European Magazine*, *Literary Register* and *The London Literary Gazette*. The *Gazette* was scathing in its description of the author as an 'oaf' who profaned 'the name of love' and who dealt in 'low and disgusting ribaldry.' Sarah was also derided and dismissed as a woman who 'seems to have been exceedingly diverted with the whimsicalities and sentimentalities of his ridiculous sweethearting.' Such an injunction, presumably, applied equally to any reader seduced by this 'conjunction of vulgar sensuality and Cockney affectation.' The reviewer deviously combines moral outrage with prurient intrusiveness through the use of both the moral and linguistic imperative, claiming: 'this part of the subject is rather disgusting; but to expose its mixed filth and utter despicableness we must cite a few passages.'[103] *The Literary Register* continued such vilification, even when considering later works by Hazlitt. For instance, in the July 1823 review of *Characteristics: in the Manner of Rochefoucault's Maxims*, the journal sniped that Hazlitt's 'indecent exhibition of himself as the modern Pygmalion, called aloud for the castigation and contempt it almost universally received.'[104] Unsurprisingly, it was *John Bull* which exhibited the most vitriol in its denunciation of Hazlitt's text. Not content with 'laughing at this cockney's stupidity and folly', it raged against the 'innate stupidity, grossness, vulgarity and impudence' allegedly exhibited within the pages of *Liber Amoris*. Finally, having considered the 'most degraded practical sensuality, the most inveterate ignorance, and the most depraved principle', the reviewer, having exhausted his range of superlatives and his sense of moral indignation, concluded 'it becomes necessary to take a double view' of this 'abominable struggle against taste, decency, and morality.'[105] Perhaps

[103] *The London Literary Gazette, Journal of Belles Lettres, Arts, Sciences, Etc.*, No.332, Saturday, May 31. 1823. Hathi Trust Digital Library. <https://babel.hathitrust.org> [accessed 26/2/2019]
[104] *The Romantics Reviewed: Contemporary Reviews of British Romantic Writers. Part C: Shelley, Keats and London Radical Writers, Vol. 2*, ed. by Donald Reiman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 553.
[105] *John Bull*, 15 June 1823, <www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0001945/18230615/020/004#> [26/2/2019]

more significant, in light of the contention that confession, as in the case of De Quincey's reliance on opium, has the paradoxical potential to be both an expanding and containing medium, is Paulin's withering criticism of the inauthentic or restricted nature of Hazlitt's self-writing. Hence he damns Hazlitt's literary impotence as surely as Sarah damned his sexual advances, marking a dual failure on the part of the erstwhile writer-romancer. Furthermore, the crux of this present thesis is supported by this key passage:

> There is a nihilistic, self-flagellating desperation, a having-it-all-ways irony, a masturbatory, taut flaccidity, in the recycled clichés which comprise *Liber Amoris*. This is an exploration of imaginative extremity which never in all its sequence of dead surprises achieves an authentic image or cadence even for a moment.[106]

Evidently Hazlitt had failed woefully in his enterprise, displaying impotence both literally, in failing to win the affections of the object of his passion, and symbolically, in failing to gain the approval of readers and critics. His attempt to construct a sympathetic public persona through the revelation of private sexual humiliation has still not succeeded, at least in the eyes of Paulin. This is in marked contrast to the considered reception received by De Quincey's engagement with opium and his self-propagation via the creation of the more favourably received 'opium-eater.'

Both De Quincey's *Confessions* and Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* share motifs and literary tropes in addition to the ever-present theme and threat of impotence. This is, in a sense, to be expected given their similarity in terms of biographical background. Both writers were the product of a new, rising middle-class, De Quincey the son of a Manchester merchant while Hazlitt's father was a non-conformist minister born in Ireland. Each writer desired or married women who were considered their social inferiors. In the case of De Quincey, his wife was Margaret Simpson the daughter of a Westmorland farmer. While, as we have seen, though not attaining

[106] Paulin, p. 45.

the position of his wife, Hazlitt was infatuated with Sarah Walker whose father was his landlord. Dart, arguably, over-contextualises the nature of Hazlitt's desire, seeing the servant-girl as a figure of emergent social possibilities, polite yet approachable, 'explicitly imagined as a creature of revolutionary potential' and representing a new 'intimacy and transparency between the sexes.'[107] Such a theoretical historicist reading is resisted by another interest Hazlitt shared with De Quincey. Each had a predilection for, at the very least, the company of prostitutes. This penchant itself has implications for the wider theme of impotence, in its connotations of an ultimately weakening drive which is unrequited and insatiable. Morrison refers to De Quincey's 'taste for prostitutes' which he acquired whilst still a pupil at Manchester Grammar School and Hazlitt likewise according to Wu 'saw prostitutes regularly […] visiting the knocking shops or inviting female guests to his rooms.'[108] Hazlitt's position is further complicated by the open question as to whether he was responsible for encouraging Charles Lamb to engage in this particular pursuit.

Hazlitt, furthermore, shares De Quincey's penchant for role play. Indeed, his choice of phrasing when, for instance, describing his position of supplicant is remarkably similar to De Quincey's when he insists 'I grew idolatrous, and I would have kneeled to her.'[109] He further casts himself in the role of self-abasing suitor: 'I was still to be tantalized, tortured, made the cruel sport of one, for whom I would have sacrificed all.' Or, when adopting the persona of the wretched prisoner of love in a gothic narrative via the alliterative declarative: 'I am now enclosed in a dungeon of despair.' In the latter case, the confinement motif is clearly evident with its lack of potential for expansion, while the former statement appears not so much as a strategy for self-proliferation via various guises, but rather a reinforcement of the suspicion

[107] Dart, p. 10.
[108] Morrison, p. 60 and Wu, pp. 59-60.
[109] Hazlitt, p. 89.

that there may be more than a hint of masochism in his continual failed pursuit of Sarah. This possibility, moreover, is supported by the manner in which Hazlitt almost revels in an elegiac evocation of his passive repose in death. He employs images which are suggestive of his impending demise when he remarks 'I am grown spectral' and which equate his passion for Sarah with death: 'if she was in a burning fever, I would kiss her, and drink death.'[110] Finally, he fantasies over the possibility of a shared grave in a pre-figuration of the Freudian theory of Thanatos or death-wish.

> As I trod the green mountain turf, oh! how I wished to be laid beneath it – in one grave with her – that I might sleep with her in that cold bed, my hand in hers, and my heart for ever still – while worms should taste her sweet body, that I had never tasted.[111]

The sexual motif is particularly marked here, equating the total surrender to death, through the symbolism of venereal disease, with the final consummation of the relationship. Yet, ultimately, this represents an outcome as fruitless and unsatisfactory for both Hazlitt and the reader as De Quincey's failed search around London for the elusive prostitute, Ann.

Notwithstanding the fact that, given their upbringing, both De Quincey and Hazlitt would have experienced a similar education there is a certain noticeable correspondence in allusions between the *Confessions* and *Liber Amoris*. Such references suggest – if not actual plagiarism – at least a strong familiarity on the part of Hazlitt with the work of De Quincey. Ironically, in November 1823, a letter from Hazlitt appeared in the *London Magazine* insisting that De Quincey had taken Hazlitt's argument about Malthus, published as a *Reply to Malthus* (1807), and subsequently claimed the theory as his own. This was something which in fact De Quincey, reluctantly, accepted in the next edition of the *Magazine* by downplaying any

[110] Hazlitt, p. 89. and p. 64.
[111] Hazlitt, p. 74.

notion of intentionality in the borrowing. There appears an element of hypocrisy here, on the part of Hazlitt, given for example that the same Old French phrase appears in both the 1823 *Liber Amoris* as well as the original 1821 edition of the *Confessions*: 'honi soit qui mal y pense'; and although Hazlitt does present it in translation the coincidence is still striking.[112] The context of the quotation is precisely the same, addressing the propriety of the writer's relationship with a lower-class female and tantalizingly concealing more than it reveals. Perhaps Hazlitt's reference to this as an 'old saying' is a deliberate ploy to deflect any accusations of borrowing. Furthermore, in *Liber Amoris* Hazlitt also includes strategies of self-expansion similar to De Quincey such as the manner in which he recasts his opening dramatic narrative of Part I into the 'Letters to C.P-, ESQ.' which constitutes Part II. In terms of a displacement strategy for avoiding more substantial writing this could be considered as even more of a short-cut than anything attempted by De Quincey, given that the published text of *Liber Amoris* is under one hundred pages long. In Part II Hazlitt also includes self-referential remarks about the text he is composing, again resembling De Quincey. For example the comment in one letter mirrors the introspective meta-autobiography of the opium-eater: 'I have begun a book of our conversations […] which I call LIBER AMORIS.'

Perhaps to consider the inter-textuality in a more generous light, Hazlitt can be regarded as a co-conspirator alongside De Quincey in his use of unattributed quotations from Shakespeare. De Quincey, as we have seen, invokes *The Tempest* while Hazlitt employs his knowledge of *Othello* to great effect when describing a conversation with Sarah Walker's father; 'So I told him the whole story, 'what conjurations, and what mighty magic I won his daughter with.'' A major symbolic reference Hazlitt makes to one of Sarah's responses – 'This, I own, was the unkindest cut of all' – is, tellingly, an unacknowledged line from *Julius Caesar*.

[112] De Quincey in ed.by Lindop, p. 57 and Hazlitt, p. 76.

The area in which the two writers differ most prominently is in terms of their political views, which, as we have seen, inform the particular focus of their confessions. De Quincey was an unforgiving reactionary and monarchist, whereas Hazlitt was both an egalitarian republican and supporter of the French revolution. Therefore, there is a sense in which Hazlitt is dealt an appropriate double-blow in *Liber Amoris* when he destroys his bust of Napoleon in a moment of rage at Sarah's rejection, in an incident described as equally 'frightening and farcical': 'I then dashed the little Buonaparte on the ground, and stamped upon it, as one of her instruments of mockery.' [113] The destruction of this icon, which had earlier and symbolically had its sword broken, ultimately represents both Hazlitt's romantic-phallic defeat and Napoleon's military defeat. Hazlitt's figure of Napoleon is made of bronze, the toughness of which substance renders its act of destruction even more emphatic and symbolically charged. Whilst Hazlitt's desecration of his hero highlights the extent of his despair, Simon Bainbridge notes that the considerable industry which grew up around manufacturing busts of Napoleon was by no means confined to those of radical or Jacobin sympathies. Staffordshire pottery figures of the emperor continued to outsell representations of Wellington and Nelson well into the Victorian era. Such statues performed the function of allowing the British public to domesticate and internalise 'its greatest enemy', thereby 'suggesting that in the century after Waterloo, the war with France was ongoing, that Britain continued to face the same enemy, and that this war was fought within the homes of the nation itself rather than at its frontiers.'[114]

[113] Hazlitt, p. 60, p. 91 and p. 96. Dart, p. 14, and Hazlitt p. 90.
[114] Simon Bainbridge, 'Battling Bonaparte after Waterloo: Re-enactment, Representation and 'The Napoleon Bust Business' in ed. by Neil Ramsay and Gillian Russell *Tracing War in British Enlightenment and Romantic Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 144 and p. 146. Bainbridge charts this pervasive symbol of the nineteenth century, which he sees as culminating in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes' story *The Six Napoleons*, set in 1900 although published in 1904.

Hazlitt directly links the restoration of his statue with the restitution of his love for Sarah. However, the connotation might not exactly be the same for Sarah, who is reminded of a former lover by the bust's profile. For Hazlitt, in contrast, her commitment to getting the 'little image' mended was like the 'petrification of a human face in the softest moment of passion.'[115] The ambiguity of the verb choice 'petrification' is revealing. It refuses the nature of the statue itself which, ironically, is anything but fixed or permanent, appearing almost randomly as a motif throughout the text.[116] Yet it is a pivotal topos, reflecting how dramatically the 'Little Emperor' and Hazlitt's own sexual endeavours have failed to live up to expectations. While similar to Wordsworth's disillusionment with the betrayal and outcome of the French revolution, the defeat at Waterloo is also a painful personal metaphor for Hazlitt. Overall, the statue has the potential to represent a triad of symbols, namely, the failure of idealism, Hazlitt's self-destructive impulses and the unresponsive, cold qualities of Sarah as love-object. Once again, 'On Great and Little Things' anticipates and illuminates the correlation between Hazlitt and his twin idols. Napoleon, like Hazlitt, was 'mad at uncertain forebodings of disaster, yet resigned to its consummation.'[117] Perhaps Napoleon was appealing to Hazlitt in that the doctrine of Bonapartism gave the *arriviste* middle-class English writer a sense of self-worth, offering a model of masculinity which 'did not celebrate aristocracy, breeding or physical status but genius, enthusiasm and individual energy.'[118]

George Steiner identifies what he considers the *zietgest* which afflicts Hazlitt and which the latter perceives as surrounding him, by drawing comparison with another author writing at the end of the long Nineteenth Century:

> A century apart, Hazlitt and Hardy both discern in the spirit of the modern age a prevailing nervousness, a falling away of the imaginative. Something is lacking of the

[115] Hazlitt, p. 100.
[116] See Grayling, p. 297.
[117] Hazlitt, p. 139
[118] Dart, p. 14.

> superb confidence needed of a man to create a major stage character, to endow some presence within himself with the carnal mystery of gesture and dramatic speech.[119]

Here, it is noticeable that Steiner employs sexually-laden lexis and intimations of masculinity and impotence to describe Hazlitt's sense of malaise. Furthermore, Steiner then relates this literary failure to the prevailing disillusionment resulting from the failure of the French Revolution, transforming as it did into a Reign of Terror and the vainglorious and ultimately fruitless exploits of Napoleon.

The concomitant of this failure in radical politics was a decline in the associated discourse of overtly sexualised confession, as highlighted by the hostile response to, and subsequent vilification of, the author of *Liber Amoris*. Yet perhaps there is an intrinsic paradox, in that Hazlitt ultimately achieves a form of success through failure. If he had succeeded with Sarah there would be no quest, no literary and personal tumult and turmoil. Equally, if De Quincey had found Ann then his narrative would lack the power and poignancy that it possesses. There is power and force inherent in the narrative of failure and of unrequited love that proves purposeful and absorbing for the writer and reader in a way that conquest would not.

Through the essays of Charles Lamb, writing as Elia, the confessional genre would simultaneously reaffirm and reinvigorate itself via the appropriation and distortion of another physical craving, that of over-eating and a celebration of the joy of digestion. Examples of Lamb's particular form of culinary confession and obsession, the aetiology of which forms the focus of chapter four, had been published prior to, and parallel with, details of Hazlitt's sexual proclivities. While having pre-dated *Liber Amoris*, the pleasures of gastronomic over-

[119] George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 121.

indulgence now, paradoxically, superseded libidinal excess as a literary stratagem, as well as, at times, reflecting its darker, and more sinister, manifestations.[120]

[120] Lamb's essays 'Edax on Appetite' and 'Hospita on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasure of the Palate' were both published in 1811. *Essays of Elia* and *Last Essays of Elia* were published in 1823 and 1833 respectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIGESTING LAMB AND THE DANGERS OF WRITING UPON DRINK

The reputation of Charles Lamb is secured upon his output of ‘appealing and slightly eccentric ‘‘occasional’’ essays’, which were published in the *London Magazine* from 1820 until 1825.[1] The subject of these articles primarily reflected the traditional, and superficially incidental, interests of the late Romantic middle-class gentleman, such as drinking, smoking and eating albeit alongside more esoteric subjects such as the East India House. In terms of historical specificity, situated on the cusp of Romantic and Victorian sensibilities, Lamb’s discourse embedded modes of cultural practice which were in the process of being displaced and re-negotiated as key referents in defining the demarcations and status of the gentleman. Dominant narratives of carefree indulgence and excess were remodelled through a ‘change in manners […] as French refinement and evangelical religion brought more delicacy and circumspection to public behaviour.’[2] Philip Mason notes that while the term ‘gentleman’ had traditionally carried both moral and social connotations, it was the former that predominated as the nineteenth century progressed. The gentleman ‘must live […] with self-respect, performing his dues […] upright, of unblemished reputation.’[3]

In this chapter a reading of Lamb is proposed which shows him resisting such emerging and more refined cultural tropes, instead actively subverting these motifs and revealing a darker, unhealthier aspect to his gastronomic introspection. Indeed, it is possible to place both Lamb and his subject-matter as a point on a conventional literary trajectory, which includes authors such as Geoffrey Chaucer, Francois Rabelais and Henry Fielding. The tradition continues up to archetypal post-modern iconoclastic protagonists and narrators utilised by Martin Amis,

[1] Charles Lamb, *Selected Prose*, ed. by Adam Phillips (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2013), p. xi.
[2] Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 299.
[3] Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (London: Pimlico, 1993), p. 20. Mason, perhaps, utilises archaic prose to emphasise his point.

such as John Self in *Money* (1984), or Keith Talent in *London Fields* (1989). This chapter will begin by focussing on Lamb's representation of eating in essays such as 'Edax on Appetite' (1811) and 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' (1822), including the latter article's analogies with Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), before considering the trope of drinking in 'Confessions of a Drunkard' (1822).

Autobiographical descriptions of eating and drinking reflect a literal expansion or inflation on the part of the author, as an over-indulgence in food and alcohol provides a ready-made and exploitable subject-matter with which to magnify their writing. As with De Quincey and the label of 'Opium-eater', Lamb might prefer the resulting unflattering epithets to the ignominy of obscurity as a writer. Lamb, in effect, invites a form of dual approbation: from the emerging temperance movement in general, and for his ultimate addiction to the oppressive brandy in particular. As F.M.L. Thompson argues, in the early part of the nineteenth century, whilst the immorality of drink undermined 'character, religion, the work ethic, and family responsibilities […] immorality was reserved for spirits'.[4] Adam Phillips also highlights the importance of such consumption-centric narratives as authored by Lamb: 'food (and sex) […] fads are akin to our dreams […] they link us to our histories and our physiologies […] They are redolent with meaning.'[5] Furthermore, Phillips offers a potential insight into the function served by such elaborate food fantasies, namely the eroticising of food as a strategy for coping with trauma:

> Something can be done to one's hunger akin to what we call sexualisation. In some kinds of sexualisation it is as though something traumatic is evoked by an object, and that this is unconsciously transformed into sexual fantasy and desire, as a form of self-

[4] F.M.L Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Britain, 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 309.
[5] Phillips, 'On Eating and Preferring Not To', p. 290.

> cure […] the person with an eating disorder (has) not sexualised the occasion or relationship; instead they have, for want of a better word, appetized it.[6]

Such analysis is particularly relevant and revealing given certain key biographical details of Lamb's life. Lamb suffered rejection by two women, Ann Simmons in 1795 and Fanny Kelly in 1819, and furthermore, he had the undoubtedly distressing requirement of coping with his sister Mary's madness.[7] She had stabbed their mother to death when Lamb was twenty one and thereafter he assumed responsibility for his unstable sibling.[8] Moreover, he had to contend with the restrictions imposed on his creativity by the painful necessity of earning a living due to his unassuming background. His father had worked his way up from the position of footman to barrister's assistant, and Lamb himself had only been able to attend Christ's Hospital School through the sponsorship of Samuel Salt (like 'Lamb' another appetitive name). Salt was his father's employer and a Whig MP. Thereafter, as Phillips notes, 'all Lamb's working life was taken up by his routine employment […] all his writing […] done after hours.'[9] The post itself was no sinecure. Wu notes that he worked in his office 'nine hours a day, six days a week' for thirty-three years.[10] While he did attempt to humanise and improve his situation, essentially self-denial in reality would not be matched by a corresponding self-denial in his writing. There would be no stinting on the expression and development of personal tropes and mythologies which would be cultivated until both Lamb and his reader alike were satiated.

Lamb utilises, as well as expands upon, an established trope of food and digestion as a metaphor for the reading process. The association is evident, for instance, in the death of Error in Canto One of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590): 'her vomit full of books and

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[6] Phillips, p. 294.
[7] It is significant to note that Lamb authored an article entitled 'A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People' (1822), in which it is hard not to detect a hint of sour grapes, as opposed to parody or humour: 'Nothing is to me more distasteful than that entire complacency and satisfaction which beam in the countenance of a new-married couple.'
[8] Phillips, Introduction to Lamb, *Prose*, pp. xii-xiii.
[9] Phillips in *Prose*, p.xiii.
[10] Wu p. 757.

papers was', as well as the gorging on books in eighteenth-century satire.[11] Lamb conversely presents indigestion as inimical to successful literary composition. Likewise, an over-emphasis on contemplation results neither in reification nor deification of the common or mortal subject; rather it is a cerebral form of dyspepsia.[12] Lamb presents a more complex theme: namely, digestion as an indicator and symbolic synthesis of self, subjectivity and sexuality. All of these represent key definitions of identity and hence are central tenants of his confessional writing.

The analogy between eating and ensuring the preservation of self-identity is highlighted. For example, in 'Edax on Appetite' Lamb, writing under the alias of Edax, remarks 'my food […] was an indispensable necessary; I could as soon spared the blood in my veins, as have parted that with my companions.'[13] The pseudonym is deliberately chosen as a correlation of the authorial persona and subject-matter, being taken 'from the Latin adjective implying someone with a voracious appetite.'[14] Lamb, writing as Elia, in 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' extends the figurative exploration of food as life-blood by claiming broiling is the 'elder brother' to the 'art of roasting.'[15] Food is no longer merely valued for its sustaining qualities, but is elevated to a form of art. Paul Youngquist summarises the quintessential early nineteenth-century capitalist and individualistic approach towards the eating process as it acquires connotations that supersede the merely corporal - and corpulent: 'eating is the epitome of human agency both because it requires work and because that work […]

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[11] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. by A.C. Hamilton (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 36. Or, indeed, earlier, as Arkady Plotnitsky notes how 'Aeschylus once said that 'his tragedies are merely remnants (leftovers) of the great banquets of Homer.'' 'Beyond the Inconsumable' in ed. by Morton, p. 165.
[12] Timothy Morton, Preface to Morton (ed.) *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite: Eating Romanticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. xvi.
[13] Lamb, 'Edax on Appetite' in *Selected Prose*, p. 48.
[14] Claire Lamont, 'Charles Lamb, Food and Feasting' in *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* (The Charles Lamb Society: Spring 2015, No. 161), p. 6.
[15] Lamb, 'A Dissertation on Roast Pig' in *Selected Prose*, p. 163.

transforms common matter into personal property; giving all men a property in their own person.'[16]

Such a radical re-evaluation of the importance and status of the individual mirrors the transition within autobiography itself. The European tradition of self-writing as religious and confessional (such as in Saints Teresa and Augustine, St Thomas Aquinas and Calvin) is replaced by a humanistic, liberal and secular Western genre in the manner of Rousseau. This process is not necessarily the imposition of an opposing and monolithic world view. Rather, as Weineck argues, it represents a more subtle 'displacement of what constitutes' the 'religious', shifting towards a definition that places man, not God, at the centre of the universe. [17] A critical factor in this transformation is the newly found focus on the body's digestive functions. An individual ceases to be defined, and judged, by their relationship with God. Rather, in a move mirroring the transition from spiritual to corporal, a sense of self results from a trio of bodily activities, namely consuming, digesting and excreting. All three actions were obsessions of eighteenth-century satirical prints, deployed 'against the overmighty' while offering a 'taunting social commentary.'[18] William Wordsworth, in his sonnet 'The World Is Too Much With Us' (1807), had likewise observed humanity's perceived shift away from spirituality: 'late and soon/Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers/Little we see in Nature that is ours'.[19] Sexuality and sexual desire also formed an integral part of this shift, featuring predominantly, if distortedly, in Lamb's writings. Karen Harvey highlights the change occurring in the standard narratives of the eighteenth century:

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[16] Paul Youngquist, 'Romantic Dietetics! Or, Eating Your Way to a New You', in ed. by Morton p. 241.
[17] Weineck, pp. 36-37.
[18] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic, 2007), pp. 182-184.
[19] William Wordsworth, *The Major Works including The Prelude*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 270.

> The flesh had always been subordinate to the mind but as the Enlightenment progressed naturalistic and materialist philosophy transformed the hierarchical mind-body pairing and thus enhanced the status of the corporeal.[20]

These multi-faceted somatic properties might extend to the end product of writing, as Lamb comments about the outpourings of another orifice: 'not that which goes into a mouth desecrates a man, but that which comes out of it.'[21] This could be read as a rather self-referential and hence potentially dangerous aphorism, given for instance the colloquial register adopted at times by Lamb in his essays.

Lamb, in a manner similar to De Quincey, employs and develops the notion of eating in order to explore methods of figuring key themes of both literal and metaphorical expansion and restriction/contraction in his writing. Edax's ruse of sequentially visiting multiple friends for dinner is described as a means of attempting to garner a complete meal for his prodigious and ever-increasing appetite. However, his compulsion is destined never to be satisfied, resulting in a comment borrowed from Shakespeare, and spoken suitably enough by the hapless Hamlet, rather than Lamb's own persona: 'But alas! with me, increase of appetite truly grows by what it feeds.'[22] The original remark, alluding to Gertrude's attachment to Hamlet's father, contains a reference to sexual as well as digestive appetite. Ultimately, the potential here is for uncontrolled growth, both physically as regards the body, but perhaps more importantly, to a writer in the form of a body of work, via an opportunity to explore and reconfigure the rich literary vein of discourse on food. Such meta-commentary on the authorial implications of the ever-expanding appetite suggest that it is Lamb himself who is

[20] Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 199.
[21] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 53.
[22] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 49. and *Hamlet* 1.2 144-145.

directly quoting Hamlet, rather than merely ascribing the opinion to his Edax persona. This exploitation of appetite is precisely what Lamb continued to do for the next ten years, with other authors then following suit.

Thus tropes reflecting the interplay between eating and textual discourse permeate, but are not confined to, Lamb's journalism of the period. They represent a wider form of Romantic discursive formulation of the 1820s, present for example in the writing of Hazlitt, particularly 'My First Acquaintance with Poets' (1823) and 'Hot and Cold' (1826). In the former essay, Hazlitt co-opts several motifs which would be familiar to readers who are themselves acquainted with Lamb's articles. Poets often appear secondary to the culinary accounts and descriptions, for which Hazlitt reserves his most figurative rhetoric. At Nether-Stowey, Wordsworth's voice is analogous to 'a strong tincture [...] like the crust on wine.'[23] This is followed by the observation 'he instantly began to make havoc of the half of Cheshire Cheese on the table'.[24] Literary anecdotes are interspersed with fondly remembered meals, such as 'some excellent rashers of fried bacon and eggs.' The culmination of Hazlitt's walk to Linton on the Bristol Channel with Coleridge and John Chester is breakfasting 'luxuriously in an old-fashioned parlour on tea, toast, eggs and honey.'[25] Mention of a failed collaboration between Coleridge and Wordsworth on a prose-tale seems secondary and immaterial when set next to such glorious reminiscences. This homo-social and bountiful world of male poets is contrasted with the paucity of fare offered by Dorothy Wordsworth, who 'set before us a frugal repast', a situation only rectified by the arrival of her brother and concomitant

[23] Hazlitt, *The Fight and Other Writings*, ed. by Tom Paulin and David Chandler (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 259
[24] Hazlitt, p. 259.
[25] Hazlitt, p. 261 and p. 262.

nourishment when the writers 'quaffed our flip.'[26] Like Lamb, Hazlitt's treatment of appetite is multi-faceted. However, that which attracts Lamb, namely the dissolving of bifurcation between animals and humans, is a quality which repulses the more delicate and sensitive Hazlitt. In 'Hot and Cold' he applauds the desire 'to get rid of the idea of the living animal […] by all the disguises of cookery […] and by the artifice of changing the name of the animal into something different when it becomes food.'[27] Swine's meat, fetishized by Lamb, belongs in Hazlitt's opinion to the category of foods 'that stick in the throat and turn the stomach [...] The greater rankness of its flesh is accompanied by a corresponding irritability of surface […] a soreness to attack.'[28] Yet food, for all its capacity to disgust, remains a rich source of literary rumination, transforming beasts to eats in an act of creative transformation mirroring the writing process, as raw material is turned into a consumable end-product fit for literary consumption. The parallels between the methodology of literary and food production are highlighted even in an essay (borrowing from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)) ostensibly concerned with the respective hygienic merits, both moral and physical, of Protestants and Catholics.[29]

However, there are potential drawbacks in this choice of subject matter for the writer which Lamb alludes to when describing country towns and 'the kind of suppers which elderly ladies in those places have lying in petto in an adjoining parlour, next to that where they are entertaining'.[30] Significantly guests are then invited to 'sup upon what may emphatically be called *nothing*' during these 'shadowy reflections'.[31] Lamb's (writing again as 'Edax') ruminating on the nature of nothing-ness is, on one level, a comical indication of the

[26] Hazlitt, p. 257 and p. 260.
[27] Hazlitt, p. 449.
[28] Hazlitt, p. 452.
[29] For example, Swift refers to 'those detestable creatures […] those filthy Yahoos' in contrast to the Houyhnhnms who are both clean and civilised. The former, significantly, are described as feeding upon the 'flesh of some animals' which are 'asses and dogs, and now an then a cow dead by accident or disease.' Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (London: HarperCollins, 2010), pp. 222-223.
[30] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 51.
[31] Lamb, 'Edax', both p. 51.

enormity of his appetite, but perhaps also operates on a more metaphysical and meta-textual plain. For writing, like food, whilst substantial can also be regarded as ephemeral and requires constant replenishment. ‘Edax’, earlier in the essay, has referred to the ‘temporary fiction’ which his parents were unable to sustain, that his appetite was a corollary of his natural growing.[32] There is the possibility that a real fear is being expressed, though sublimated, here: a concern how such essays themselves are as transparent and inconsequential as the imaginary food at the table, that it is ultimately the reputation of their author which is ‘temporary’. This might reflect the wider anxieties of the autobiographical or confessional writer, desperate to delineate a specific or defined subjectivity which resists the immutable and ephemeral sense of mortal self. Indeed Lamb did end up, in Phillips’ description, ‘by all accounts a sad caricature’, a writer who was prodigiously reprinted within the Victorian era perhaps, yet whose current literary legacy, in comparison to his contemporaries Wordsworth, Coleridge and De Quincey, was meagre.[33]

Yet, food for Lamb, or rather *writing* about food, like opium for De Quincey, still offered multiple opportunities for literary expansion via the construction and adoption of roles, aliases and identities. This includes the possibility of subsuming his masculine self within a liberating feminine persona, which is in contrast to Coleridge’s opium-induced constipation which emasculates him by ‘reducing him to the condition of a labouring female.’[34] The pen-name Lamb adopted, ‘Hospita’, in ‘Hospita on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate’ (1811), allowed him not merely to collaborate with his sister Mary but to indulge in a fantasy of social elevation. For example, ‘Hospita’s’ rather regal opening declaration ‘My husband and I’, together with the ambiguous majestic use of the pronoun ‘we’. ‘Hospita’

[32] Lamb, ‘Edax’, p. 48.
[33] Phillips in *Selected Prose*, p.xi.
[34] Youngquist, p. 243.

also adopts archetypal or constructed female stances on her daughter's modesty and society debut: 'I am in good hopes […] she may be brought to endure the sight of a roasted chicken or a dish of sweetbreads, for the first-time, without fainting.'[35] Again, in a manner reminiscent of De Quincey, the subject matter of food not only enables Lamb to explore his own subjectivity but also the ancient, exotic and oriental. In Timothy Morton's phrase, 'as being becomes portable it becomes potable', with drinking, and eating choices rapidly acquiring a status of symbols of individual and national identity. [36] As nationalism rose and colonialism spread, food was increasingly used to define the self as well as other peoples and races through the national dish, while simultaneously representing a medium via which readers could experience other life-worlds. Thus meat-eating was a marker of Anglo-Saxon identity 'used in the ideology of John Bull and the Roast Beef of Old England'; breadfruit became a 'synecdoche for the Polynesian islands on which it flourished' after Cook's voyage in the late eighteenth century. Elia, likewise, in 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' (1822) transports his reader to Confucian China in a narrative journey which is both spatial and temporal, as Lamb peppers the essay with Latin idioms, for example '*mundus edibilis*' and '*princeps obsoniorum*'.[37] This intertextuality is itself then incorporated into portentous faux-Biblical statements: 'the strong man may batten on him, and the weakling refuseth not his mild juices.'[38] Citing an allusion in Pliny to a creature in Africa, Edax revels in a role-play of power, by all accounts denied Lamb in the mundane reality of his employment as a clerk in the East India Company:

[35] Charles Lamb, 'hospita on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate' in *Selected Prose*, p. 54 and p. 56. Certainly the expression 'My husband and I' *might* be viewed as a modern construct. However, as highlighted, it also represents a syntactical device which merges and disguises questions of authorship between Lamb and his sister.
[36] Timothy Morton, 'Let Them Eat Romanticism: Materialism, Ideology, And Diet Studies', in ed. by Morton p. 259.
[37] Morton, p. 6. and Timothy Fulford, 'The Taste of Paradise: The Fruits of Romanticism in the Empire', in ed. by Morton p. 41.
[38] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 168.

> A reptile […] whose venom is of that hot, destructive quality, that wheresoever it fastens its tooth, the whole substance of the animal that has been bitten in a few seconds is reduced to dust, crumbles away, and absolutely disappears; it is called […] the Annihilator […] *I am that snake, that Annihilator*.[39]

The similarity to the sense of all pervading and encompassing dominance, present in De Quincey's description of the orient in the *Confessions* (1821), is marked:

> I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Hindostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and her gods under the same law.[40]

Ultimately, however, like Napoleon's conquest and rule of Egypt, which provided a contemporary context for both authors, the power with which each writer is endowed is fleeting.[41] For Lamb, the image of the reduction of matter to dust, even from the perspective of the Annihilator, followed by its disappearance in its entirety is a potentially powerful symbol and reminder of the ever-present fate awaiting all authors. De Quincey too is immediately reminded of his fallibility and mortality as he enters a succession of contradictory and disorientating role-plays: 'I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed' resulting in his being 'laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.'[42] In both instances the negation and destruction is complete, the Annihilator and the Nilotic mud having achieved their nihilistic purpose of undermining those responsible for invoking their presence in the first place.

Here, the ambiguities contained within Lamb's references to the exotic are reflected in the nature of his duties as an import/export clerk, dealing routinely with overseas commodities

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[39] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 52.
[40] Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, Part II* in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey Volume 2*, ed. by Grevel Lindop (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2006), p.71.
[41] Napoleon's three year Egyptian campaign (1798-1801) is certainly ephemeral within a historical context.
[42] De Quincey, p. 71.

such as tea and opium. Lamb occupied a juncture between constructs of Englishness and oriental otherness, representing in effect the domestication of the exotic, and vice versa. By virtue of this seemingly innocuous task, Lamb is complicit in the imposition and codification of imperialist commodification. Yet, as a mere functionary he possesses a comparable power to the Annihilator that is simultaneously all-embracing yet ephemeral.

That eating and digestion are key tropes in defining the self and delineating subjectivity in the Romantic era is hardly surprising. The overall health and general well-being of the individual was seen as being located primarily within the stomach during this period. As Weineck has observed:

> Nineteenth century medicine attributed a great number of illnesses to digestive disturbances, many of them fatal […] Thus the term 'digestion' was not simply the semi-comical topic it is now – rather it evoked matters of life and death.[43]

That food traditionally, for example within Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, involved an element of, or represented a symbol for, the divine was indisputable. After all, as Youngquist notes 'good digestion' and 'not some deity, creates life from dead matter.'[44] This process did, of course, also result in waste products, the disposal of which raised challenges for a newly-found bourgeois sensibility already grappling with a public/private debate around the question of displays of consumption. Francis Sheppard, in his study of the development of London, suggests that the pejorative connotations of 'sewer' were in themselves a lexical by-product of the period: 'sewers existed, of course, but until the early nineteenth century, when it acquired its malodorous significance, the word 'sewer' meant a channel for the removal of

[43] Weineck, p. 37.
[44] Youngquist, p. 238.

surface water.’[45] The creation of a unified London sewage system would occur in 1858, after Benjamin Disraeli’s compared the Thames to the worst aspects of the mythological Styx: ‘that noble river […] has really become a Stygian pool, reeking with ineffable and intolerable horrors.’[46]

Morton argues that the notions of eating/excretion and taste, a key aesthetic term connoting discernment and moral judgement, are bound up with the formation of the human subject in the Romantic period, in particular with what he terms reflexive consumerism. This reflexive consumerism is epitomised, appropriately enough, by De Quincey’s use - one might prefer the phrase ‘utilisation’ given his conscious exploitation of the substance for authorial ends - of opium, as well as Lamb’s fixation with digestion and its associated processes. While explaining and expounding this theory, Morton is all too aware of its pitfalls in terms of its application to the individual in the Romantic period. Ultimately, the contradiction inherent in defining a subject in terms of the capacity to consume is that such choices are palliatives, embracing and giving ‘the sense of subjective power […] in inverse proportion to objective impotence’, rather than authentic expressions of free-will. [47] Moreover, even the liberal accompaniment to such a false discourse of empowerment, namely the bourgeois fallacy of the ‘Rights of Man’ linked to a market economy, paradoxically merely serves to re-enforce consumption as social performance:

> How to distinguish oneself as belonging to the right sort of people, if the philosophical determinants of one’s identity are abstract and universal derivations

[45] Francis Sheppard, *London: A History* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 183
[46] <api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/Commons/1858/jul/15/first-reading> [accessed 23/4/2019]
[47] Timothy Morton, ‘Consumption As Performance: The Emergence of the Consumer in The Romantic Period’, in ed. by Morton, p. 3.

> from the American and French Revolutions. Distinction upon distinction was required […] consumerist diet became a menu of performative acts.[48]

Non-consumption is likewise no guaranteed marker of non-conformism to the predominant consumer narrative. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries consumerism is the process of becoming all-embracing, so that even negation serves to enforce and emphasise, rather than subvert, its validity, thereby dissolving the boundaries between binary opposites. The semiotics of choice now encompassed and defined the right of refusal: 'the choice *not* to consume was in itself a self-reflexive way of defining oneself as a consumer.'[49] Such non-compliance was increasingly a feature of the Romantic period with, for instance, Shelleyean vegetarianism and its protest at the pastoral destruction wrought by industrialised farming methods. However, while Shelley's 1813 pamphlet 'A Vindication of a Natural Diet' lauded the taste of various fruits and vegetables, it is inconceivable that an avowedly carnivorous Lamb would subscribe to such a doctrine. As Lamont drily remarks, 'one cannot imagine Lamb being converted by this.'[50]

Another example of anti-consumerism was the boycott of sugar due to its dependence on the trans-Atlantic slave trade and imperial connotations. Morrison notes that De Quincey's father, also Thomas, refused to allow sugar in his household.[51] Yet, while the moral case for such a non-consumerist stance was admirable, one might say unarguable, in terms of *defining* an individual, as a measure of subjectivity, it remained on a par with choices of food, dress and even drugs. Consumption, or in this case its mirror image non-consumption, as an end in itself is taken to the ultimate degree by the emerging figure of the opium addict. De Quincey,

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[48] Morton, 'Let Them Eat Romanticism', p. 259.
[49] Morton, 'Consumption As Performance', p. 3.
[50] Lamont, p. 9.
[51] Robert Morrison, *The English Opium Eater: A Biography of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2009) p .9.

or to a lesser degree Coleridge, was ‘a consumer who consumes for the sake of experiencing some general essence of consumption itself.’[52] Such hedonism manifested itself in the bohemian life choices of the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century, continuing up to the present when ‘as window shoppers, we are now all potential De Quinceys.’[53] However, once again, as a means of highlighting the essential properties of the self, such statements remain unsatisfactory and open to denial. They raise issues crucial to the present thesis, namely that the use of opium or excessive indulgence in eating amounting likewise to an addiction, simultaneously restrict whilst seemingly liberating the subject. Such superficial freedom is acknowledged and described thus:

> As the Nineteenth Century continued, the role of the addict joined the repertoire of consumer performances […] Like homosexual identity, addiction tied paradoxical knots in old progressive notions of free-choice […] To be stigmatized as an addict is to be imprisoned in a biologically determined role.[54]

This is not to under-emphasise the importance of food, in particular, to the nascent social order of the nineteenth century. Certain types of dishes were in the process of acquiring, and having constructed around them, national and political associations. The various connotations of the production and constituents of bread, for example, transformed it into a highly contentious foodstuff. Samantha Webb identifies the background to the bread/social-class divide in England:

> Until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the standard loaf was brown, composed of virtually all of the wheat, and frequently mixed with other cereals. White bread […] composed of only the best parts of the grain, led to waste, and was therefore a symbol of privileged status.[55]

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[52] Morton, ‘Consumption As Performance’, p. 2.
[53] Morton, p. 2.
[54] Morton, p. 10.
[55] Samantha Webb, ‘‘Not so pleasant to the taste’: Coleridge in Bristol during the mixed bread campaign of 1795’, in *Romanticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) Vol. 12, No.1, p. 6..

Periods of crop shortage followed in the 1780s and 1790s which saw a 'mixed-bread' campaign initiated by the Board of Agriculture to convince the general populace of both the nutritional and flavoursome benefits of this substitute product. Needless to say it was not a success and merely added to the poor's sense of injustice, as 'mixed bread (was) transformed from being food for starving, desperate labourers into fuel for rebels and revolutionaries.'[56]

Food, historically considered, was assuming a prominence in literature, culture and social identity which will now be discussed. National delineations were being created using the medium of diet and cuisine. What had previously been considered matters of personal, internal digestion alone now became external, public - almost exhibitionist - tropes as the 'discourse of diet connected interior and exterior.'[57] No more so, as we have seen, than in the elevation of Roast Beef to a status synonymous with Englishness; although such signifiers of nationality were themselves not merely fixed social constructs, but subject potentially to reinterpretation and shifting cultural re-association and re-evaluation. Nick Groom highlights how the quintessential-English diet of fish and chips had its origins in France and describes the later nineteenth-century socio-historical process by which 'fashionable French fries and feminine fish are transformed into traditional and sustaining sturdy English fare', thereby contributing to an Englishness which is 'restless and incoherent, contextually contingent, and necessarily impermanent.'[58] Like the schema of consumption/non-consumption, the norms and production of new understandings regarding national identity could be exploded.

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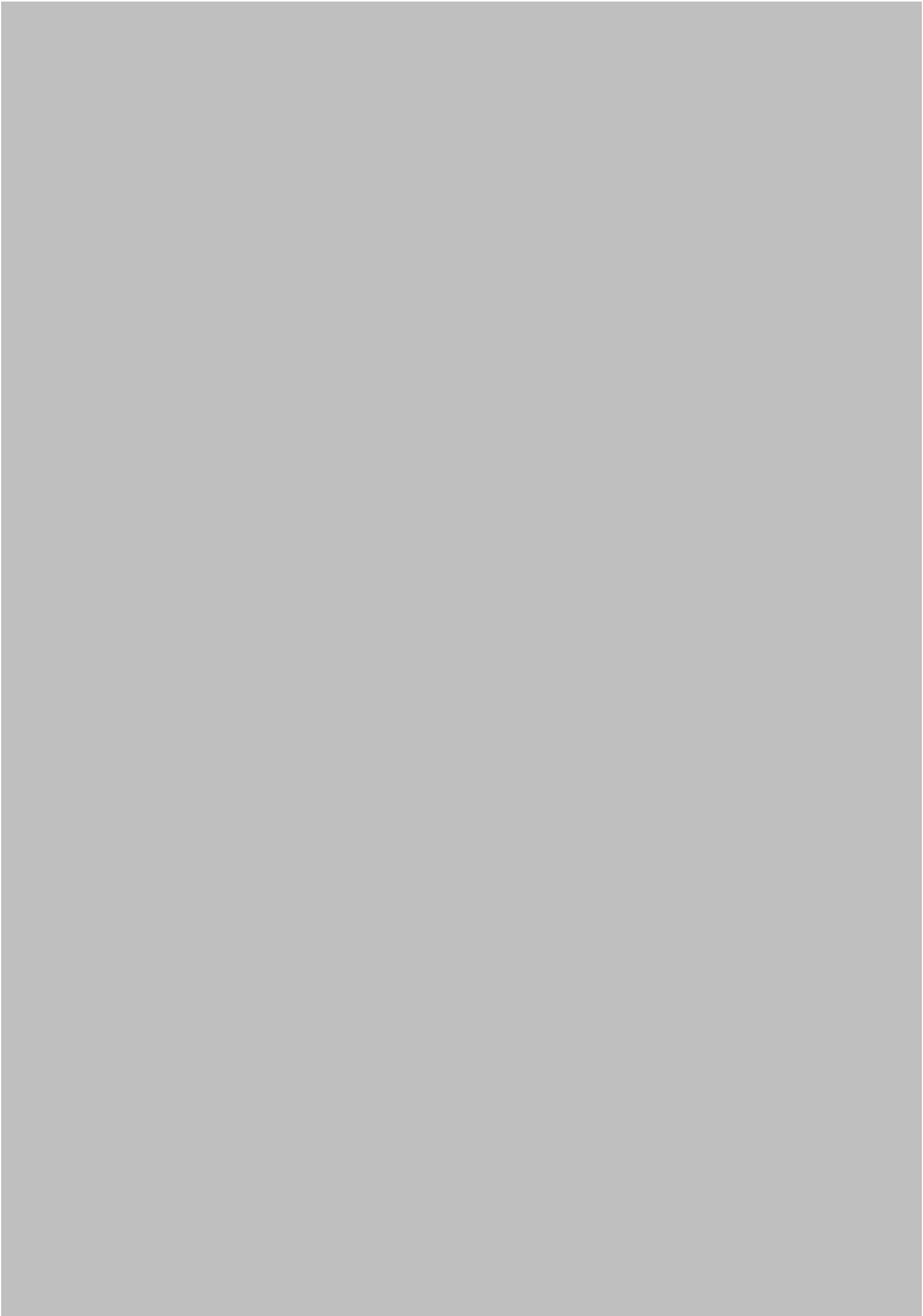
[56] Webb, p. 8.
[57] Morton, p. 6.
[58] Nick Groom, 'William Henry Ireland: from Forgery to Fish 'n' Chips', in ed. by Morton p. 34.

Markers of aesthetic taste were particularly associated with middle-class prejudices, the social rank of both Lamb and his readership. The emerging bourgeois notion of the correlation between diet and aestheticism was exemplified in the period by reaction to James Gillray's cartoon portrayals of an overindulgent Prince Regent in 1792. The Regent himself remains unaffected in his contemplation. Rather, 'the horror is in the eyes of the middle-class consumer who cannot quite match his aristocratic rites of consumption.'[59]

Furthermore, the Regent's royal excesses continued to exercise a fascination over the middle-class Romantic imagination as the subject of Lamb's justified poem or mere 'contemptuous doggerel' (depending on the reader's sympathies) 'The Triumph of the Whale' (1812) published in *The Examiner*.[60] However, literary discretion being the better part of valour, this text was neither re-published, nor included in his *Works* (1818). The immediate post-revolutionary age of the 1810s became increasingly epitomised by social and cultural repression and reaction culminating, symbolically and literally, in the Peterloo Massacre of 1819.[61] Indeed, both the editors of *The Examiner*, John and Leigh Hunt, would find themselves on trial and imprisoned for two years for the article 'The Prince on St. Patrick's Day', which appeared (with two epigrams by Lamb) only a week after 'The Triumph of the Whale'.

[59] Morton, 'Preface' in ed. by Morton, p. xvi.
[60] Gatrell, p. 510.
[61] The ruling class, faced ultimately with a choice between revolution or reform, increasingly opted for the latter in subsequent decades. For instance, the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the 1832 reform Bill.



Given this context, the absence of Lamb's poem from the *Works* is unsurprising, as the vast leviathan of a royal is ridiculed, via rhyming couplets, both politically and aesthetically, allowing the author to himself be cast as an 'ink-fish' and indulge in some potentially libellous and certainly spiteful 'black liquor' shedding of his own. Lamb's Hobbesian analogy is apt, given the breakdown in social contract between the sovereign and his subjects. However, such rancorous remarks are, in the final analysis, insubstantial and expose Lamb's ineffectuality and lack of subversive credentials and achievement. In terms of revolutionary ardour he is far surpassed, for instance, by Shelley who not only satirised the Prince Regent in 'The Devil's Walk' (1812) but continued to agitate against him (as George IV) eight years later in 'Oedipus Tyrannus' and 'Swellfoot the Tyrant'. Paul Foot notes how Shelley, unlike Lamb, with fury 'pursued the English monarchs of his day […] still fat, and still fattening as thousands starved to death.'[62] Furthermore, this motif of failure is literary as well as political. Just as 'The Triumph of the Whale' has been has been superseded by Shelley's 'spiciest venom' of Swellfoot, 'Confessions of a Drunkard' has likewise been largely written out of the canon by the revelations of the opium-eater.[63]

The lexis and connotations of early Nineteenth Century bourgeois taste are also a feature employed by Lamb in 'Edax on Appetite' in which the narrator refers, significantly enough, to being called Dentatus 'among other unsavoury jests.'[64] Here, even taunts are imbued with notions of inappropriate taste and, as they are aimed at Edax's prodigious appetite, they highlight how he both represents and subverts what might be described as a developing Romantic notion of dietetics. Thus, in terms of the era, the early Nineteenth century, eating was being endowed with a moral dimension, with concomitant notions of responsibility and

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[62] Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (London: Bookmarks, 1988), pp. 50-51.
[63] Foot, p. 50.
[64] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 49.

the conscious, if discreet, management of the appetite. Edax, like Hospita and Elia, represents and reflects the growing connection between self-identity and digestion, however crucially does not direct this into the necessary persona of the moral and responsible eater, abdicating the accompanying required role of guardian of literal and metaphorical taste.

In one sense, Lamb's adoption of various nom-de-plumes might be regarded as, at best, a distraction given that his surname constitutes in itself sufficient aptronym for his chosen culinary discourse, an encapsulation now designated 'nominative determinism'.[65] Yet the nature of the relationship between Lamb and his various aliases needs to be addressed as it raises questions about the distance between the private and public self within confessional writing and the propriety of on-going displays of consumption. Writing which focuses on excess, even when presented as parody by Lamb or (say) the anonymous author of 'The Confessions of an English Glutton' (1823), creates an uncomfortable mixture of traditionally hidden and open arenas. Eating is often an area for social performance but one's body and digestion are considered more personal and therefore, to early Nineteenth Century sensibilities at least, ought to resist disclosure. To this purpose, 'Elia' might be too readily dismissed as a rather transparent pun, and convenient alter ego for excusing and exonerating Lamb, were it not for the fact that the latter created ambiguity by implying the appellation should in fact be pronounced 'Ellia' (with the stress apparently on the initial syllable) in the manner of an Italian clerk at the South-Sea House from whom, admittedly in one version of the story, Lamb said it derived.[66] While seemingly innocent enough, this confession might itself represent another ploy or distancing strategy which merely serves to add a further layer

[65] The term was first adopted by the editors of the 'Feedback' column of the *New Scientist*, John Hoyland and Mike Holderness, in 1994.
[66] *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb: Elia and The Last Essays of Elia: Volume 2* (Memphis: General Books, 2012), p. 129.

of intrigue onto Lamb's decision to adopt an authorial double. Such speculation, if nothing else, adds to the enigmatic nature of the creative self-writing process. Here, the rhetoric and taxonomy of food writing transitions to questions of authorial intent and facets of confessions and print culture. Lamb's essays, ostensibly written for publication by another person, and certainly via the mouthpiece of a different persona, might ironically suggest that, a multiplicity of selves is necessary to express the subject through writing. Of course, questions regarding authorial identity and ownership of texts have to be viewed in the historical context of the magazines and publications of the period, in which a multiplicity of selves and coteries were operating within the journalistic milieu.

Blackwoods and the *London Magazine* were poly-vocal businesses, with Robert Morrison and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts noting how 'confessional writing self-consciously addresses the authorial duplicity and multiple identities that characterised the magazines.'[67] Penelope Hughes-Hallett's asserts that Lamb 'alternated between wild optimism and bouts of despair'. However, by all accounts, the otherwise gentle and considerate essayist was given a license to behave licentiously by proxy, via the strategy of fictive confessions which transformed an otherwise saccharine writer into an advocate of debauched corporeal qualities. [68] However, before adopting any superior moral stance, it must be remembered that this is an endeavour in which the reader is complicit. The response evoked is shared between the author and reader, the latter too potentially salivating at the prospect of vicarious accounts of over/self-indulgence, responding like Elia's description of Hoti in 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig': 'an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced […] A

[67] Robert Morrison and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, ''A character so various, and yet so indisputably its own': A Passage to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine', in ed. by Robert Morrison and Daniel Sanjiv Roberts *Romanticism and Blackwood's Magazine* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 10.
[68] Penelope Hughes-Hallet, *The Immortal Dinner: A Famous Evening of Genius and Laughter in Literary London, 1817.* (London: Vintage, 2012), p. 174.

premonitory moistening […] over-flowed his nether lip.'[69] Phillips, significantly enough, refers to 'some mutual appetite that dissolved self-consciouness' in a shared eroticising of the edible flesh.[70] Such an analogy may be considered appropriate as Lamb, regardless of which of his chosen pseudonyms he has adopted, is essentially willing to commodify food in terms of transforming it into writing material. Edax ostensibly rejects 'those tales which are renewed as often as the editors of papers want to fill up a space in their unfeeling columns of great eaters, - people that devour whole geese and legs of mutton *for* wagers.'[71] Yet despite his protestations that he was 'never mercenary, nor could consent to prostitute a gift […] of nature', the extensive and lucrative gastronomic and digestive ruminations of Hospita, Edax and Elia might suggest otherwise.[72] It is significant that, given the combination of commercial, sexual and gluttonous allusions invoked by Lamb, the term 'Winchester geese' was employed as slang for London (specifically South Bank) prostitutes.[73] Lamb's value was certainly recognised by the *London Magazine* where he was always paid double that of other contributors for his essays and articles.[74]

Lamb's choice of subject matter might appear somewhat prosaic, primarily reflecting culinary rather than cultural or political anxieties as, say, evident in Hazlitt. Whilst the relationship between these themes represented a porous as opposed to fixed categorisation, Lamb, for example, largely avoids the early English hegemonic or imperial motifs which permeate the work of De Quincey. Lamb, nonetheless, dominates the sphere of the personal or subjective rather than the ideological narrative. Moreover, this discourse can potentially be more sustained as it implies a universal appeal, feeding not so much the insatiable appetite of

[69] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 164.
[70] Phillips, 'On Eating', p. 291.
[71] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 50.
[72] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 50,
[73] S.Whatley *England's Gazetteer at Southwark*, 1751, OED Online [accessed 26/6/2019]
[74] Phillips in *Selected Prose*, p. xxv.

the protagonist-author, but concurrently fuelling and satisfying the ever-growing demands of the readership with whom the addiction is shared. Such methodology suggests, from the post-Freudian perspective of the modern reader, burgeoning parallels with pornography. The process of reading both fiction and anatomical texts was increasingly central to eighteenth-century constructions of sexuality and gender. While (alliteratively) accepting the 'liberated libido was constrained by consistently demarcated desire', Harvey argues that such cultural trends contained challenging social implications, 'because pleasure - and men's possible surrender to it - threatened the loss of manly self-control.'[75] On initial reading, Lamb is no De Sade. However, dark and unsettling elements are present within his fixation with excessive digestion and consumption. These are evident, for example, in his lexical choices equating eating with the forced sexual conquest of innocence and his regret at the passing of the 'Age of Discipline', which is perhaps more than simple parody. Overall, Lamb is manifestly *not* writing the harmless equivalent of Romantic erotica, defined as using metaphor, suggestion and allusion to 'insinuate sexually charged activity'.[76] He diverges from the notion that 'Romanticism dismissed Enlightenment sensuality as gross and materialistic', and it is this theme that will now be considered.[77]

It is highly appropriate that Lamb employs the motif of the pig as an object of culinary exploitation mirroring sexual conquest and desire. The creature holds a central position within a tri-partite discourse of social class, sexuality and human/animal ambivalence. Given its status as a 'symbolically base and abject' beast, its appropriation as a term of disparagement for those, in R.J. White's phrase, 'who existed rather to be governed than to take part in government' would appear to the politically reactionary an irresistible figurative

[75] Harvey, p. 2 and p. 36.
[76] Harvey, p. 24.
[77] Porter and Hall, p. 32.

association, as in Burke's reference to the 'swinish multitude'. [78] Moreover, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White emphasised that pigs were not solely a rural phenomenon in the Regency period. In fact they were 'present and highly visible in the city', appearing somewhat as an emerging bestial proletariat.[79] Pigs were not only a convenient metaphor for the rabble, they occupied the provocative lexical status of denoting the female genitalia which was referred to as 'porcus or porcellus'.[80] The relationship of food to sex was explored, for instance, via the characters of Circe in the *Odyssey*, and the temptress Arcacia in the *Faerie Queene*. Moreover, in ancient Greek (as Lamb as an accomplished classical scholar would have been aware), the double meaning of 'choiros' as piglet and pudenda was a common humorous trope, for example in Aristophanes's *The Acharnians* (425 BCE).[81] Finally, and most significantly for this model of critical reading and interrogation of Lamb, pigs can be seen to disrupt a sense of stable opposition between definitions of what constitutes animal and human. This is a feature particularly applicable in regards to the new born and infants, as 'not only did the pink pigmentation and apparent nakedness […] disturbingly resemble the flesh of European babies […] pigs were usually kept in peculiarly close proximity to the house'.[82] Such tropes are firmly entrenched within the tenets of the confessional genre. Elia's descriptions of devouring roast pig encapsulate the paradox within the terminological rules and dynamics of confessional writing, which is 'at once egotistical and self-negating'.[83] The latter propensity is emphasised by the loss of self-control and the adoption of behaviour which is demeaning and diminishes self-respect. Yet this provides the author, and potentially

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[78] Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetry of Trangression* (New York: Cornell, 1986), p. 5 and R.J. White, *Waterloo to Peterloo* (Harmondsworth: Peregine, 1968), p. 47.
[79] Stallybrass and White, p. 48.
[80] Stallybrass and White, p. 44.
[81] *A Greek-English Lexicon* comp. by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1889), p. 1732.
[82] Stallybrass and White, p. 47.
[83] David Higgins, 'From Gluttony to Justified Sinning: Confessional Writing in *Blackwood's* and the *London Magazine*', in ed. by Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts p. 48.

the reader, with an experience of 'excessive satiety that is both somatic and psychic'.[84] The glutton who narrates his eponymous 'Confessions' (attributed to Thomas Colley Gratton) is confronted by his alter-ego at a public exhibition in the form of an individual designated, appropriately enough, 'fat *Lamb*ert'. Despite the obvious parodying of, and borrowing from, De Quincey ('Glutton' appeared two years after the *Opium Eater*) there is also a clearly discernible element of Lamb's voraciously-appetited characters in Gratton's caricature.[85]

It is pertinent to trace the transformation and refinement of the fantasies disclosed by Lamb's various aliases. These can be seen as mirroring a degree of sexual development, from the early, tentative onanistic descriptions of Edax (in 'Edax on Appetite', 1811) to the orgiastic indulgences and fetishism of Elia in 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig'(1822). Edax, significantly, writes autobiographically. He recalls that at boarding school his excessive eating, like folkloric masturbation, could be read on the face and resulted in lethargy. He confesses: 'the truth was but too manifest in my looks – in the evident signs of inanition which I exhibited after the fullest meals.'[86] The account of the resulting public humiliation is imbued, appropriately enough, with adolescent phallic imagery: 'once detected, I was the constant butt of their arrows - the mark against which every puny leveller directed his little shaft of scorn.'[87] However, the guilt associated with 'following the blameless dictates of nature' still haunts the adult Edax in his dreams, as the solitary vice, with its connotations of frugality associated with a solo sexual act, becomes symbolised and substituted by the image of the solitary *slice*. [88] He recalls, uncomfortably, his youth: 'my school-days come again, and

[84] Higgins, p.49
[85] David Higgins not only reveals the author of the 'Confessions of an English Glutton' as Grattan, he notes that 'like the Opium-eater he is both pursuer and pursued, chased by pigs demanding to be eaten.' p. 49.
[86] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 47.
[87] Lamb, 'Edax', p47.
[88] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 47.

the horror I used to feel, when in some silent corner retired from the notice of my unfeeling playfellows, I have sat to mumble the solitary slice of ginger–bread allocated me.'[89]

The intermingling of porcine sexual allusions alongside an obsession with food are motifs that Lamb would have encountered in Homer, Aristophanes and Spenser, but also, significantly, in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. Lamb had certainly read Jonson, including him in his 1808 anthology *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare*. Lamb was an inveterate writer of marginalia and his copy of the 1692 folio of Jonson's *The Works* is described as having the 'endleaves and margins profusely annotated in his hand.'[90] Tom Lockwood, however, notes how Lamb 'seldom writes in his own voice'; instead he further engages inter-textually and expansively by transcribing 'those of other authors, and other texts, into the pages of his annotated books. The text of his Jonson is marked with corrections and, most of all, with texts that he adds to Jonson's texts.'[91] Lamb had also accompanied, and introduced, Wordsworth and Dorothy to the actual Bartholomew Fair in 1802.

In Jonson's play, Mistress Littlewhit attends the fair to satisfy a (fake pregnant) craving for roast pork. Stallybrass and White stress the significance of this unifying trinity of creature, sexuality and appetite: 'the proverbial filth of the pig is […] a synecdoche for sexual desire', creating a 'rhetorical equation between pig, sexuality and greedy incontinence.'[92] Furthermore, Ursula's appellation of 'pig-woman' denotes both pig-seller and prostitute. By

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[89] Lamb, 'Edax', p. 47.
[90] *Christies Catalogue*: the book fetched £10,000 at auction in New York on 14th December 2000. It was subsequently purchased in 2015 by Princeton.
[91] Tom Lockwood, 'Jonson and the Friends of Liberty', (2018), p.16. To be included in Jonson's *Afterlives*, ed. by Martin Butler and Jane Richard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019). For Lockwood, 'Lamb continues with Jonson, and through Jonson, a community of writers in whose company the political world can be resisted: a romantic politics is inscribed in Jonson's margins.' (p. 19.)
[92] Stallybrass and White, p. 63.

her own admission, a gross character, she is 'belly, womb […] source and object of praise and abuse […] excessive', as well as 'the celebrant of the open orifice.'[93] Philological alertness should extend to the Latinate origins of her title. She is the 'bear', or beast, that her name connotes. The distinction between human and, in this case, edible animal becomes blurred, a prominent trope of Lamb's, in Jonson's depiction of Ursula as 'juicy and wholesome'.[94] Bruce Thomas Boehrer has observed *apropos Bartholomew Fair*, that the 'appetitive theme of the play is manifest and persuasive, encompassing much more than the quotidian act of eating […] Jonson is concerned to cross the borders that ostensibly separate eater from eaten and edible from inedible.'[95] Such subversion of the boundaries between human and swine had been depicted by Lamb in his adaptation of Homer designed for children, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808), a version which included 'the house of Circe' in Chapter Two.

Ursula's language 'grows greasier than her pigs', and when she scalds herself she requires the application of 'salad-oil' to her injured limb.[96] Dissolution of the self becomes literal as well as metaphorical when a melting Ursula (from the 'fire and fat') proclaims: 'I do water the ground in knots as I go, like a great garden-pot; you may follow me by the s's I make.'[97] Boehrer highlight's Jonson's obsession with 'alimentary entertainment that is always distilling into various kinds of excreta' as characters 'urinate, defecate, sweat, weep and drool when they eat.'[98] Lamb's borrowing from Jonson is so marked, and his adopted register

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[93] Stallybrass and White, p. 64. See Jonson, p. 363 for Ursula's declaration: 'This is the very womb and bed of enormity, gross as myself.'
[94] Ben Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* in *The Selected Plays of Ben Jonson, Vol. 2*, ed. by Johanna Procter and Martin Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 199.
[95] Bruce Thomas Boehrer, *The Fury of Men's Gullets: Ben Jonson and the Digestive Canal* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 190.
[96] 'Scalding' is also a process used in the preparation of pork to soften hair follicles on the skin.
[97] Jonson, p. 200, p. 201 and p. 188
[98] Boehrer, p. 190.

sufficiently anachronistic, that it is difficult not to detect a strong element of pastiche of *Bartholomew Fair* in the musings of Edax and Elia. Thus the reference in 'Edax on Appetite' to gingerbread mirrors similar allusions in Jonson's text via the figure of Joan Trash, the Gingerbread-woman. Trash, like Edax, is fearful of disclosure as Leatherhead (a fellow stallholder) threatens to expose the ingredients which comprise her cakes: 'stale bread, rotten eggs, musty ginger, and dead honey'.[99] There is an element of irony here for the enlightened reader of Lamb, who discovers that the Romantic essayist is himself employing motifs that might no longer be considered as fresh.

Published in the same issue of the *Reflector* (No. IV, 1811) as Edax's essay, 'Hospita on the Immoderate Indulgence of the Pleasures of the Palate' shares similar concerns over the impact of gastronomic disclosure on the young. Adopting a feminine role would appear, if anything, to permit Lamb a greater degree of mock indignation and censoriousness, together with the attendant opportunity for more detailed description. Evoking the brood of the dying Error who feed off her blood, Hospita compares the eating of meat to another unnatural activity – Anthropophagism, or cannibalism, and has previously kept her children in a state of ignorance 'not allowing them to go into the kitchen' or 'even to know that such things are practised.'[100] Hospita's fascination with the coming-of-age of her daughter is revealed in a lengthy passage in which the sense of laviscious, and hence perverse anticipation at the loss of culinary innocence, is prolonged. Her eldest girl,

> Must shortly be introduced into the world and sit at table with us, where she will see some things which will shock all her received notions, I have been endeavouring by little and little to break her mind, and prepare it for the disagreeable impressions

[99] Jonson, p. 186.
[100] Lamb, 'Hospita', p. 55.

> which must be forced upon it. The first hint I gave her upon the subject, I could see her recoil from it.[101]

The basis of her introduction signifies the passage from childhood to adulthood and hence carries connotations of incipient sexualisation. However, the transition described here is not solely to society with its supply of potential husbands but to a far more unsettling, yet ultimately exciting, prospect – that of the pain and pleasure afforded by food.

However, it is in the guise of 'Elia' that Lamb's food fantasies reach fruition or, as it might be more fittingly expressed, are fully consumed and, it will be argued, consummated. In 'Grace Before Meat' (1821) the inter-play between eating and sexuality is made explicit via the reference to the 'ravenous orgasm upon you' (the use of the second person pronoun might be considered a form of displacement) while sitting at rich men's tables. [102] This is reinforced shortly afterwards by the declaration that grace as uttered by a chaplain is 'but the signal for so many impatient harpies to commence their foul orgies', with the inference of excessive indulgence until satiated.[103]'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig', written two years later, represents a culmination of the eating-as-sex metaphor. The sexual ingredient is further implied by the adoption of caricatured infantile appellations ('Bo-bo' and 'Ho-ti'), suggestive of Freudian fort-da, *avant la letter*. Bo-bo's first taste of broiled pig results in a 'tickling pleasure which he experienced in his lower regions', followed by 'barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.'[104] Once his father is upon him, the initial disgust exhibited by the former suggests Bo-bo has been discovered indulging in some

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[101] Lamb, 'Hospita', p. 56.

[102] Lamb, p. 121.OED online has the earliest sexual definition of 'orgasm' from 1754: 'a turgescency of the seminal vessels' in *New + Compl. Dict. Arts & Sci. III 2285/2*. Interestingly, the OED also indicates that this was a period in which the non-sexual meaning is just ceasing to be current alongside the sexual meaning. For instance, the last example given for the obsolete definition of 'a sudden movement', is from *The Lancet*, 1824. [accessed 28/10/2019]

[103] Lamb, 'Grace Before Meat' in *Selected Prose*, p. 122.

[104] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 164 and p. 165.

shameful activity: 'Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should put his son to death for an unnatural young monster.'[105] However, to extend the metaphor, the outcome implies some form of mutually satisfactory resolution above that sanctioned between generations, as 'both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.'[106] The essay continues in a sinister and once again potentially disturbing manner as the ideal pig for roasting is described in too-precise and, ultimately, anthropomorphic detail: 'I speak not of your grown porkers […] but a young and tender suckling - under a moon old - guiltless as yet of the sty […]- his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish tremble, and a grumble.'[107] This poses potentially uncomfortable questions for the reader, representing a textual de-stabilising of any previous assumption of trust, as he is forced to make a judgement on just how complicit he has become in the writer's queasy locution and the borders imposed by such a manipulative device. If this is indeed the intended strategy, to coerce the reader into the role of voyeuristic accomplice, then it suggests a dark literary manipulation on the part of the 'Elia' alter-ego or, perhaps more disconcertingly, directly by Lamb himself. Moreover, the lexis of the eating process is also suggestive of the forced sexual conquest of innocence, as the pleasure of devouring piglet is considered superior to that of mature pork:

> There is no flavour [...] to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling* […] the very teeth are invited to their share of pleasure […] in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance […] - O call it not fat – but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it – the tender blossoming of fat – fat cropped in the bud.[108]

The emphasis here on fetishizing particular aspects of the process of consumption and gratification represents a form of departure from the previous erotic tradition of the

[105] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 165.
[106] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 165.
[107] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 166.
[108] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 167.

eighteenth century where 'sight rather than taste governed the sensual experience'.[109] Moreover, Harvey, ignoring perhaps the physical realities of Georgian period hygiene, continues 'only rarely was there an olfactory dimension to sexual encounters', again unlike Elia's determination to entice and engage all the senses ('an odour assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced.') [110] In view of the continual locating of sexual desire within the trope of devouring pork, the closing reference in the article to the flagellation of pigs in order to improve the flavour of their flesh loses any connotation of humour or parody, despite the warning: 'yet we should be cautious […] how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto-'.[111] By this stage, the reader too has foregone their innocence, or gullibility, to succumb to this particular example of textual parole within Lamb's suspect *langue*. In his use of the term 'gusto' Lamb has borrowed a key aesthetic expression from Hazlitt, whose essay 'On Gusto' first appeared in *The Examiner* in May 1816, that is, seven years before 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig'. Hazlitt coined the word to denote a 'power or passion defining any object' and as such it acquired both honorific status and the distinction, as highlighted by Paulin, of being 'the critical term with which he is most frequently associated.'[112] Thus Lamb employs phraseology which had become semantically appropriated (via this particular history and genealogy) and which significantly, in view of his advocacy of animal flagellation, includes in its definition reference to 'some precise association with pleasure or pain'.[113] Here Lamb appears to incorporate the term into a form of debased rhetoric via its association with the notion of

[109] Harvey, p. 205.
[110] Harvey, p. 206 and Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 164.
[111] Lamb, 'Dissertation', p. 169.
[112] Hazlitt, 'On Gusto', p.77 and Paulin, p. 235
[113] Hazlitt, p. 77

‘taste’; in contrast to Keats, another advocate of the usage, who applied the designation ‘gusto’ in a less problematic context to describe the voice of the actor Edmund Kean.[114]

Lamb’s construction of subjectivity, a process which occurs and develops throughout the writing and publication of his essays, can be traced back to one of his earliest discursive elaborations; his essay ‘On the Genius and Character of Hogarth’ (1811) published in the *Reflector*. The inter-relation here between subject and subjectivity is, it can be argued, central to a reading of Lamb’s literal and symbolic sense of self and, incidentally, notions of self-worth. The representations of selfhood encoded within this particular text not only foreshadow Lamb’s later literary and cultural personae; they potentially reveal as much about the writer, and the writing process, than they do about the professed and hence overtly legitimised subject-matter. The inversion evident here is, no doubt, largely unintentional. However, the convergence between the two figures (Lamb and Hogarth) in terms of their mutual fascination with the grotesque and its potential for parody is striking. With hindsight, Lamb might be construed as illuminating a register of being, of forming a template for his literary and linguistic aspirations (if not a fully-fledged manifesto) firmly entrenched within a Hogarthian conceptual schema. Unfortunately, for both Lamb and his potential readership, this, at times, displays a tendency for insufficient authorial regulation and discrimination; resulting, for instance, in the turgidity and consequent literary transgression (in comparison to the sublimity of ‘A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig’) of ‘The Confessions of a Drunkard.’ Thus, the contention argued here is that the process of understanding Lamb’s reading of Hogarth is necessarily more a cultural analytic of the writer than the painter.

[114] Stephen Hebron, *John Keats and ‘negative capability’*, The British Library, <www.bl.uk/romatics-and-victorians/themes/romanticism> [accessed 24/4/2019]

Lamb, appropriately enough, is careful to stress his affinity as a writer with his artist-subject. He emphasises how Hogarth's genius does not lie solely within his remit as a creator of painted images but as a hybridizer, an artist who can successfully and potently fuse graphology and lexis: 'all artists but Hogarth have failed when they have endeavoured to combine two mediums of expressions.'[115] Furthermore, both Lamb and Hogarth share the self-conscious, inter-connected domain of self-reference. Lamb, again, highlights, indeed celebrates, this feature of an artist whose print of *Beer Street* (1751) contains a 'conceited, long-backed sign-painter […] contemplating the picture of a bottle which he is drawing from an actual bottle that hangs beside him.'[116] Lamb might, ironically, given his personal penchant for elaborate and disingenuous autobiographical discourse, question the 'enormity of the self-delusion' but still contends rhetorically that we can't help 'loving the good humour […] of the fellow.'[117] Moreover, Lamb recognises in Hogarth's work a shared ability to adopt and explore the character of his socially peripheral subjects, 'as if it was painful to Hogarth to contemplate mere vacancy or insignificance.'[118] To Lamb, the drunkard or the glutton offer a transformative role, a domain to inhabit for discursive effect but also a Lacanian reflective function as a mirror to be held up to himself and his readership. Lamb comments apropos Hogarth: 'our intellectual natures love the mirror which gives them back their own likeness. The mental eye will not bend long with delight upon vacancy.'[119] Lamb would, no doubt, wish to align and situate himself within this cultural milieu of reflexivity via the construction of characters whose faces 'have not a mere momentary interest, as in caricatures, or those grotesque physiognomies […] but are permanent abiding ideas.'[120]

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[115] Lamb, 'On the Genius and Character of Hogarth' in *Selected Prose*, p. 23.
[116] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 25.
[117] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 25.
[118] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 15.
[119] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 15. A riposte, perhaps, to Wordsworth's 'inward eye/which is the bliss of solitude' from 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud' (1807).
[120] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 14.

However, a conundrum is also displaced onto the reader; how exactly should *he* respond to the moral failings of the author or narrator? The use of the male pronoun here is apposite. Issues of the cultural context and surroundings of food and its consumption are particularly relevant to a reading of Lamb. Not just in a socio-geographic sphere but rather, as Harvey contends, in propagating to the eighteenth century mind eternal masculine and feminine verities: 'space is not simply physical, it is imaginary and mythic'.[121] Lamb's essays primarily reflect, and therefore reinforce, a peculiarly homo-social world of the open, public arena of taverns and street food in contrast to the largely domestic circumstances of women. Moreover, the restricted role allocated to women within such spaces was identified by Mary Lamb, writing as 'Sempronia', in 'On Needle-work' (1814): 'to make a man's house so desirable a place as to preclude his having a wish to pass his leisure hours at any fireside in preference to his own, I should humbly take to be the sum and substance of woman's domestic ambition.'[122] Notions of gender were still delineated by such eighteenth century spacial codes, explaining why the persona of Hospita is crucial to Lamb as a writer in allowing him to cross-cut gender constraints and constituencies.

A form of literary blackmail is practised by Lamb in 'The Confessions of a Drunkard' as he excuses the paucity of his endeavours: 'this poor abstract of my condition was penned at long intervals, with scarcely any attempt at connection of thought, which is now difficult for me', then stresses how he has nobly suffered 'for your sake reader, and that you may never attain to my experience, with pain'.[123] Lamb's real failing as a writer in this essay, however, is paradoxically in the overtly serious and genuine tone he adopts suggesting that confessional

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[121] Harvey, p. 147.
[122] Mary Lamb, 'On Needle-work', *The Lady's Magazine*, 1814, <https:www.janeausten.co.uk> [accessed 27/6/19]
[123] Charles Lamb, 'Confessions of a Drunkard' in *Selected Prose*, p. 160.

writing need not rest on authenticity to be successful. This is something which is reflected in the text's rather convoluted publishing history during which, significantly, it was taken as Lamb's *bona fide* public admission of alcoholism. The essay first appeared in 1813 in the *Philanthropist,* then featured as part of Basil Montague's *Some Enquiries into the Effects of Fermented Liquors* the following year, before being re-published and re-authored (by 'Elia') in the *London Magazine* in 1822. Lockwood points out how Lamb 'intervened in the text four times to correct in manuscript errors that Montague had introduced [...] corrections that were made again with only one exception [...] when the essay was reprinted for the third time in *The London Magazine*'. This serves as both a reminder of all the 'awkwardness and discontinuity that identity must over the passage of a life and a career struggle to contain or to accommodate', and a suitable epigraph to the lives of the authors considered here.[124]

De Quincey's *Confessions* were published in the *London Magazine* a year before Lamb's *Drunkard* appeared. There are many salient points of comparison between the two, with the potential at least for Lamb to be considered the inspiration behind, or precursor to, many tropes which would later be regarded as quintessentially De Quinceyan. For example, Lamb's flights of prose reverie in which the floating, alliterative signifier predominates: 'to mortgage miserable morrows for nights of madness', via the vast imaginative landscapes invoked by the hapless author: 'to waste whole seas of time upon those who pay it back in little inconsiderable drops of grudging applause'; to, finally, the ineffectual moralising which would also come to represent the pious regret of the opium-eater, as Lamb's drunkard, using an image of impotence, bemoans 'a sybarite effeminacy, a submission to bondage, the springs

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[124] Tom Lockwood, 'Charles Lamb's Copy of 'On Needle-work'', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin* No. 162, 2015, pp. 123-124.

of the will gone down like a broken clock.'[125] (The specific relevance of the gender reference here will be considered shortly.) Compared to the more humorous register of (say) 'The Confessions of a Glutton', ultimately the leaden musings of Lamb the drunkard, because of their honesty and pathos, manage to convey a sense of both tedium and embarrassment. The issue is the extent to which Lamb overplays a conceit he identifies in Hogarth: the requirement to introduce characters upon whom the 'moral eye may rest satisfied.'[126] It is the over-bearing moral 'I' of the narrator which, unfortunately, becomes the dominant trope of the drunkard. Lamb has perhaps not yet developed his narrative voice in sufficient clarity to make the distinction within his prose between writing about the condition of being a drunk, as opposed to writing *as if* drunk. De Quincey, it might be said, is able to maintain a more balanced perspective between the two categories regarding opium, although it is noticeable that Lamb seems most like De Quincey (or more controversially, vice versa) when discoursing on alcohol, sometimes to the point of parody. This also extends to his minor treatise on tobacco within his wider alcoholic musings, as his prose resembles the faux-moralising and hyperbolic tone now primarily associated with the opium-eater:

> I should repel my readers, from a mere incapacity of believing me, were I to tell them what tobacco has been to me, the drudging service which I have paid, the slavery which I have vowed to it […] How even now, I feel myself linked to it beyond the power of revocation. [127]

This is reinforced by a classical reference, to Tarturas from Homer, and mention of 'the abyss,' both archetypal De Quicey tropes representing respectively familiarity with scholarly Greek and apocalyptic imagery.

[125] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 156, pp. 156-157 and p. 158.
[126] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 21.
[127] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 158.

Such a critical response and seemingly unsympathetic mode of understanding and reading naturally involves an element of reluctance. After all, as Phillips points out, the essay 'Confessions of a Drunkard' was 'risky for Lamb to publish: 'clerks could easily lose their jobs if it was known that they drank excessively, as Lamb clearly did intermittently.'[128] Yet, brave or foolish (or both), Lamb's potentially most honest piece of self-writing is less inspiring than his literary exercises on the excesses of gluttony. Once again, regrettably, Lamb has not listened sufficiently closely to his earlier self: that centred and perceptive authorial voice of 'Hogarth' which identified the cathartic presence for the viewer/reader of 'a sprinkling of the better nature, which, like holy water, chases away and disperses the contagion of the bad.'[129] Admittedly, a process of dismantling occurs at this point of production given the fact that in this essay the demotic register adopted by Lamb undergoes, at times, a process akin to linguistic substantiation via the application of the 'holy water' of Lamb's piety. For example in his footnote on Sir Joshua Reynolds

> that admirable commixture of maternal tenderness with reverential awe and wonder approaching to worship with which the Virgin Mothers of L. da Vinci and Raphael […] contemplate the union of the two natures in the person of their Heaven-born Infant.[130]

However, overall, there is still sufficient humour and humanity in the Hogarth essay to distance it from the portentousness which characterises the 'Drunkard.'

It is the curtailment of masculinity, through the impotence associated with drink, which results in a crisis of representation within Lamb. The essays on Hogarth and 'The Drunkard' signify points of opposition in Lamb's creative and imaginative topography. A pair of binary opposites contest and operate within his literary discourse. If 'Drunkard' represents a

[128] Phillips in Lamb, *Selected Prose*, p. 454.
[129] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 25.
[130] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 12.

lachrymose and fluid textual dissolution, then 'Dissertation' or 'Glutton' denote a more substantial or solid fare. A semantic field of fluidity permeates the former text, often perniciously as Lamb employs a more traditional female marker of emotional appeal when addressing his reader: 'write an essay, pen a character or description – but not as I do now, with tears trickling down your cheeks'. Further allusions are evident in the admission 'I am losing myself in a sea of drink', or in the statement 'time, which has a sure stroke at dissolving all connections which have no solid fastening than this liquid cement.'[131] The bonds between reader and author in this instance are equally ephemeral. Lamb himself dismisses the artistic endeavours of Mr Penny, the painter of *Death of Wolfe* (1763) and the *Marquis of Granby relieving a Sick Soldier* (1765) as 'pretty things to teach the first rudiments of humanity,' then continues: 'good God! Is this *milk for babes* to be set up in opposition to Hogarth's moral scenes, his *strong meat for men?*' [132] Taking an overview of the long nineteenth century, Weineck discerns a theme that 'bland diets are for ruined spirits.'[133] This is a sentiment with which Lamb, at least in this instance, would seem to concur. However, as the century progressed such formulations assumed a more sinister, Carlylean, ideological bias *viz* 'enlightenment and democracy are poor philosophies of nutrition precisely because they prescribe the same food for all'. [134] Lamb, who 'nearly always wrote for liberal, reformist editors and publishers' would surely dissent from such reactionary food dogmatism. [135]

However, the milk/meat opposition is readily discernible within 'The Confessions of a Drunkard' when evidenced alongside 'Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' or 'Glutton.' In the

[131] Lamb, 'Drunkard', pp. 156-157.
[132] Lamb, 'Hogarth', p. 19.
[133] Wieneck, p. 39.
[134] Wieneck p. 39.
[135] Phillips in Lamb, pp. xiii-xiv.

former text, both author and reader suffer the 'WET DAMNATION to run thro' 'em' although it might be considered preferable to take this poison in its original form than distilled through Lamb's prose. The essay opens with the tiresome rambling and inflated register characteristic of inebriated discourse ('O pause, thou sturdy moralist, thou person of stout nerves […] whose liver is happily untouched'); conventions which have, unfortunately, become institutionalised by its conclusion. [136] Other tropes of drunkenness are employed such as a frustrating combination of ellipsis and elision, for example the incomplete utterance: 'but when a man has commenced sot-'[137]. This is further compounded by the inclusion of complex sentences, with potential for meaning to become confused, as Lamb's syntax itself is 'slurred':

> I took my degrees through thin wines, through stronger wines and water, through small punch, to those juggling compositions, which under the name of mixed liquors, slur a great deal of brandy or other poison under less and less water continually, until they come next to none, and so to none at all.[138]

Lamb's forays into the genre might be better confined to what he describes as 'twi-formed births': that is, essays in which a moralising prescriptive and humorous descriptive element are more synthesised and centred. Once again, this is a feature of Hogarth's work which, not unlike Bartholomew Fair, is applauded, as

[136] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 154.
[137] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 154.
[138] Lamb, 'Drunkard' p. 157. If De Quincey is regarded, albeit erroneously, in terms of sub-culture as a proto-punk by commentators such as Malcolm McLaren and Jon Savage, then Lamb's passage might equally lay claim to having inspired Bob Dylan's 'Just like Tom Thumb's Blues' (1965): 'I started out on burgundy/But soon hit the harder stuff.' De Quincey's supposed punk credentials are highlighted by a (misleading) quotation from McLaren on the dust jacket of Morrison's biography: 'a cultural outlaw who took a lot of drugs and had a mind churning with radical ideas.' Savage goes further, and more figuratively, in his introduction to a biography of Ian Curtis, seeing the latter's suicide as a continuing reflection of 'De Quincey's Manchester: an environment systematically degraded by industrial revolution, confined by lowering moors, with oblivion as the only escape.' See Deborah Curtis, *Touching from a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division* (London: Faber and Faber, 1995), p. xi.

> it is the force of these kindly admixtures which assimilate the scenes to the drama of real life […] merriment and infelicity [...] perpetually unite to skew forth motley spectacles of the world.[139]

Thus it is the co-joining of the high and low spheres of physical and moral representation which explains the power and appeal of Hogarth's creations and the success of Lamb's 'Dissertation Upon Roast Pig' and 'Confessions of a Glutton' and the concomitant failure of his musings on drink. In terms of historicism it can be viewed as a personalization and reflection of a wider social process identified by Stallybrass and White in which the fair or marketplace of the 18th and 19th centuries represented 'a commingling of categories usually kept separate and opposite: centre and periphery, inside and outside, stranger and local, commerce and festivity.'[140] The negotiation of what constitutes the public and private arenas or spheres regarding the author's body was a conflict mirrored by the demarcation of the market place as it struggled to define itself within the body-politic.

Perhaps, paradoxically, Lamb is at his most culturally representative when describing the oblivion provided by alcohol: part essence of Romantic intoxication in the form of a 'secret wish that I could have lain on still and never wakened', part 'Wertherism', the disease of the age as posited by Rupert Christiansen.[141] However, he is at odds with another, emerging strand of thought; namely the conflicting, rational discourse of Lockean *homo-economicus* which revolts at the incapacitation of the economic unit via the lethargy brought on by over-excessive drinking. 'The slightest commission […] haunts me as a labour impossible to get

[139] Lamb, 'Hogarth', both p. 13.
[140] Stallybrass and White, p. 27.
[141] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p.161 and Rupert Christiansen, *Romantic Affinities: Portraits from an Age 1780-1830* (London: Bodley Head, 1988), p .59.

through' may represent, in the final analysis, the most shocking confession offered by Lamb the Drunkard to his contemporaries.[142]

Ultimately, a central tenet of this study, that Romantic confessional writing and representation of the self is both facilitated and restricted by dependence upon palliatives, would appear to be substantiated. Lamb bemoans 'the countless nails that rivet the chains of habit', an epitaph that might apply equally to De Quincey, and also to the subject of the next chapter, James Hogg.[143] Hogg both depended upon, and rejected, the persona he manufactured, that of the 'Ettrick Shepherd', as something that ensured him celebrity and notoriety, while simultaneously confining him to a position of literary and social outsider. These themes are explored through a religious, national and supernatural context, combined with a hybrid discursive perspective and structure, in his most famous work, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). However, as I will argue, their origins are to be found within an apparently unlikely, much earlier and often overlooked text, his practical treatise on the diseases of sheep, *The Shepherd's Guide* (1807).

[142] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 161.
[143] Lamb, 'Drunkard', p. 158.

CHAPTER FIVE

HOGG, HOGS AND HUSBANDRY: THE CONFESSIONS OF A JUSTIFIED *SHEPHERD*

James Hogg's 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* was largely ignored both critically and in terms of sales on its publication, with fewer than 500 of the original Longman and Co. print run of 1,000 copies being sold through what P.D. Garside deems 'normal channels.'[1] Indeed, the rediscovery or exhumation of the text is primarily credited to the French author Andre Gide who wrote a preface to a 1947 Cressett Press edition citing its psychological facets and metafictional qualities (amongst other features) as worthy of literary recognition and reappraisal. Since then, in spite of Gide's potential mis-reading of the text, the *Confessions*, like its author Hogg, has occupied something of a niche position within Romantic studies, although with a reputation that has been steadily growing.[2] Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson detect a residual of the class and nationality bias that afflicted Hogg in his lifetime in the marginalisation he suffered by subsequent generations of literary scholars, who have excluded him 'from anthologies and major works of literary criticism chiefly because of his Scottish working-class identity.'[3]

[1] The rest were consigned 'at a knock-down price to the remainder specialist Thomas Tegg.' James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. by P.D Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. xii. William St Clair attributes the novel's lack of recognition and limited publication partly to its failure to be selected as one of the *Bentley's Standard Novels* series of the 1830s. William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 361.
[2] For example Hogg, like Malthus, is extirpated from Duncan Wu's compendium of Romantic writing, only appearing via proxy in Wordsworth's elegy 'Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of James Hogg'. Meiko O'Halloran regrets this omission but does little to reclaim Hogg with her definition of his supposedly 'kaleidoscopic art.' See *passim*. Hogg is similarly absent from David Wright's selection of *English Romantic Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986) and once again referenced only by Scott's poem, (while works, for example, by Browning and Tennyson are included.) *The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse*, ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) contains a solitary poem by Hogg, 'A Witch's Chant', despite constituting an 800 page tome. The process of successfully reclaiming the Ettrick Shepherd's place within the canon is in part due to the efforts of the James Hogg Society whose July 2017 conference at the University of Stirling saw 18 papers presented on the author, although in keeping with the argument advanced in this chapter the predominant focus remained the *Confessions* with the *Shepherd's Guide* ignored completely.
[3] *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. by Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), p. 1. Alker and Nelson, somewhat modestly, if ironically, omit their own work within the Hogg society to remedy this exclusion.

Hogg's status, prior to 1824, was primarily based around a persona that was both created by, and imposed upon, him: namely that of the 'Ettrick Shepherd.' Ettrick was the region of the Scottish borders (as well as its eponymous population centre) where he grew up, farmed and spent a large part of his life, eventually dying there at his home in Altrive in 1835. Hogg's first major published work, in 1807, was a treatise dealing with the classification and treatment of diseases of sheep, *The Shepherd's Guide*. The text is no mere homily. Rather it represents a serious and pioneering scientific document for the period, essential (and in some cases still relevant) to the successful maintenance of the sheep-farming industry in Scotland.[4] Valentina Bold and Suzanne Gilbert emphasise both its importance and promote its claim to practical innovation:

> Until the foundation of the Gamgee and Dick veterinary colleges in the 1840s, and the availability of commercial treatments, remedies were passed on by self-taught experts […] Hogg is often critical of contemporary husbandry. Regarding lambing, he condemns pulling wool away from the ewe's udder as unnecessary and cruel.[5]

The present chapter will suggest that this initial work of Hogg has not only been unfairly marginalised and neglected by scholars, but also that on analysis and critical revaluation it can be seen as representing an early model for the later *Confessions*, significantly informing its themes, tropes and form. Furthermore, through *The Shepherd's Guide's* reference to the practice labelled 'spare lamb', in which the identity of a dead lamb is transferred onto one which is living, Hogg essentially anatomises sheep into selfhood, anticipating his later treatment of duality within the human form. Thus the roots of Robert Wringhim's tale (the 'justified sinner' of the title) are to be found fourteen years further back than 'A Scot's

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[4] 'Many of the ailments he investigated are still important problems in sheep husbandry, including braxy (malignant edema) a generally fatal disease of lambs to which he gives a lot of attention. It is caused by clostridium septicum, which enters the blood stream when the lining of the abomasum is damaged by eating frozen herbage. So Hogg was on the right track in recommending the provision of soft food for lambs, for example by burning heather and keeping lambs off frozen pastures. It is hardly surprising that Hogg described all the many remedies that were used as ineffectual, because braxy can only be controlled by immunisation. Our local research department at Moredun in Edinburgh developed a vaccine.' Dr Ronald Halliday, formerly University of Edinburgh Animal Breeding Research Organisation (Roselyn), in a letter to the author 26/9/2017.

[5] Valentina Bold and Suzanne Gilbert, 'Hogg, Ettrick, and the Oral Tradition', in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, ed. by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press 2012), p. 16.

Mummy'. This piece was published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in August 1823 and is generally regarded as the textual precursor to *the Confessions* which appeared ten months later. Moreover, given the significance of the appellation 'The Ettrick Shepherd' to Hogg's creation of a literary persona, the importance of the text which established his credentials as precisely this shepherd has often been overlooked. After all, the authority and authenticity assumed by, and accorded to this literary figure of The Shepherd was at least partly due to the published treatise *The Shepherd's Guide*. Hogg's bona-fide claim to the title was originally based upon this serious scientific work; the disparaging portrayal of the *Noctes Ambrosianae* in which he was caricatured by John Wilson (writing as Christopher North) in *Blackwood's* would appear over fifteen years later.

Like Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide* has often been side-lined and confined to the borders of his prodigious literary output. The 2017 Hogg Society Conference, for instance, referred in the introduction to its exhibition to Hogg having produced '*even* treatises on diseases in sheep' (my italics), emphasising the position of the publication at the extremities of his work. Yet, professing surprise that a farmer and writer who adopted the pseudonym of 'Shepherd' should have produced such a text in the first place is to demand evaluation. Furthermore, in a paradox appropriate to a writer whose name is inextricably linked with notions of both literary and personal duality, attempts to reclaim Hogg's centrality within British Romanticism have themselves either ignored this crucial work or floundered in their attempts to define and categorise its status. For example, Meiko O'Halloran wishes to reclaim Hogg as a central figure within British Romanticism and bemoans how canonical accounts of the era 'have tended to favour writers with more clearly defined and articulated artistic ideas and

principles'.[6] Attempting to formulate a new reading of Hogg, she coins the term 'kaleidoscopic art', a reference to Hogg's interest in optics and his friendship with Sir David Brewster, the inventor of the instrument and scientific contributor to *Blackwood's*.[7] However, the phrase appears to have a distinguished pedigree, having already entered the lexicon of Hogg studies via an observation from Valentina Bold that 'Hogg fragments sources and reassembles them as if in a kaleidoscope (borrowing Cedric Whitman's image of Homer's poetic methods).'[8] For O'Halloran, it encompasses the 'multi-layered use of allusion, creative collisions of genre, mixed imagery, structural experimentation […] its encouragement of proactive reading and interpretation.'[9] Yet beyond this rather formulaic litany of literary tropes, O'Halloran herself subsequently makes no mention of the pivotal work *The Shepherd's Guide*, primary in initiating and defining both the writing career and persona of the Ettrick Shepherd.[10]

Granted, the *Guide* predated the text by which Hogg first gained meaningful literary recognition, the poem *The Queen's Wake* published as a book in 1813 and describing the poetry competition (or 'wake') held in honour of Mary, Queen of Scots on her return to her home country in 1561 after exile in France. However, there is a compelling case to be made that *The Shepherd's Guide* is crucial in highlighting tropes which would later achieve prominence within Hogg's writing. When referring to the impact of the disease known as

[6] Meiko O'Halloran, *James Hogg and British Romanticism: A Kaleidoscopic Art* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 256.
[7] Hogg's fascination with atmospheric illusions such as the Brocken Spectre is evident from the description of the phenomena as witnessed by George Colwan on Salisbury Crags: 'to his utter amazement and supreme delight , he found, on reaching the top of Arthur's Seat, that this sublunary rainbow, this terrestrial glory, was spread in its most vivid hues beneath his feet.' *Confessions*, p. 29.
[8] Valentina Bold, *James Hogg: A Bard of Nature's Making* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), p. 200.
[9] O'Halloran, p.13.
[10] O'Halloran omits *The Shepherd's Guide* completely from her (otherwise) extensive syndetic listing of Hogg's authorial achievements: 'Between the appearance of his first collection of poems …and his last…he composed ballads, songs, long narrative poems…theatre criticism, plays…and even lay sermons'. O'Halloran, p. 5.

Braxy upon sheep, Hogg laments that detailed explanation would ‘require one better versed in the construction, connection, and names of the animal frame than I am’.[11] Construction of, and the connection between, names (and verse) would henceforth define Hogg’s literary output. Likewise, it is particularly illuminating to consider the manner in which the *Shepherd’s Guide* is described by those currently involved in editing the Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition of the *Collected Works* of James Hogg. It is almost offered up with an apology by Douglas S. Mack, who concedes that it ‘has its own kind of interest, not least because it includes an essay containing Hogg’s intelligent and perceptive discussion of the forces that produced the Highland Clearances’.[12] Here Mack implies that the text does not merit serious academic consideration, missing the opportunity to advocate the study of a practical guide to sheep-farming or analysing its importance to Hogg’s literary development.

The Shepherd’s Guide has yet to appear in print in the Stirling/South Carolina series.[13] In some senses this is hardly surprising given the fact that Hogg himself omits the mention of this work in his list of publications in the 1821 *Memoir of the Author’s Life Written by Himself*. Nevertheless, Wilson’s injunction to Hogg (credited in ‘A Scot’s Mummy’): ‘you should look less at lambs and rams, and he-goats […] and more at the grand phenomena of nature’ ignores the crucial role that writing about such creatures performed in Hogg’s development as a Romantic author.

[11] James Hogg, *The Shepherd’s Guide* (London: British Veterinary Association, 2013), p. 19. Facsimile of 1807 edition. Significantly, the only modern version of the *Guide* currently available is published under a scientific print. See note 14 below.
[12] Douglas S. Mack, *James Hogg in 2000 and Beyond*, Romanticism on the Net, [2000], paras. 1-35, (34) <https://id.erudite.org> [accessed 28/10/2019]
[13] Admittedly this is due to issues beyond the control of the current editors, one of whom (Suzanne Gilbert) revealed to the present writer that she was an admirer of this particular work of Hogg’s. Nevertheless, it is still apposite that Hogg’s first major text has still to be published as one of The Completed Works, a series that first appeared in 1995. Hopefully, the version currently in preparation, edited by H. b. de Groot, will finally rectify this omission.

Alker and Nelson judiciously note how multiple modes of textual transmission were one of the cognitive frameworks through which Hogg experienced the world.[14] Here they are specifically referencing the combination of oral and written traditions that informed Hogg's creative process. However, there are also elements of the academic scientific treatise mode represented by the *Shepherd's Guide* evident within the literary discourse of the *Confessions*. For instance in this description, in the Editor's Narrative, of the suicide's skull:

> A spade had damaged it, and one of the temple quarters was wanting […] If it was particular for any thing, it was for a smooth, almost perfect rotundity, with only a little protuberance above the vent of the ear.[15]

The statement is, however, doubly subverted in the form of a telling Hogg trope: firstly by the author's claim to be 'no phrenologist' and secondly by seeming to write in the language and style of exactly that.

The location of the Scottish Borders is equally an important feature of both texts (*The Shepherd's Guide* and *The Confessions*) and one which will be considered presently. The connection between a justified sinner who is one of the elect in Calvinist theology and the justified type employed by a printer has been noted and commented upon by David Groves among other scholars.[16] Groves also observes, apropos the episode from *The Confessions* in Mr. Watson's printing house, that the 'devils who plague Wringhim as he adds the finishing touches to his journal might be compared with the printer's devils (a common phrase of the 1820's to describe typesetters)'.[17] What is, perhaps, of more significance to locating Hogg's

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[14] *Literally and Figuratively Locating Hogg's Writings for the Uncollected Works in the Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition of the Collected Works of James Hogg.* Paper given at Hogg Society Conference, University of Stirling, [20/7/2017]

[15] Hogg, ed. Garside, p. 172.

[16] David Groves, *Hogg: Growth of a Writer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), p. 127.

[17] As indicated in Chapter One, De Quincey notably acquired the nickname 'the printer's devil' for his unreliability when producing copy and meeting deadlines.

primary textual references is that an allusion to the concept of justification is first present in *The Shepherd's Guide*:

> Hitherto I have written solely from experience and observation; having had no opportunity, and far less inclination, to consult any books on the subject […] I have now ventured to look at some of the few books which relate to this important subject […] in some instances, their theories differ materially from mine; but what I have written, I have written.
>
> To experience only I appeal for my justification.[18]

The association between Hogg as Ettrick Shepherd and this totemic signifier ('justified') is thus predicated on, and contextualised around, this hitherto largely unacknowledged reference, with its pleading, penitent yet pious register. This, in turn, anticipates the sense of self-validation and pity inherent in Robert Wringhim's confessions.

Questions of duality which would in future feature so prominently in Hogg's oeuvre, not solely in the *Confessions* but in diverse texts such as the short story 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs' (1828) and the poem *The Pilgrims of the Sun* (1815), are also firstly invoked via the description in *The Shepherd's Guide* of the phenomena known as 'spare lamb':

> When a ewe loses her lamb […] another lamb may easily be given to her by the following simple stratagem:-Take the skin of the dead lamb, and fasten it tightly around that which you intend giving her; confine them together in a dark corner, on a space of four foot diameter, and in twenty four hours […] she will be quite reconciled to it, and acknowledge it as her own.[19]

This description of a practical process allowing replication of self would be transformed by Hogg from a literal to literary application, with the reference to the necessity of a 'dark corner' perhaps intimating an acknowledgement of the potential for the development of more figurative connotations. Thus, for Hogg, transposition of identity was encountered within an

[18] Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide*, p. 175.
[19] Hogg, *The Shepherd's Guide*, p.15.

early context of husbandry, along with other forms of duality and paradox. For example, it is present in the inherent contradiction accompanying the condition known as the rot, where ironically ‘the blood grows too thin, and though the animal continues to feed most greedily, it pines daily away to a mere skeleton.’[20]

Furthermore, the actual form of the guide anticipates the *Confessions* (and indeed later Scottish studies of dual and multiple personalities such as *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*) in its use of a diversity of individual texts (memoir, letters, essays) to constitute the complete work. Douglas Jones, in his study of the *Confessions,* identifies a continuity between Hogg and Stevenson’s novel placed firmly within a psychological doppelgänger tradition: ‘like Edward Hyde Robert’s secret/predatory self slips out and commits crimes without his consciousness of them; like Henry Jekyll, Robert must answer for these crimes when the authorities arrive.’[21] What is perhaps surprising, however, is to locate this prototypical textual form of the Caledonian antisyzygy within a practical guide to the diseases of sheep.[22]

For a writer whose role is being reclaimed and re-assessed within the Romantic canon, Hogg exhibits some decidedly mercantile, pragmatic, and unromantic attitudes towards animals during an era when, as David Perkins observes, ‘Romantic authors generally assumed that the

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[20] Hogg, *The Shepherd’s Guide*, p. 69. Hogg describes this ‘rot’ as a common affliction of sheep due to a ‘sudden fall in condition’ such as insufficient food. According to *The Shepherds Guide*, symptoms include the whole body ‘turning a dirty pale colour’ and the liver ‘the most horrible mass of corruption and disease that can be conceived.’ pp. 152-153.

[21] Douglas Jones, ‘Double Jeopardy and the Chameleon Art in James Hogg’s Justified Sinner’, *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 23:1. (1988), 164-185, (166) <scholarcommons.sc.edu./ssl/vol23/iss1/13> [accessed 28/10/2019]

[22] A term first coined by Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919) to describe the peculiarity of Scottish literary duality. ‘Syzygy refers to a yoking together of opposites in which the two elements remain distinct but an antisyzygy would be a pairing in which distinctions are lost.’ Tim Middleton, introduction to *The Strange Case of Dr.Jekyll and Mr Hyde and The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1999), p. xiv.

best thing for animals was to be far from humans, living their wild lives without interference.'[23] In certain important aspects Hogg is in opposition to accepted Romantic enlightened notions of how humanity should treat what had previously been considered the lesser of God's creatures. Eleven years before the publication of *The Shepherd's Guide*, John Lawrence had presented a moral argument for the compassionate treatment of horses (and, indeed, beasts in general) in a deliberate re-writing of Shylock's monologue in *The Merchant of Venice* (1600):

> Is not a beast produced by the same rule, and in the same order of generation with ourselves. Is not his body nourished by the same food, hurt by the same injuries; his mind actuated by the same passions and affections which animates the human breast.[24]

In contrast, Hogg essentially reflects what Christine Kenyon-Jones describes as a 'pre-Darwinian incapacity to relinquish a conception of the universe ordered according to human needs.'[25] Hogg also, in some ways, lagged behind the legislative advancement of the 1820s in terms of the rights of animals, with for example the bill of 1822 which provided protection of, and prevented cruelty to, amongst others, sheep. In contrast, as Karl Miller phrases it rather bluntly and without sentimentality when referring to Hogg's adopted approach towards the gelding process: 'here was a man of feeling who used to bite the balls off sheep.'[26] In one aspect, however, Hogg's affinity with the supernatural - his poems of fairies and witches and tales of hauntings - can be interpreted as an identification of sorts with forms which, like animals, suffered from historically variable power asymmetries and significantly, constitute a

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[23] David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. xi. Perkins highlights, for instance, how Burns' sympathy in 'To a Mouse' (1786) is grounded in 'a feeling of shared existential suffering.' (p. 10)

[24] John Lawrence, *A Philosophical and Practical Treatise on Horses: And On the Moral Duties of Man Towards the Brute Creation* (London: T. Longman, 1796), pp. 119-120. Compare with Shylock's argument for Jews and Christians sharing a common humanity: 'Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons.' III, 1, 57-60

[25] Christine Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2001), p. 161.

[26] Karl Miller, *Electric Shepherd: A Likeness of James Hogg* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p .6. Here Miller references the early nineteenth century debate linking the suffering of animals with the treatment of marginalised and oppressed groups. See also Kenyon-Jones, p. 40.

mode of opposition towards 'capitalist and nationalist narratives of progress.' They represent 'another world and a different temporality from that of Edinburgh and even by extension the lager national interest.' Furthermore, Hogg 'reminds the reader of forces that will not be coopted – be they sheep, shepherds, dogs, witches, brownies or fairies.'[27] While not naturally nor necessarily considered disempowered entities - yet still, significantly, categorised as non-human and therefore other - these ubiquitous supernatural tropes were often dealt with sympathetically by a man who, after all, claimed lineage from Will o' Phaup, his maternal grandfather who was purportedly the last Borderer to converse with fairies.[28]

In the *Shepherd's Guide*, Hogg claims a much closer identification between man and sheep than the merely sympathetic. Kenyon's observation that some writers at the end of the eighteenth century saw animals as 'metonymically or synecdochically linked to […] human groups' is something of an understatement when applied to Hogg. His association is much more direct. [29] This is achieved obliquely through constant and repetitive statements referencing and reinforcing the parallels between their family names (Hogg and hogs) which even the most sophisticated and detached reader cannot easily ignore. This is due to the cumulative impact of such interplay of signifiers within a closed, hermetic - yet self-sustaining and self-perpetrating semiotic system - as Hogg begets hogs. Moreover, it appears at times as if Hogg is almost relishing the word-play and the potential for humour afforded via an imposed self-referential narrative, especially as he continually employs (or affects) the

[27] Ron Broglio, *Sheep, Fairies, and Hogg: Biopolitics of the Ettrick Shepherd*, in *Essays in Romanticism*, Volume 21, Number 2, 2014, ed. by Alan Vardy (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), pp. 137-139.
[28] Douglas Gifford in James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft*, ed. by Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), p. xx.
[29] Kenyon-Jones, p. 40.

additional, superfluous, 'g' in his orthography.[30] For instance, in statements such as 'I never had occasion to try the powers of this medicine, save once, upon a hogg [...] which dwindled on for several months […] recovered […] and is alive to this day.'[31] Such parallels are reinforced by a reference to the extreme variant of anthropomorphism advocated by Adam Bryden (quoting 'the late Advocate Mackintosh') whom Hogg lauds as 'shrewd and comical': 'I never like a man if I don't like his face,-so say I of a sheep.'[32]

Hogg was a beneficiary of two economic and cultural developments evident in the early nineteenth century which together invite a historicist interpretation of his writing. First, the importance of shepherding to the economy of Great Britain as a whole; and secondly, to the nostalgia which was already developing in the context of the emerging Industrial Revolution for a spoken mode which was seen as rapidly disappearing. Such sentimentality enabled a synthesis between the idealised peasant-poet with his oral tradition and the new reality of mass urban print. Hogg rapidly found his place within the community of peasant poets alongside his precursor Burns, as well as John Clare and Allan Cunningham (although such common origins did not prevent the latter from criticising the homeliness of his fellow Scot's song lyrics.) [33] Appropriately enough for a writer who existed within a milieu of literary disparagement, 'smearing' in its medicinal form as applied to sheep is a keystone of the shepherd's art. Hogg endeavoured to reinforce this peasant tradition, presenting himself as a

[30] This spelling of Hogg with the double consonant was by no means standardised by the early nineteenth century. OED online has the *Gainsborough News*, as late as 23rd March 1867, referring to '200 he hogs, 140 she hogs.'

[31] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 80.

[32] *Shepherd's Guide*, p.139. In the spirit of textual borrowing and re-working which dominates Hogg's work, this maxim had been previously discussed in his letter to Walter Scott from Ardhill, 11th June 1803. See James Hogg*, Highland Tours: The Ettrick Shepherd's Travels in the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles in 1802, 1803 and 1804*, intro. by Sir Walter Scott, ed. by William F. Laughlan (Hawick: Byways, 1981), p. 89.

[33] Bold in ed. by Goodridge p. 74. However, this censure was as nothing compared to the vehemence of Wilson's attacks.

natural heir to Burns by adopting his birthday (25th January) and even claiming that he expected to die at the same age and date as his predecessor. [34]

Corey E. Andrews discerns a deliberate and active process of identity 'acculturation' on the part of Hogg as he appeared at numerous Burns dinners throughout the 1810s and 1820s in an attempt to assume the latter's mantle.[35] While ostensibly designed to commemorate the Ayrshire bard through, for example, the Immortal Memory speech, such dinners provided more opportunity for the self-mythologising and self-eulogising of the Ettrick Shepherd with, for example, the substitution of the words 'Shall Jamie Hogg be e'er forgot' replacing the traditional refrain to Auld Lang Syne at the Freemason's Tavern in Holborn in 1832.[36] On this occasion, as 'had become the established custom, Hogg's *genius* was toasted, and his elegy for Burns was recited.'[37] Both writers were similar in being co-opted as Tory icons of 'a naive if gifted peasantry', something which the radical Burns would potentially have resented more that Hogg. [38]

In another example of Hogg's literary re-invention, in this case textual, 'The Scenes of Pastoral Life' series which appeared in *Blackwood's* between April 1817 and March 1818 were part of group of sketches that were designed for publication in book form as early as 1813. In fact, during Hogg's lifetime he published *four* versions of his *Memoirs of an Author's Life* (1805, 1807, 1821 and 1832) dismissing 'what an Edinburgh editor styles my

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[34] As J.M.W. Turner did with Shakespeare's birth date.
[35] Corey E. Andrews, *The Genius of Scotland: the Cultural Production of Robert Burns, 1785-1834* (Leiden: Hotie Publishing, 2015), p. 259.
[36] Miller, p. 316
[37] Andrews, p. 260. Italics in original.
[38] Hughes, p. 160.

good-natured egotism, which is sometimes any thing but that'.[39] Such review and amendment of a single composition surpasses even De Quincey's notorious penchant for revising his *Confessions* and merely labelling it 'this *important* Memoir' hardly justifies such literary self-multiplication. Significantly this is a trope in Hogg's *Confessions* associated with Robert Wringhim's tormentor:

> What is finally most uncanny (and perhaps most frightening) about Hogg's Devil is his tendency to reduplicate. Otherness leads to *other* Others: not only can Gil-Martin change his face he can occupy more than one place (or face) at a time.[40]

Similarly, Hogg's relationship with his alter-ego of The Shepherd was problematic and as fraught with difficulties as De Quincey's assuming the title of the opium-eater. However, like De Quincy, there is no doubt that Hogg effectively resists accusations of being an imposter and merely assuming his chosen role. Hogg was a genuine shepherd. He worked as a labourer on a farm from the age of seven and his first poem was published while attending a sheep market in Edinburgh's Old Town. Moreover, he had a realistic rather than idealistic view of Nature, suggesting he had experienced its realities at first hand; something which the descriptions contained in the *Shepherd's Guide* highlight. The text is replete with accounts which uncompromisingly embrace the visceral degeneracy of animal existence, rather than offering a sanitised (let alone romanticised) portrayal. Hogg, for example, fully engages with the reader's olfactory senses in his observations on the effect of maggot infestation which 'gives the excrement, and perspiration, a rancid and putrid smell; for they have every one of them the same loathsome smell […] On very sultry weather, they will kill a sheep outright in a week.'[41]

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[39] In Hogg, *Altrive Tales*, p. 11. Expanded and updated versions of the *Memoir* where attached to different texts including *The Mountain Bard* (1807 and 1821) and *Altrive Tales* (1832). An early version written in the third person appeared in *Scots Magazine* titled 'Farther Particulars of the Life of James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd' in 1805. See Hogg, *Altrive Tales Collected among the Peasantry of Scotland and from Foreign Adventurers,* ed. by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 194.
[40] Jones, p. 177.
[41] Hogg, *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 106.

While his knowledge of animal husbandry was theoretically sound, whether he was a successful practitioner of country pursuits is, however, another matter. He was ridiculed for once having ploughed the top of a hill, and certainly his attempts to purchase and successfully develop his own farm at various locations around Scotland were fraught with difficulties and complications. There was the notion amongst some living in the Ettrick locale, including Hogg's brother Robert, that Hogg 'would have done well to have paid more attention to his flock and less to literature.'[42] Hogg himself would seem to sense this ambiguity in the attitude he displays towards husbandry in 'Scenes from Pastoral Life' where he appears, at times, to remove himself from the characters and events he is describing. The authenticity and direct engagement of the *Shepherd's Guide* is replaced by the slightly patronising tone of the educated, somewhat bemused, outside observer, as Hogg foregrounds the religious connotations of the *pastor*al with the bucolic tradition. For example, he opens his 'Tales and Anecdotes of the Pastoral Life No. III' (1817) with the following remark on those present at a country wedding: 'the rusticity of their benisons amused me and there were several of them that I have never to this day been able to comprehend.'[43] This would, ironically, shortly reflect his own fate at the hands of the *Blackwood's* contributors with, for example, William Blackwood himself providing an accompanying meta-narrative in the form of a foot note to readers of 'Pastoral Life III', reassuring them, while simultaneously patronising Hogg, that a 'curious epistle' contained in the article is not 'a mere coinage of our facetious correspondent.'[44] Likewise, in the *Guide* Hogg writes knowledgably about the importance of drains and methods of draining marsh land in order to reduce the occurrence of Braxy ('this universal ravage of young flocks'), yet seemingly distances himself from the social stigma

[42] Miller, p. 321.
[43] Hogg, *Contributions to Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, p. 19.
[44] Hogg, Contributions to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, p. 23

attached to any manner of acquaintance with such systems when writing in *Blackwood's*.[45] A key episode in 'Tales and Anecdotes of the Pastoral Life No.II' revolves around an incident in which a competitor (denoted by the ubiquitous appellation 'Jock') in a Border horse race is faced with the prospect of leaping the sheep-drains, something which Hogg is content to relate with detachment and implied ignorance, belying his expertise in the discipline. The prejudice that Hogg previously revealed towards Highlanders in the *Guide* has, by 1818, moved closer to his Lowland home, suggesting that as he advances socially, so do the objects of his derision. Hogg derides the former, specifically, inhabitants around Cairn-Gorm and Lochavin, as ascribing the disease of 'head-ill' in their flocks to a 'most deformed little monster' they call Phaam, whose 'head is larger than his whole body' and whose 'intents are evil and dangerous.' Hogg, in dismissing this belief as a mere manifestation of the 'natives' […] usual superstitious way' would be blind to the dramatic irony of his later profiting from the prolific re-telling of similar supernatural and folkloric narratives – and to his own pariah status as a swollen-headed, parvenu, zoomorphised Hogg-beast, who in the eyes of polite Edinburgh society is likewise 'no earthly creature.'[46]

Still, there are moments when Hogg suddenly appears uncomfortably close to those rustic characters he describes, even those of the canine category. For instance, in 'Further Anecdotes of The Shepherd's Dog' (1818) Hogg refers to his faithful 'Sirrah' displaying a love for music, for which he possessed 'an outrageous ear': 'music was his delight: it always

[45] *Shepherd's Guide*, p.17. Hogg exhibits a thorough technical familiarity with the construction and practicalities of drain management later in the text. See pages 156-157. A reader would not gather this from his dissociating viewpoint in the *Scenes from Pastoral Life*.

[46] *Shepherd's Guide*, p.115. Such Lowland prejudice did not, however, prevent Hogg from utilising his travels around the Scottish Highlands and Islands as material for a series of letters to Walter Scott, initially published in 1802 in *The Scots Magazine*. Like *The Shepherd's Guide* claims can still be made as to the continuing relevance of the text in terms of practical application and merit. Laughlan remarks that this 'is a work to be enjoyed. But it is also meant to be used – for the letters describe the routes which James Hogg actually followed […] and which can still be taken.' (p. 7.)

drew him towards it like a charm.'[47] This was notably also a characteristic of Hogg who was a renowned singer, fiddler and lyricist, once jubilantly informing his neighbour in the audience at the Royal Lancaster Theatre that the song being performed on stage, 'Donald Macdonald', a celebration of the martial prowess of that eponymous Scottish soldier, was one of his own creations.[48]

The contradiction and duality underpinning the complex relationship that evolved between James Hogg and The Shepherd in his lifetime, are already evident within *The Shepherd's Guide*, this first seminal text. Hogg is struggling with questions of identity and contingency in *The Shepherd's Guide*, fourteen years before the publication of *The Confessions*. The latter has been described, fittingly, with its imagery, puns and allegorical devices as a 'very much a poet's novel' by Groves but it is also, as I will argue, a 'shepherd's novel'.[49] The author of the text is designated *The* Ettrick Shepherd and within the work itself Hogg both is and is not *an* Ettrick Shepherd, in that there are symbolic fractures which reject the traditional mode of historic categorisation. Significantly, the use of the definite article was an affectation adopted later to re-inforce the uniqueness of his character within literary society, while alienating former Borders neighbours who considered it an act of arrogant assertion.[50] The author of *The Shepherd's Guide* negotiates his text between two distinct registers (pragmatic veterinary and poetic) which reveal a central tension within the discourse and delineate the emerging self/other dynamic, albeit along a porous borderline.

[47] Hogg, 'Further Anecdotes of The Shepherd's Dog' in *Blackwood's*, p. 67.
[48] Miller, p. 22.
[49] Groves, p. 115. As indeed *The Shepherd's Guide* might be considered a poet's treatise.
[50] My italics

Hogg's tone, when introducing his *Shepherd's Guide*, is situated comfortably between a practical register and tone of faux humility. Significantly, there is no attempt to co-adopt a Scot's vernacular within the Standard English usage. There is also a sense of dislocation evinced by the distancing techniques Hogg employs to redefine the reader's expectations of encountering the oral, traditional mode of the shepherd's discourse. His ideology in constructing the narrative voice of the *Guide* is prescriptive and hegemonic. Hogg is asserting his agency as a propagator of the superior, anglicised *written* form, ignoring the demotic connotations of a more multi-modal, dialect-based system. He describes improvements in breeding stocks as being brought about by men who are:

> Nowise singular for their literary acquirements; and who, though they can communicate their sentiments with perspicuity in conversation, never once think of doing it in writing. It is thus that a great many observations are lost to the country in general, which, if once circulated, might be greatly improved upon.[51]

However, the reader of Hogg once again encounters a form of paradox. Namely, that written documents and accounts, unlike oral narrative, demand a more profound level of decryption while simultaneously resisting classification. This is evident in the case of the manuscript discovered alongside the suicide's corpse in *The Confessions,* which is delineated 'deep, rotten and yellow', analogous to descriptions of sheep's innards in the *Guide*. This evokes the somewhat unappealing process of deciphering the document, via the attendant gustatory image: 'the entrails, on dissection, are of a dark yellow, and have likewise a smell [...] flavouring something of sulphur.'[52] This strand, here with its suitably hellish connotations, moreover, co-exists with a self-consciously literary schematic: stylistically mediated and both lexically and syntactically beguiling.

As noted, *The Shepherd's Guide* represents something of a bricolage in its subtle slippage between genres. This is not to dismiss the guide as inauthentic as a *guide*, rather to emphasise

[51] Hogg, *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 3.
[52] Hogg, *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 37.

its (at times) startling, if relatively incongruent, literary qualities and indeed its almost prophetic function as a meta-narrative anticipating key aspects of Hogg's later development and methodology as a writer. A series of apparently incidental or minor references, which are threaded through the treatise, in effect construct and offer an alternative, sub-text. These are represented through a number of forms. Firstly, the prevalence of some overtly stylised features of Hogg's discourse fashions this critical dialectic. For example, a passage describing a shepherd reacting to the symptoms of Breakshuach or Cling in a sheep:

> He will observe it wasting away like snow from the wall, with its head hanging down, and its sides fallen in, courting solitude with the greatest anxiety; searching after, and drinking water with avidity, while every draught serves only to increase the malevolence of the distemper.[53]

Here, Hogg employs a combination of simile, alliteration - particularly effective due to the repetition of the hard consonant 'd' - and figurative speech: personifying both the suffering sheep (through pathos) as well as the invasive affliction. On another occasion when discussing milking the ewes, Hogg exhibits an almost De Quinceyan enchantment with, and belief in, the seemingly totemic power of the alliterative signifier: 'I would rather there were never another ounce of ewe-milk cheese […] than that the poor animals should be so abused to procure it. Of all practices this is the most pernicious which prevails to the present day.'[54] Hogg also dabbles in rhyme, injecting a poetic or doggerel quality into his prose, when discussing avoiding draining certain marsh and boggy land to prevent rot: 'let it be as wet as it will: for the wetter it is, the ling grows the better.'[55] While this rhyme might reflect the oral tradition with echoes of a memorable saying or proverb, the deliberately distorted syntax also betrays the lyrical aspirations, or pretensions, of the good shepherd.

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[53] Hogg, *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 85.
[54] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 91.
[55] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 156.

Secondly, Hogg draws implicit parallels between the two practices of writing and shepherding. Significantly, in view of the pecuniary benefits of exploiting and extracting material for the creative process, the analogy is suggested by the similarity between the motor skills necessary for both writing and milking. Hence the injunction to overcome dams reluctant to feed their new-born: 'milk them with the thumb and fore finger until the milk begin (*sic*) to flow freely.' Furthermore, the procedure for concluding an incision of the skull to relieve hydrocephalus is reminiscent of the closing of a manuscript or parchment. The surgical approach is described with a mixture of tenderness and exactitude comparable to the skill exhibited by the most fastidious of authors. One half of the separated folds of skin must be carefully kept back with the thumb until the water is extracted. Then, as Hogg instructs: 'fold them neatly down again, seal them, and cover all with a wax-cloth.'[56] Other key lexical terminology is applicable to each of Hogg's careers. Early on in the *Guide* he reflects on how important it is that his observations on treating the illnesses of sheep are 'circulated' as widely as possible.[57] Of course, the motivation to increase circulation lay behind the magazine and review wars in which Hogg would later become embroiled.

Finally, the trajectory of Hogg's occupation as a writer, feted and then dismissed by the Edinburgh literary establishment, would appear to mirror the fate of those lambs succumbing to bowel sickness. As autumn progresses into winter, he notes, 'sooner or later, the frosts must commence, and frequently enough, very suddenly; then the mountain grasses close at the root and […] become of themselves more dry and astringent.' Denied the once succulent vegetation, the lambs fall victim to a painful distemper: 'that Braxy which hath cut off so many thousands of excellent young sheep.' Tellingly, this occurs at the stage at which the

[56] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 9 and p. 62.
[57] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 3.

lambs, according to the author, begin to be called hoggs.[58] Such foreshadowing of the inevitability of the author's literary demise is compounded by Hogg's confession in the *Guide* that he has 'been obliged […] to swell this essay to a size which I did not at first intend.' Hogg must have been aware of the negative connotations of 'swelling' within his text, indeed on the following page he refers to awalding, the clawing of a sheep at its itching back until it rolls over. Consequently, 'owing to the bulk of their fleeces, they cannot get up again, but soon swell and die if not noticed or lifted by the shepherd.'[59] Hogg's ultimate fate at the hands of *Blackwood's* was something not even 'The Shepherd' could save himself from. Perhaps, in literature as well as nature, 'swelling' is a precursor to a peculiar, and particularly uncomfortably, form of death. Certainly, as we have seen with De Quincey and Lamb, expansion is, at the very least, a troubling and double-edged process.

The messianic qualities assumed by Robert in *The Confessions* as one of the 'elect' are matched by the presence of symbolic signifiers of divinity and redemption in *The Shepherd's Guide,* which would also be reinvigorated 14 years later in the forced scriptural discourse of *The Chaldee Manuscripts*. In a recent paper, 'Re-locating Gil-Martin: Fairies Versus Christianity Within Justified Sinner', Joshua Dobbs has posited that Hogg's cultivation of the role of shepherd was partly motivated by notions of the accompanying religious and Biblical significance, of which he was fully cognisant.[60] Hogg's practical interaction with the natural landscape is in accordance with a Wordsworthian vision of the pastoral, as defined by John Barrell and John Bull.[61] Significantly, Wordsworth's 'Extempore Effusion Upon the Death of

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[58] *Shepherd's Guide*, pp. 21-22.
[59] *Shepherd's Guide*, pp. 120-121.
[60] Given at the Hogg Society Conference, University of Stirling, 21/7/2017
[61] 'The harmony […] has been achieved by work; but by working in co-operation with nature, and not by struggling to subdue her; and in this way Wordsworth goes back to the properly *pastoral* origins of the kind – the herdsman lives by understanding the landscape and the elements.' *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*, intro. and ed. by John Barrell and John Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1982), pp. 427-428.

James Hogg' (1835) opens with an image of Hogg as a Christ-like figure borrowed from Psalm 23: 'When first, descending from the moorlands/I saw the Stream of Yallow glide/Along a bare and open valley/The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide.'[62] The quatrains that follow spout the lexis of Christian doctrine: 'holy Spirit', 'heaven-eyed creature' and 'Lamb' – also a play on Charles who had died the previous year. Indeed, Kenneth R. Johnston describes the poem as 'Wordsworth's conscious tribute to the passing of his entire generation.'[63] The *Shepherd's Guide* certainly contains many parallels with the New Testament, Hogg as the good shepherd performing miracles and anointing his flock both literally and metaphorically. For example, when describing the following incident:

> The flies were at this time settled upon the fold, in such numbers, that when we went in among the sheep, we could with difficulty see each other; but when those with the oil were turned in amongst the rest, to our utter astonishment, in less than a minute, not a fly was to be seen.[64]

The register of the Bible is further evoked via Hogg's claim to possess the ability to cure those sheep 'quite past redemption', and through apocalyptic passages in which the author seemingly adopts the mantle of zealous preacher: 'when the Rot and Braxy […] have raged like a pestilence among the woolly tribes, and buried the hopes of the husbandman with his bleating flocks.' [65]

While such theological allusions are structurally and referentially embedded amongst details of the shepherd's everyday life, there are accompanying darker sutures constructing and constricting the narrative form, initiating a minor, yet significant, trope within Hogg's writing. Namely, an unsettling sexualisation of lambs in a manner reminiscent of Lamb's

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[62] Wordsworth, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Sandra Anstey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 98.
[63] Kenneth R. Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet Lover Rebel Spy* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998), p. 839.
[64] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 111.
[65] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 59 and pp. 5-6.

pork fetish, a motif which is first hinted at in *The Shepherd's Guide* and subsequently developed fifteen years later in *The Three Perils of Man* (1822). The triad referenced in the sub-title to this latter work is, nominally, 'War, Women and Witchcraft', with the threat (or promise) of non-alliterative bestiality omitted from the designation at least. However, the narrative itself is rather less inhibited, taking its cue largely themes from suggested in the *Guide.*

In the *Guide*, Hogg describes how, in preparation of gelding the males, 'some farmers anoint the two vacuities in the scrotum with oil of turpentine;' a pre-Lawrencian trope of religious-sexual conflation. [66] The process of castration itself is, of course, inherently sexualised, yet Hogg seemingly transforms the act into an erogenous ritual, mediating it through (on this occasion) a combination of soothing sibilance and semantic field of sensitivity:

> When the lambs are taken to be cut, they should never be catched by the back or flanks, or any part except the hough or neck, and lifted gently up by the legs. The operation ought to be performed as gently as possible, by slitting up, or cutting the scrotum with a sharp smooth-edged knife and, and starting the testicles by pressing both hands against the belly of the lamb.[67]

Furthermore, the subsequent reference to removing the testicles via the shepherd's teeth, which Miller interprets as solely a brutish aspect of the proceedings, might constitute an oral intervention and ingestion with connotations both erotic and consumable.[68] The modern reader's possible unease here, anticipates a similar disquiet in response to Elia's troubling descriptions of the pleasures derived from devouring the flesh of young pigs, and his

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[66] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 13.
[67] *Shepherd's Guide*, p. 13. Hogg anticipates D.H Lawrence with his excitement at the prospect of forbidden forms of sexuality being cloaked in quasi-(or pseudo-) religious imagery. Lawrence's paean to anal intercourse in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) describes a sensuality 'sharp and searing as fire, burning the soul to tinder […] necessary, to burn out false shames and smelt out the heaviest ore of the body into purity.' (London: Penguin, 1961). pp. 257-258. .
[68] See note 27.

accompanying fetishism of tender and alluring porcine meat.[69] Hogg, however, in *The Three Perils of Man*, significantly elevates the degree of anthropomorphism by transporting the reader, in effect, beyond bestiality; involving them, merely by the process of reading, in a perturbing act of rapine collusion and voyeurism. Ostensibly depicting the slaughter of a fat ewe lamb by Marion's Jock, a son renowned by his long-suffering mother for his prodigious appetite, Jock's prehensile permutations suggest a form of sexual stimulation and conquest:

> She was as beautiful and playful as innocence itself [...] After hard struggling he mastered her, took her between his feet, stroked her snowy fleece and soft downy cheek, and ever, as he patted her, repeated these words, 'O but ye be a bonny beast!'[70]

The moment before penetration with the knife is imbued with a suitable *frisson*, with Jock 'seized with certain inward longings and yearnings that would not be repressed' before finally 'he took away the lamb's life, and that not in the most gentle or experienced way.'[71] Moreover, the violation of the ewe described here, in which 'hunger and desire (are) mirror images,' likewise predicts and inhabits a terrain reminiscent of the assaults Robert receives in the *Confessions*.[72]

The disempowering of Robert's masculine identity, for example his recurring bloody noses at the hands of assailants are considered as having connotations of female powerless, mirror the gelding process alluded to in the *Guide*.[73] This emasculation theme is signified and unified through the persistent paradigms of penetration from the rear and a fixation with the susceptibility of the bowels. Sedgwick further notes how 'the bowels and backside as the

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[69] See Chapter Three. Such an interpretation of Hogg would not necessarily be ascribed to the passage by the intended audience of shepherds.
[70] James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man: War, Women and Witchcraft* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1996), p. 258.
[71] *Three Perils*, pp. 258-259.
[72] Miller, p. 12.
[73] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 101: 'The bloody nose, especially, is an emblem of a specifically female powerlessness…it occurs in eighteenth-century novels at moments of sexual threat against women.'

place of vulnerability to violence, pain and domination proleptically take the place of any location there of possible satisfactions.'[74] Hogg devotes several pages to the subject of dysentery amongst sheep and was himself afflicted with a bowel condition which nearly cost him his life.[75] Furthermore, the powerless of Robert when faced with the will of Gil-Martin is a feminised response to an overtly masculine and aggressive dominance.

The Shepherd's Guide can thus be regarded in many ways as a precursor to the (now) more recognised text, *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Furthermore, in view of the vitriolic treatment Hogg received at the hands of *Blackwood's* contributors (the subject of the final section of this chapter), *The Confessions* have also been read as his response to, and revenge on, the *Noctes Ambrosianae* construction of The Shepherd. Or, as Groves describes it more benignly, 'writing the *Confessions* may well have been therapeutic – a chance to objectify his own literary struggles.'[76] Certainly, according to Garside the 1824 novel can be seen as reflecting his ambivalent attitude to Edinburgh and his 'increasingly perplexing experiences as a participant in *Blackwood's*.'[77] This may be perceived, for example, in the gradual loss of identity of Robert Wringham at the hands of the demonic Gil-Martin, which has been interpreted as paralleling the subsuming of Hogg's identity within the form of the Shepherd in the *Noctes*. However, Hogg's subversion of his submissive role to North, his editor, is evident in the article 'A Scot's Mummy' which he contributed to *Blackwood's* in 1823 (partly

[74] p.113. Sedgwick makes much of the symbolism suggested by the deadly assault on Robert's brother George being from behind and in the form of Gil-Martin's double-edged, gilded weapon. Sedgwick also highlights the duality of the motif thus: 'the last golden weapon in the novel is brandished behind Robert during his final degeneration, by Gil-Martin who is using it both to protect him and to prod and subjugate him.' In his introduction to the Wordsworth edition of the *Confessions*, David Blair notes how Robert's sharing a bed with another male is always accompanied by (ostensibly) supernatural 'disturbance and disorientation.' See James Hogg, *The Private memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner,* intro. and notes by David Blair (Ware: Wordsworth, 2003), p. xx.
[75] See Hughes, p. 35.
[76] Groves, p. 125.
[77] Garside, p. xxxii.

as a riposte to the denigration of his *Memoir*) and which is incorporated into the editor's manuscript at the end of the *Confessions*. Questions of intertextuality, for the moment, aside, it is fascinating alone for its injunction to North to follow the example set by the character of the title in committing suicide: 'if you should think of trying the experiment on yourself, you have nothing more to do than hang yourself in a hay rope, which by the by, is made of risp, and leave orders that you are to be buried in a wild height.'[78] The harsh, rasping sibilance evoked here in the officious/offensive clarification adjusts the power asymmetry nominally in Hogg's favour. Hogg also has his fictitious editor of the *Confessions* question the veracity of the discovery of the grave and manuscript, via a self-referential dismissal of the tale precisely because it appeared in *Blackwood's*.[79] Hence the difficulties inherent in locating the textual artefact physically are superseded by difficulties associated with locating and defining its subsequent authenticity, intertextual function and status. Via the employment of such subversive perambulations, Hogg, evidently, was not fully subscribing to those early nineteenth-century notions of class deference and subservience seemingly favoured by Wilson.

Hogg's undermining of social conventions is mirrored by his attitude towards literary precepts. Hogg appears as a character near the end of his own text (the *Confessions),* in a deliberate interrogation of the relationship between a reader, the author, and his work. Such renegotiating and re-contextualising potentially engenders a sense of dislocation, through a significant repositioning of the writer. This narrative strategy became, more prominently, a

[78] James Hogg, 'A Scot's Mummy' in *Collected Works*, ed. by Richardson, p. 143. Risp is 'a sort of long sword-grass that grows about marshes and the sides of lakes.' Dictionary of the Scots Language online.
[79] Garside, in the introduction to the Stirling/South Carolina edition of the *Confessions* discerns parallels between the party visiting the grave and Scott's (first) arrival in Ettrick in 1802. The question of the relationship between Hogg and his patron is, however, unfortunately, outwith (to use an appropriate Scot's preposition) the scope and remit of the present study. See, for instance, Peter Garside, 'Hogg and Scott's 'First Meeting' and the Politics of Literary Friendship' in Alker and Nelson.

feature of later twentieth century post-modern texts such as Martin Amis' *Money*. In his novel, published in 1984, Amis similarly introduces himself as a character interacting with the protagonist - the intriguingly and tantalisingly named 'John Self'. The initially unsuspecting Self is finally allowed by Amis to appreciate that, within this convoluted and entangled meta-fiction, '*I'm the joke, I'm it. It was you. It was you*.'[80] Even the novel's sub-title, *A Suicide Note*, suggests an affinity with the fate of the justified sinner. The latter's Editor similarly feels that he too, potentially, is a victim of a hoax perpetrated this time by 'the ingenious fancies displayed' in *Blackwood's*; meanwhile supposedly baulking at the intervention of James Hogg into his narrative.

Hogg's persona as shepherd and author of *The Shepherd's Guide* was, therefore, interwoven with Hogg as the author of the *Confessions*, a connection which is re-enforced by the Edinburgh/Border geographical and narrative axis of the two texts. It is pertinent to situate and posit readings of both works within deliberately indeterminate terrain. The 'borders' are, by their very nature, places suggestive of national and personal self-enquiry, reflection and dislocation. Sebastian Mitchell categorises the history of the borders as an 'era of mutually destructive Anglo-Scottish relations, [...] of banditry, factional infighting, petty squabbles, meanness and impoverishment.'[81] Susan Oliver, in turn, sees the attempted literary reclaiming of the borders by Scott as a deliberate ploy designed to serve reactionary political purposes. Scott

[80] Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 379. The novel contains other prompts and references to this multi-layered inter-textuality. For example, John Self's book collection includes *Success!* (the title of an Amis novel, albeit *sans* exclamation mark in the original.) He is also working on a film project entitled *Good Money*, allowing him to contemplate revealingly: 'I must keep a grip on my priorities. A good film didn't matter. *Good Money* didn't matter. Money mattered. *Money* mattered.' (p. 185. All emphasis in the original.)

[81] Sebastian Mitchell, *Visions of Britain, 1730-1830: Anglo-Scottish Writing and Representation* (Basingstoke and New York; Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 193.

> Challenges and countermands radicalism within Scotland, and by implication Britain, by constructing these once contentious and 'lawless' Borders as a historical frontier region where martial codes of loyalty and personal honour had through time become naturally embedded in the fabric of a latterly dutiful civil society.[82]

This was the 'debatable land' of *Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* (1802-03), debatable not just geographically and nationally but in terms of formulating an appropriate discourse to record and reflect such a contentious and contested landscape.[83] These issues of topography and identity remained on-going and relevant within Hogg's writing. Such indeterminacy provides the appropriate backdrop to accompanying questions of shifting and resisting notions of social status which were continually attached to Hogg. For Hughes, his life fluctuated 'between worlds, that of the labouring-class and of the professional literary men.'[84] Broglio identifies this fluidity within locational context: seeing the Ettrick (border) locations employed by Hogg in his tales as refusing 'the fashioning of an isomorphic space and instead [placing] locales across Scotland as heterotopic communities not to be consumed under the homeostasis and homogeny of a unified Britain.'[85] Borderlands therefore resist formal political and social classification within the emerging nation state of the nominally United Kingdom. The turmoil and upheaval described by, and associated with, the justified sinner's manuscript is in itself seemingly justified by its discovery at a quintessentially border location, Fall Law, equidistant between the lowland topography of Altrive and Ettrick:

> On the top of a wild height, called Cowanscroft, where the lands of three proprietors meet all at one point, there has been, for long and many years, the grave of a suicide […] Often have I stood musing over it myself, when a shepherd on one of the farms of which it formed the extreme boundary.[86]

The reference to the 'three proprietors' mirror the triad of narratives which collectively constitute *The Confessions*. Yet the setting is potentially Wordsworthian, reminiscent of the

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[82] Susan Oliver, *Scott, Byron and the Poetics of Cultural Encounter* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 4.
[83] See Mitchell pp. 194-195.
[84] Hughes, p.
[85] Broglio, p.126.
[86] Blackwood's p. 140.

infant's grave in 'The Thorn' (1798) which lies 'High on a mountain's highest ridge,/Where oft the stormy winter gale/Cuts like a scythe'.[87] Wordsworth, significantly, also writes about 'proprietors' too, for example in 'Michael: A Pastoral Poem' (1800), raising the contentious question of Romantic identity and authorial status within the canon. Tropes which might be thought unique to the Lake District via their appropriation by Wordsworth have, seemingly, in turn been appropriated by a Scottish writer and incorporated within his discourse, suggesting that both national and canonical borders are themselves permeable. This broaching of the question of who exactly is entitled to lay claim to the ownership of the Romantic label is particularly legitimate and appropriate within the context of an analysis of 'Michael'. The poem is, after all, recounted by the narrator for 'the sake/of Youthful Poets who among these hills/Will be my second self when I am gone.' This reference to a 'second self', with its relevant connotations of duality, implies an invitation to writers such as Hogg to adopt the romantic mantle. Hogg acknowledged the profound influence of Wordsworth, a writer who he had first met in Edinburgh during the summer of 1814 and of whom he later stated: 'I admired many of his pieces exceedingly.' Moreover, he admitted that Wordsworth's works represented a rich mine of quotations and mottos 'that is altogether inexhaustible.' [88]

The notion of ownership or 'proprietorship' is central to 'Michael', as it is homologous to Hogg – not least within the *Confessions,* but also in the latter's history of unsuccessful farming and publishing ventures. Michael, the eponymous old shepherd (from Grasmere Vale), contemplates selling a 'portion of his patrimonial fields' in order to pay a debt for his nephew. However, 'if these fields of ours/should pass into a stranger's hands, I think/ that I could not lie quiet in my grave', a fate shared by Robert Wringhim when his resting place is

[87] William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 63.
[88] Hogg, 'Reminisces of Former Days' (1829) in *Altrive Tales*, ed. by Hughes, p. 67 and p. 69. Hogg, however, was not a Wordsworth disciple in the manner of John Wilson or De Quincey.

desecrated by the editor's party. Ultimately, Michael is failed by his son Luke, as symbolised by the unfinished sheepfold, in whom he had placed his hope of financial redemption, whereupon the poem concludes with the estate being sold off. Freudian theory notwithstanding, patriarchal conflict and disappointment are likewise a key trope of Scottish literary duality, which achieves a form of thematic apotheosis during the nineteenth century.[89] The question of Wringhim's paternity in the *Confessions* is fraught with uncertainties, representing a location for potentially uncomfortable interrogations. For the reader, Hogg's editor sufficiently modifies the justified sinner's relationship to his nominal father (George Colwan, the laird of Dalcastle), both raising and subverting questions of parenthood by stating grudgingly that he was more than probably his son.[90] However, the laird himself suffered no such ambiguity: 'though he knew and acknowledged that he was obliged to support and provide for him, he refused to acknowledge him in other respects.'[91] Wringhim, in turn, disavows his supposed father in order to transfer his trust and affection firstly to his Reverend mentor (from whom he takes his name) and then, disastrously, to his tormentor Gil-Martin.

Other principal tropes utilised by Wordsworth are also employed by Hogg. Within 'The Thorn' the fate of Martha Ray's baby is uncertain, whether hanged or drowned, and of course the status of the suicide is in itself also indeterminate, traditionally constituting neither a natural nor a morally or legally justifiable death.[92] The foregrounding of an action such as suicide which, intrinsically, both resists and demands interpretation is congruent with the

[89] Stevenson, significantly, indicates Hyde's relationship with Jekyll as existing somewhere along the father-son continuum: 'Jekyll had more than a father's interest; Hyde had more than a son's indifference.' *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 79.
[90] The name itself is appropriately ambiguous, according to the Editor, 'as it is often spelled' 'Dalchastel.
[91] *Confessions*, p. 14.
[92] See, for instance, Marshall Clinard and Robert Meier, *Sociology of Deviant Behaviour* (Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008), p. 339.

difficulties of defining the nature and validity of Wringhim's confessions themselves as well as the text of *The Confessions* in which they are finally (and, it might be stated, somewhat awkwardly) incorporated. Significantly, it is southward from Edinburgh, towards the borders and Hogg's original and natural habitat, that Robert flees to safety after his crimes in the capital are revealed. Moreover, Ian Duncan has recently suggested that it is Robert's failure to become a successful border shepherd which ultimately 'results in his ontological demise.' [93] After exchanging his clothes for a shepherd-costume, he finds himself 'welcome in every house,' however after being engaged in the actual role his fellow shepherds 'told my master I knew nothing of herding, and begged of him to dismiss me.'[94] It appears that, in this case at least, *The Shepherd's Guide* would have constituted an indispensable inter-textual volume: not just life-changing for Hogg in establishing and marking the beginning of his literary career but potentially as a life-saving resource for the agriculturally inept Robert.

The fictional grave robbing initially described in 'A Scot's Mummy' and which thereafter performs a prominent role within *the Confessions* would be replaced by a form of literary grave-robbing by Hogg, again anticipating De Quincey's strategies of re-hashing and re-inventing texts as the opium-eater. In a manner reminiscent of the reworking of Tales and Anecdotes of the Pastoral Life, the incorporation of the *Blackwood's* article 'A Scot's Mummy' into the *Confessions* is an example of Hogg's re-using the same (or similar) texts in multiple forms. Such multi-transplanting of his work is not without humour, although perhaps understandable in view of early nineteenth century Edinburgh's literary intrigues and machinations. Hogg ends Robert Wringham's confessions with a warning to anyone who dares modify them, in the manner of the Book of Revelation in the New King James' version

[93] In his paper *Locating Human Nature in Hogg's Fictional Autobiographies* given at the Hogg Society conference, University of Stirling, 20/7/2017.
[94] Hogg, *Confessions*, pp. 162-163.

of the Bible: 'I will now seal up my little book and conceal it; cursed be he who trieth to alter or amend!'[95] Yet in an ironic postscript, and reflecting an increasingly desperate attempt to promote a novel which Hogg considered unfairly ignored, the text was amended and re-published under the title *Confessions of a Fanatic* (1837), a bowdlerised version of the original which was accepted as a standard version until an edition of the original text was reissued in 1895. [96] This edition, suitably, reflected its own crisis of unresolved identity appearing as *The Suicide's Grave*.[97] Literary acceptance thus drove his desire for self-reproduction although, in keeping with the mythos of the repulsive shepherd propagated by *Blackwood's*, it has been proposed that such reproduction functioned as a compensatory device for his rejection by women, as well as atonement for the revulsion he supposedly induced within the opposite sex; the unfortunate Hogg, simultaneously, being imputed with a 'grandiose sex drive and a disgustingness that makes its fulfilment impossible.'[98]

However, despite his rural heritage and concomitant treatment and status as an interloper, Hogg certainly benefited from his relative proximity to 1820s Edinburgh. The Scottish capital represented a flourishing centre for periodicals in the early decades of the nineteenth century, creating and emphasising a distinct Scottish literary and cultural identity. The cultural difference between the two nations, England and Scotland, which had only been (relatively) recently unified by the parliamentary Act of 1707 was exemplified by *Blackwood's* attacks

[95] Hogg, *Confessions*, p. 165.
The reference is to Revelation 22:18-19. 'If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life'.
[96] Excluding the 'descriptions of religious of religious fanaticism which are the heart of the book.' See St Clair p. 610. See also Ian Duncan, in introduction to James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. xvi.
[97] Which may, in a further development, be a reincarnation of a similarly entitled 1828 re-issue of *The Confessions*. However, according to St Clair, 'no copy has been found' of this original *Suicide's Grave*. (p. 610.)
[98] Schoenfield, p. 225.

on the pejoratively titled 'Cockney School' of writers - Hazlitt, Keats and Leigh Hunt.[99] The charge was led by John Gibson Lockhart, Scott's biographer and son-in-law, in his article 'On the Cockney School of Poetry No. 1' and the purpose was to 'render London local, limited and provincial.'[100] Particular venom was reserved for Leigh Hunt, 'a man of extravagant pretensions both in wit, poetry and politics, and withal of exquisitely bad taste, and extremely vulgar modes of thinking.'[101] Gregory Dart further exposes the pernicious, mean-spirited nature of the criticism with Lockhart deliberately comparing Hunt with Homer and Hazlitt with Aristotle in order to emphasise the contrast with the classical Athens of the North, the *bona fide* inheritor of the Greco-Roman tradition. Furthermore, the charges levelled against Hunt (like Hogg) became moral as well as literary:

> It was not merely that the author had a 'polluted muse'[…] his private life was similarly infected. Coded insinuations were made about an incestuous relationship between Hunt and his wife's sister, Elizabeth Kent [102]

The 'Cockney School' were also frequently the subject of barbed comments in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, with the first of the series (March 1822) containing the Editor's salutary warning about both the scruples and commercial viability of this supposedly disreputable group:

> There was a worthy young man done up only a few months ago by the Cockney poets. He gave £100 to one for a bundle of verses, (I forget the title,) of which just 20 copies sold. They were all at him like leeches, and he was soon sucked to the bone.[103]

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[99] Of course Hogg would himself be on the receiving end of similar class and geographical bias from the same magazine.
[100] Gillian Hughes, 'The Edinburgh of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and James Hogg's Fiction' in *Romanticism and Blackwood's Magazine: 'An Unprecedented Phenomenon'*, ed. by Robert Morrison and Daniel S. Roberts (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) p. 177.
[101] John Gibson Lockhart, 'On the Cockney School of Poetry No.1', *Blackwood's Magazine* 2, October 1817, pp. 38-40. <Spenserians.cath.vt.edu>
[102] Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 14. Dart does note, however, that such attacks, 'spiteful and sectarian as they undoubtedly were' did have 'a deep purchase on their subjects' due to Lockhart and Wilson's contacts in London.
[103] *The Tavern Sages*, p. 6.

Ten years later, in *Noctes* 60, the much maligned cockneys were still the subject of literary approbation, being accused of ‘doing what they may to spoil’ Alfred Tennyson, of whom Christopher North had ‘good hopes.’ The *Noctes* characterised version of Byron was also enlisted to validate the social inferiority of Leigh Hunt, with the writers equally unable to resist a gibe at the Shepherd’s expense. Hunt is apparently ‘worth 50 Hoggs’, as his Lordship generously, yet condescendingly, concedes that these ‘*plebs* occasionally write good verses.’[104]

This conflict between the opposing yet supposedly unified national, and literary, identities of Edinburgh and London has been interpreted as a symbol of the difficulty of the incorporation of Scotland into the United Kingdom. Whether readily embraced or not, Hogg’s retained his ‘primordial Scottish authenticity’ of lowland peasantry.[105] This is in marked contrast to Thomas Carlyle’s decision to move to London in 1834 (writing for *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*) and thus renegotiate his Ecclefechan-born Scottishness in order to operate within a predominantly Anglo-centric ideology, at least as defined by his choice of a more Standard English register.[106] This reflects a widely acknowledged shift in the geo-cultural axis. For example Hughes highlights how, by the 1830s, Edinburgh was losing ‘some of its cultural eclat’, citing Scott’s death in 1832 and Lockhart’s decision to edit the (English) *Quarterly Review*.[107]

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[104] *The Tavern Sages*, p.163 and 28. Italics in original.
[105] Schoenfield, p. 204. Emblems signifying this status were, significantly, those reflecting physical features: ‘references to Hogg’s hair and teeth […] his skin, voice, and musculature’.
[106] Although Carlyle’s early writing was, admittedly, mostly undertaken in Edinburgh.
[107] Hughes*, Edinburgh of Blackwood’s*, p.183.

Therefore, forms of duality encompassed essential aspects of Hogg's personality and character: manifest in social, political and literary terms. He moved between social classes and operated within both a traditional rural, oral culture and the mode of communication which was rapidly replacing it: that of urban mass printed and distributed magazines.[108] Similarly to De Quincey, he was a Tory by instinct, due to the perception that the Tory party represented the interests of the country rather than the city, yet often sided with oppressed groups and individuals. Moreover, Hogg's observations on Scott's politics were scathing in their criticism of the deference and adoration the latter insisted be granted to the nobility. In *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott* (1834), Hogg notes

> The only foible I could ever discover in the character of Sir Walter Scott was a too strong leaning to the old aristocracy of the country. His devotion for titled rank was prodigious and in such an illustrious character altogether out of place […] to me who alas to this day could never be brought to discern any distinction in ranks save what was constituted by talents or moral worth.[109]

There is also the assertion that Scott's dogmatism regarding the party politics of the time, specifically his deep distaste for the Whigs, was a contributing factor in his decline in health; something a more cautious and canny Hogg might naturally wish to avoid.[110] Paul Hamilton reads Hogg's criticism of Scott as 'justifiably class-conscious' while detecting a 'displacement of an analysis he feared to apply to himself' present in Hogg's focus on the Scott's dread of revolution.[111]

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[108] Hogg notably criticised Walter Scott for anglicising his tales of the Scottish borders, Hogg wished them preserved in the original Doric. See Broglio, p.127.

[109] James Hogg, *Memoir of the Author's Life* and *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1972), pp. 95-96.

[110] 'The Whig ascendancy in the British cabinet killed Sir Walter. Yes I say and aver it was that which broke his heart deranged his whole constitution and murdered him […] a dread of revolution had long preyed on his mind; he withstood it to the last: he fled from it but it affected his brain and killed him. From the moment he perceived the veto of democracy prevailing he lost all hope of the prosperity and ascendancy of the British empire.' *Familiar Anecdotes of Sir Walter Scott*, p. 132.

[111] Paul Hamilton, *Metaromanticism : Aesthetics, Literature, Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) , p. 117.

Gillian Hughes highlights this contradictory compassion less obliquely, explaining the apparent doctrinal dichotomy within the Shepherd thus:

> Hogg's later sympathy with groups at the opposite ends of the political and religious spectrum, the Highlanders after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1745 and the Covenanters in hiding in the 1680s is less inconsistent than it seems. Both groups have this in common, that they have been dispossessed and are consequently suffering cruelly both in mind and body.[112]

Thus Hogg's novel *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818), with its benevolent portrayal of persecuted seventeenth century Covenanters was seen in part as a response to Scott's 1816 *Old Mortality*, a tale which had challenged 'the popular view of the Covenanters as martyrs in the fight for religious freedom.'[113] Hogg's paradoxical political views may also be explained by the fact he had frequent contact with prominent Whigs via his literary and political circles. Moreover, he operates within the terms of reference of our present study, being firmly placed within the context of the emerging genre of secular confession in which, as Hamilton comments, an author offers 'a contested portrait in explicit competition with others.'[114] Hogg's *Confessions* were published anonymously, in the manner of De Quincey, Hazlitt, Malthus and Lamb's texts, and within three years of De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* and, notably, in the same magazine, *Blackwood's*.[115] Ironically, given the connection between the two writers, De Quincey was introduced as a character into the *Noctes Ambrosiana* to provide a sophisticated, educated and pedantic (if ultimately somewhat facile) contrast to the boorish and ignorant Ettrick Shepherd:

> Shepherd. But what soup will you take, sir? Let me recommend the hotch-potch.

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[112] Gillian Hughes, *James Hogg: A Life* (Edinburgh; Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 10.
[113] Douglas M. Murray, 'Martyrs or Madmen? The Covenanters, Sir Walter Scott and Dr Thomas McCrie', *The Innes Review*, Volume XLIII, No.2, (1992), 166-175 (166) <https.//doi.org/10.3366/inr.1992.432.1667> [accessed 28/10/2019] As with many aspects of Hogg's relationship with Scott, the issue is problematic – namely, complicated by potential accusations of plagiarism. Hogg claimed to have started his novel before Scott's and, moreover, that the latter was aware of this.
[114] Hamilton, *Metaromanticism*, p. 117.
[115] Karl Miller sees the key contemporary parody of the genre *Confessions of a Glutton* (discussed in Chapter One) as owing much more to Hogg's text than DeQuincey's.

> English Opium-Eater. I prefer vermicelli.
>
> Shepherd. What? Worms! They gar me scunner,-the verra luk o'them. Sae, you're a worm-eater, sir, as weel's an Opium-eater?
>
> English Opium-Eater. Mr Wordsworth, sir, I think it is, who says, speaking of the human being under the thraldom of the senses,- 'he is a slave, the meanest we can meet' [116]

The intended humorous distance between the erudite conversation of the Englishman and the witlessness exhibited by the Scot is reinforced by the disparity in the mode of address, with the Shepherd constantly referring to the former as 'Mr de Quinshy.' Moreover, the quotation, from Number II of Wordsworth's 1807 *Pastoral Talk* sequence of sonnets, is both deliberate and apposite. Here De Quincey is reprimanding The Shepherd for his lack of thought and reflection, implying that Hogg is enslaved to his emotional and physical senses. As the informed reader of *Blackwood's* would have been aware, the preceding lines of the sonnet counsel: 'Children are blest, and powerful; their world lies/More justly balanced; partly at their feet,/And part far from them: sweetest melodies/Are those that are by distant made more sweet.[117] Thus, a potential rebuke to the supposed intellectual insensibility and insensitivity of the upstart shepherd whose 'mind is but the mind of his own eyes.'

Adopting the persona of the Ettrick Shepherd was, for Hogg, a contradictory decision, something that was both constructed by, and imposed upon, him, primarily via the periodicals in which he was published. At times the benefits were dubious and perhaps unsurprisingly he

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[116]*The Tavern Sages*, p. 88. Hogg was, however, allowed to land the odd counter blow. For example, the following reference to DeQuincey's lack of literary output:
'English Opium-Eater. Will you accept from me, Mr North, an essay to be entitled, 'Comparative Estimate of the English and Scotch Character?'
North. My dear sir, when did I ever decline an article of yours?
Shepherd. Faith he seldom gies ye an opportunity-about twice, may be, in three years.' *The Tavern Sages*, p. 128.
[117]Wordsworth, *Pastoral Talk, Number II,* in ed. by Gill, p. 269.

alternately embraced and rejected this constructed persona. However, in a similar manner to other writers considered in this thesis, as Mark Schoenfield has observed,

> The self, as both a concept and an experience, performs rhetorical labour […] Hogg worked hard to become The Ettrick Shepherd, just as Charles Lamb struggled both to be and not to be Elia and Thomas de Quincey devoted his life and body to becoming the English Opium Eater.[118]

Indeed, his commitment to maintaining his alter-ego was such that ultimately it was not merely the public who had difficulty distinguishing one from the other. The lines between the two figures became blurred for Hogg himself. Thomas Richardson notes how Hogg gradually became unable to differentiate between the 'shepherd of Ettrick and the Shepherd of the *Noctes*'.[119] There is little doubt that Hogg embraced this duality, for example he was rarely seen without his rustic plaid which became his 'hallmark costume, in Ettrick as in Princess Street, Edinburgh, and London's Mayfair and Holburn.'[120] Moreover, at times he appeared reluctant to refute the notoriety attendant on the uncivilised behaviour for which he was criticised and parodied in the *Noctes*. The infamous 1803 incident reported to have occurred at Sir Walter Scott's Castle Street residence in Edinburgh, in which he put his feet up on a pregnant Mrs Scott's divan then compounded this social *faux-paus* by addressing his hosts forwardly as 'Charlotte' and 'Wattie', illustrates this tendency to *epater la bourgeoisie*.[121] Whether or not the anecdote is apocryphal is immaterial, in that it was widely accepted as the kind of behaviour that the Ettrick shepherd would have exhibited. The originator of the tale was Lockhart who, despite chronicling it in his *Life of Sir Walter Scott, bart.*, (1837) was not

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[118] Mark Schoenfield, *British Periodicals and Romantic Identity: The 'Literary Lower Empire'* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 124.
[119] Hogg, ed. Richardson, p. lvii.
[120] Miller, p. 39.
[121] While Scott was admittedly a Baronet, being knighted in 1820, this represented the lowest rung of the aristocracy. Moreover, his roots as the son of a solicitor, and an Edinburgh lawyer (later an advocate) himself, placed him firmly in the Royal-High-School educated middle-class.

present at the episode described, being only nine years old at the time.[122] However, Hogg, intent on constructing or inventing his own self-mythology and authorial aura, neither confirmed nor denied this social *faux-pas* had actually occurred.[123] It was precisely events such as these that contributed to the creation of someone in the 1820s who, for Miller, constituted the first instance of the modern cult of personality or celebrity culture:

> 'Personality' is a word which appeared to be gaining a new sense. It could now mean the power and magnetism of individual idiosyncrasy. It was on its way to meaning 'star'. Hogg embodied concerns of his time while also bestriding his time, as an extraordinary individual, a sometimes unreliable and scandalous individual, a genius[124]

The paradox here was that the first instance of a constructed individual celebrity was in fact the product of a collective authorship behind series such as the *Noctes Ambrosianae,* which thrived on what Schoenfield designates as an 'entanglement of identity.'[125] This was a form of literary Gordian knot which defied attempts to reduce authorship to a single, genuine, identifiable entity:

> The construction of a literary self was a corporate effort […] the corporation was an unholy alliance of writer(s), publishers, reviewers – anonymous, named, pseudonymous […] mistakenly or purposefully misidentified or unmasked in other publications.[126]

Nonetheless, his resulting fame across the empire and former colonies reinforces Miller's assertion that this manufactured creature (the lexical choice is deliberate – Hogg was continually dehumanised in the *Noctes* as will be shown shortly) reflected the appetite of the reading public in an emerging mass market for such absorbing and contentious figures as the

[122] J.G Lockhart, *The Life of Sir Walter Scott, bart.* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893), p. 111. No precise date is given in 1803 for the incident, other than it was Hogg's second visit. Hughes (p. 54.) and Miller (p. 39.) employ the same formulation, namely 'towards the end' of the year.
[123] Hughes, p. 55.
[124] Miller, p. 203.
[125] Schoenfield, p. 215.
[126] Schoenfield, p. 231.

Shepherd. [127] Circulation of *Blackwood's* alone was between 6,000–7,000 for each issue with the *Noctes Ambrosianae* occupying the final pages, signifying their status as the climatic piece of the magazine. Moreover, of all the characters featured in the *Noctes*, Hogg is the only one who appears regularly as himself during the course of the series.[128] The concomitant of this, however, was an enclosing or penning-in of the Shepherd-author into a role which was irreversible and ultimately inescapable. Hogg, for instance, was never allowed to contribute to the series of *Noctes* in which he had featured so prominently, and which was to define him not solely amongst his contemporaries but for several subsequent generations. Hogg was, in effect, acceptable to the Edinburgh literary establishment as a peasant-poet not as a serious novelist or philosopher. Attempts to move beyond this status were ridiculed or ignored, to such an extent that *The Confessions* were not even reviewed in *Blackwood's* with doubt cast on whether he was, in fact, the author. The importance of this rebuke should not be underestimated as, according to Schoenfield, periodicals - and the economic system they helped to formulate - were the primary means of integrating 'the self into a market economy.'[129] Hogg naturally wished to benefit from an era of expansive cultural production when, in Marilyn Butler's description, 'book-production boomed and the prestige of writers arrived at new heights.' Unfortunately, she also notes that the extent of Hogg's advantage comprised 'raw, demotic abuse […] for his impenetrable accent and his bad manners.'[130] Neither could the frustrated Hogg take any immediate consolation from the analysis of future critics, who define his duality as being simultaneously socially and culturally progressive and liberating:

[127] Many of Hogg's tales have New World or colonial settings. Examples include *Story of Two Highlanders* (1810) in Canada and the Polynesian backdrop to the ballad 'Cary O'Kegan' (1831). Hogg's reputation of reflecting the experience of the Scottish diaspora was also furthered by his short story *The Pongos: a letter from Southern Africa* in *The Altrive Tales* (1822).
[128] The Tavern Sages, p.
[129] Schoenfield, p. 6.
[130] Marilyn Butler, 'Culture's medium: the role of the Review' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 128 and pp. 148-149.

> Though belonging to different social backgrounds, Scott and Hogg were capable of swapping from Standard English to less prestigious vernacular, thereby exposing that mastering good manners and language is not an innate, essentialist quality deriving from class and ethnic origins.[131]

The initial clause employed here is paramount to an appreciation of Hogg's situation and, unfortunately for the Ettrick Shepherd, in reality not so easily dismissed. The depiction of Hogg, especially by Wilson, was patronising, contemptuous and insulting. He was portrayed in the *Noctes* as an indecent savage, a form of Caledonian 'Caliban […] boozing, brawling and bragging.'[132] In a manner similar to that offspring of Sycorax, Hogg was misrepresented in the following exchange as a form of monstrous sea-creature complete with (brave) New World setting:

> Tickler. What fish, James would you incline to be, if put into scales?
>
> Shepherd. Let me see – I sud hae nae great objections to be a whale in the Polar Seas. Gran' fun to fling a boatfu' o' harpooners into the air – or, wi' ae thud o' your tail, to drive in the stern-posts o' a Greenlandman. [133]

To compound the Shepherd's ignorance and brutishness, he is then reprimanded via a barbed declarative by 'Timothy Tickler' (a character based upon Robert Sym, Wilson's uncle), thus: 'A whale, James, is not a fish.' The emphasis syntactically engineered here by the inclusion of the commas merely adds potency to the insult.

Ironically, given such a comment, references to Hogg's nomenclature were based on mis-understandings which were potentially genuine, such as the definition in border dialect of a 'hog' as an unfleeced sheep as opposed to the more popular porcine connotations. However,

[131] Barbara Leonardi, 'The Performativity of English' from The Hogg Society Conference, University of Stirling (20/7/2017)
[132] Groves, p. 88. Perhaps this explains why Hogg emphasises Scott's somatic prowess and attributes in *Familiar Anecdotes*, a form of corrective to the focus on his own supposed brutish physicality: 'But when I came to examine the arms! Sir Walter had double the muscular power of mine […] I declare that from the elbow to the shoulder they felt as if he had the strength of an ox.' p. 130.
[133] *The Tavern Sages*, pp. 76-77.

Wilson's description of Hogg's former occupation as a swine-herd, were designed deliberately to demean and diminish him. J.H. Alexander, in his 1992 introduction to *The Tavern Sages*, suggests that Hogg's identity as presented in the 'Maga' (the nickname given to *Blackwood's* by its inner coterie) was 'a complex embodiment of profoundly intuitive responses to experiences, standing in a teasing and stimulating relationship with his original.' [134] But such 'complex embodiment' represents scant recompense when, for instance, it creates the impression of an 'ungenteel persona' resulting in the loss of a 'desperately needed' pension from the Royal Literary Society.[135]

Hogg's register and dialect in the *Noctes* was consciously constructed in opposition to North's. An Oxford-educated Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University, Wilson, originating from Paisley, in reality spoke in a Scottish accent whereas he is portrayed as having English pronunciation within the *Noctes* in order to emphasize the differential with the Shepherd. [136] Hogg, admittedly, *did* confess to a childhood deficiency in reading and writing which he deemed illiteracy. He states in his *Memoir* that at the age of seven his education terminated. Thereafter he received no formal schooling, noting 'in all I had spent about half a year at it'.[137] However, this notion of illiteracy is to equate, erroneously, education with schooling and, in keeping with his husbandry background, was used within the context of Hogg figuratively himself being considered 'uncultivated'. Yet Hogg, after all,

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[134] Supposedly a result of the peculiar pronunciation of the word 'Maga-zine' by William Blackwood to his wife. See James Hogg, Contributions to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* Volume 1, 1817-1828, ed. by Thomas C. Richardson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p.lxxii.

[135] Valentina Bold, 'James Hogg and the Scottish self-taught tradition' in The Independent Spirit: John Clare and the self-taught tradition (The John Clare Society and The Margaret Grainger Memorial Trust, (1994), p. 78. Hogg, like DeQuincey, always existed on the pecuniary margins.

[136] The circumstances surrounding the appointment were, however, controversial. His credentials were primarily political (Tory) rather than philosophical: 'Professor Wilson was required to give 120 lectures a year on a subject about which he knew nothing and on which […] De Quincey knew everything […] while De Quincey drew on Wilson for cash, Wilson drew on De Quincey for credibility.' Frances Wilson, *Guilty Thing: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 257.

[137] Hogg, *Memoir*, p. 13.

founded his own periodical *The Spy* in 1810 and was a product of Edinburgh debating societies such as The Forum (which he established in 1812) and the Right or Wrong Club. Moreover, from the start of his writing career Hogg employed the label of 'illiterate' disingenuously, distinguishing himself from others while immediately subverting the notion of his ignorance through the refined quality of the accompanying prose and subject-matter. For instance in his letter to Scott, dated, 23rd July 1802, Hogg recounts a visit to the theatre in Edinburgh: 'as an illiterate countryman's opinions of the play and actors are very likely to be quite different from that of every other person I cannot resist the impulse of telling you mine in broad Scotch.'[138] He then undermines this statement by referring to Mr Weston's (the lead actor) 'most affected indifference' and to his own 'singular propensity of picking faults with everything that pleaseth me'[139]. Here, both phrases hardly denote the register of an illiterate, nor indeed constitute 'broad Scotch.'

Hogg further established his persona as an observant outsider with the publication of *The Spy*, and the idea of his role as being that of an intruder was, as we have seen, something from which unfortunately - and ironically given its initial self-imposed status - he could not escape. Hogg, in his 1821 *Memoir*, identified a pair of interested groups who constantly exhibited bias against him in terms of gender and class, crucially revolving around a supposed lack of 'delicacy'. These comprised what he considered the blue-stocking brigade who regarded this deficiency as resulting from his uncouthness (an aspect of his personality they continually and vehemently expressed their disapproved of), and the Edinburgh literary elite who considered such talents as he possessed to be marred irrevocably by his supposed ill-breeding.

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[138] Hogg, *Highland Tours*, p. 18.
[139] Hogg, *Highland Tours*, pp. 18-19.

However, those who encountered Hogg independently, and being therefore largely immune to these pre- or mis-conceptions, were surprised by the difference between the man they knew and the portrayal popularised by the *Noctes*. In London, for instance, which Hogg visited in 1828, his reception was favourable. That year, the 26th February edition of *The Athenaeum* (a liberal-leaning journal) issued a form of reprimand to *Blackwood's*, insisting that the impression of The Shepherd created by the writers of the magazine was 'substantially erroneous.'[140] Furthermore, in an anonymous article entitled simply 'James Hogg, The Ettrick Shepherd', the journal attested that

> Hogg is by no means the roystering, bullying, declamatory Cimon he has been represented by his adopted friends; his good humour is not noisy, his manner is not overbearing […] his share of a dialogue is never either the loudest nor the least amusing.[141]

In addition, *The Athenaeum* notably praised Hogg's literary ability rather than merely defending his character. Compared to the 'Queen's Wake', it argued, 'Scott's metrical tales are doggerel, and Wilson's verses mere prosing.'[142]

Unfortunately, the public perception of the hapless Hogg had been formed years earlier and was by now so firmly established as to be largely immune to well-meaning attempts at revisionism. It was in his 1821 review of *The Memoirs* that Wilson's antagonism to Hogg surpassed any previous level and degree of criticism. Wilson ridiculed Hogg's claim to have founded *Blackwood's*, which he considered entirely spurious, overlooking the latter's previous involvement with *The Spy* as well as his close relationship with John Blackwood. At the very least, according to Alan Lang Stuart, Hogg had 'assisted the infant periodical

[140] The *Atheneum* ceased publication in 1921, when it was incorporated in to *The Nation*. This, in turn, was assimilated by *The New Statesman*.
[141] The *Atheneum*, Vol.1 No.10 (26th February 1828), p.1 <http://www.lordbyron.org>. Cimon was an Athenian general from the 5th century BC known in his youth for his unsophisticated demeanour.
[142] p. 4.

[*Blackwood's*] when assistance was most necessary', by offering his *Anecdotes of the Pastoral Life* in April, May, June 1817.[143] In a letter dated 24th September 1817, Hogg provided both moral and practical support to Blackwood via the offer of further contributions to the magazine: 'you may be sure of my best efforts.[…] to show the world that the *redoubted Ettrick Shepherd* is on your side I will inclose (sic) you in this one or two little poetical pieces of mine.'[144] He also gave tactical advice to Blackwood on how to outwit his main literary rival, Constable's monthly *Scots Magazine*:

> Yours is more likely to gain ground by degrees provided you affix a price to the writers which every man may demand if he chuses […] Another thing quite necessary is that every part should be literally and strictly anonymous provided the author wishes it.[145]

Yet, in a further display of mendacity Wilson mocked the question of Hogg's (genuine) authorship of *The Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript*, a mock-Biblical account, ironically enough, of Edinburgh's bitter literary wars; thus unintentionally, and in a form of indirect tribute, effectively validating Hogg's parody.

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[143] Alan Lang Stuart, *The Life and Letters of James Hogg: The Ettrick Shepherd Vol.1 (1770-1825)* (Lubbock; Texas Tech Press, 1946), p. 140.
[144] Hogg to Blackwood in Stuart, p. 132. Emphasis in the original letter.
[145] Stuart, p. 131.

CONCLUSION

I have argued in this thesis that secular confessional writings of the 1820s were predicated on a trio of obsessions identified by Thomas Malthus in his *Essay on the Principles of Population*. Malthus was an unlikely literary, as opposed to economic, prophet. He is recognised as the harbinger of society's inability to match food production to an ever-increasing population. However, he also anticipated a series of self-destructive tropes which would come to dominate the discourse of Thomas De Quincey, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb and James Hogg. These are 'the cravings of hunger, the love of liquor, the desire of possessing a beautiful woman', which would 'urge men to actions, of the fatal consequences of which [...] they are perfectly well convinced'.[1] Malthus's *Essay*, published in 1798, the same year as Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, marked the emergence of an alternative romantic narrative which was developed by the writers in the present study. The *Essay* itself was revised six times over the following twenty eight years, with its final edition published in 1826. Therefore, Malthus redrafted and reworked his own *Essay* in a strategy anticipating the textual intrigues, contortions and perambulations of De Quincey and Hogg, in particular. All three writers highlight the connection between confession and revision or, more precisely, the relationship between confession, recidivism and revision. As the author repeats the actions that lead him to confess in the first place, he therefore needs to confess again what he has done. Malthus's reference to the 'fatal consequences' of corporal obsessions was also prophetic, particularly within the sphere of literary success. The response to *Liber Amoris* and 'Confessions of a Drunkard' ensured ostracism and ridicule for both Hazlitt and Lamb, with the confessions of their narrators being read primarily as a record of the author's personal weakness and folly.

[1] Malthus, ed. by Gilbert, pp. 104-105.

Ultimately, in respect of literary considerations, the idea of 'fatal consequences' also extends to the status afforded these authors within the Romantic literary canon. The work of these confessional writers has not achieved the prominence and acclaim of their poetic contemporaries such as Wordsworth or Coleridge. Consequently, the prose confessional oeuvre is often designated as being of secondary importance, or dismissed as essentially a literary aberration; something which this thesis hopes to redress.

However, the writings of De Quincey, Hazlitt, Lamb and Hogg also represent a prima-facie flaw in the Reverend Thomas Malthus's pious pronouncement. This is because the objects of his disapproval, while no doubt testament as he contended to humanity's irrationality, *are* precisely the stuff of secular confession. Despite being later excluded to the fringes of the literary canon, those supposed bodily weaknesses and cravings were transformed in the 1820s into a successful and popular body of discourse with which the emerging readership of the early nineteenth-century itself became obsessed and addicted, even to the extent of generating a sub-genre of confessional parody.

Another link exists between Malthus and the confessional writers of the 1820s. That is, his conflict with Rousseau, the key figure behind the emerging secular confessional genre. Rousseau's *Confessions* from their first publication in 1789, and their circulation in translation from 1790, represented both an inspiration and model for the authors considered here, whether or not they chose to acknowledge this particular influence.[2] The origins of Malthus's antagonism towards the Swiss philosopher and author, which appears primarily political and economic, can in fact be traced back to an unresolved disagreement with his

[2] These dates refer to the complete, twelve book version of the text. See Introduction, note 4.

father, Daniel Malthus. Significantly, Rousseau is relegated to the category of 'Other Writers' in the Essay's full original title (unlike 'Mr Godwin' and 'M. Condorcet'), as if it were sacrilegious even to mention him by name. Likewise, patriarchal antagonism was a characteristic evident in Hazlitt, who was influenced by the relationship with his father and the unfulfilled expectations contingent upon the latter's religious beliefs. Hogg was patronised, in both definitions of the term, by the father-figures who adopted him within Edinburgh periodical circles such as Scott and John Wilson and often depicted as a figure worthy merely of scorn and contempt.

My thesis identifies other new framings among this group of authors. De Quincey, Hazlitt, Lamb and Hogg all operated within a range of borderlands. Despite between them displaying a wide range of political beliefs, ranging from Hazlitt's radical republicanism to the Tory and monarchical sympathies of De Quincey and Hogg, they existed on the literary, financial and social margins. Sometimes these included literal national boundaries, such as Hogg's location of himself firmly in a lowland Scottish oral and supernatural rural tradition. However, more often than not, these frontiers were figurative literary boundaries, with the writer inhabiting authorial spaces and personae which were porous, shifting and rarely demarcated by strict opposition between what constituted factual confession and creative fiction. This subversion and merging of the factual account with the imaginary narrative, in which the two are not merely interdependent but ultimately inextricable, is a key confessional legacy of the 1820s.

The thematic focus of Malthus, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Lamb and Hogg also created a series of challenges and contradictions for those writers operating within the confessional genre. What constitutes potentially expansive literary material is simultaneously both physically and

psychologically debilitating, whether opium for De Quincey, unfulfilled sexual desire for Hazlitt or over-indulgence in drinking and eating for Lamb. Furthermore, all three attempted to offset the consequences of their public confessions. However, the adoption of aliases, the intricate construction of literary personae or indeed attempting to hide behind anonymity, appears to have little effect on mitigating the ultimate impact of those destructive urges identified by Malthus.

Each of the authors claimed a unique literary form of individual indulgence. For instance, De Quincey exploited the possibilities offered by the open-ended nature of opium-based confessions. He escaped the limitations and restrictions imposed by a more conventional narrative form, with the creative potential of opium dreams enabling him to achieve a vast range of otherwise unobtainable experience. The physical joys of opium offered a realisation that the resulting dreams contained the potential to fill a written life. This also, conveniently, allowed De Quincey to circumvent some of the more demanding aspects of the writing process. However, De Quincey was equally aware of the precarious nature of his opium-manufactured literary status. This is epitomised by an ever-present fear of obscurity and authorial impotence, which De Quincey attempts to counter via strategies of self-proliferation and self-multiplication and through the continual revision and reworking of his writing.

The motif of sexual impotence, linked to possibilities of literary failure, represent a crisis of self-worth and identity within Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris*. The 1820s marked a convergence between the sexual and textual modes, with Hazlitt's sense of emasculation and enfeeblement at the hands of Sarah Walker reflected in his fragmented discourse and inability to depict his female antagonist as anything more than a caricature. Hazlitt's failure was not confined to

physical sexuality, nor indeed to literary potency and an inability to satisfy his reader. It also extended to disillusionment with a brand of political, republican idealism, symbolised by the destruction of his bust of Napoleon. Indeed, it is possible to detect an underlying sense of despondency and decay in *Liber Amoris*, not just in personal terms but with wider social and cultural associations. This disappointment characterised the rest of Hazlitt's career and was heightened by the moral outrage resulting from the publication of the text.

Due partly to Hazlitt's failure, Lamb's writings, as I have argued, mark a shift in the confessional genre, through a distancing from political fixations. Lamb, instead, authors a series of consumption-centred narratives, celebrating Bacchanalian tropes of obsessive and excessive drinking and feasting. Lamb's elaborate food fantasies resist the emerging and more refined cultural connotations of 'taste', revealing a darker, unhealthier sexual aspect to his gastronomical revelations. This, in turn, reflects a distinct transition from a religious to corporal confession, as Lamb presents digestion and ingestion as a symbolic synthesis of self, subjectivity and sexuality. However, as with De Quincey's obsession with opium-eating, Lamb is aware that his discursive musings on food, however enjoyable to the reader at the moment of consumption, might ultimately be as ephemeral as the subject matter itself by only offering a temporary form of sustenance.

As I have argued in my last chapter, Hogg's Calvinist sinner, Robert Wringhim, encapsulates the bodily desires and urges described by the writers of the 1820s. Moreover, he succumbs to the 'fatal consequences' of his actions, suicide, encouraged by the interference of his mentor and double Gil-Martin. The themes of contingency, duality and identity are primary tropes in Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. However, they originate in an

overlooked work, *The Shepherd's Guide*, published seventeen years earlier. Until now this practical handbook to diseases in sheep has not received the recognition it deserves as a significant initial stage in the development of themes which would come to dominate Hogg's later writing. The paradox inherent in the figure of the ill-educated Ettrick Shepherd cultivated by Hogg, and the literate and literary Edinburgh creator of sophisticated, multi-faceted narratives, is first addressed in the *Guide*. *The Guide* also serves as a meta-textual commentary on the similarities between the craft of writing and the craft of animal husbandry. Both were arenas in which Hogg excelled, demonstrating the necessary skills to an often sceptical audience. By the time of the publication of the *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in 1824, chronologically the last confessional text considered here, there is the sense that the genre had run its course having satiated or exhausted its readership. Subsequently, it would revert to its origins. By the mid-1820s, the religious and Biblical language associated with Malthus's original *Essay* had been rigorously appropriated by Hogg to express disgust and disquiet at the habits of his sinner. Ironically, this happened just as Malthus was expunging his ecclesiastical register and rhetoric from the later versions of his Essay and replacing it with an ever-drier economic discursive tone.

There is a literary sub-genre that is referred to during this thesis, but deserving of greater study; that of Romantic confessional parody. As noted, the most significant example of this form is Thomas Colley Grattan's *Confessions of an English Glutton*, published anonymously in *Blackwood's* in 1823. It offered 'a very effective parody of De Quincey and Lamb' that drew 'on the tendency towards self-parody already present in their confessional texts.'[3] As mentioned in Chapter Five, Grattan's text was also a key influence on Hogg's *Confessions*. Finally, while the subjects of this study are all male, this does not imply that females are

[3] Higgins in ed. by Morrison and Roberts, p. 48.

either less, or more, (to subvert the collocation) inclined to the corporeal fixations and behaviours that necessitates confession, than men. Rather, that consideration of a particular female confessional mode, while fascinating, lies outside the scope of the present thesis. Women's confessional writing both represents and deserves a project and focus all of its own, as the genre negotiates and chronicles its specific challenges. Indeed, the year which marked the publication of Malthus's *Essay,* 1798, also saw Mary Robinson start writing her memoirs which were published three years later by her daughter as *Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Robinson. Written by Herself.* As with De Quincey, Lamb and Hogg, Robinson explores 'a fluid multiplicity of selves'. She gained notoriety due to her affair with the Prince of Wales, but was also 'an actress who had played more than 20 roles at Drury Lane,' as well as a woman who had 'taken an untold number of different lovers' and a poet 'who was still publishing under a variety of different pseudonyms.'[4] Perhaps Robinson is the exception. Dorothy Wordsworth likewise began keeping her *Alfoxden Journal* in 1798, which, alongside her *Grasmere Journal* describing the years 1800-1803, were published in 1897.[5] Yet the texts represent a 'refusal of the confessional mode' according to Kari Lokke, who goes on to ask 'what does one do with an autobiographical text rooted in an effacement of the self?'[6] Wordsworth struggled to reconcile the tension between observations of daily life and 'succumbing to her own emotions.'[7] This is not something the male authors in this thesis have to contend with and why, in the written form at least, confession is a genre that they more readily and enthusiastically embrace.

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[4] Sharon M. Setzer, 'The Gothic Structure of Mary Robinson's Memoirs' in *Romantic Autobiography In England*, ed. by Eugene Stelzig (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), p. 35.
[5] Although extracts from her *Grasmere Journal* were published in her lifetime as part of Christopher Wordsworth's *Memoirs of William Wordsworth* (1851). See Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Grasmere and Alfoxden Journals*, ed. by Pamela Woolf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xxii.
[6] Kari Lokke, 'My Heart Dissolved in What I Saw: Displacement of the Autobiographical Self in Dorothy Wordsworth and Gertrude Stein', in ed. by Stelzig, p. 15.
[7] Lokke, p. 22.

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