On De Quincey's Portrait of Coleridge Considered as a Work of Fine Art

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IN A PECULIARLY DIRECT, entertaining and informative way, De Quincey wrote about many of his own concerns, such as the passiveness necessary to real pleasure; the imprecision of language and troubles with the Press and publishers; and how a remarkable memory could explain plagiarism. I wish to show that in these considerations he found in himself striking similarities with Coleridge. De Quincey also considered murder as one of the fine arts. In this he differed from Coleridge. And yet his lax moral attitude to murder has some curious similarities with his—and Coleridge's—attitude to plagiarism.

Consider Coleridge's letter to John Thelwall (in 1797), in which the poet acts out his role of otherworldly visionary, not to mention his other more worldly role of eternal procrastinator conscious that his want of traction in practical matters has already become so colossal that it has turned out to be epic:

> I adopt the Brahman Creed, & say—It is better to sit than to stand, it is better to lie than to sit, it is better to sleep than to wake—but Death is the best of all!—I should much wish, like the Indian Vishna to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotus, & wake once in a million years for a few minutes—just to know I was going to sleep a million years more. (*Letters*, I, p.350)

In one way, Coleridge 'summons up a mystical view of nature, or rather, the longing to attain it';[1] in another way, he fantasises about not having to do anything except take just a few minutes every million years to double-check he doesn't have to do anything.[2]

Over half a century later, having long found, and held, sight of his own dreamy ways in Coleridge's, Thomas De Quincey would (in his revised *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, 1856) remember being given, by his mother,

> a pianoforte, together with the sum required for regular lessons from a music-master. But the first discovery I made was that practice through eight or even ten hours a-day was indispensable towards any great proficiency on this instrument. Another discovery finished my disenchantment… Too soon I became aware that to the deep

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1 Richard Holmes, *Early Visions*, 1989, p.167.

2 Thelwall, with his 'eyes focused on the real world', had less time for such passiveness, as David Fairer has shown in "A little sparring about Poetry": Coleridge and Thelwall, 1796-8', *Coleridge Bulletin*, New Series 21 (Spring 2003), 20-33.

> voluptuous enjoyment of music absolute *passiveness* in the hearer is indispensable. Gain what skill you please, nevertheless activity, vigilance, anxiety must always accompany an elaborate effort of musical execution: and so far is that from being reconcilable with the entrancement and lull essential to the true fruition of music, that, even if you should suppose a vast piece of mechanism capable of executing a whole oratorio, but requiring, at intervals, a co-operating impulse from the foot of the auditor, even *that*, even so much as an occasional touch of the foot, would utterly undermine all your pleasure. A single psychological discovery, therefore, caused my musical anticipations to evanesce.[3]

Well-versed in Wordsworthian wise passiveness, and Coleridgean dejection, De Quincey can articulate his own morbid dread of exertion in any sphere other than the poetic. The drifty, floaty, wistful nature of his inclinations makes him incapable of taking control of any machine or musical instrument to his own exquisite satisfaction. He cannot abide feeling so constricted and controlled by a pianoforte which, existing as a fact, defines and delimits his own role and involvement in music. His lack of control and his alienation from his labour (in practice) are inevitably unpropitious to his uninterrupted enjoyment of the negatively capable commonwealth in which he (free of practice) would be a perceiving and presiding consciousness. In such a realm—where 'ideas of the unfleshed mind'[4] flourish unforced—the actual application and industry of the nineteenth century (steam power, electricity and so on) can seem wretchedly redundant.

The unsympathetic nature of the exacting music machine to the young De Quincey was one thing. The unsympathetic nature of the Press to the adult De Quincey is similar but, as it turned out, even more punishing. It could be said that the Press too is a defining and delimiting machine of sorts that must be worked by the writer with vigilance and anxiety. And the Press is more than *just* a printing machine. The whole business entails a set of power relations in the world of getting and spending: author to compositor / author to publisher or journal proprietor / author to reader or market / author to his own product. This sort of fiddle can become well-nigh intolerable to the individual who is irreparably split between finite and spiritual aspirations. On the one hand, De Quincey is in the grip of unappeasable despair—the childhood memory of the loss of his most beloved sister is further informed by the 'wind that had swept the fields of mortality for a hundred centuries'[5]–and he is far too preoccupied with the thunderclouds massing on his own inner horizon to be able to attend to terrestrial concerns. On the other hand, the adult with responsibilities is very often obliged to rally against financial disaster 'with the desperate energy of a man suddenly awakened to the dangers of his position',

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[3] *Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by Grevel Lindop, volume 2, p.137.

[4] Rose Tomassi, 'De Quincey's "Interagencies": An Eco-Phenomenological Reading', Coleridge Summer Conference paper, 30 July 2014.

[5] *Suspiria De Profundis*, in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and other writings*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.98.

as Albert Goldman, unimpressed by the inky cloak and cosmic melancholy, has put it.[6]

In a letter written during the revision of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* for his collected edition (in the 1850s), De Quincey notes some of the difficulties of writing and working with the Press. These concern the ambiguities of language, ambiguities which allow for inaccuracies and superfluous meanings, and for a possibly limitless sequence of reinterpretations. When he writes about writing for the Press, is he not inspired by the pianoforte he has repudiated?

> To the Press,
> I am much afraid—that in consequence of the very imperfect means for communicating with the Press which I now possess or ever *have* possessed (being at all times reduced to the single resource of *writing*—which, to evade misinterpretation and constant ambiguity, requires a redundancy of words—and, after all that is done on *my* part, requires in addition a *Reader* that is not only singularly attentive, but also that has a surplus stock of *leisure time*)—*Premising* all this, I am and *have* been at all stages of this nominal reprint… of the Confessions, in terror of mutual misunderstandings…[7].

De Quincey (now an old man) seems to feel as worried and incapable of taking control of the Press as he had been as a boy of taking control of the pianoforte. As an adult thinker and writer, his multifarious imaginings, having flourished so colourfully in conditions of potential and provisionality (in his dreams, his conversation, his handwriting) will not 'evanesce', as his '*musical* anticipations' did, but they will get reduced to, and fixed in, the inert black and white of printed periodicals, the unprecedented production and proliferation of which may well ensure that the disconnectedness of scattered souls remains tragically complete, and that the mutual remoteness of minds remains comically apparent. 'It may seem wonderful', complained Thomas Taylor the Platonist, 'that language, which is the only method of conveying our conceptions, should, at the same time be an hindrance to our advancement in philosophy'.[8] Or, as Tennyson puts it in *In Memoriam*, 'words, like Nature, half reveal / And half conceal the Soul within.'[9]

Whereas the pianoforte of De Quincey's restless adolescence could be dumped in a spare room to 'remain.. for months as a lumbering monument of labour misapplied', the Press of his tormented adulthood would loom large, actively amplifying any writers' labours misapplied, continuing to churn away, playing its remorseless part in generating and regenerating the whole connective but mutable cloud-atlas of understanding, half-understanding and

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[6] *The Mine and the Mint*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1965, p.19.
[7] Edmund Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography*, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, p.17.
[8] *Collected Writings of Plotinus,* The Prometheus Trust, 2000, p.xiii.
[9] Wordsworth, too, thinks about 'the Power so called / Through sad incompetence of human speech' (1850 VI 592-3).

misunderstanding in which literary culture speeds and gleams and quivers.

The writer is keenly aware of being thwarted and frustrated by, say, the degradation of language, or the ungovernable results of language renewing itself in and around new generations of readers reaching for new handholds of understanding—vocabulary fluctuates and goes through wide changes of meaning, depending on where the reader happens to be situated on the arcs of attitude running between, say, the Storming of the Bastille and the Peterloo Massacre. A writer's words make their way through time into a context different to the one in which they were first inscribed. The writing of poetry or poetic prose—like the playing of pianofortes, and at least as demoralising for any aspirant whose resolution is alloyed with self-doubt—is like a physical activity involving not just mechanical drudgery (the plod plod of the workshop) but also the intransigence or even volatility of the chosen materials. The struggle is exhausting and the rewards are more often than not meagre. The dust-nimbus acquired by the instrument dormant in the spare-room is something De Quincey would much prefer to the trivial tiara of active mediocrity—if he didn't have a family to feed.

To take a look at the writer's struggle from a (slightly) more modern vantage-point, T S Eliot (called somewhere by Seamus Perry 'a good Coleridgean') would complain, with a practitioner's hypersensitivity that De Quincey—and Coleridge—would have recognised, about 'Trying to learn to use words' and 'get the better of words' in a sort of 'raid on the inarticulate / With shabby equipment always deteriorating / In the general mess of imprecision of feeling'. In trying to discipline 'squads of emotion',[10] Eliot would be practising a dying art, and fighting a losing battle.[11] Elsewhere in his *Four Quartets* he would put it particularly nicely, perceiving that the raw material—quite literally the dead wood—worked over eventually into ink-marked paper has not in itself the initiative, intuition and informing spirit of aspiring humanity:

> Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still.[12]

Eliot, De Quincey and Coleridge all feel the heaving burden of the incommunicable, and they often feel the absurdity of trying to fix it in perishable communications. Also, they fear that the deliquescence of words no longer inspirited by the meaning the writer meant to breathe into them is

[10] *Collected Poems: 1909-1962*, Faber and Faber, 1963, pp.202-3.

[11] Coleridge of course has plenty to say about the inaccuracy and indefiniteness of words. For example, in Chapter 1 of the *Biographia Literaria*, he remembers his efforts as a younger poet, editing his own work, to reduce clutter and increase transparency: 'I pruned the double epithets with no sparing hand, and used my best efforts to tame the swell and glitter both of thought and diction; though, in truth, these parasite plants of youthful poetry had insinuated themselves into my longer poems with such intricacy of union, that I was often obliged to omit disentangling the weed, from the fear of snapping the flower.'

[12] *Collected Poems: 1909-1962*, Faber and Faber, 1963, p.194.

inevitable, and that universal erroneousness will bury all.

In *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), De Quincey's first-hand account of experimentation with and then full-blown addiction to opium was not so much as an ethno-botanist as it was of a traveller of the realms of gold left disillusioned by semantics. In 1808 he had had a particularly exhausting jog across a literary-political scree created by his favourite Lake poet, and came away from the episode feeling right through him the futility of his attempts to get Wordsworth's words to 'stay in place', to 'stay still', to the satisfaction of himself and Wordsworth. The printers of Wordsworth's pamphlet, *The Convention of Cintra* (which De Quincey agreed with Wordsworth to see through the Press) were often occupied with other business, and seemed to have a habit of getting drunk. There were 'monstrous errors' obliging De Quincey to get a new compositor, and the vexation of the whole business was considerable, with each communication between De Quincey and Wordsworth furnishing 'new matter for misconception on both sides.' On top of this, Wordsworth then began to worry that the pamphlet might be libellous. It was, after all, an expression of indignation at Britain's treaty with the enemy (France) which meant that French troops and their plunder could be taken from Portugal back to France in British ships. Wordsworth made last-minute requests for De Quincey to make rather deep and awkward editorial changes. This led to further confusions and further delays. Next, Wordsworth cited De Quincey's insistence on his own system of punctuation as a major reason for the delays. And Coleridge said De Quincey's 'strange & most mistaken System of punctuation' had damaged *Cintra*'s readability: 'Never was a stranger whim than the notion that , ; : and . could be made logical symbols expressing all the diversities of logical connection.' Robert Southey, too, joined in. Wordsworth's 'long and involved sentences' had been rendered 'more obscure' by De Quincey's 'unusual system of punctuation', he told Walter Scott.[13]

This painful formative experience for the young writer—acquiring, if not a stain of dishonour, certainly one of ridicule as Wordsworth's angelically ineffectual little helper, and getting angry and embarrassed about the echoes and re-echoes of opprobrium ringing around the Wordsworth circle—may have played its part in making a sadder and a wiser man of De Quincey. But it is also possible that the whole business of being suspected in one way or another by Wordsworth, Coleridge and the Wordsworth family and friends—which De Quincey 'finally accepted with both bitterness and despair'[14]– activated the inimitable perversity in 'De Quincey's manner of ideation'.[15] It was better to reign in prose than serve in the poetry of his ambition's origins (including, emphatically, the *Lyrical Ballads*). He would write as a pariah, now enthroned in a sulphurous attitude, and burning in a mode of discourse known, thanks to Mario Praz, as the Romantic Agony. Outcast, De Quincey would practise his

[13] Robert Morrison, *The English Opium-Eater*, 2008, pp.140-6.

[14] Ibid., p.146.

[15] Rose Tomassi, 'De Quincey's "Interagencies": An Eco-Phenomenological Reading', Coleridge Summer Conference paper, 30 July, 2014.

dark art of ambiguity into melting subtleties, and he would become self-loathingly reflective about the men he idolised but who let him down:

> Assuredly, Coleridge deserved, beyond all other men that were ever connected with the daily press, to be regarded with distinction. Worlds of fine feeling lie buried in that vast abyss, never to be disentombed or restored to human admiration. Like the sea it has swallowed treasures without end, that no diving bell will bring up again.[16] But nowhere throughout its shoreless magazines of wealth, does there lie such a bed of pearls confounded with the rubbish and 'purgamenta' of ages, as in the political papers of Coleridge…[17]

Though himself painfully and necessarily held down by the Press, De Quincey is in tune with the same higher pleasures as Coleridge. Hence, for example, the longing up-thrust of De Quincey's own sighs from the depths—*Suspiria De Profundis*—and the hard-won immortality of soul elucidated with such decisive empathy by Baxter:

> The Press is an 'underworld' of traumatic experiences from which the charismatic Opium-Eater must rise. The problem he is obliged to face is whether or not he will survive intact. Will he emerge alive? The Press, 'closed and sealed inexorably', is a type of grave from which it is De Quincey's task to rise. He must be given by his writing, must self-resurrect.[18]

And hence too De Quincey's reaching into hiding places decades deep, for, for example, the abortive musicianship of his youth as a subject analogous with the pains of writing. There is another (perhaps less likely) subject which De Quincey recognised (perversely) as analogous with writing—or at any rate with his (and Coleridge's) way of writing: murder.

Just as he did in the guise of the English Opium-Eater some years before his series of Murder articles started to come out in 1827, De Quincey again seizes on the idea of transgression as a stimulus, and writes it up to excite and seduce (and of course scandalise) his readers.

> If once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begun upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps

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[16] Coleridge's daughter, Sarah, did lift out and defend much of her father's material otherwise destined to stay sunk without a trace, and she was very conscious of what De Quincey felt about Coleridge. (See my article, 'Revisiting Some Old Foundations and Opening Some New Ground in Coleridge Studies', *European Romantic Review*, Vol. 25, 1, 2014.)

[17] *Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by Grevel Lindop, volume 10, p.319.

[18] Edmund Baxter, *De Quincey's Art of Autobiography*, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, pp.16-17.

he thought little of at the time.[19]

The above quote admirably expresses the blasphemous element in De Quincey's impassioned attitude. It may be taken lightly. But it is still unsettling. The hierarchy of sins is turned upside down, and the hidden Lucifer figure is perceptible. De Quincey's art is essentially ironic, if not demonic, in tendency.

The power involved in morphing reality into an altered state equivalent is perhaps what makes poetic writing addictive: the aptitude for dissolving reality in the process of writing is the fundamentally subversive quality that outlaws the writer. (One thinks perhaps of the distorting mirror of Byron's *Don Juan* which directly reflects the appetites, emotions and pretensions of a bourgeois reading public.) De Quincey seems to appreciate, from the inside out (at any rate in the first-person narrative), the murderer's act of choosing, and then his attempt to take the life of, his victim:

> Whether it were his great expanse of chalky face, or what else, I know not—but the fact was, I "fancied" him, and resolved to commence business upon his throat, which by the way he always carried bare—a fashion which is very irritating to my desires. Precisely at eight o'clock in the evening, I observed that he regularly shut up his windows. One night I watched him when thus engaged—bolted in after him—locked the door—and, addressing him with great suavity, acquainted him with the nature of my errand; at the same time advising him to make no resistance, which would be mutually unpleasant. So saying, I drew out my tools; and was proceeding to operate. But at this spectacle, the baker, who seemed to have been struck by catalepsy at my first announce, awoke into tremendous agitation. "I will *not* be murdered!" he shrieked aloud; "what for will I lose my precious throat?"—"What for?" said I… "know that I am a virtuoso in the art of murder—am desirous of improving myself in its details—and am enamoured of your vast surface of throat, to which I am determined to be a customer." …he made so desperate a defence, that many times I feared he might turn the table upon me; and that I, an amateur, might be murdered by a rascally baker. What a situation! Minds of sensibility will sympathise with my anxiety…[20]

De Quincey has drawn us into such an odd region here, like Jonathan Swift's 'Modest Proposal':

> Let me remind… objectors, once for all, of Dean Swift's proposal for turning to account the supernumerary infants of the three kingdoms, which, in those days, both at Dublin and at London, were provided for in foundling hospitals, by cooking and eating them.

[19] *On Murder*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.27-8
[20] Ibid

Even though he has claimed that Swift's 'extravaganza [was] really bolder and more coarsely practical than mine', De Quincey breaks out into yet more mock-seriousness and issues an absurd challenge to the reader:

> If… any man thinking it worth his while to tilt against so mere a foam-bubble of gaiety as this lecture on the aesthetics of murder, I shelter myself for the moment under the Telamonian shield of the Dean.[21]

De Quincey's mad vision of murder as fine art—more radiant and finely ironised than the delivery of Swift's savage acrimony against the flesh—facetiously facilitates in the nineteenth-century magazine-reader reader a brighter way of seeing in the shadow of death and the light of common moralising. Or it is even like another visit to the moral grey area given such brilliant colours in the first canto of Byron's *Don Juan* (Don Juan's mother, Donna Inez, once had an affair with Don Alfonso. Julia is now married to Don Alfonso. Donna Inez, mindful of the permanent damage to her reputation, is therefore motivated to be friendly to and protective of Julia—as an exercise in damage-limitation):

> Julia was—yet I never could see why—
> With Donna Inez quite a favourite friend;
> Between their tastes there was small sympathy,
> For not a line had Julia ever penn'd:
> Some people whisper but no doubt they lie,
> For malice still imputes some private end,
> That Inez had, ere Don Alfonso's marriage,
> Forgot with him her very prudent carriage;
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> And that still keeping up the old connection,
> Which time had lately render'd much more chaste,
> She took his lady also in affection,
> And certainly this course was much the best:
> She flatter'd Julia with her sage protection,
> And complimented Don Alfonso's taste;
> And if she could not (who can?) silence scandal,
> At least she left it a more slender handle.
>
> (*Don Juan*, Canto 1, LXVI-LXVII)

'Everything in this world has two handles', as De Quincey, having once read Canto 1 of *Don Juan* and kept up the old connection, says:

> Murder, for instance, may be laid hold of by its moral handle, (as it generally is in the pulpit, and at the Old Bailey;), and *that*, I confess, is its

[21] Ibid., p.95

> weak side; or it may be treated *aesthetically*, as the Germans call it, that is, in relation to good taste.[22]

Susan Oliver has recently discussed De Quincey's gift for putting his readers in touch with their secret selves, making them 'thrill to the worst of crimes' and writing in a way that 'gradually dismembers and dissolves literary form', melting away the contemporary journalistic 'boundaries'[23] and categories, along and within which readers could otherwise become rather accustomed to having their morals sorted for them by the periodical press. De Quincey creates a bit a play around the terrible issue of murder—play as in room for movement as well as the merely ludic and game show sense:

> Enough has been given to morality; now comes the turn of Taste and the Fine Arts. A sad thing it was, no doubt, very sad; but *we* can't mend it [murder]. Therefore let us make the best of a bad matter; and, as it is impossible to hammer anything out of it for moral purposes, let us treat it aesthetically, and see if it will turn to account in that way. Such is the logic of a sensible man, and what follows? We dry up our tears, and have the satisfaction perhaps to discover, that a transaction, which, morally considered, was shocking, and without a leg to stand upon, when tried by the principles of Taste, turns out to be a very meritorious performance.[24]

In this region beyond good and evil, and in language as precise and unpredictable as the language of any poet, like some informal and indeed amoral emanation of Coleridge, De Quincey finds the other handle of murder. To read De Quincey, to be receptive to his judicious amplification of some things and open to his deepening, twisting, thickening, blackening tone of enthusiasm on, for example, the subject of murder, is one way of handling the traffic of images between one's dark side and one's daylight realities:

> Through this great gallery of murder, therefore, together let us wander hand in hand, in delighted admiration, while I endeavour to point your attention to the objects of profitable criticism.[25]

In a related region (the depths from which he sends us his sighs), he finds the other handle of plagiarism too:

> Rarely do things perish from my memory that are worth remembering. Rubbish dies instantly. Hence it happens that passages in Latin and English poets, which I never could have read but once (and *that* thirty years ago), often begin to blossom anew when I am lying awake, unable

[22] *On Murder*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.10-11.
[23] 'De Quincey's "On Murder": The Generic Confict', *The Wordsworth Circle*, XL1V, Number 1, Winter 2013, pp.44-51.
[24] *On Murder*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.12-3.
[25] Ibid., p.13.

> to sleep. I become a distinguished compositor in the darkness and, with my aerial composing-stick, sometimes I "set up" half a page of verses, that would be tolerably correct if collated with that volume which I never had in my hand but once. I mention this in no spirit of boasting. Far from it: for, on the contrary, among my mortifications have been compliments to my memory, when, in fact, any compliment that I had merited was due to the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies, and by means of those aerial pontoons passing like lightning from one topic to another.[26]

The language here is not only satisfying in itself, but it also fulfils De Quincey's larger purpose—as an habitué of the *Vast* inner space habituated by the greatest poets, and as Coleridge's most thoroughly insightful, if utterly unauthorised, auto/biographer: 'Amongst the admirers of Coleridge, I am at all times stood in the foremost rank'.[27] Remember how De Quincey accounted for his failure to master the piano. Here, he offers what could be taken to account for his (and Coleridge's) occasional failure to produce prose entirely free of plagiarism:

> Still, it is a fact that this pertinacious life of memory for things that simply took the ear, without touching the consciousness, does, in fact, beset me. Said but once, said but softly, not marked at all, words revive before me in the darkness and solitude, and they arrange themselves gradually into sentences…[28]

De Quincey's writing is sculptural, in the round, and gestural in a way that keeps the esteesian sphere of influence dense and connected even as it dilates. It cannot be read as an affirmation of the normal, but rather as providing the acceleration and inspirational oomph to transport the reader to a magical somewhere else, beyond the single definitive version in grey print (often so inimical to imagination), beyond the literalization (by printing and publishing machinery) of the life of the mind, beyond contemporary scholars of Oxford and sellers of oxen, to somewhere like the timeless 'mental space' in which Coleridge could enjoy himself with Edmund Spenser:

> Observe… the exceeding vividness of Spenser's descriptions. They are not, in the true sense of the word, picturesque; but are composed of a wondrous series of images, as in our dreams… in the domains neither of history or geography… ignorant of all artificial boundary, all material obstacles… truly in a land of Faery, that is, of mental space. The poet has placed you in a dream, a charmed sleep, and you neither wish, nor have the power, to inquire where you are, or how you got there. It

[26] *Suspiria De Profundis*, in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and other writings*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.109.

[27] *Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by Grevel Lindop, volume 2, p.105.

[28] *Suspiria de Profundis*, in *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and other writings*, edited by Robert Morrison, Oxford University Press, 2013, p.109.

> reminds me of some lines of my own…[29]

Just as Coleridge had stood out against the age as the individual with the wisdom and wizardry to, for example, access Spenser's twilit world as a poetic home from home, so De Quincey styles himself as the scholar, shape-shifter and shoplifter with the sharp wit and esoteric vision to see himself in Coleridge and Coleridge in himself. I'll leave you with one last brief look at the double-exposure—or 'the dark shadow thrown by our [De Quincey's and Coleridge's] several trespasses'[30]—I have in mind:

> Coleridge [I] spun daily and at all hours, for mere amusement of his [my] own activities, and from the loom of his [my] magical brain, theories more gorgeous by far, and supported by a pomp and luxury of images, such as Schelling—no nor any German that ever breathed, [and perhaps just one other English opium-eater] …—could have emulated in his [my] dreams. With the riches of El Dorado lying about him [me], he [I] would condescend to filch a handful of gold from any man whose purse he [I] fancied.[31]

[29] *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, collected and edited by Henry Nelson Coleridge, volume 1, 1836, pp.93-4.
[30] *Works of Thomas De Quincey*, edited by Grevel Lindop, volume 2, p.105.
[31] Ibid., volume 10, p.292.