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# Invisible links, abject chains: habit in nineteenth-century british literature

Daniel R. Mangiavellano

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, dmangi1@tigers.lsu.edu

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INVISIBLE LINKS, ABJECT CHAINS:  
HABIT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by  
Daniel R. Mangiavellano  
B.A., Michigan State University, 2000  
M.A., American University, 2003  
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**DEDICATION**

For Linzey and Lucy

*Larks at break of day arising*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

William James has said that habituation leads to an “old fogyism [that] begins at a younger age than we think...in the majority of human beings it begins at about twenty-five.” It is a pleasure to acknowledge the thoughtful assistance of faculty, friends, and family who have helped me grow beyond my own early onset “fogyism,” and who have dedicated much time and effort to helping me pursue new connections between habit, creativity, and nineteenth-century British literature.

Dr. Robert Hamm first drew my attention to the importance of Shakespearean allusion in eighteenth and nineteenth-century medical literature. Conversations with him gave shape to much of my analysis of Coleridge, *Hamlet*, and the psychological paralysis of habit in Chapter 2. The lively conversations and debates in Dr. Sharon Aronofsky Weltman’s engaging “Victorian Life Writing” seminar (during a turbulent Fall 2005 semester) influenced how I’ve made sense of De Quincey’s bravado when he spins tales about his own opium habit. Robert and Sharon have been encouraging members of my dissertation committee and have both been sounding boards for early ideas developed throughout this dissertation.

Three scholars have given shape to my career as a critic and an educator. My interest in British Romanticism began with a presentation on the Romantic lyric in Dr. Richard Sha’s poetry seminar at American University in 2001. Richard has been a tireless advocate for my work and has encouraged my active participation among a community of Romanticists. He has drawn my attention to primary and secondary materials included in every chapter of this dissertation. The co-chairs of my dissertation committee have invested an extraordinary amount of time, good cheer, and thoughtful attention to the growth of this dissertation from its earliest stages. This project began as a seminar paper on Joanna Baillie, “sympathetic curiosity,” and addiction in Dr. Daniel Novak’s “Romanticism and the Gender of Language” seminar at Louisiana State University in 2004. I turned my attention from “addiction” to “habit” after

discussions with Dan about the language nineteenth-century writers used to understand addiction—these and so many other conversations with Dan continue to influence how I interpret literature and teach in the undergraduate classroom. From day one, Dr. Elsie Michie has seen the larger implications of my work on habit. She has helped me develop the kind of critical attentiveness that allowed me to identify moments in nineteenth-century British literature when poets and novelists talk about habit without knowing it. Elsie has always had faith in the integrity of this project, and her welcome suggestions on my writing have always pushed me to make connections between habit and creativity. Richard, Dan, and Elsie remain my mentors and models for professional engagement—not to mention most valued friends. There isn't an ounce of Jamesian "fogyism" in the bunch.

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## ABSTRACT

“Invisible Links, Abject Chains: Habit in Nineteenth-Century British Literature” argues that habit is a central characteristic of both Romantic and Victorian theories of imagination, originality, literary production, and subjectivity. Certainly, nineteenth-century culture often treats habit with suspicion, invoking language of bondage, slavery, and dangerous unconscious imitation to apply to everything from reading habits to opium use. However, by tracing a discourse of habit from association theory to pragmatism and drawing from philosophical, educational, medical, and psychological texts, I foreground how Romantic and Victorian texts redeploy habit as a paradoxical form of imaginative agency. In nineteenth-century culture, habit makes possible what seems to be its opposite—*invention, authenticity, and imagination*. The variety of activities, attitudes, and behaviors characterized as “habitual” in nineteenth-century discourse intervenes in how we understand issues such as Romantic genius, the mechanics of creativity and memory, automation and spectatorship, and addiction. Reading key instances in the writings of William Wordsworth, Joanna Baillie, Coleridge, De Quincey, Lamb, William James, and Wilkie Collins, I show how alternative discourses of habit challenge our understandings of the (often self-fashioned) myths inscribed within Romantic and Victorian subjectivity.

## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I examine the connection between habit, literary production, and creativity in nineteenth-century British literature. Associating habit with literary invention and creativity may appear to constitute a troubling counterintuitive claim; we tend to think of habit strictly in relation to engrained cycles of automatic, repetitive behaviors. But throughout this dissertation I show that quite the opposite was true for Romantic and Victorian writers—the desires embedded by repetition in the unconscious mind make possible creative impulses in writers as diverse as William Wordsworth, Joanna Baillie, Thomas De Quincey, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Wilkie Collins.<sup>1</sup>

I focus exclusively on “habit” in this dissertation because it was the specific term nineteenth-century writers used to describe behaviors in contexts ranging from childhood educational experience to opium consumption. The *OED* definition of “habit” foregrounds the conditions by which it strengthens and embeds itself as a mental and physical agent:

A settled disposition or tendency to act in a certain way, esp. one acquired by frequent repetition of the same act until it becomes almost or quite involuntary; a settled practice, custom, usage; a customary way or manner of acting (9a).

This definition incorporates the principal aspects of habit formation—repetition, desire, and the unconscious mind—that run throughout all models of habit I explore in this dissertation. As this definition also makes clear, competing terms like “custom,” “use,” and “practice” can potentially substitute for “habit” in vernacular usage.<sup>2</sup> Idioms like “Practice makes perfect” and being “used to” and “accustomed to” to one thing or another imply similar acts of repetition that make parsing differences between “habit” and many of its linguistic first-cousins tricky interpretive work. “Addiction” has emerged in the twentieth century as an especially resolute synonym for “habit,” with the addict as a literary and cinematic ‘type’ dramatizing cultural anxieties about chemical dependency in relation to uncontrollable agency, insatiable appetite, and desires run amok. As Eve Sedgwick has complained, it becomes all too easy to map the appetites of drug

addiction onto *any* repetitive, habitual act: “any substance, any behavior, even any affect may be pathologized as addictive” (131). Sobriquets like “Political junky,” “Chocoholic,” and “Shopoholic” deliberately hyperbolize the dangers of clinical addiction onto general repetitive behavior, effectively complicating the boundaries of addiction as a meaningful signifier. As critics like Susan Zieger, Virginia Berridge, and Barry Milligan remind us, “addiction” does not become a charged medical or political concept until the passage of Britain’s Pharmacy Act in 1868.<sup>3</sup> When critics cling to a medical model of addiction to diagnose the past, it skews perceptions about how the combined effects of repetition, desire, and the unconscious mind always lead to a perpetual state of indulgent dependency.<sup>4</sup> William James has said that “we speak, it is true, of good habits and bad habits, but when people use the word ‘habit,’ in the majority of instances it is a bad habit they have in mind” (*Talks* 47). James’s supposition about knee-jerk reactions to habit in the late nineteenth century is as true in our time as it was in his own—though the early twenty-first century seems more likely to overwrite “bad habit” with the throes of a threatening, pathologized, and uncontrollable “addiction.”

By rooting my scholarly approach to habit in a historical usage of the term, I am better able to foreground how Romantic and Victorian writers reinvent models of habit relative to creativity. “Addiction” was a term used in the nineteenth century, though without overt pathological associations. Thus, when Johnson’s *Dictionary* defines “curious” as “addicted to enquiry,” it is tempting to de-historicize “addiction” as something more potentially threatening than it is in Baillie’s “sympathetic curiosity” in the “Introductory Discourse” to the ‘Plays on the Passions’ that I discuss in Chapter 2 (Def 1).<sup>5</sup> Baillie explains her psychology of social and dramatic spectatorship as the drive to identify another’s disturbed mental state through physiological cues. While “sympathetic curiosity” may involve a desire to meddle in other people’s affairs, it is an entirely common and habitual mode of enquiry. Interpreting “sympathetic curiosity” as a variant of clinical addiction hyperextends any potential connection

between spectators and addicts by suggesting that they struggle against identical states of dependency. Addiction overshadows the integrity of the connection between habit and creativity in Baillie's work. Instead, I outline how in her literary output Baillie strives to spark heightened levels of "sympathetic curiosity" in her audience by reinventing the everyday images that have become too familiar throughout habitual exposure.

I resist the tendency to overwrite "habit" with "addiction" in order to keep my analysis historically relevant to the writers under consideration. Certainly, it is difficult to keep presumptions about clinical addiction from spilling over into discussions of the opium consumption of writers such as De Quincey, Coleridge, and Collins. But my focus on habit not only remains true to the terminology nineteenth-century opium-eaters used, but it also privileges the vivid language and the stark imagery describing patterns of opium consumption: clanking, entangling chains; abject slavery reminiscent of Caliban's subservience to Prospero in *The Tempest*; and habituation likened to a "Maelstrom, the fatal whirlpool" in Coleridge's description of his dependency.<sup>6</sup> I argue that the debates between De Quincey and Coleridge devoted to theorizing the integrity of each other's opium habit help to produce the creative images that constitute a pre-history to Addiction Studies—one that informs Louise Foxcroft's recent "Making" of addiction and Zieger's "Invention" of the addict during the nineteenth century. Zieger refers to habit as "an attractive concept for thinking about the relationship between acts and identities, [but] it is the very background of disappointed agency from which addiction emerges" (8). My purpose when examining the opium habit is not to slight "addiction" as a vaguely anachronistic concept for nineteenth-century opium eaters like De Quincey, Coleridge, and Collins. Rather, I spotlight how the convergence of habit and creativity forms the contours out of which addiction emerges as a diagnostic concept and the addict as a lasting, recognizable type. Contemporary stereotypical renderings of the addict are a legacy of the connection

between habit and creativity that Romantic and Victorian writers adapted from inherited cultural anxieties about habit perpetuated by Samuel Johnson.

## II

In “Sermon 15,” Johnson states “habits are formed by repeated acts, and therefore old habits are always strongest. The mode of life, to which we have been accustomed, and which has entwined itself with all our thoughts and actions, is not quitted but with much difficulty” (164). Johnson does not distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ habits in the sermon, only asserts that “old” ones are difficult to break—though referring to habits as “entwining” betrays his suspicion about habit’s agency over the individual. Given the difficulty of breaking a habit, Johnson outlines in “Sermon 10” a plan for managing habits: “we are in full possession of the *present* moment; let the *present* moment be improved” (113) [original emphases]. If individuals are stuck living with the reality of the embedded, “old” habits, Johnson at least provides hope for the improvement of the “present moment,” which (one supposes) will lead to the improvement of the quality of habits one forms.<sup>7</sup> This subtle concern over new and old, good and bad habits is on display in “The Vision of Theodore,” where the threats and anxieties associated with Habit can be summarized in the Johnsonian aphorism, “The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken.”<sup>8</sup>

“The Vision of Theodore” traces life’s journey up the “Mountain of Experience.”<sup>9</sup> The didactic principles at stake in the work are immediately on display through Theodore’s opening apostrophe: “Son of Perseverance, whoever thou art, whose curiosity has led thee hither, read and be wise” (195). Theodore recounts how he has retired to Mount Teneriffe in a solitary, self-imposed exile to shun the excessiveness of society. After years on the mountain, Theodore is reluctant to venture out of his cave to climb to the summit of Mount Teneriffe, and he explains his trepidation in relation to the psychological conditioning of habit: “All change, not evidently for the better, alarms a mind taught by experience to distrust itself” (196). What “alarms [his]

mind” is the process of stepping outside his own dwelling and reaching beyond the lessons of habit (via “experience”).

Midway through his journey to the top of the mountain he falls asleep against a bank and experiences a vision. A spirit advises him to stop toiling and pause to look around him. As Theodore sees a neighboring mountain, the Mountain of Existence, the allegorical nature of Johnson’s work begins to take shape.<sup>10</sup> At the base of the Mountain he sees Innocence casually supervising young children happily picking flowers. Before they know it, these children eventually move from the delights of kindly Innocence to the strict commands of Education, “a nymph more severe [than Innocence] in her aspect and imperious in her commands” (199). The transition from Innocence to Education confuses the children, though they ultimately begin their journey up the Mountain of Experience under Education’s vigilant watch. Education leads her (at times) reluctant pupils and always warns them against the false promises made by the allegorical figures of Appetite and Passion who corrupt and enslave some students before Education can deliver them to guidance of Reason and Religion.<sup>11</sup> A persistent danger facing travelers up the Mountain of Experience comes from Habit—whose lurking presence preoccupies almost all of Theodore’s reportage throughout the entire work.

Theodore has difficulty identifying and describing Habit because its stature and appearance always fluctuate—often growing unexpectedly as students unwittingly fall under its influence. When Theodore finally gets a steady look at Habit, he sees “a group of Pygmies” that each “held secretly a chain in her hand, with which she prepared to bind those whom she found within her power” (200-1). Once enslaved, individuals are entirely under Habit’s control: “It was the peculiar artifice of Habit not to suffer her power to be felt at first...Habit was continually doubling her chains upon her companions...Each link grew tighter as it had been longer worn, and when by continual additions they became so heavy as to be felt, they were very frequently

too strong to be broken” (202).<sup>12</sup> Johnson imagines Habit as an externalized, exotic, sly, feminized agent, dominating pupils before they know it.

As dire as this representation of Habit is for travelers up the Mountain of Experience, it is not always a malicious agent in Johnson’s allegory. Only when Habit combines with Appetite, Passion, Ambition, Intemperance, Indolence, and Melancholy, does it endanger travelers. Theodore notes how at the top of the Mountain of Experience, “Some who had never deviated but by short excursions, had Habit in the middle of their passage, vigorously supporting them and driving off their Appetites and Passions, which attempted to interrupt their progress” (208). As in his sermons, Johnson allows for both good and bad habits, though he continues to be preoccupied by the dangerous consequences of cultivating the wrong habits.

The interaction between the individual and Habit interests Johnson and the ensuing struggle illustrates the perils of habituation:

It was evident that the Habits were so far from growing weaker by these repeated contests, that if they were not totally overcome, every struggle enlarged their bulk and increased their strength; and a Habit oppos’d and victorious was more than twice as strong as before the contest. The manner in which those who were weary of their tyranny endeavoured to escape from them, appeared by the event to be generally wrong; they tried to loose their chains one by one, and to retreat by the same degrees as they advanced; but before the deliverance was completed, Habit always threw new chains upon her fugitive: nor did any escape her but those who by an effort sudden and violent, burst their shackles at once, and left her at a distance; and even of these many rushing too precipitately forward, and hindered by their terrors from stopping where they were safe, were fatigued with their own vehemence, and resigned themselves again to that power from whom an escape must be so dearly bought, and whose tyranny was little felt, except when it was resisted. (207)

The struggle between an individual and Habit involves a tortuous series of “burst shackles,” “new chains,” and resignation. The ease with which habits form is offset by the difficulty of breaking habits, and even when one believes that one’s chains are gone, stronger chains replace them. Even those who “burst their shackles at once” run the risk of failing to actually undo their habits. Johnson presents a vision of habit that so engrains itself in the individual that one can never completely do away with it.

According to Boswell, Johnson considered “The Vision of Theodore” to be “the best thing he ever wrote” (111). Along these same lines, Bernard Einbond calls Johnsonian Habit “the most entertaining of allegorical beings...The figures of Habit are as versatile a troop of performers as can be imagined” (61). Such excitement and “versatility” about “The Vision of Theodore” compound the fact that the work uses allegory to reflect larger cultural perceptions about habituation. The work was so influential that it sparked a variety of imitations. Truncated pirated imitations titled “Salah: Or the Dangers of Habit.—An Eastern Allegory” published in 1772 and “The Force of Habit: An Oriental Tale” published in 1779 are blatant reproductions of Johnson’s “The Vision of Theodore.” Each retains the allegorical nature of Johnson’s work, even more overtly emphasizing the externalized, exotic ‘otherness’ of Habit only touched on by Johnson. More importantly, both use Habit as the narrative frame for their respective versions of Johnson’s allegory. Neither takes the long view of life from Innocence to the top of the Mountain of Experience. Rather, they focus exclusively on expounding on the threats of allegorical Habit. This is significant because it shows how Johnson’s allegory was accepted and broadened to explore Habit, in specific. It illustrates the way Johnson was at the center of perpetuating attitudes about Habit in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Johnson provides a rich cultural context for perceptions about habit emerging out the eighteenth century that constitutes the backdrop for prevalent attitudes for habit moving into the nineteenth century. In Johnson’s view, habit is a menacing, externalized agent working against individuals as they proceed through life. Theodore’s (and by extension, the reader’s) ability to identify Habit is elusive because by its nature, Habit is difficult to identify:

Education led her troop up the mountain, nothing was more observable than that she was frequently giving them cautions to beware of Habits; and was calling out to one or another at every step, that a Habit was ensnaring them; that they would be under the dominion of Habit before they perceived their danger; and that those whom a Habit should once subdue, had little hope of regaining their liberty. (200)



What remains “most observable” are Education’s warnings about Habit, *not* Habit, itself.

Johnson’s point is clear: the problem with Habit is its imperceptibility to those who are most vulnerable to it. Since Habit is practically invisible, it easily sneaks up on pupils and “ensnares,” “dominates,” “subdues,” and enslaves in spite of efforts to warn against habituation. One must labor against Habit, and only the lucky few can work in tandem with Habit.<sup>13</sup> As in his sermons, Johnson leaves room for both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ habits, though his anxiety about Habit’s agency over individuals dominates his allegorical presentation of Habit in the second half of the eighteenth century.

### III

The allegorical figures populating Johnson’s “The Vision of Theodore” represent the conceptual frames I use in each chapter to pursue links between habit and creativity. Habit and Education, the psychological consequences of the strength of Habit’s chains, and the dangers of Appetite, Indolence, and Melancholy (as filtered through accounts of opium consumption) all figure into the chapter breakdowns of this dissertation. Johnson provides the cultural backdrop, one in which distinctions between good and bad habits are brushed aside and questions about the effect of habit are most important. This dissertation explores the discourse of habit in models of education and psychology in Chapters 1 and 2 and in discussions of opium consumption and appetite in Chapters 3 and 4. My project’s title, ‘Invisible Links, Abject Chains,’ yokes together discourses of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ habit formation by foregrounding two moments in nineteenth-century British literature when habit intervenes in moments of creativity. In “Book I” of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth credits “invisible links” of mental association with allowing him to recall and retain past experience in the mind that will ultimately influence his capacity for poetic creativity. In the 1856 revised edition of *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, De Quincey describes opium habituation in relation to a “chain of abject slavery,” an image defining the anxieties about compulsive appetite. The shared image of the chain connects Wordsworth’s

“links” and De Quincey’s underlying sense of bondage—with the former relying on habit to preserve creative impulses from the past and the later imaginatively projecting the dire effects of opium habituation.

My study opens by analyzing images of habit and custom in seventeenth and eighteenth-century essays, pamphlets, and tracts about education. Habit shifts from being a “violent and deceiving schoole-mistris” in Montaigne’s essays to imprinting the operative stamp, mold, and inscription on the “white Paper, or Wax” of a child’s mind at the dawn of the Enlightenment. These images merge to reflect an uneasiness about habit’s agency in models of education: habit may exert tyrannical control independent of the student, but it also stands as a necessary and efficient agent that shapes a child’s mind. In short, habit is at once the delivery mechanism *and* intellectual substance of education. Romantic-era writers recall associations between habit and education, and Coleridge, Charles Lamb, and Leigh Hunt all frame their late eighteenth-century educational experiences at Christ Hospital in relation to habit.

This relationship between habit and education is important to Romantic-era writers because they also argue for an intimate relationship between habit and the imagination. Wordsworth maintains that an original writer must “create the taste by which he is to be relished, [and] he must *teach* the art by which he is to be seen” (*MY*: 1.130). Taking my cue from Wordsworth’s pragmatism, I treat the “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads* as a pedagogical text—one that stresses the importance of memory, mechanical mental repetition, unconscious imitation, and habit as a fundamental component of a poet’s creative capacity. Wordsworth’s account of literary production as a combination of imagination, originality, repetition, and habit-formation revises inherited models of education in order to establish new aesthetic tastes and interpretive habits for the nineteenth century.

The entrenched habits of youth (for better or worse) guide the behaviors and attitudes of adulthood, and the psychological implications of habit as an inscribed educational and

imaginative agent are the focus of my second chapter. Nineteenth-century medical literature regularly invokes Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy to articulate the psychological impact of habit, and in this chapter I position Hamletian dilemmas of abstraction and paralysis alongside Coleridge's anxiety about habit inscribed in notebook entries and literary fragments from 1803 to 1815. Coleridge acts out a paralytic psychosomatic response to opium habituation when he asks, "Is not *Habit* the Desire of a Desire?—As Desire to Fruition, may not the faint, to the consciousness *erased*, Pencil-mark-*memorials* or relicts of Desire be to Desire itself in its full prominence...Must not the Soul then work eternally inwards, Godward, or Hell-ward—will it not all be Habit?" (*Notebooks* 1: 1421) [original emphases]. This explanation of habit as a combination of desire, repetition, and the unconscious mind is especially useful for conceptualizing how recycled literary images, social routines, and automatic viewing practices produce desensitized mental states in individuals—a significant psychological problem to account for given Romanticism's emphasis on strong emotional response.

Baillie and Wordsworth explore theories of spectatorship, tautology, and nostalgic memory in relation to repetition and desire, and they both reimagine the habitual through novelty, creativity, and invention in order to forestall the psychological consequences of habit and aesthetic desensitization. In particular, Baillie's theory of "sympathetic curiosity" which guides our social and dramatic spectatorship is the motivating force behind her own creative impulses. For Baillie, literary production is a cycle of inventing and reinventing, establishing and uprooting psychological habits for her audience.

In my third chapter, I explain how Coleridgean attitudes toward habit articulated in his notebook work alongside De Quincey's preoccupation with larger questions of 'authentic' and 'legitimate' opium experience and habituation. De Quincey's critical and biographical essays on Coleridge from the 1820s, 30s, and 40s, as well as the enlarged 1856 *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* manufacture images of Coleridge's inauthentic habits through literary allusions and

satiric fictional reenactment. In De Quincey's hands, Coleridge (and his habits) become alternate versions of Marley's Ghost from *A Christmas Carol*, Caliban "fretting his very heart-strings against the rivets of his chain," and a squabbling "Transcendental Philosopher" engaged in farcical debate with young boys at a druggist's shop (1856: 18). Reimagining Coleridge as a series of fictional characters allows De Quincey to differentiate himself (and his own habits) from Coleridge—ultimately suggesting that he is the more authentic, legitimate, and trustworthy habituate of the two.

De Quincey constructs what I term a literary model of habit—one that appropriates the supernatural, the exotic, and the comically absurd in texts from Shakespeare to Dickens to present ready-made images of cultural anxieties about habit. Through these literary allusions, De Quincey evokes habit's presence in the afterlife, the metaphysical suffering and regret associated with unmanageable habits, habit-formation as a product of free will, and overt racial coding as a means of debunking Coleridge's status as an opium-eater.

I shift focus from a literary model of habit in Chapter 3 to a curious intersection between unconscious literary creation and habit in my final chapter. While dictating *The Moonstone* to an amanuensis, Wilkie Collins consumed large amounts of laudanum to combat depression and rheumatism. He repeatedly lost consciousness, but continued a coherent *unconscious* narration of the novel without retaining any memory of it or even recognizing the work as his own. Chapter 4 reads Collins's unconscious literary creation through William James's late-nineteenth-century behavioral and psychological model of habit. I link biographical anecdotes of Collins's early boarding school education with Jamesian theories of habit, education, and hypnotic suggestion. I argue that while opium consumption occasioned Collins's unconsciousness, established habits of impromptu story-telling formed in his youth provide the power of suggestion that leads to his hypnotic creative expression.

In each chapter, I explore established models of habit and argue for the ways Romantic and Victorian writers construct alternate versions of these models to account for connections between habit and creativity. This approach foregrounds how inherited notions of habit evolve and get redeployed throughout the nineteenth century. I work through the individual details of habit in order to ground my analysis in a historical approach and to illustrate that in the nineteenth century, many of these models of habit overlap with one another. Models of habit do not exist in isolation, but are in dialogue with each other throughout the nineteenth century.

In this dissertation, I reorient how critics and students of nineteenth-century British literature should think about the connection between habit and literary creation. Myths about Romantic genius, creativity, and inspiration tend to rely on a specious set of circumstances: a poet strolls along a riverbank, is bowled over by the West Wind, and immediately produces immaculate lines of poetry. My attention to the link between habit and creativity reorients not only the temporality of poetic inspiration, but the very processes by which repetition, desire, and the unconscious mind interrelate in the creative imagination.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> While this dissertation does not go into excessive detail about the idiosyncratic habits of nineteenth-century British writers, it does recognize that to do so would be to humanize the figures whose creative acts are important to how we understand the past. Wordsworth's "habit...of kissing the women of his family on meeting or parting" and Byron and Shelley's "routine of habits...the one getting out of bed after noon, dawdling about until two or three...the other was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza" help us to remember these figures as more complicated than just names in anthologies (Jordan 294) (Stoddard 242-43).

<sup>2</sup> Many of the first English-language dictionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth century define "habit" by invoking "custom" (and *visa versa*). Henry Cockeram's *The English Dictionarie* (1623) defines "Habitual" as "Growne to a custome by long use." Elisha Coles's definition of "Habitual" in *An English Dictionary* (1676) is much the same as Cockeram's: "grown to a Habit or custome." John Kersey's *A New English Dictionary* (1702) defines "Habit" as "state of mind, or body," while in his *Dictionarium Anglo-Britannicum* (1708), he notes that "Habit" means "Constitution or Temper of the Mind or Body, Custom or Use." See also Manley (Chapter 2) for the political importance of custom in eighteenth and nineteenth-century England.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the Pharmacy Act.

<sup>4</sup> Hayter, writing in the context of the heroin epidemic in the 1960s, makes unconscionable judgments about De Quincey's delinquent status as an addict. She generalizes De Quincey's habituation by overwriting it with addiction: "De Quincey became the prophet of opium. Addicts often use ecclesiastical terms for their opium slavery, and De Quincey led the way in this disagreeable practice" (*Imagination* 104).

<sup>5</sup> The *Dictionary* is important to eighteenth-century English culture because it stands as a more definitive English-language authority than any of the dictionaries that had come before it. Allen Reddick locates the difference between Johnson's *Dictionary* and its English-language predecessors by highlighting an often overlooked characteristic of Johnson's lexicographical methodology: "What has not been sufficiently recognized, however, is that Johnson's *Dictionary* was the first to attempt, to a considerable degree, to determine its meanings according to word usage as it was encountered in the works of authors in the language. This practice emerged only after Johnson experienced the futility of fixing or ordering the language" (15).

<sup>6</sup> When De Quincey actually uses the phrase "addiction" in relation to Coleridge in his essay "Coleridge and Opium-Eating," it does not include any clinical undertone.

<sup>7</sup> The exact composition dates of Johnson's sermons are unknown; thus, the sermon's individual numbering is an unreliable indicator to trace the progression of his thinking about habituation. Johnson's sermons are a mix of the didactic and the literary—making them a variant of an educational text. Hagstrum and Gray summarize the function of Johnson's twenty-eight known sermons as "formal works of instruction and persuasion...we should not be surprised that they contain the basic Ciceronian divisions of the oration and seem designed to teach, delight, and persuade, the grand objective being the first, or instruction" ("Introduction," xlii). See also Hagstrum and Gray, "Appendix A."

<sup>8</sup> I have been unable to trace the original source of this aphorism, though the threats associated with Habit throughout "The Vision of Theodore" match the truism of this sentiment exactly and make Johnson's authorship likely.

<sup>9</sup> "The Vision of Theodore" first appeared in *The Preceptor* in 1748.

<sup>10</sup> Einbond states that Johnson, like Theodore, wants readers to reorient their collective attention to the world around them: "if we wish to survey human existence, all we need to do is stand still and look about us" (57).

<sup>11</sup> Einbond suggests that we can interpret Johnson's allegory either literally or figuratively, which again demonstrates why this is a good example of eighteenth-century attitudes toward habit: "When we hear Johnson's allegorical beings named in expressions such as 'path of Reason,' 'followers of Religion,' 'directions of Reason,' not to mention 'force of Habit' and 'enchained by Habits,' we are able to take them as literally or as figuratively as we may choose. But then we do not have to choose, for they can be taken entirely literally and entirely figuratively at the same time" (58).

<sup>12</sup> Unlike the confusion of the transition from Innocence to Education, Theodore notices how happily the pupils move from under Education's influence: "It was easy to discover, by the alacrity which broke out at her departure, that her presence had been long displeasing, and that she had been teaching those who felt in themselves no want of instruction" (203).

<sup>13</sup> See Alkon for a rich comparison of Johnson's overwhelmingly negative treatment of habit alongside other eighteenth-century behavioral and moral philosophers.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ‘A SOURCE OF FIRST PRINCIPLES’: HABIT, EDUCATION, AND MOLDING THE IMAGINATION

In this chapter, I argue that Wordsworth’s “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads* reorients models of education to account for links between habit and creativity. I treat the “Preface” as a pedagogical text, one that builds on previous models of education and foregrounds the relationship between “habits of mind” and acts of creativity. Wordsworth’s own autobiographical reflection on the “Growth of a Poet’s Mind” in *The Prelude* associates repetition and habit formation with literary invention, and his pedagogical “Preface” builds on habit in models of education in Aristotle, Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. My argument about connections between education, habit, and creativity in the “Preface” shows that even as the text announces a revolution in poetics, it foregrounds habit formation as the process that will retrain interpretive impulses and tastes in readers. Echoes of these Wordsworthian lessons about the “habits of mind” extend to the Victorian period—especially in the ‘re-habituating’ of John Stuart Mill’s troubled mental state addressed in his *Autobiography*. By continuing to turn to the “Preface” to introduce students to Romanticism, we participate in the cultivation of interpretive habits so instrumental to the pedagogical principles of Wordsworth’s text.

The connection between habit formation and pedagogic practice has historical roots extending back to Aristotle. The *Nicomachean Ethics* outlines the importance of early habit formation in education to ensure that virtuous behaviors extend into one’s adulthood. Aristotle lays out a pedagogical process that matches the “character [of] our activities” with the child’s eventual sense of subjectivity:

Virtues we acquire by first exercising them. The same is true with skills, since what we need to learn before doing, we learn by doing....So too we become just by doing just actions, temperate by temperate actions, and courageous by courageous actions....Like states arise from like activities. This is why we must give a certain character to our



activities, since it is on the differences between them that the resulting states depend. So it is not unimportant how we are habituated from our early days; indeed it makes a huge difference—or rather all the difference. (II: 1103b)

The maxim “like states arise from like activities” raises an interesting point about the relevancy of our daily activities to the fabric of our individual characters. Since activities determine our self-identity, the repetition and reinforcement of the behavioral habits we cultivate over time mold our intellectual and behavioral development. On the one hand, if we “exercise” the *right* habits in youth—say, justness, temperance, or courageousness—habit produces corresponding virtues that we can comfortably rely upon for the rest of our lives. On the other hand, if we “exercise” the *wrong* habits in youth—say, bias, intemperance, or cowardice—habit jeopardizes the kinds of virtues meant to guide individuals to adulthood. This dilemma over the kinds of habits we develop underwrites Aristotle’s absolute insistence that proper habit formation must occur early in life. After all, childhood provides a unique window of opportunity for mentors to control the “character of activities” of children while simultaneously nurturing the proper habits that will last for the rest of students’ lives. In light of the intersections between repetition, habit, and virtuous character formation as cornerstones of his ethical system, Aristotle makes us rethink the old adage “actions speak louder than words,” as he suggests that, in actuality, our “*habits* speak louder than words.”

As is generally accepted in both Aristotle’s time and our own, the repetition of specific actions over time results in unconscious, habitual behaviors.<sup>1</sup> Repetition endows habit with stability and predictability of actions, opinions, and attitudes that become increasingly difficult to destabilize. As Kathleen Dougherty notes of Aristotelian habit, “our character is influenced not only by our actions but also our way of viewing the world[,] and thus once we have come to interpret, understand[,] and grasp the world and its particulars from a certain perspective, it is thought unlikely that we could undergo...a radical change quickly” (296).<sup>2</sup> Fundamentally altering a habitual perspective (be it a subtle or a “radical” alteration) proves difficult because the

consistency of repetition solidifies and entrenches habitual attitudes and behaviors within the psyche.<sup>3</sup> All in all, to kick-start the process of habituation in childhood ensures an easy transition from the habits of youth to the virtues of adulthood.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, turning to Aristotle's reliance on early habit formation in children becomes a popular point of departure for theorists as varied as Montaigne, Locke, and Rousseau. These influential pedagogues foreground habit (and its sometime synonym, custom) as both the intellectual substance and the delivery mechanism of a child's education. Within the essays, pamphlets, and personal narratives that address habit's role in education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, questions about its agency relative to the student dominate cultural perceptions: images of habit oscillate between tyrannical externalized threats to the student in Montaigne's essays to an operative stamp, mould, and inscription on the "white Paper, or Wax" of the child's mind during the Enlightenment. The assurances and anxieties incumbent in habit's agency within education center specifically on its capacity either to ensnare and enslave, or to guide and liberate individuals. Such a mixed critical reception underwrites conceptions of habit that exist well into the nineteenth century.

Montaigne's essay "Of the institution and education of children" is an important starting point because many of his opinions about what *should* constitute an educational system extend well into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Specifically, "Of the institution and education of children" points to early childhood as an influential time in the development of children's characters and "customs" for the rest of their lives.<sup>5</sup> The labor of "sowing, setting, and planting" the seeds of knowledge in children is the centerpiece of Montaigne's pedagogical platform. Such a position is unquestionably reminiscent of the role early habit formation plays for Aristotle, whom Montaigne affectionately refers to as "the Monarch of our moderne doctrine" (107).

But unlike Aristotle, Montaigne privileges scholastic components of childhood development as opposed to behavioral components. In Montaigne's "Of custome, and how a received law should not easily be changed," he asks whether there is any practice "that custome hath not planted and established by lawes in what regions soever it hath thought good?" (76). Such "planting and establishing" of laws clearly engages in an Aristotelian vision for how repetition establishes and embeds behaviors and attitudes into the day-to-day life of an individual.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Montaigne not only presents custom as a form of education, but he explains the power and influence it wields over individuals by likening it to the machinations of a tyrannical school mistress:

For truly, 'Custome is a violent and deceiving schoole-mistris.' She by little and little, and as it were by stealth, establisheth the foot of her authoritie in us; by which mild and gentle beginning, if once by the aid of time, it have setled and planted the same in us, it will soone discover a furious and tyrannicall countenance unto us, against which we have no more the libertie to lift so much as our eies; wee may plainly see her upon every occasion to force the rules of Nature: *Usus efficacissimus rerum omnium magister*: 'Use is the most effectuell 'master of all things.' (74)<sup>7</sup>

Custom's slow influence over the individual is, in Montaigne's construction, identical to the deceptive behavior of the most two-faced of school marms.<sup>8</sup> Students do not at first think to be suspicious of this otherwise benign figure because of her "mild and gentle" demeanor. But already the trap has been set—students "soone discover a furious and tyrannicall countenance" lurking below the surface. The school marm's authority becomes so well entrenched that students have no choice but to obey the influence she exerts. Custom becomes "settled and planted" within individuals, which is practically identical to the language Montaigne uses to theorize childhood education as a process of "sowing, setting, and planting" in "Of the institution and education of children." In itself, custom constitutes a type of education, delivered to the student under the most threatening and nerve-wracking of situations.

Montaigne is altogether less interested in *what* custome as schoole-mistris actually teaches us, than he is in *how* she operates. In the above quotation, custom is sly, secretive,

initially patient but eventually becoming so terrifying that “we have no more the libertie to lift so much as our eies.” Montaigne associates custom with dangerous, involuntary blindness. We cannot look custom square in the face because of her terrifying influence over us. Pliny’s maxim may present “*usus*” as the best “master of all things,” but this is not to suggest that individuals can control (or are even aware of) the unconscious attitudes and behaviors custome as schoole-mistris instills in us as we cover our eyes in terror. For Montaigne, custom goes unnoticed because we are blind to its engrained effects: it “dizzie[s] and lull[s] asleepe the senses” just as much as it “brings the sight of our judgement to sleep” (104, 108). Custom first blinds us by scaring us into submission and then “lull[s] asleepe” our ability to think and act for ourselves. The lessons custom engrains remain with us for the rest of our lives, whether we like it or not.

Despite similarities between Aristotle’s habit and Montaigne’s custom, they do not work in identical ways as agents within systems of education. On the contrary, Aristotelian habit and Montaignian custom rely on the continuation of different kinds of repetitions with different origins. Aristotelian habit originates and repeats entirely within the student: he (and his teacher) are alone responsible for introducing, nurturing, and repeating proper behaviors until they become established habits in the student’s life. Montaignian custom involves a set of cultural reproductions administered independent of the student and repeated from generation to generation until one loses track of its origins. Habit facilitates the transition from childhood behavior to the virtues of adulthood within an Aristotelian ethical system, whereas Montaignian custom relies on blindness and fear to keep individuals in a permanent state of adolescent terror—forever shrinking under the stony glare of a school mistress they have never *accustomed* themselves to challenge in any meaningful way.<sup>9</sup>

The larger significance of the “Of custome” essay is that it is the context for an important linguistic shift from “custom” to “habit” at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Montaigne’s essays were first translated into English by John Florio in 1603 and again by

Charles Cotton in 1685-86.<sup>10</sup> These seventeenth-century English translations do not fundamentally alter the images or the range of opinions which make Montaigne's collection of essays such a spirited reading experience.<sup>11</sup> However, as should be expected with any translation, linguistic decisions reflect the popular mores of the translator's own culture, and such is the case with Florio's translation decisions.<sup>12</sup> In "Of custome," Montaigne addresses the danger of limiting early education to the supervision of nurses: "*Je treuve que nos plus grands vices prennent leur ply des nostre plus tender enfance, et que nostre principal gouvernement est entre les mains des nourrices*" (Buchon 45). Florio's translation of this statement momentarily incorporates "habit" in relation to education in an essay entirely devoted to custom: "I finde that our greatest vices make their first *habit* in us, from our infancie, and that our chiefe government and education, lieth in our nurses hands" (75) [emphasis added]. Florio treats "*prennet leur ply des nostre*" in terms of "habit" as opposed to "custom"—a telling distinction since custom is, after all, the guiding intellectual and behavioral concept of Montaigne's essay.

Florio's linguistic shift foregrounds habit as a psychological inscription on the mind in relation to a developmental moment in the life of the child—as if vice *inhabits* the mind as a result of educational miscues during childhood. This translation significantly shifts the meaning of Montaigne's phrase to an internalized, organic, developmental moment in the child's life that will guide and mold his behavior, as opposed to the oppressive customs being forced on him through social repetitions perpetuated by nurses. The *OED* credits Florio's introduction of "habit" in this context as the original English etymological source (9A).<sup>13</sup> As early as the beginning of the seventeenth century, key distinctions between custom and habit surface that will echo in how theorists like Locke, Rousseau, and Johnson theorize habit's agency within education in the eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

Critics and historians credit Montaigne with revolutionizing the essay genre, and it comes as no surprise that other essayists follow his lead in both style and substance. Most notably, the

tyranny associated with custom in Francis Bacon's "Of Custom and Education" is strikingly similar to that of Montaigne's ubiquitous "violent and deceiving schoole-mistris."<sup>15</sup> Bacon not only equates custom with an educational figure, calling it "the principal magistrate of man's life," but he also presents a variety of explicit Montaignian examples to illustrate the tyranny of custom upon the minds and bodies of individuals (419).<sup>16</sup> However, even though Bacon retains the use of "custom" as a lens for his essay, it operates and develops in relation to the individual more akin to Aristotelian habit than it does to Montaignian custom. For example, Bacon states that "custom is most perfect when it beginneth in young years, this we call education; which is, in effect, but an early custom....For it is true that late learners cannot so well take the ply" (419). He calls attention to the *beginning* of custom-formation in the individual as part and parcel of education, as opposed to custom influencing the student from outside, social repetitions over time. Moreover, the difficulty of attempting to alter customs once they have become entrenched in the individual's psyche is an anxiety directly in line with Aristotelian habit. Bacon's "Of Custom and Education" is an intriguing combination of principles of custom and habit—one in which both concepts get collapsed into one term in one system of Baconian pedagogical thinking.

Yet, Bacon does attempt to pry custom and habit apart from each other in *The Advancement of Learning*. He uses the *Nicomachean Ethics* as a baseline for his discussion of *how* behaviors become customary and habitual: "But allowing his [Aristotle's] conclusion, that virtues and vices consist in habit, he ought so much the more to have taught the manner of superinducing that habit: for there be many precepts of the wise ordering the exercises of the mind, as there is of ordering the exercises of the body" (260). Bacon supplements Aristotle's theory of habit by providing rudimentary psychological techniques that illustrate how concepts became customary and habitual in the mind. The Baconian training regimen includes advice on how students should strive to find a balance between rigorous and easy mental topics, to practice

mental activities at different times of the day when the mind is at its most and least productive, and to set up obstacles that challenge the strength of mental behavior, “like unto the rowing against the stream” (261). These activities result in habits and customs of plasticity and adaptability of the mind that facilitate the development of reliable skills and characters in life.

## II

Bacon’s training regimen in *The Advancement of Learning* treats habit as a psychological concept—as an agent that actively molds intellectual activity through consistent repetition coupled with early introduction in childhood. Any number of proverbs point to the tacit acknowledgement of the pliability of Bacon’s training regimen: ‘Practiced in youth, accomplished in age,’ ‘Every drop hollows the stone,’ ‘Practice makes perfect,’ and, as educational theorist Paul Radestock’s nineteenth-century essay *Habit and Its Importance in Education* maintains, “the power of good as well as evil habits is shown in ‘A hook will early begin to bend” (8).<sup>17</sup> Constant repetition of behavior coupled with early introduction in childhood underwrites the merit of each of these proverbs.

While Bacon’s use of the words “custom” and “habit” collapses them into a single meaning, Locke’s educational theories in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* pry these two terms apart by privileging habit over custom as an educational agent. The overall purpose of *Some Thoughts* is to advise members of the gentry on how “a young Gentleman should be brought up from his Infancy” in a manner befitting his future responsibilities and station in society (86).<sup>18</sup> Balking against educational practices *en vogue* at the dawn of the eighteenth century, Locke rails against the brutality of corporal punishment, despises the ineffectiveness of rote-learning, and overtly advocates refashioning the common curriculum to address real-world demands of life outside the classroom. For example, he scoffs at the prospect of a child writing a Latin theme, since it is “A Language, which your son, ’tis a thousand to one, shall never have an occasion once to make a Speech in, as long as he lives, after he comes to be a Man” (229).

Locke maintains that virtue is the “hard and valuable part to be aimed at in Education....All other Considerations and Accomplishments should give way and be postpon’d to this” (132). Connections to Aristotelian modes of thinking are obvious, as Locke strives in his early eighteenth-century educational model to establish and cultivate the kinds of habitual behaviors early in life that will produce a responsible, reasonable, and virtuous English gentleman.

Like those of his predecessors, Locke’s model of education is most efficient in conjunction with early childhood. In what amounts to a mission statement for his educational agenda, Locke calls attention to important distinctions between custom and habit: “The great Thing to be minded in Education is, what *Habits* you settle: And therefore in this, as in all other Things, do not begin to make any Thing *customary*, the Practice whereof you would not have continue, and increase” (95) [original emphasis]. For Locke, “settling Habits” and “making Things customary” are part of the same educational process, though they play different developmental roles. Critics like John Yolton and Kevin Cope have called attention to the lack of a systematic approach to education in *Some Thoughts*, but it is worth noting that Locke clearly presents a process in the way customs transform into habits.<sup>19</sup> First, a behavior or attitude gets introduced to the student at the level of custom. Then, once established, and after the custom has been “continued and increased” as part of a process of repetition, custom graduates into the “settled Habits” within the student’s mind. Without question, Locke privileges the “settled Habits” of the mind over “customary” behavior—habit is, after all, “the great Thing to be minded in Education.” In Locke’s educational framework, customs *produce* habits. A tutor with an eye toward his pupil’s future development would do well to show caution at the level of custom since the resulting psychological habits constitute the entrenched attitudes and beliefs the student uses for the rest of his or her life.<sup>20</sup>

Locke wants education to reinforce social standing while pupils are young enough to easily develop the habits that prepare them for any situation in adulthood. He advocates for



children to sleep on hard surfaces, only eat certain foods at certain times in the day, and only walk around with thin-soled shoes to acclimate themselves to wet feet when they are adults. By repeating these customs, students develop mental habits that allow them to deal with any unexpected situation wherein they will be required to revert this early training. Contrary to what we might expect, habit produces a convenient versatility in adulthood—one that allows for self-government that enables the individual to adapt to any situation and environment.

Locke repeats the educational payback of habit in relation to the benefits of adult self-governance. In fact, habit behaves like a substitute for the tutor when the child develops into an adult:

...the Custom of Forbearing grown into Habit, will help much to preserve him, when he is no longer under his Maid's or Tutor's Eyes. This is all I think can be done in the Case; for, as Years increase, Liberty must come with them; and in a great many Things he must be trusted to his own Conduct; since there cannot always be a Guard upon him, except what you have put into his own Mind by good Principles, and established Habits...For, from repeated Cautions and Rules, never so often inculcated, you are not to expect any thing either in this, or any other case, farther than Practice has established them into Habits. (90)

The move from custom to habit is especially important because, according to Locke, habit “preserves” the adult and acts as a “Guard upon him.” Habit restores and reestablishes the lessons from childhood and intervenes in our management of our liberties. All in all, customs transform into habits, which ultimately become alternate tutors and teachers.

Habit's capacity to supplant the tutor in the life of the pupil is the ultimate goal of a successful education. Locke's *Some Thoughts* does not, however, trace this education into the adulthood of his pupil, leaving readers with only the hypothetical benefits of his educational advice. Rousseau's *Émile* becomes an important companion piece to Locke's *Some Thoughts* because it not only echoes much of Lockean sentiment about habit's importance to education, but actually follows this education into the pupil's adulthood. Much like Locke, Rousseau explains the benefits of early habit formation in pupils through cold water immersion, wearing

loose-fitting clothing, and the general predictability and regimentation of a child's daily schedule (22, 27, 94). Rousseau states outright that "Education itself is but habit," and one can clearly see Locke's influence in such thinking throughout Rousseau's text (7).

But a primary difference between *Some Thoughts* and *Émile* is how far each text traces the effects of education. In his educational platform, Rousseau maintains that one can only gauge the success of an education by witnessing the habits engrained in the behaviors and attitudes of the pupil as an adult. He states, "To judge of this you must see the man full-grown; you must have noted his inclinations, watched his progress, followed his steps... When you have read this work, I think you will have made progress in this inquiry" (9). Rousseau manufactures this long view of a student's education by turning his pupil into a work of fiction. "Émile" is Rousseau's "imaginary pupil" who allows the author to present a glimpse of the long-term benefits of habit in education—a time when "he needs no guide but himself" (18).

Rousseau follows Émile's thought processes as the pupil encounters life's passions and frustrations. Habits of self-reliance, self-denial, industry, and compassion drive Emile's education and eventually lead him to a responsible and virtuous adulthood. By the conclusion of the narrative, Émile marries Sophie and they are expecting their first child. Émile turns to his now aged tutor and asks him to "continue to be the teacher of the young teachers. Advise and control us; we shall be easily led; as long as I live I shall need you" (444). Yet one must bear in mind that Émile does not need the tutor as much as he thinks he does because the habits of his youth are successfully "advising and controlling" him in his new stage of life. Together, Locke's *Some Thoughts* and Rousseau's *Émile* stand as the premier texts on education that emerge out of the eighteenth century. First-hand accounts of how pupils actually reflect back on their eighteenth-century education provide a sense of how effectively habit operates in the classroom as a practical pedagogical concept, and Locke and Rousseau's principles are never far out of reach.

### III

In “Christ’s Hospital Five-and-Thirty Years Ago,” Lamb reflects on his education at the famous London charity school by explicitly referencing Locke and Rousseau’s influential pedagogical theories.<sup>21</sup> He remembers, “[As children] we cultivated a turn for mechanic and scientific operations;...mixing the useful with the agreeable—as would have made the souls of Rousseau and John Locke chuckle to have seen us” (18). The early “cultivation” Lamb remembers is a tacit reminder of the habit-formation that was the backbone of eighteenth-century theories of education. Details about Lamb’s childhood education (including, perhaps, the “turn for mechanic and scientific operations” mentioned above) return to him “sweetly softened to the memory” (“Recollections” 288), and his multiple accounts of school life at Christ Hospital include what students ate, what they wore, what they studied, why they admired some older boys, and why they feared others.<sup>22</sup> Lamb’s essays on Christ Hospital serve to remind his readers of the long-standing integrity of the institution and its students.

Lamb uses multiple etymological variations of habit (both behavioral and sartorial) to present student life and learning at Christ Hospital in the late-eighteenth century. Initially, he defines the general principles of education in relation to the moral habits it nurtures in students:

Here neither, on the one hand, are the youth lifted up above their family, which we must suppose liberal, though reduced; nor on the other hand, are they liable to be depressed below its level by the *mean habits* and sentiments which a common charity-school generates. It is, in a word, an Institution to keep those who have yet held up their heads in the world from sinking; to keep alive the spirit of a decent household, when poverty was in danger of crushing it;...to separate a child from his family for a season, in order to render him back hereafter, with *feelings and habits more congenial* to it, than he could have even attained by remaining at home in the bosom of it. (“Recollections” 281)  
[emphases added]

Lamb’s use of the present tense implies that what was true of his Christ Hospital experience in the 1780s—that students learn domestic habits *outside* the home at the school—remains unchanged in the 1820s when he writes his essay. More importantly, he endorses the institutional goals in relation to the kinds of habits the school both cultivates and repels. Boys

attending Christ Hospital do not fall into the embarrassing “mean habits and sentiments” of common charity schools; rather, they develop the proper “feelings and habits” that preserve elite social standing and will seamlessly reintroduce boys back into fabric of family life. The economic value and the moral virtues of a Christ Hospital education revolve around the habits that allow students to continue to hold their collective heads high in society. Such was the case when Lamb was a student, and, his thinking goes, such is the present state of the school.

The “mean” habits characteristic of common schools and the “congenial” habits at Christ Hospital go unspecified for the remainder of the essay. Lamb applies “habit” so broadly that he can safely leave it to the imagination of concerned parents to substantiate what constitute *good* and *bad* behavioral habits in otherwise rambunctious school-boys. But Lamb ultimately shifts attention away from the school as a whole and onto the students themselves. He calls attention to their distinctive uniforms which, he insists, account for the respectable behavior and demeanor of a “Blue-coat boy”:

The Christ’s Hospital or Blue-coat boy has a distinctive character of his own, as far removed from the abject qualities of a common charity-boy as it is from the disgusting forwardness of a lad brought up at some other of the public schools....His [a Blue-coat boy’s] very garb, as it is antique and venerable, feeds his self-respect; as it is a badge of dependence, it restrains the natural petulance of that age from breaking out into overt acts of insolence....Within his bounds he is all fire and play; but in the streets he steals along with all the self-concentration of a young monk. He is never known to mix with other boys, they are a sort of laity to him. All this proceeds, I have no doubt from the continual consciousness which he carries about him of the difference of his dress from the rest of the world. (“Recollections” 282)<sup>23</sup>

The school uniform reflects a sobriety predicated upon, one assumes, the “feelings and habits” instilled in students by the institution, itself. The “antique and venerable” Christ Hospital uniform inspires “self-respect” in the boys that ultimately influences their public behavior: they behave with a respectability and discipline that outstrip their age and maturity. By likening the Christ Hospital boy to “a young monk,” Lamb effectively re-tailors the distinctive Blue-coat uniform into a monk’s *habit*, with the boys now characterized by the devotion, scholasticism,

and silent contemplation of monastic life—all on account of their unique attire.<sup>24</sup> Lamb's characterization is absolutely sincere, and he makes the respectability inherent in a Christ Hospital education sound as easy as simply fashioning a new sartorial *habit*.

Lamb sees no problem with this externalized monastic habit controlling or (in his words) “restraining” a child's natural boisterous impulses. He sees no burden for a Blue-coat boy walking the streets of London, “continually conscious” of his moral and intellectual superiority over other boys—all on account of his mental and sartorial habits. Lamb sounds like the speaker of Cowper's “Tirocinium: or a Review of Schools”: “This fond attachment to the well-known place / Whence first we started into life's long race, / Maintains its hold with such unfailing sway, / We feel it ev'n in age, and at our latest day” (314-17).<sup>25</sup> Undoubtedly, such “fond attachment” for his *alma mater* colors Lamb's remembrance and similarly obfuscates the restraints that forcing a habit upon a young student entails.

Like his schoolmate Lamb, Coleridge describes the curriculum at Christ Hospital by invoking habit, though he exchanges the restrictiveness of the Blue-coat habit for the intellectual molding made possible by habituation. In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge recounts studying under the terrifying Reverend James Boyer—the Head Master famous for his short temper and brutal corporal punishment: “He early *moulded my taste* to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid. He *habituated* me to compare Lucretius (in such extracts as I then read), Terence and, above all, the chaster poems of Catullus not only with the Roman poets of the so-called silver and brazen ages but with even those of the Augustan era;...” (3) [emphases added].<sup>26</sup> For Coleridge, a series of intellectual “habituations” instilled by Boyer “mould” his literary tastes and, by extension, the inclinations of his creative imagination.<sup>27</sup> Coleridge gives us little direct evidence of *how* this habituation actually “moulds” the mind—only that it is part of his education.<sup>28</sup>

In his 1856 enlarged revision of the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Thomas De Quincey includes a short description of his private childhood education in the 1780s under the direction of his guardian, the Reverend Samuel Hall.<sup>29</sup> De Quincey remembers Reverend Hall as an utterly “torpid” individual, who amassed a collection of 330 equally “torpid” sermons which he would deliver each week to his Manchester congregation (18).<sup>30</sup> Despite the sluggish nature of Hall’s Sunday sermons, as an educational exercise designed to strengthen De Quincey’s mind, Hall required his eight-year-old pupil to reproduce (from memory) the integrity of the language, style, and organization of the sermon delivered during each Sunday church service. De Quincey explains what was expected of him in the weekly assignment:

Every sermon in this morning course was propounded to me as a textual basis upon which I was to raise a mimic duplicate—sometimes a pure miniature abstract—sometimes a rhetorical expansion, but preserving as much as possible of the original language, and also (which puzzled me painfully) preserving the exact succession of the thoughts; which might be easy where they stood in some dependency upon each other, as, for instance, in the development of an argument, but in arbitrary or chance arrangements was often as trying to my powers as any feat of rope-dancing. (17)

Without the luxury of note-taking, consulting other parishioners, or soliciting Hall’s assistance, De Quincey strained to memorize the style and substance of Hall’s sermons. The elder De Quincey passes judgment on the “arbitrary or chance arrangements” of Hall’s organization, and the difficulty of the mental “rope-dancing” of this intellectual task cannot be denied. This kind of assignment was a staple of De Quincey’s education under Hall’s tutelage, and such rote exercises, while decried as ineffective by a vast majority of educational theorists (including Locke), were nonetheless a cornerstone of late eighteenth-century models of education.

Writing from the distance of over fifty years, De Quincey openly celebrates the benefits of this educational approach.<sup>31</sup> While he still bristles from the “cruel anxieties” incumbent in this methodology, De Quincey acknowledges the value of such “intellectual gymnastics” (18, 20). These mental calisthenics are effective, according to De Quincey, because they targeted and corrected his early tendency for imaginative abstraction. His final judgment on his education

looks beyond the monotony and unorganized union of ideas in the sermon, itself, and more toward the benefit of the intellectual exercise: “It is notorious that the memory strengthens as you lay burdens upon it, and becomes trustworthy as you trust it. So that, in my third year of practice, I found my abstracting and condensing powers sensibly enlarged” (18). The discipline that this pedagogical technique forces on the mind, according to De Quincey, actually facilitates imaginative abstraction, rather than limiting it. De Quincey’s pride in the strength and trustworthiness of his memory is evident, and coupled with an energized “abstracting and condensing” capacity as a direct result of Hall’s application of the rote-learning methodology, he showcases an important connection between the educational exercises from childhood and the eventual operations of the creative imagination in adulthood.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, De Quincey makes a counterintuitive claim about the relationship between this educational technique and his imagination. Rote-learning is based on principles of repetition, recall, and exact imitation. De Quincey’s task was to memorize and repeat the exact language, style, and organization of Hall’s dry sermons, without including any additional artistic embellishments of his own creation.<sup>33</sup> Hall never asks De Quincey to summarize or demonstrate any actual understanding of the messages of his sermons. It is unclear how reproducing what De Quincey rejects as lifeless, unorganized prose facilitates the expansion of abstracting imaginative principles. One would expect it to introduce more mechanical inclinations to De Quincian creativity, as opposed to literary innovativeness.

The key to understanding De Quincey’s claim about rote-learning’s capacity to facilitate creativity in the imagination hinges on how Hall’s educational model “burdens” the mind and strengthens the memory. What De Quincey labels a “burden” is actually a reference to the introduction, development, and establishment of lasting intellectual habits made possible by rote-learning techniques.<sup>34</sup> Habits connect the memory with acts of imaginative abstraction, which will be a fundamental component of how Wordsworth accounts for his own literary production,

and initiates the process of creating the literary tastes for his poetic experimentation at the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup>

#### IV

While Wordsworth does not reflect on his own education at Hawkshead in the same way that Lamb and Coleridge remember Christ Hospital, he does foreground the importance of habit to his education as a poet as he details the “The Growth of a Poet’s Mind” in *The Prelude*. In “Book I” (subtitled “Childhood and School-time”), Wordsworth revels in his new-found freedom in the English countryside, though he voices fears about the nature of poetic inspiration, the suitability of poetic subjects, and even of a poet’s vocation. At the conclusion of the Book, Wordsworth resolves to collect and store in his mind the most precious images around him which will influence his future poetic creativity and production:

The scenes which were a witness of that joy  
Remained, in their substantial lineaments  
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye  
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus  
By the impressive discipline of fear,  
By pleasure and repeated happiness,  
So frequently repeated, and by force  
Of obscure feelings representative  
Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes,  
So beauteous and majestic in themselves,  
Though yet the day was distant, did at length  
Become habitually dear, and all  
Their hues and forms were by invisible links  
Allied to the affections. (627-40)

For Wordsworth, a combination of mental discipline, pleasure, “obscure feelings” and desires, and the “invisible links” of associative memory allow for poetic expression. Together, the “frequent repetition” of these principles will not only solidify images in his mind for future poetic consumption, but also the feelings associated with these images that become “habitually dear” stand as the emotional substance of his poetry. Within Wordsworth’s system of educating his mind to collect images and feelings, habit hardy resembles the threatening, enslaving agent



handed down from theorists like Montaigne. Rather, Wordsworth's habit in *The Prelude* is reminiscent of the internalized pedagogical principles of Locke and Rousseau. Nineteenth-century educational reformer Heinrich Pestalozzi suggests that "Education is nothing more than the polishing of each single link in the great chain that binds humanity together and gives it unity" (*Aphorisms* 32). Instead of educating youth so that they grow up to be responsible citizens, Wordsworth explains his own education as one in which habit helped him to "polish each single *invisible* link" that served as his guide as he matured into the poet of the *Lyrical Ballads* and beyond.

In the "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth announces his break with the poetic theories of the eighteenth century (theories that have become habitual interpretive mainstays among readers), which puts his audience in a relatively uncomfortable position of being in an interpretive adolescence when it comes to generating the taste for Wordsworth's new kind of poetry. Such a malleable state is important to habit formation in the mind in Wordsworth's model of education in the "Preface." In order for Wordsworth's theory of originality, creativity, subjectivity, and literary production to work, he must first show his readers how to break old interpretive habits and develop new ones. In many respects, Wordsworth must become the teacher who guides his pupil by engraining interpretive habits that will help them understand and cultivate a taste for his poetry.

In his letter to Lady Beaumont in May 1807, Wordsworth thanks her for her steadfast support of his recently published *Poems*. Throughout the letter, he reassures her that persistent hostile critical backlash does not bother him and that his "ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz, and [his] flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings" (*MY* 1.130-31). But most significantly, Wordsworth reminds Lady Beaumont of Coleridge's advice about the responsibilities incumbent in works of original creative importance:

Never forget what I believe was observed to you by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen...for this multitude of unhappy, and misguided, and misguiding beings, an entire regeneration must be produced; and if this be possible, it must be a work of *time*. (*MY*: 1.130) [emphasis in original]<sup>36</sup>

Wordsworth implies that “unhappy, misguided, and misguiding” critics who denigrate his work have simply developed the wrong habits of literary interpretation. In order to enact a kind of “regeneration” in these critics, he must teach them to break their old habits and form new ones. As we have seen through multiple theories of habit and education, to do this after habits have already formed is difficult work to undergo. However, in order for Wordsworth’s new kind of poetry in the *Lyrical Ballads* to find a receptive audience, he must first convince readers that they *can* break their old interpretive habits and form new ones. The “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads* is as much a pedagogical text that focuses on re-habituating as one that announces a revolution in poetics. Wordsworth’s reminder that this kind of work takes a lot of time makes it especially important that he position his audience in a malleable and formative time of their lives as readers at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Wordsworth calls attention to his own “habits of meditation” in the “Preface.” He credits these habits with an agency that develops the feelings, underscoring the purpose of his poetry: “I believe that my habits of meditation have so formed my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If in this opinion I am mistaken I can have little right to the name of a Poet” (126). [original emphasis]. The productivity inherent in Wordsworth’s *belief* about his meditative habits produced conscious, purposeful, and altogether distinct poetic identity. There is a safety inherent in Wordsworth’s construction of connection between habit and subjectivity. He spends time in the “Preface” explaining how it guides his own sense of self and poetic vocation before he theorizes how it should work in the minds of his audience.

While habit formation is an important facet of Wordsworth's sense of poetic purpose, it also stands as an often overlooked aspect of his famous definition of poetry as the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." In Wordsworth's lengthy qualification, he includes repetition, memory, and associative conscious and unconscious mental behavior as the aggregates of habit formation:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached, were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated. (126)

The temporality of Wordsworth's "habits of meditation" becomes explicit as he pits the "spontaneity" of emotional response against "long and deep" meditation—with poetic "value" tied directly to the length and depth of one's cognition.<sup>37</sup> Wordsworth defines the mind's thoughts as *copies* of original emotions or as "representatives of all our past feelings." The "repetition and continuance" of these "general representatives" in the mind create associative "habits of the mind," with much at stake for both the poet and the reader within this system of habit formation. For the poet, continual, repetitive contemplation creates a desirable, independent, *pulsating* agent in the mind capable of "nourishing" feeling. For the reader, such habits directly impact the exaltation of taste and the amelioration of affections. In all, a sustained, mechanical contemplative repetition in the poet's mind actually produces the emotional spontaneity so important to Wordsworth's new brand of poetry.

Wordsworth turns a “blind and mechanical” abeyance to habit—characteristics to be suspicious of in Montaigne—into safe, integral components of habit formation in the mind. In “The Moral Habits,” the Associationist psychologist Alexander Bain credits Wordsworth with striking out new artistic territory that extends into the Victorian period:

The cultivation of the poetic interest is one of the sources of a refined pleasure. This belongs to our modern development. Our great nature poets, as Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, are the chief instruments in this culture. It is a pre-eminent example of the increase of an emotional susceptibility by assiduous training. The progress in this culture is exactly defined by the laws of Ideal Emotion; and the leading circumstance that makes iteration fruitful is the disengagement and devotion of the mental energies for the work. (453)

While one can speak generally about the theoretical effects of how Wordsworth and other Romantic-era poets aid in the cultivation of “refined pleasure” and “modern development,” there are multiple accounts in the Victorian period crediting Wordsworth with re-educating and re-habituating individuals’ lives. And perhaps nowhere is there a more glaring example of the way in which Wordsworthian Romanticism retrains “emotional susceptibility” than in the case of John Stuart Mill.

The details of John Stuart Mill’s education and his subsequent mental breakdown are outlined in his *Autobiography*, where he addresses the manner in which James Mill (his father) used education to “form” and “shape” his character (49, 92). His father “exerted an amount of labour, care, and perseverance rarely, if ever, employed for a similar purpose, in endeavouring to give, according to his own conception, the highest order of intellectual education” (27). Mill mainly studied Greek and Latin masters, while occasionally reading some Milton and Pope, though “the poetry of the present century [his father] saw scarcely any merit in,” and in turn, Mill’s education focused mainly on Utilitarian “habits of the mind” (35). Mill’s Utilitarianism is so deeply entrenched within his psyche because of his early education that as he progresses into adulthood, he follows the cues from his upbringing automatically, “mechanically, by the mere force of habit” (116). It is only when Mill is faced with a doctrinal and emotional crisis in 1826-

27 (during what we consider the Romantic period) that habit's unchecked influence on his life becomes jeopardized.

Mill summarizes his education as “much more fitted for training me to *know* than to *do*” (48) [original emphases]. As a result, when he begins to question his own happiness and sense of vocational and personal fulfillment, he becomes despondent about his limited capacity for imaginative agency or emotional response. He asks himself, ““Suppose that all your objects in life were realized...would this be a great joy and happiness to you?”” (112). Mill's inability to answer his own question in the affirmative and his inability to lean on the principles of his education to support him in his adult life cause the famous crisis in his mental history—to which he devotes an entire chapter in his *Autobiography*. His professional unhappiness becomes compounded by what he deems a lack of passion and sympathy in himself. Mill points to the failures of his education and the short-sightedness of the *kinds* of habit his father incorporated. His education, “had been conducted without any regard to the possibility of its ending in this result” (113). Bain attributes Mill's crisis to too much mental activity: “That the dejection so feelingly depicted was due to physical causes, and that the chief of these causes was over-working the brain, may I think be certified beyond all reasonable doubt...I am unable to produce an instance of a man going through as much as Mill did before twenty, and yet living a healthy life of seventy years” (*John Stuart Mill* 38). Bain's concern is symptomatic of the kinds of analytic habits that were the backbone of Mill's education. Though, it is important to recognize that habit as a psychological principle in the mind does not spur Mill's mental breakdown. The interpretive behaviors that become habitual result in the devastating “over-working” of the mind.

As Mill turns his attention to his early educational habits, he comes closer to understanding the roots of his own unhappiness:

For I now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity—that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings: as indeed it has when no other mental habit is cultivated, and the analyzing spirit remains without its natural

complements and correctives...My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings [pleasurable association and sympathy] in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind. I was left stranded at the commencement of my voyage, with a well equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for: no delight in virtue or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. (115)

It is not “analysis” on its own that is so problematic for Mill as much as it is the “habit of analysis” that overshadows the “cultivation” of other habits in his mind and heart. Mill rejects the *kinds* of habit instilled in him by his education, not the function of habit within education. After all, habit only backfired in his education in the sense that it did not provide him with the skills by which to deal with crises that face him in later life. Mill ends the quotation with a portrait of himself at the metaphorical beginning of a new a journey—a new *educational* journey that includes re-habituating himself using Wordsworthian Romanticism.

Wordsworth’s poetry provides Mill with the capacity for feeling and sympathy that found no place in his childhood education. Mill frames all of this by referring to what Wordsworth actually “teaches” him:

What made Wordsworth’s poems a medicine for my state of mind, was that they expressed, not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings, which I was in quest of. In them I seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which could be shared in by all human beings...From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence...I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only without turning away from, but with a greatly increased interest in the common feelings and common destiny of human beings. And the delight which these poems gave me, proved that with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis. (121)

Wordsworth’s poetry substitutes the emotional responses that Mill’s father brushed aside in educating his son. Mill revels in the “sympathetic and imaginative pleasure” that the poetry provides. What Wordsworth teaches him is not how to overhaul his Utilitarian upbringing with

Romantic preference for the individual. Instead, Mill learns from Wordsworth how to reconcile his previous education with his new education. Mill walks away from Wordsworth with the notion that “there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis.” Because Utilitarianism had become habitual for Mill, Wordsworthian Romanticism works in conjunction with this habit. New Wordsworthian habits do not supplant Utilitarian habits—they work alongside each other to set Mill back on course for his life.

When Mill addresses these concerns, he frames himself in his own *Autobiography* as still in a metaphorical state of youthfulness, discovering new sensations just as any child would: “Much of this, it is true, consisted in rediscovering things known to all the world, which I had previously disbelieved, or disregarded” (134). He refers to these years of crisis as a breaking point and an “important transformation in my opinions and character” that allows him to revel in a new “fabric of thought” (111, 124). Wordsworthian Romanticism renews Mill’s sense of purpose, and it is exactly this capacity to rejuvenate that fuels Matthew Arnold’s lament when Wordsworth dies in 1850.

Arnold’s “Memorial Verses” mourn Wordsworth’s death by differentiating the loss he feels in Wordsworth from the loss he felt with Byron and Goethe. The poem certainly memorializes all three poets in their turn, but Wordsworth stands out as the one whose death will linger in Arnold’s memory the most. Much of this memorializing revolves around the way Wordsworth was introduced to readers in an “iron time / Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears” (43-4). In Wordsworth’s poetry, Arnold feels revived states of youthfulness, when “smiles broke from us and we had ease” (50). But what makes Arnold’s lament so striking is the fact that there seems to be nobody waiting in the wings to fill Wordsworth’s role as a poet or one whose poetry teaches readers something about themselves:

Time may restore us in his course  
Goethe’s sage mind and Byron’s force;

But where will Europe's latter hour  
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?  
Others will teach us how to dare,  
And against fear our breast to steel;  
Others will strengthen us to bear—  
But who, ah! who will make us feel? (60-67)

Wordsworth's "healing power" is tied to the emotional response his poetry elicits. Other poets may be able to "teach" about daring and courage, but at the heart of Arnold's lament is the absence of one who will not only "make us feel," but who will teach us *how* to feel.

Mill and Arnold each look to Wordsworth's poetry to teach and guide them to a new way of living. But it is important to bear in mind that Wordsworthian Romanticism does not substitute or override the habits that already exist in the mind. Rather, it complements the habits that figures like Mill and Arnold have already cultivated. Of his newfound Wordsworthian medication and education, Mill states that he "found the fabric of my old and taught opinions giving way in many fresh places, and I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was incessantly occupied in weaving it anew... When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relation to my old opinions, and ascertained exactly how far its effect ought to be expected in modifying or superseding them" (127). Mill celebrates his ability to manage different habits in his mind and "weave anew" the fabric of his thoughts. Arnold's dependency on Wordsworthian habit liberating his mind is nowhere near as pronounced as in Mill's *Autobiography*. But as Arnold laments the loss of a poet who could so reliably incorporate feeling into his poetry, the very same capacity for emotional response is already on display in Arnold's poetic memorial to Wordsworth. As Victorians reflect back on Wordsworthian influences over how they have trained their minds, habit's centrality in these discussions becomes more and more evident precisely when it becomes hidden and deeply engrained in the minds and behaviors of figures like Mill and Arnold.<sup>38</sup>



In *Physics and Politics*, Walter Bagehot outlines why it is so difficult to break with custom and then credits Wordsworth with the boldness to make such a brave departure:

Most men catch the words that are in the air, and the rhythm which comes to them they do not know from whence; an unconscious imitation determines their words, and makes them say what of themselves they would never have thought of saying...just as a writer for a journal without a distinctly framed purpose gives the readers of the journal the sort of words and the sort of thoughts they are used to—so, on a larger scale, the writers of an age, without thinking of it, give to the readers of the age the sort of words and the sort of thoughts—the special literature, in fact—which those readers like and prize. And not only does the writer, without thinking, choose the sort of style and meaning which are most in vogue, but the writer is himself chosen...How painfully this traditional style cramps great writers whom it happens not to suit is curiously seen in Wordsworth, who was bold enough to break through it, and, at the risk of contemporary neglect, to frame a style of his own. But he did so knowingly, and he did so with an effort. (33-34)

Bagehot's delineation of how writers perpetuate the taste of their given period echoes back to the unconsciousness associated with custom and habit in earlier discussions from Montaigne to Locke. When a majority of writers simply "catch the words that are in the air," literary creation becomes cheapened to a suspect series of stylistic "unconscious imitations." Such a bleak assessment of the motivations of the literary marketplace similarly casts aside discussions of originality and innovation in favor of the traditional or the "customary." Wordsworth shatters what Bagehot calls the "cake of custom," making his determined effort for literary originality worthy of Bagehot's highest praise, and represented in the actual experience Mill's renewed mental habits and Arnold's poetic memorial to the emotional tenor of Wordsworthian feeling and creativity (27).<sup>39</sup>

Throughout the history of habit in education, habit moves from externalized gendered and racial stereotypes in Montaigne and Johnson (and his later eighteenth-century imitators) to the internalized mold for the child's mind and guide for his adult behavior in Locke, Rousseau, and Wordsworth.<sup>40</sup> As habit becomes entrenched as a psychological principle acting upon and motivating behavior in individuals, it also impacts notions of subjectivity and the psychology of spectatorship as will be addressed in Chapter 2.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle singles out the relationship between repetition and habit: “[Actions are] caused by habit, which men do as a result of having often done it before” (1369b6). Repetition leads to familiarity, and “familiarity accounts for, in part, the pleasure of habit” (1371a).

<sup>2</sup> Dougherty’s excellent literary analysis hinges on what appears to constitute a counter-intuitive claim about the relationship between habit and “radical character change.” She uses Euripides’s Hecuba and Dickens’s Scrooge to account for how character change can be consistent with Aristotelian notions of habit formation in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. See Sherman (Chapter 10), Burnyeat (Chapter 5), and Reeve (59-61) for more on habit within an Aristotelian ethical system.

<sup>3</sup> Repetition is such a fundamental component in Aristotle’s correlation between character formation and habit that the two concepts are actually repetitions of nearly identical Greek words: “Virtue of character (*ēthos*) is a result of habitation (*ethos*), for which reason it has acquired its name through a small variation on ‘*ethos*’” (1103a).

<sup>4</sup>The first English-language edition of Montaigne’s *Essais* was translated by John Florio in 1603. Given Florio’s importance to the introduction of “habit” in the “Of custome” essay, I use his translation of Montaigne’s essay throughout this chapter (unless otherwise noted for comparative purposes).

<sup>5</sup> Like Aristotelian habit, Montaigne’s custom is built upon a series of educational repetitions. In “Of Exercise or Practice,” Montaigne points to the repetitions of exercise in relation to custom as necessary preparation for dealing with future situations: “It is a hard matter...that Discourse and Instruction, should sufficiently be powerful, to direct us to action, and address us to performance, if over and besides that, we doe not by experience exercise and frame our minde, to the traine whereunto we will range it....A man may, by custome and experience, fortifie himselfe against grieffe, sorrow, shame, want, and such like accidents...” (326). Since one cannot adequately prepare for the experiences of the deathbed, Montaigne actually pinpoints the failure of custom and repetition to prepare for *all* inevitable future situations.

<sup>6</sup> See Yolton (“Introduction”) for a brief introduction and discussion of early treatises on education roughly concurrent with the publication dates of Montaigne’s essays including Elyot’s *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531), Ascham’s *The Scholemaster* (1570), and Peacham’s *The Compleat Gentleman* (1622). Yolton also addresses Montaigne’s influence on Locke’s *Some Thoughts* by highlighting similarities between the two theories of education: “The scattered essays of Montaigne are not systematized into a book on education, but they do view children in much the same way as do Locke and the British writers before him. The same subjects and themes are found: father-son relations, selection of a tutor, relations between tutor and pupil, teaching and learning Latin, what food to give the child, recommendations for cold water as a way of developing physical hardiness, and for encouraging some of the same virtues (civility, love, respect)” (12-13).

<sup>7</sup> Overall, in “Of custome” Montaigne outlines custom’s impact on the mind, the senses, and the body of unsuspecting individuals. See Almási (Chapter 2) and E.A. Johnson (Chapter 3) for more on custom’s influence on Montaigne’s system of epistemology.

<sup>8</sup> Montaigne's image of custom as a dangerous female figure remains consistent throughout the essay, ultimately transforming to the maniacal figure of a "Queene and Empresse of all the world" (80). Even Florio's linguistic shift from "custom" to "habit" in 1603 occurs within the context of how nurses endanger the integrity of a child's virtuous development. See Haywood for a satiric eighteenth-century account of how female drinking habits (particularly in nurses and common servants) constitute a threat to the economy of the household and the dignity of the English nation.

<sup>9</sup> Casting custom in the role of a "violent and deceiving schoole-mistris" presents an image that anybody who has ever been intimidated by a school teacher at any point can understand. Holyoake argues that Montaigne's images are influential because he skillfully combines abstract and concrete principles from everyday life: "He draws his most typical and significant images from his everyday life and experience...they are rooted in the language of the familiar and the down-to-earth" (41).

<sup>10</sup> Both Florio and Cotton's seventeenth-century translations remained the standard texts for subsequent translations of Montaigne well into the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>11</sup> In his 1892 "Introduction" to his revised edition of Montaigne's *Essays*, William Carew Hazlitt hounds both seventeenth-century translators for unconscionable linguistic and editorial decisions: "The besetting sin of both Montaigne's translators [Florio and Cotton] seems to have been a propensity for reducing his language and phraseology to the language and phraseology of the age and country to which they belonged, and, moreover, for inserting paragraphs and words, not here and there only, but constantly and habitually, from an evident desire and view to elucidate or strengthen their author's meaning..." (vi). Hazlitt accuses Florio and Cotton of each "habitually" Anglicizing Montaigne. He would probably consider the linguistic shift I call attention to away from "custom" and toward "habit" as entirely reductive, though by his own rationale it would appear that "habit" is an important part of the "language and phraseology of the age and country." I maintain it is an important historical moment that anticipates the psychological importance of habit so prominent in Locke and Rousseau's eighteenth-century theories of habit in education.

<sup>12</sup> Frame justifies his translation decisions in relation to his twentieth-century context. In his "Note on the Translation," he states, "I have tried, in short, to express Montaigne as I think he would have expressed himself had he been writing in English today" (xv). As a result of this theory, he translates "custome" as "habit" throughout the "Of custome" essay. His footnote to the essay coincides with his theory of translation: "The French word *coutume* here, in the title, and throughout the chapter, has either of its usual meaning of *custom* or *habit*" (77) [original emphases].

<sup>13</sup> It should come as no surprise that Florio coins a new use of the term "habit." He was a noted lexicographer and an important seventeenth-century contributor to the organization and translation of the English language. Though the reach of his etymological originality is limited. In his *Queen Anna's New World of Words*, he translates and defines habit in relation to custom, and *visa versa*. The Italian *Habito* ("habit") means "an habite, a fashion, a forme, a custome, a qualitie, a disposition of mind or bodie. Also an attire or sute of apparel" (225) The Italian *Usanza* ("custom") means "use, guise, custome, fashion, maner, wont, ure, enurement" (610).

<sup>14</sup> While this conceptual shift from “custom” to “habit” in the first English translation of Montaigne’s “Of custome” essay is exciting, Cotton’s subsequent translation later in the century does not retain Florio’s use of “habit.” Cotton translates “prennet leur ply des notre” as a “first propensity” (100).

<sup>15</sup> Bacon met Montaigne at the Royal Palace of Marguerite of Navarre sometime between 1576-79 (Dodd 89-90). He certainly would have read Montaigne in the original French and would have been knowledgeable about Florio’s translation. Florio was Bacon’s Italian tutor and longtime friend, “who seems to have been associated with him for many years after . . . in literary ventures” (Dodd 63). Bacon’s brother, Anthony, also met Montaigne while in the Queen’s service in Europe (Bowen 57). See Villey for more on Montaigne’s influence on Baconian scientific and epistemological thinking.

<sup>16</sup> Examples include how “Indians . . . lay themselves quietly upon a stack of wood, and so sacrifice themselves by fire” and Russian monks rely on cold water immersion for penitence (419).

<sup>17</sup> Each of these proverbs comes from Radestock’s *Habit and Its Importance in Education* (1867). I do not mean to imply that these proverbs in any way originate with Bacon, only that they reflect the kind of thinking about early habit formation’s impact upon adult behaviors that is a consistent thread with each of the pedagogues under consideration in this chapter.

<sup>18</sup> *Some Thoughts* was published in 1693 and dedicated to Edward Clarke, a member of the gentry who solicited Locke’s advice on how to educate his son. See Yolton’s “Introduction” for a superb pedagogical, social, and textual history of *Some Thoughts*.

<sup>19</sup> Cope candidly states, “Locke’s ‘system’ is that there is none. He proceeds phenomenon by phenomenon, sentence by sentence, without any pretensions to an overarching system. There are things to be explained, and these things compromise human knowledge—plain and simple” (*Revisited* 27).

<sup>20</sup> In *Essay on Human Understanding*, Locke echoes such cautionary measures to tutors about being mindful of what ideas get introduced into the malleable minds of their pupils: “Those who have Children, or the charge of their Education, would think it worth their while diligently to watch, and carefully to prevent the undue Connexion of *Ideas* in the Minds of young People. This is the time most susceptible of lasting Impressions . . .” (397).

<sup>21</sup> Lamb attended Christ Hospital from 1782 to 1789 and Coleridge attended from 1782 to 1791—both formally entering the school on the same day, 7 July 1782. Hunt attended from 1792 to 1800. Hunt reminds us that the proper name of the school is “Christ Hospital” (which I retain throughout this chapter), as opposed to the possessive “Christ’s Hospital” used by Lamb and Coleridge in their accounts of the school (*Autobiography* 72).

<sup>22</sup> Lamb and Hunt both recall how the younger students admired the Grecians and Deputy Grecians—these included the eldest boys at Christ Hospital who were generally expected to pursue professions in the church, the law, or proceed to Cambridge. Coleridge was a Grecian and Lamb was a Deputy Grecian. In contrast to the esteem the younger students reserved for the intellectual elite at the school, most students feared the King’s Boys—students studying mathematics in preparation for naval careers. Lamb adroitly juxtaposes the intellectual strength

of the Grecians (calling them “the Muftis of the school”) with the physical intimidation of the King’s Boys (referring to them as the “Janissaries”) (“Recollections 287-88).

<sup>23</sup> Lamb references his own Christ Hospital uniform in the elegy “Written on the Day of My Aunt’s Funeral”: “How did thine eye peruse him round and round, / And hardly know him in his yellow coats, / Red leathern belt, and gown of russet blue!” (12-14).

<sup>24</sup> Hunt echoes this connection between dress and the monastic presumptions of Christ Hospital boys: “Our dress was of the coarsest and quaintest kind, but was respected out of doors, and is so. It consisted of a blue drugget gown, or body, with ample skirts to it; a yellow vest underneath in winter-time; small-clothes of Russia duck; worsted yellow stocking; a leathern girdle; and a little black worsted cap, usually carried in the hand.... We used to flatter ourselves that it was taken from the monks” (*Autobiography* 54).

<sup>25</sup> Cowper’s poem actually stresses the advantages of a private education over a public education; thus, taking the opposite opinion from Lamb. However, the nostalgia over one’s *alma mater* from the lines I quote perfectly reflects Lamb’s enthusiasm for Christ Hospital. “Tirocinium: or, a Review of Schools” was published in 1784, when Lamb would have been a pupil at Christ Hospital, forming the very sentiments he reports on later in life.

<sup>26</sup> Hunt never denies Boyer’s violence, but he acknowledges that the Head Master’s severity was checked by his conscience and the infamous story of Boyer knocking out one of Hunt’s teeth has been taken completely out of context. Hunt writes: “When his severity went beyond the mark, I believe he was always sorry for it: sometimes I am sure he was. He once...knocked out one of my teeth with the back of a Homer, in a fit of impatience at my stammering. The tooth was a loose one, and I told him as much; but the blood rushed out as I spoke: he turned pale, and, on my proposing to go out and wash the mouth, he said, ‘Go child,’ in a tone of voice amounting to the paternal. Now ‘go, child,’ from Boyer was worth a dozen tender speeches from any one else...” (97-8).

<sup>27</sup> We should assume that the “moulding” Coleridge calls attention to was not an isolated educational incident under Boyer’s tutelage. Traces of similar habituations are evident in, for example, the criteria Boyer insisted upon with English compositions: “He showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor or image unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words” (*Biographia Literaria* 4). Such linguistic specificity never extended into Coleridge’s conversation—he was a notoriously long-winded conversationalist. For a discussion of Coleridge’s renowned conversational abilities, see Perry’s “The Talker.”

<sup>28</sup> See Courtney (Chapter 4) for a more general treatment of Lamb and Coleridge’s schooling and friendship at Christ Hospital in the 1780s.

<sup>29</sup> Eighteenth-century debates over the advantages of a private education as opposed to a public education are only tangentially related to my attention to the pedagogical function of habit within education. These debates play out in fiction, though, as a way to make sense of characters’ behaviors. For example, in *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen maintains that the difference between Edward Ferrars and his coxcomb brother, Robert, is that Edward was privately educated with the Pratts and Robert had a public education (250-51). Though how education acts as a marker for

behavior here is unclear—after all, it is within the seclusion of his private education at the Pratts that Edward’s secret engagement to Lucy Steele first started.

<sup>30</sup> On De Quincey’s twenty-first birthday in 1805, he compiled a twelve-item list called the ‘Constituents of Happiness,’ which includes resolutions such as “a capacity of thinking,” “health and vigour,” and “moral elevation and purity.” Line item “Number 11” vaguely notes “the education of a child” as one of his keys to happiness. Wordsworth agreed to make De Quincey responsible for young Kate Wordsworth’s education, and one can detect De Quincey’s enthusiasm in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth: “[she] is to be taught by nobody but *me*: this promise Mr. Wordsworth once made me; and therefore I shall think it an act of the highest perfidy, if anybody should attempt to insinuate any learning into Catherine—or to hint at primers—to the prejudice of my exclusive privilege” (qutd. in Lindop 171) [original emphasis].

<sup>31</sup> In 1824, De Quincey reviewed Hill’s *Plans for the Government and Liberal Instruction of Boys in Large Numbers; Drawn from Experience*. One cannot doubt that there would be passages of particular interest to De Quincey given his own educational upbringing, including Hill’s comments that “No habit is more effectual in preserving the recollection of what has been learnt, than those involuntary mental repetitions, which we so often make of passages from which we receive power. But no one ever fed his mind upon lists of phrases...” (248). This last point about making mental lists seems precisely the mode of De Quincey’s education under Hall’s tutelage. De Quincey’s review is lukewarm, and he peppers his critique of the educational model with footnotes that call attention to Hill’s indistinct educational structure: “Economy of time is a matter of importance with us [Hill et al.]: we look upon all restraint as an evil, and to young persons as a very serious evil: we are therefore constantly in search of means for ensuring the effective employment of every minute which is spent in the school-room, that the boys may have ample time for exercise in the open air. The middle state between work and play is extremely unfavourable to the habits of the pupil” (qutd. in Hogg 170). To this comment De Quincey amends a footnote calling attention to habit: “‘Habits!’ habits of what?” (Hogg 170).

<sup>32</sup> Rote-learning was an influential pedagogical technique in the eighteenth century, but it was not the only educational method. Stephen Gill notes the difference between Wordsworth’s Hawkshead grammar school and other schools: “As a ‘grammar’ school Hawkshead gave a good grounding in the Classics. Here, however, unlike in many other schools, a good grounding did not mean wearisome rote learning and exercises in verse composition in Latin and Greek” (27). See Thompson for more on Wordsworth’s early education.

<sup>33</sup> See Lindop’s biography of De Quincey for remarkable accounts of young Thomas De Quincey’s creative flare as a child. See, in particular, his letter to his sister where he takes on the tone of a gossipy old woman and signs the letter “Tabitha Quincey” (27).

<sup>34</sup> At the conclusion of *My Lady Ludlow*, Elizabeth Gaskell uses a variant of rote learning and memory as a ploy for accounting for the verisimilitude of the narration. The narrator produces from memory the action of the novel, and the concluding paragraph places rote learning techniques within educational exercises: “As any one may guess, it had taken Mrs. Dawson several Monday evenings to narrate all this history of the days of her youth. Miss Duncan thought it would be a good exercise for me, both in memory and composition, to write out on Tuesday mornings all that I had heard the night before; and thus it came to pass that I have the manuscript of ‘My Lady Ludlow’ now lying by me” (198).

<sup>35</sup> This was not De Quincey's first experience with rote-learning pedagogical techniques: "Thomas had been set to learn spelling by *memorizing* a dictionary, starting at the letter A—a task which he had flatly refused!" (Lindop 16).

<sup>36</sup> This statement is also found in the "Essay Supplemental" to the 1815 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*: "If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical Works, it is this—that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed: so has it been, so will it continue to be" [original emphasis].

<sup>37</sup> See Branch (Chapter 5) for a reading of Wordsworthian spontaneity as a variant of the free prayer model.

<sup>38</sup> The "Preface" remains a text scholars return to when introducing Romanticism to students because it so deliberately lays bare how interpretive habits form in the mind and how those mental habits carry over to impact the appreciation and interpretation of poetry. See Page for an examination of the "psychological orientations" she deems necessary to teach the "Preface" in the undergraduate classroom (75).

<sup>39</sup> Bagehot defines "cake of custom" as "all the actions of life are to be submitted to a single rule for a single object; that gradually created the hereditary drill which science teaches to be essential, and which the early instinct of men saw to be essential too" (27).

<sup>40</sup> See also Aiken's "How Character is Formed. A Dialogue" for a more conventional reading of habit and character formation that is roughly contemporary with Wordsworth's "Preface."

## CHAPTER TWO

### HABIT AND THE ROMANTIC PSYCHE

In this chapter, I move from examining habit's function in education to thinking about it in relation to the psyche. I argue that Samuel Taylor Coleridge presents an internalized model of habit, while Baillie and Wordsworth explore the external, social functions of spectatorship. Nineteenth-century medicine used Shakespearean allusion (especially Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy) to explain dangerous habit formation in the mind. Such imaginative diagnosis feeds into how I read Coleridge's psychosomatic response to habituation in an 1803 notebook entry as symptomatic of Hamletian dilemmas of abstraction, introspection, and crippling paralysis. I argue that Baillie and Wordsworth's respective theories of "sympathetic curiosity" and "virtual" tautology contrast Coleridge's strict internalized habit, and they each theorize how psychological habits define one's behavior in society. Baillie and Wordsworth reinvent familiar, habitual images transforming them into dramatic encounters and situations that spark renewed interest in their work. Connections between habit and creativity shift from Coleridge to Baillie and Wordsworth. For Coleridge, mapping Hamlet's characteristics onto himself fictionalizes his own sense of subjectivity, while Baillie and Wordsworth's literary output defines general notions of group subjectivity in the nineteenth century.

*Hamlet's* resonance in nineteenth-century American and British constructions of selfhood is evident in the critics who attempt to merge Hamlet's identity with their own. Ralph Waldo Emerson suggests that "it was not until the nineteenth century, whose speculative genius is a sort of living Hamlet, that the tragedy of Hamlet could find such wondering readers. Now, literature, philosophy, and thought, are Shakspearized. His mind is the horizon beyond which, at present, we do not see" (335).<sup>1</sup> Emerson's notion of the interpretive "speculative genius" of the ethereal nineteenth-century intellect is a disembodied alternate version of Hamlet. William Hazlitt echoes Emerson's admiration and cultural association with *Hamlet* by proclaiming "it is *we* who



are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth, which is above that of history” (232) [original emphasis]. Together, Emerson and Hazlitt associate nineteenth-century British and American collective cultural identity with Hamlet. Unlike Emerson and Hazlitt’s cultural associations with Hamlet, Coleridge links his own individual sense of subjectivity to Hamlet’s psychological habits when he famously declares, “Hamlet’s character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical...I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so” (qutd. in Bate 160-61).<sup>2</sup> Coleridge revels in his own passing resemblance to Hamlet, but it is worth remembering that even the smallest “smack of Hamlet” in Coleridge is intimately tied to the intellectual *habits* that render Hamlet such a provocative hallmark of nineteenth-century subjectivity.<sup>3</sup>

As Jonathan Bate reminds critics, “the presence of Hamlet in Romantic discourse usually indicates that the artist is examining his own self” (19). Nineteenth-century critics like Goethe, Schlegel, and Coleridge created the mold by which *Hamlet* would subsequently be understood to carry such autobiographical undertones.<sup>4</sup> In their turn, Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1775-76) and Schlegel’s *Lectures on Dramatic Arts* (trans. 1815) theorize Hamlet as a character bereaving the loss of his youthful idealism at the hands of a dishonest society and as a character utterly paralyzed by his own intellect. Coleridge builds on these two readings of *Hamlet* by noting that there exists in Hamlet an unhealthy imbalance of thought and action:

the effect of this overbalance of the imaginative power is beautifully illustrated in the everlasting broodings and superfluous activities of Hamlet’s mind, which, unseated from its healthy relation, is constantly occupied with the world within, and abstracted from the world without—giving substance to shadows, and throwing a mist over all commonplace actualities. (qutd. in Bate 135)

Hamlet’s excessive imaginative abstraction appeals to Coleridge. The “overbalance” of imagination and “everlasting broodings and superfluous [mental] activities,” with no corresponding action, mimic many of the dilemmas Coleridge faced with his own melancholic

disposition and his inclination for procrastination.<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot neatly summarizes this self-identification with Hamlet as the worst kind of temptation for critics: “Hamlet the character has had an especial temptation for that most dangerous type of critic: the critic with a mind which is naturally of the creative order... These minds often find in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization. Such a mind had Goethe, who made of Hamlet a Werther; and such had Coleridge, who made of Hamlet a Coleridge” (95).

Certainly, what lends broader medical and psychological interest to *Hamlet* is the fact that Hamlet’s mind is, as Coleridge politely puts it in the above quotation, “unseated from its healthy relation.” The burgeoning field of psychology in the nineteenth century regularly invoked Shakespearean allusion to conceptualize and diagnose mental afflictions. Benjamin Reiss has argued that invoking Shakespeare in medical and psychological diagnosis brought casual familiarity and prestige to a budding class of professional psychiatrists in America and Britain. Reiss provides an eclectic array of examples of aberrant mental behavior as diagnosed and theorized through *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear*. In particular, Hamlet becomes the character most invoked when exploring explanations and cures for insanity. Reiss gives the example of one 1828 “test” of insanity administered by Sir Henry Halford that relies on logic from *Hamlet* to gauge the sanity of a patient’s decision to alter his legal will:

When faced with a man ‘in a state of mental derangement’ who appears to be in a lucid interval but wants to revise his will in a way that is certain to bring litigation after his death, Halford concocted an application of Hamlet’s bedroom scene with his mother, in which the prince defends his apparently wild speech by saying:

Bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will reword,—which madness  
Would gambol from.

Remembering this scene, Halford asked his patient to reword his will. The patient, in responding to the doctor’s questions, got many of the figures and names wrong, or ‘gambolled’ from the matter, and so the new will was declared invalid. (quid. in Reiss 778)

The patient becomes an actor in a medical re-staging of *Hamlet* in what became known as the

“Halford test.” The more the patient resembles Hamlet, the more he reaffirms the initial diagnosis of insanity. Or, to give it a more Coleridgian perspective, the more the patient “smacks” of Hamletian habits, the more pathological his symptoms appear.

Thomas Trotter’s *An Essay, Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical on Drunkenness and its Effects on the Human Body* (1810) explains how bouts of drunkenness may begin benignly as bodily and behavioral customs, but they eventually transform into dangerous psychological habits. Trotter was a navy surgeon and he based much of his *Essay* on the behavior and consequences he witnessed in sailors. Trotter explains that “[t]he physical influence of custom, confirmed into habit, interwoven with the actions of our sentient system, react[s] on our mental part” (13). Custom embeds itself within the body and conditions the “sentient system” so that habit can lodge itself within the mind. Such “interweaving” of custom and habit is Trotter’s first step in locating habit in the mind as part of a larger psychosomatic system entirely reminiscent of the early eighteenth-century psychological theories Locke incorporated in his *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.<sup>6</sup>

The further Trotter pursues his own analysis of habit in the mind, the more he relies on Shakespearean allusion to help him articulate the consequences of habit as an unmanageable mental agent. Once Trotter locates habit within the mind, he notes its potential to continue to strengthen and to challenge its own metaphorical boundaries, and he uses the ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy to hypothesize what exists beyond habit in the mind: “The habit, carried to a certain length, is a gulph, *from whose borne no traveler returns*: where fame, fortune, hope, health, and life perish” (15) (original emphasis). Unfortunately, this allusion to Hamlet tells us relatively little about *how* habits energize in the mind or *how* to control them. Trotter relies on frustratingly indistinct imagery to define this activated and, apparently, volatile form of mental habit: habit, at a “certain” length (wherever that marker may be) is a “gulph”—itself a vacuous and dangerous-sounding classification. The allusion “*from whose borne no traveler returns*”

only delineates a consequence of habit in the mind, on par with Trotter's own "perishable" list of "fame, fortune, hope, health, and life." Shakespearean allusion confronts us with all we stand to lose because of habit's influence upon the mind, though it does little to tell us how to control habit.

While Trotter's use of *Hamlet* is relatively limited in its application, he incorporates lines from the play that showcase the imaginative abstraction that so excites early nineteenth-century critics like Coleridge:

To be, or not to be, that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—  
No more, and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to; 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep—  
To sleep, perchance to dream—ay, there's the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause;  
...  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveler returns, puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of? (3.1.55-81)

That Hamlet's "puzzled will" cannot pin down what, exactly, happens beyond death is evident in the fact that he does not gain much ground on the issue by soliloquizing. He repeats roughly the same image for three consecutive lines: "something after death" (77) is the same as "The undiscover'd country" (78), which is the same place that "from whose bourn / no traveler returns" (78-79). The difference between these three repeated images is that Hamlet moves from the abstract and the unknowable ("something after death" and "undiscover'd country") to the concrete consequences associated with this abstraction ("No traveler returns"). Trotter uses a similar rhetorical strategy in setting up his own definition of the moments when habits

strengthen: they are abstract “gulphs” which lead to a set of highly specific consequences. One cannot adequately describe this mysterious form of energized habit without falling victim to the dire consequences built into each articulation. Trotter may not be able to fully delineate exactly *why* habits become so threatening, *how* they operate on the mind, or *what* their limits are, but his inability to do so is reminiscent of (and has a specific precedent in) nothing less impressive than Hamlet’s imaginative dilemma about his own agency and the landscape of the afterlife.

Trotter, like Hamlet, fails spectacularly by intuitively admitting that possessing the answers to such imaginative speculation always leads back to the direst of consequences: the point of no return between life, death, and the unknown reaches of the imagination.

Trotter’s nineteenth-century readership would easily recognize his use of Hamlet since the ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy enjoyed a kind of pop culture status throughout the century and even to the present day. For Lamb, the soliloquy was “so handled and pawed about by declamatory boys and men...till it [has] become to me a perfectly dead member” (qutd. in Bate 113). Lamb’s point about the ubiquity of the soliloquy exposes why it was of such importance to medical communities: Romantic-era readers would not only recognize this quote, but given its popularity they should be able to place it back in context with the larger imaginative dilemma at stake at this particular moment in the soliloquy.

Trotter’s use of *Hamlet* to define the limits of habit in the imagination is what Bate has referred to as a recognizable Shakespearean shorthand (*Romantic Imagination* 33). Trotter pulls lines from one of the most celebrated of soliloquies which makes identification relatively easy, though Coleridge attempts to do much the same in more an indirect and subtle way when he defines habit as the “Desire of a Desire” in an 1803 notebook entry. The notebook entry is worth quoting in its entirety because of the sheer volume of questions that Coleridge struggles to pin down including the effects of habit as it relates to hypnotic cognitive experience, suicidal tendency, and existential rejuvenation:

Is not *Habit* the Desire of a Desire?—As Desire to Fruition, may not the faint, to the consciousness *erased*, Pencil-mark-*memorials* or relicts of Desire be to Desire itself in its full prominence?—How far is Habit congenerous with Instinct?— / — If this were so, Why does Habit give facility? In order to understand this, I must first have understood the being of Difficulty—? May not the Desirelet, a, so correspond to the Desire, A, that the latter being excited may revert wholly or in great part to its exciting cause, a, instead of sallying out of itself toward an external Object, B?—May not the latter case by coming into the Domain and under the laws of vision or imagination impress the comparing power, and thus as the comparatives pass over the soul, each transiently & slightly at least a new exciting power, often of other instruments or directions of motion, thus distract and waken the energy—introduce the predicaments of Time & full Consciousness.

Quaere?—Whether the marvelous velocity of Thought and Image in certain full Trances may not be explained from the same cause?—N.B.—to connect with this the state after Death, Death being taken as the removal of outward excitements of Desire—Must not the Soul then work eternally inwards, Godward, or Hell-ward—will it not be all Habit? And what the Law of its Increase?—

There is one thing wholly out of my Power. I cannot look forward even with the faintest pleasure of Hope, to the Death of any human Being, tho' it were, as it seems to be, the only condition of the greatest imaginable Happiness to me, and the emancipation of all my noblest faculties that must remain fettered during that Being's Life.—I dare not, for I can not: I cannot, for I dare not. The very effort to look onward to it with a steadfast wish would be a suicide, far beyond what the dagger or pistol could realize—absolutely suicide, coelicide, not mere viticide.—

But if I could secure you full Independence, if I could give too all my original Self healed & renovated from all infirm Habits; & if by all the forms in my power I could bind myself more effectively even in relation to Law, then the Form out of my power would effect—then, *then*, would you be the remover of my Loneliness, my perpetual Companion? (*Notebooks* 1: 1421) [original emphases]

What makes this notebook entry particularly difficult to parse is that it communicates (as does a dramatic soliloquy) the thoughts of the author/speaker in simulated privacy. There is little order or logical progression as Coleridge jumps from the seemingly limitless interiority of desire in one paragraph to the “suicide, coelicide, not mere viticide” of another paragraph. Yet, echoes of Hamlet’s ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy pepper much of the language used to convey the abstraction and paralysis that define this notebook entry. First, Coleridge becomes preoccupied with habit’s ability to embed itself deeper and deeper into his own psyche: “May not the Desirelet, a, so correspond to the Desire, A, that the latter being excited may revert wholly or in great part to its exciting cause, a, instead of sallying out of itself toward an external Object, B?— ...” He intuits causation and association between an original desire (Desirelet a) and a repetition

of that desire (Desire A). These desires repeat upon themselves in an internalized system absolutely incapable of externalization. The cycle of repetition between ‘Desirelet a’ and ‘Desire A’ strengthens the dependency that underwrites the subsequent mental habit that forms because of this repetition. If we consider this notebook entry as symptomatic of Hamletian desires of abstraction, we witness first hand the products and psychological conditions of how habits form and burrow in the abstracting mind.

In the notebook entry, questions cascade into more questions about habit’s relation to unconscious thought, suicide, and the landscape of the afterlife. Coleridge expresses his own hopeless paralysis through his inability to self-murder in the third paragraph. Death, for him, is “the only condition of the greatest imaginable Happiness...and the emancipation of all my noblest faculties.” But he does not act on this suicidal impulse or even linger too long on the thought because even expressing any desire after death would be a form of intellectual self-murder more devastating than “what the dagger or pistol could realize.” Coleridge’s habits produce the mental anxiety underwriting these thoughts, and his “I dare not, for I can not: I cannot for I dare not” expresses his paralysis in an alternate version of Hamlet’s celebrated ‘To be, or not to be.’”

The final paragraph of the notebook entry begins on a hopeful strain as Coleridge strives to turn habit from a paralyzing psychosomatic agent to the very cause of his liberation and “full Independence.” To read the “Desire of a Desire” entry as an examination of habit along the culturally inscribed lines of *Hamlet* is not an arbitrary critical gesture. Coleridge places reading the play among the most influential intellectual moments of his development as a philosopher: “*Hamlet* was the play, or rather Hamlet himself was the character, in the intuition and exposition of which I first made my turn for philosophical criticism” (quod. in Bate 311). Coleridge never devotes much attention to the ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy in his published criticism on Shakespeare, noting that it “has yet received only the first fruits of the admiration due to it”

(quod. in Bate 158). A reporter summarizes one of Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare that highlights how *Hamlet* makes us rethink our own psychological makeup: "He [Coleridge] thought it essential to the understanding of Hamlet's character, that we should reflect on the constitution of our own minds" (quod. in Bate 134). Coleridge's journal entry on habit does precisely this—he reflects on the constitution of how habit operates upon the mind as both participating in and extending Hamletian abstraction. And as his own Shakespearean criticism notes, Hamlet may sound different at different parts in the play, but the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy is a "speech of absolutely universal interest...and belongs to all mankind" (quod. in Bate 318).

Paul Cefalu argues that Hamlet's preoccupation with the customs and habits of others in the play defines his own understanding of habit as related to an Augustinian theory of habit as related to sinfulness. In *The Confessions*, Augustine struggles with his own early sinfulness, which he ultimately comes to understand in relation to habitual (*consuetude*) sinful behavior. For Augustine, habit perpetuates unconscious sins that find expression in physical behavior, and acts of salvation come by conquering one's sinful behavior. Cefalu reads this model of habit into multiple scenes with Hamlet, most importantly when Hamlet confronts the Queen's sinfulness of marrying his father's murderer. As Cefalu argues, "since Hamlet has internalized the logic of *consuetudo*, the force and specificity of the "original," unpardonable sin, the murder of his father, becomes submerged under a higher-order preoccupation with the newly objectified sinful habit that he ascribes to his mother and uncle" (155). Yet, Hamlet never pauses to question whether the principles of repetition are enough in play with the King and Queen so as to constitute habitual sinful behavior as the play progresses from act to act. Appropriating Augustine's model of habit gives Hamlet a lens by which to understand the behavior of the King and Queen—and also himself in the play.



It is important to recognize that Coleridge's notebook entry does not reflect the notions of habit in Shakespeare's play. Instead, habit in Coleridge's writing makes him resemble the version of Hamlet that so excited the nineteenth century imagination. Critics have primarily used this journal entry to explain the significance of two of Coleridge's most infamous habits: his opium consumption and his literary and conversational plagiarisms. Paul Younquist argues that the journal entry (particularly the first paragraph) is an extrapolation upon the bodily desires of opium habituation. He calls Coleridge's opium habit "a mode of somatic memory. It memorializes desire in behaviors that demonstrate desire's loss,...Habit represents a strange presence indeed, if it somatically remembers what is interminably lost" (94). Such a dynamic between opium, desire, and repetition is convincing—especially in light of the bodily pains of withdrawal symptoms Coleridge reports on in so many of his letters to friends.<sup>7</sup> Yet, Younquist's claim that somatic memory represents desire that is "interminably lost" overstates how desire functions as a component of Coleridge's system of habit. After all, "relicts of Desire" continue to exist in the mind (albeit unconsciously) just as they do in the body, suggesting more a psychosomatic model of opium habituation, as opposed to only a somatic model. The *Oxford English Dictionary* attributes derivations of "unconscious," "psycho-analytical" and "psychosomatic" to Coleridge, so it should come as little surprise to find Coleridge exploring the psychological imprint of habit on the mind *and* body.<sup>8</sup> Somatic memory plays a pivotal role in understanding Coleridge's conception of habit as Younquist suggests, though it does more to *remind* Coleridge of the desires that continue to pulsate in the mind rather than standing in their place.

Like Younquist, Tilar Mazzeo examines how Coleridge's conception of habit exonerates him from any suspicion of nefarious intent with his notorious plagiarisms. She explains, "For Coleridge, habit is not about the desire for an object, and it is not a desire for possession; instead, habit emerges as a desire to enjoy and to occupy (or perhaps figuratively to *inhabit*) the place of

origin” (25) [original emphasis]. Mazzeo argues that Coleridge’s theory of habit is a means to return to the essence of an original idea at stake in a set of writings. If the “Desire of a Desire” is how Coleridge’s body remembers the desires of opium habituation in Younquist, then it is how his body of work remembers the ideas that came before him in Mazzeo.

Together, Younquist and Mazzeo’s interpretations illustrate that Coleridgian habit is cyclic, always returning and reverting to an earlier form.<sup>9</sup> What makes their criticism particularly evocative is how each parlays abstract conceptions of “Desire” in the journal entry into larger questions and conceptualizations of the varied habits that make Coleridge such a complicated figure. Yet, the repetition of questions without apparent answers, the suicidal speculations, and the despair about the metaphysical aspects of habit equally contribute to Coleridge’s theory of habit. We get a fuller understanding of Coleridge’s conceptualization of habit if we consider the journal entry as an extension of his admiration of the character and habits of Shakespeare’s Hamlet.

The notebook entry uses habit to recontextualize Coleridge’s notion of his own Hamletian subjectivity. The burrowing interiority of habit and the restless desperation it occasions tell us more about Coleridge than about the psychological conditions of habit. Nevertheless, such imaginative repositioning of his own subjectivity constitutes a link between habit, creativity, and private subjectivity. Baillie and Wordsworth extend these connections to more public settings.

## II

In the 1803 notebook entry, Coleridge dramatizes Hamletian dilemmas of abstraction and paralysis as he acts out the anxieties of habit burrowed deep within the psyche. Baillie’s roughly concurrent “Introductory Discourse” (1798) acknowledges the power of habit on the individual and makes it the pivot around which her theory of dramatic and social spectatorship revolves.<sup>10</sup> Baillie predicates her theory of spectatorship on the assumption that there is “no employment

which the human mind will with so much avidity pursue, as the discovery of concealed passion” (73). In many respects, Coleridge privately writing in his notebook attempting to “conceal” his passions about the tortured psychosomatic effects of habit is a perfect test subject for Baillie’s spectator: the image of Coleridge furiously scribbling with his quill, twisting his face in frustration and fear, or any other physical signal suggestive of psychological unrest feeds a spectator’s desire to know more about Coleridge’s concealed mental state.

In the “Introductory Discourse,” Baillie notes that the social spectatorship that makes us want to know more about an individual’s state of mind is a behavior spectators rehearse on a daily basis.<sup>11</sup> Even when engaged in the most mundane of daily tasks, individuals become objects of curiosity to each other when there is the slightest suggestion of a “concealed passion” lingering under the surface. An act as insignificant as a quiver of the lip or the twitch of an eye fires curiosity about the psychological state that produced such somatic reaction.<sup>12</sup> The repetition of these acts of social spectatorship entrenches this mode of inquiry within the unconscious mind, and viewing others (as well as being viewed) becomes a socially-sanctioned, *habitual* form of communal spectatorship:

From that strong sympathy which most creatures, but the human above all, feel for others of their kind, nothing has become so much an object of man’s curiosity as man himself. We are all conscious of this within ourselves, and so constantly do we meet with it in others, that like every circumstance of continually repeated occurrence, it thereby escapes observation. Every person, who is not deficient in intellect, is more or less occupied in tracing, amongst the individuals he converses with, the varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the characters of men; and receives great pleasure from every stroke of nature that point out to him those varieties... From this constant employment of their minds, most people, I believe, without being conscious of it, have stored up in idea the greater part of those strong marked varieties of human character, which may be said to divide it into classes; and in one of those classes they involuntarily place every new person they become acquainted with. (67-68)

Any number of physical cues can potentially shed light on another’s psychological state, and the interpretive desire to “trace...the varieties of understanding and temper which constitute the characters of men” constitutes the pleasure of social spectatorship. The repetition of such acts of

spectatorship, “like every circumstance of continually repeated occurrence,” makes it an unconscious, automatic, *habitual* psychological characteristic of a spectator. These interpretive habits are so deeply embedded, one is only “conscious of this within ourselves” when Baillie reminds us of our inquisitive desires. The “Introductory Discourse” lays bare how repetition, inquisitive desire, and the unconscious mind constitute the habitual nature of everyday social spectatorship. Moreover, the interpretation built into such habitual spectatorship becomes just as unconscious and involuntary as the very act of viewing. The mind (“without being conscious of it”) collects and stores a set of stock characteristics that help us to “divide” information and people according to pre-established categories. These reductions (like the act of viewing) become automatic mental judgments as we seek out and interpret the behavior of others in society. In sum, when habit overrides the mind’s conscious deliberation, it controls how the mind seeks out, collects, processes, interprets, and retains information.

In the above quotation, a combination of “strong sympathy” and curiosity constitutes the psychological impulse that makes viewing others such a desirable activity.<sup>13</sup> Baillie calls this drive sympathetic curiosity and refers to it throughout the “Introductory Discourse” as a “master propensity” requiring “exercise” to train it into an accurate interpretive tool. The training and practice involved in honing sympathetic curiosity to guide our social spectatorship leads to the very habits of spectatorship that are so important to the “Introductory Discourse.” Sympathetic curiosity is an individual habit in the mind—one that relates back to the educational aspects of habit from Chapter 1:

It is our best and most powerful instructor. From it we are taught the proprieties and decencies of ordinary life, and are prepared for distressing and difficult situations. In examining others we know ourselves...It teaches us, also, to respect ourselves, and our kind; for it is a poor mind, indeed, that from this employment of its faculties, learns not to dwell upon the noble view of human nature rather than the mean. (74)

While everyday repeated encounters engrain habits of spectatorship in the mind, such viewing behavior actually helps us to prepare for “distressing and difficult situations.”<sup>14</sup> Such

legitimizing takes the sting out of any meddling one may associate with trying to ferret out information about another's mental state based on her physiological appearance. Baillie implies that our own sense of subjectivity is intricately linked not to isolated acts of spectatorship, but to the deeply-embedded, rehearsed habits of sympathetic curiosity that we enact without even knowing it.

Because she was convinced that sympathetic curiosity is an engrained psychological habit, Baillie designed plays that would kindle the desires that spark these pre-established viewing habits. The dramaturgical purpose of each play was to evoke the psychological desires of her audience: "The chief object [of a play] should be to delineate the progress of the higher passions in the human breast, each play exhibiting a particular passion...It exhibits to us the mind of man in *that state* when we are most curious to look into it, and is equally interesting to all" (93-94) [emphasis added]. Plays such as *Count Basil* (love) and *De Monfort* (jealousy) highlight the importance and development of individual passions to her larger dramaturgical design.<sup>15</sup> Tracing and "delineating" a correlation between a character's psychological unrest (what she refers to euphemistically as "that state") and the suggestive physiological expressions of the afflicted motivates our interest in others in everyday life and on the stage.

The success or failure of Baillie's vision for dramatic representation hinges on the strength of habits the social spectator brings to one of her plays. For example, *De Monfort* is a play about the complicated relationship between De Monfort and his beloved sister, Jane De Monfort. Jane is devoted to her brother while she is courted by Rezenvelt—a nobleman who, prior to the play's opening act, won a duel against De Monfort. The play opens at an inn where De Monfort has secretly run away in shame from his lost duel. His servants detect the change in his disposition and note how "his eyes are hollow, and his cheeks are pale" (1.1.87). Such physiological cues (if Baillie's theory of the habits of social spectatorship is correct) should make the audience want to know more about the psychological distress causing the change in his

appearance. Jane De Monfort eventually finds her brother, but throughout the course of the play De Monfort refuses gestures of proffered friendship and reconciliation by Rezenvelt as his jealousy over his sister's suitor increases. To make matters worse, De Montfort thinks Rezenfelt has supplanted him in his sister's affections, which only increases his psychological anxiety. When Jane asks De Monfort about his raving, he replies "No more, my sister, urge me not again: / My secret troubles cannot be reveal'd" (2.2.1-2). Of course, his "secret troubles" *are* revealed to the audience in the physiological cues enacted by the actor and the description of his appearance by other characters in the play.

By the final Act, De Monfort's jealousy reaches such a pitch that he ambushes and kills Rezenvelt on a dark road leading to a monastery. De Monfort's physical expression of his mental suffering is noted by Thomas, the first monk to see the murderous De Monfort alongside Rezenvelt's bloody corpse:

As, striving with the blast, I onward came,  
Turning my feeble lantern from the wind,  
Its light upon a dreadful visage gleam'd  
Which paus'd, and look'd upon me as it pass'd.  
But such a look, such wildness of despair,  
Such horror-strain'd features, never yet  
Did earthly visage show. I shrunk and shudder'd.  
If a damn'd spirit may to earth return,  
I've seen it. (4.2.81-9)

Thomas's response to De Monfort's physiological expression is enough to bait anybody's curiosity. In fact, Baillie leaves it up to the audience's imagination to determine what De Monfort actually looked like after committing murder. Thomas describes him in the most general of terms through the repetition of "such" to accentuate his description of De Monfort's "look," his "wildness of despair," and his "horror-stain'd features."

Seeing first-hand the expression on a murderer's face is far from a common situation in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, but the habits of spectatorship that individuals practice every day prepare them for the kind of viewership required in any of Baillie's plays. Ordinary,

everyday situations may engrain habits in the mind, but, as Baillie reminds us both in the “Introductory Discourse” and in plays such as *De Monfort* (by far her most popular and longest running play), “extraordinary” situations have the potential to redefine and shift habits of sympathetic curiosity. In the “Introductory Discourse,” the default “extraordinary” situation is a public execution. The habits that have been trained in the mind from ordinary situations help us make sense of the physical cues illustrative of a convict’s heightened psychological state. When spectators encounter an “extraordinary situation,” it ultimately triggers habits of sympathetic curiosity: “To see a human being bearing himself up under such circumstances, or struggling with the terrible apprehensions which such a situation impresses, must be the powerful incentive, which makes us press forward to behold what we shrink from, and wait with trembling expectation for what we dread” (69).<sup>16</sup> It is not the final punishment that awaits the convict that so enraptures the spectator, but rather physical signs that indicate his psychological state: “even the smallest indications of an unquiet mind, the restless eye, the muttering lip, the half-checked exclamation, and the hasty start, will set our attention . . . anxiously on the watch” (73).

Extraordinary situations produce extraordinary psychological responses, both for the convict on the gallows and among those viewing the scene. The introduction of novelty to a scene rendered familiar by habit sparks renewed interest and investment by spectators. When repeated with enough frequency, what excites us one day as an “extraordinary situation” will inevitably devolve into an “ordinary situation” once we become thoroughly habituated to the scene. And while habit facilitates the transition from social to dramatic spectatorship, it also threatens to destabilize the entire dramatic system. After all, repeatedly seeing extraordinary situations (be they on the streets or on the stage) will produce a different kind of unconsciousness that Baillie does not account for. The desensitization that comes about with repetition jeopardizes the interest audiences may bring with them to the theater. The “powerful incentive”

that draws people to situations like a public execution becomes an important component in the recalibrating of these very same habits in the mind.

Such desensitization makes individuals work harder to find extraordinary situations, and Baillie even suggests the astonishing lengths people will go to search out new situations. She states that “if invisible, would we not follow him into his lonely haunts, into his closet, into the midnight silence of his chamber?” (73). In addition, she thinks spectators would like to “lift up the roof of [a criminal’s] dungeon, like the *Diabie boiteaux*, and look upon a criminal the night before he suffers” to get a better view of his psychological suffering (70). While Baillie might suggest we want to take the top off the roof to see the criminal, her underlying purpose is ultimately the psychological examination that allows us to peer into the minds of the suffering individual.

But if we turn this inclination to examine psychological conditions back on the spectator (as opposed to the criminal in his dungeon), then Baillie’s maternal uncle, noted anatomist Dr. John Hunter, helps explain how individual habit in the psyche operates when faced with ordinary and extraordinary situations.<sup>17</sup> Hunter defines habit by invoking familiar concepts of repetition and time, though he adds to this the violence and substitutive power of habit within the psyche. He correlates the strength of impressions that beget habits and the habit, itself. In a series of notes from an unidentified medical student attending one of Hunter’s lectures, we see the danger and dire terms Hunter uses to discuss habit:

21 There is also another kind of action which we call habit. Actions frequently repeated in any part induce a custom of acting in a given manner in any certain part and from this accustoming a part to any such action habit arises.

Habit is a kind of force or violence done or superadded to the first principle. Parts from habit acquire a power of acting in a more forcible or in a different manner from that which primarily took place in them.

This habit may be called a species of memory as memory consists in a repetition of ideas once taking place in the mind//22 so habit consists in a frequent repetition of action in any moving part of the body.



Habit will even become a cause of action in the will. It will make these actions of it voluntary which were involuntary and also the reverse. The strength of habit will be much or little in proportion to the violence of the impression which gave rise to it. Habit is always gaining on us and little force is necessary to keep it up. (“Notes” MS 40A)<sup>18</sup>

Hunter offers a sense of what happens when one habit overwrites another in the mind. To do so, he invokes a relatively desperate situation—constructing habit in relation to a psychological “force or violence” that matches the “violence” of the original impression. While Hunter does not invoke *Hamlet* to explain habit in the mind, he does dramatize its ability to co-opt individual agency: “Habit is always gaining on us” simulates a desperate attempt to fend off the violence of its persistent mental conditioning.

Despite the potentially dangerous force of habit, Hunter nevertheless looks to habit for an explanation of unconscious mental cognition. The mental processes Baillie’s spectator automatically enacts (either on the stage or in the street) rely upon habit:

As from habit we gain a power of judging and distinguishing what is advantageous or useful from what is inconvenient or pernicious. When an Idea respecting an external object is executed in the mind that Idea is followed by an Inclination to possess or obtain that object, we should be irresistibly inclined to gratify that inclination when arising did not our power of judging of the consequences that might arise from gratifying the inclination in question (acquired as// 18 before said, from habit repeated. Observation) determine us to the contrary this weighing an inclination in the mind we call reason. (152)

Undoubtedly, this is how such viewing habits in Baillie become educational. Within Hunter’s construction, habit and reason go hand in hand. The “judging and distinguishing” is exactly what is needed to be better social citizens in Baillie’s construction.<sup>19</sup>

Jeffrey Cox notes that Baillie’s plays “embody the kind of study of the psychology of passion that Wordsworth attempted in the *Borderers* and Coleridge in *Remorse*” (51).<sup>20</sup> While the “psychology of passion” is central to recognizing Baillie’s contribution to early nineteenth-century drama, one should not overlook the psychology of spectatorship that makes this possible. For Baillie, the interplay between the psyche acting habitually and habit operating upon the mind

determines the success or failure of a play. There is a clear corollary between an extraordinary social situation and that of dramatic adaptation of that scene on stage. What invests the extraordinary situation with such appeal is the originality and novelty of the situation as compared to an ordinary situation. A higher premium is placed upon dramatic invention when these are the kinds of scenes that appeal the most to audience members. In many respects, a dramatist's dramatic invention constantly works against the effects of habit. The extraordinary situation shocked the viewer out of the unconsciousness of his habit, but through the psyche acting habitually, the novelty of the extraordinary situation reverts back into a commonplace ordinary situation through repeated exposure. But the problem is that habit may render all the important things one should be learning unconscious. Because one has to deal with the effects of habit, Baillie must continually reinvent habits through her dramatic output, forming an important connection between habit and creativity.

### III

Baillie's sympathetic curiosity is a psychological habit driving our interest in the mental states of others. It acts as the backbone of her dramatic theory, though it certainly resonates with other forms of spectatorship, particularly the kind described by the narrator of Wordsworth's "The Thorn." The poem narrates the history of Martha Ray, who makes a regular pilgrimage up a mountain ridge to "A beauteous heap, a hill of moss, / Just half a foot in height" (36-37). The narrator expounds on this setting and describes the mound "like an infant's grave in size / As like as like can be," with the assumption throughout the poem that she visits the grave of her lost child (52-53). Without question, the emotional tenor of the poem plays off notions of sympathetic curiosity, as we imagine the renewed grief Martha Ray must feel with every ascent up the mountain and wonder about the circumstances of the child's death.<sup>21</sup> In the "Advertisement" to the 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth notes that the poem is not spoken in the voice of a poet but in "the character of a loquacious narrator." "The Thorn" is

a dramatic monologue, and Wordsworth's theory of repetition, desire, and tautology that emerges from his extended commentary on the poem informs how we understand the psychology of habit alongside Baillie's dramatic theory and Coleridge's prose soliloquizing.

Wordsworth includes a "Note" alongside "The Thorn" to explain how the psychological desires of the speaker/spectator reflect those of the audience. He provides a fuller description of his "loquacious narrator" as a bored, retired sea captain prone to superstitious thoughts. The emotional tenor of the poem comes from the narrator's ability to "produce impressive effects out of simple elements," suggesting that the narrator's superstitious inclinations replicate Wordsworth's ideal poetic creativity on similarly "low" subjects like common life as introduced in the "Preface" (400). This notion of replication and repetition is important to foreground because of the way in which Wordsworth makes a case for repetition in his poetry in the "Note":

There is a numerous class of readers who imagine that the same words cannot be repeated without tautology: this is a great error: virtual tautology is much oftener produced by using different words when the meaning is exactly the same. Words, a Poet's words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling and not measured by the space which they occupy on paper... During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the Speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character. There are also various other reasons why repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind. Among the chief of these reasons is the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves parts of the passion. And further, from a spirit of fondness, exultation, and gratitude, the mind luxuriates in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate the feelings. (38) [original emphasis].

Wordsworth empties tautology of its perceived excessiveness by suggesting that the repetition of images (i.e. "virtual" tautology) is not only a necessary part of the poet's craft, but longing after such repetition constitutes a powerful psychological desire in the reader's mind. Wordsworth reinvests repetition with a sense of desperation for the reader. The longing after repetition in the mind is simultaneously a pleasurable and tortuous event—unsatisfied cravings, desperate clinging after familiarity, and the transport accompanying the gratification and "luxuriation" of these desires are both the pleasures and pains of repetition. As David Bromwich notes, "Habit in

Wordsworth must not be conceived of as an imposition from without. Nor is it altogether chosen by an act of conscious will. It is simply the course by which repeatedly through pointing or selecting we create ourselves from the materials of repeated sensations” (“Solidarity” 11). This emphasis on creation and habit in Wordsworth also includes his appreciation of “virtual” tautology.

In “The Thorn,” Wordsworth incorporates somatic images of appetite and clutching anxiety to psychological states of desire—reminiscent of how Coleridge describes the psychosomatic anxieties of habit in his 1803 notebook entry. But the difference between Wordsworth’s notion of psychological desire and Coleridge’s is that Wordsworth’s finds relief in linguistic flexibility that can replicate the same image or passion using different language (what he calls “virtual” tautology). Coleridge has a closed system of habit formation, one in which habit cycles between two desires (‘Desirelet a’ and ‘Desire A’). Wordsworth allows for repetition and familiarity to exist in linguistic difference, though the psychological “clinging and cleaving” is much the same for them both.

Whereas Coleridge’s anxieties about habit are symptomatic of Hamletian dilemmas of abstraction and paralysis, Wordsworth embodies his own theory of tautological habits in the image of Dorothy Wordsworth at the conclusion of “Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey.” The poem begins with the poet’s return to the banks of the Wye and a repetition of how long he has been absent: “Five years have passed; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters!” (1-2). The prevailing anxiety in the poem centers on his inability to reproduce memories and sensations in his own mind. By the end of the poem, he is able to see his former self in the image of his sister:

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasure in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,

My dear, dear Sister! (119-24)

Dorothy provides a solution to Wordsworth's inability to "paint / What then I was" (77-78), but she also embodies the kind of tautological difference so important to Wordsworth's capacity to act on the psychological desires outlined in the "Note" to "The Thorn." As he outlines how he wants Dorothy to remember him, we can not only consider it as a way that he will be memorialized in her memory, it is how he *already* memorializes himself in his own memory:

...when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should by thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! (142-49)

Wordsworth wants Dorothy's mind to behave like a "mansion"—a psychological inhabitation for his remembrance.<sup>22</sup> Dorothy becomes a tautological reproduction of Wordsworth akin to what he describes in the "Note" to "The Thorn." But Wordsworth reorients the familiarity and pleasure associated with repetition. For Dorothy, when she feels the opposite of pleasure—"solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief"—his place in her mind will assuage these feelings.

Wordsworth's account of the general pleasures of repetition and familiarity, coupled with his desire to superimpose his own sense of subjectivity onto his sister bridges a gap between Baillie's theory of the universal psychological habits that define spectators and the Hamletian echoes of Coleridge's own sense of subjectivity. Baillie and Wordsworth's literary production and Coleridge's re-production of Hamlet's 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy forge links between the psychology of habit and creativity.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Bate comments on Rev. Boyer's insistence that Christ Hospital pupils memorize passages from Shakespeare and Milton, and as a result, "the language of Shakespeare was ingrained upon Coleridge's memory at school; it inevitably emerged in his poetry" (*Romantic Imagination* 43).

As I discuss in the first section of this chapter, one also hear Hamletian tones in his private notebook.

<sup>2</sup> Biographer William Cotkin argues that, as with Coleridge, during William James's depressive years he "came to construct and interpret his life along culturally inscribed lines of Hamlet" as a result of his non-participation in the Civil War and turning away from art as a vocation (41).

<sup>3</sup> Coleridge notes that only Hamlet could deliver the 'To be, or not to be' soliloquy and insists that the speech is in "too habitual a communion with the heart" to be fit for a character like Iago (qutd. in Bate 318).

<sup>4</sup> Goethe actually performs as Hamlet in a staging of the play and reaffirms trends of personal association with Hamlet: "I was penetrating quite into the spirit of the character, while I endeavoured as it were to take upon myself the load of deep melancholy under which my prototype was labouring... Thus learning, thus practicing, I doubted not but I should by and by become one person with my hero" (qutd. in Bate 303). See also Hunt (Chapter 5) for readings of *Hamlet* in the Romantic period among first and second generation Romantics. See also Bate's *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination* for the ways in which "the rise of Romanticism and the growth of Shakespeare idolatry are parallel phenomena" (6).

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 3 for how Lord Egmont laments what De Quincey calls Coleridge's "habit of procrastination."

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1 (pages 22-26) for a discussion of Locke's similar use of habit in education

<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3 for more on how withdrawal pains impact Coleridge's conception of habit.

<sup>8</sup> The *OED* uses an entry in Coleridge's notebook in 1805 as the first introduction of "psycho-analytical": "It requires a strong imagination as well as an accurate psycho-analytical understanding in order to be able to conceive the *possibility*, & to picture out the reality, of the *passion* at those Times for Jupiter, Apollo, &c/& the nature of the *Faith*" (Def. 1) [original emphases]. The *OED* quotes "Psychosomatic" from 1830: "Hope and Fear have slipt out their collars, and no longer run in couples from the Kennel of my Psycho-somatic *Ology*" (Def. 1) [original emphasis]. The *OED* quotes "Unconscious" from *Christabel* (1800): "Still picturing that look askance With forced unconscious sympathy Full before her father's view" (Def. A3).

<sup>9</sup> Though, this is inconsistent with how Coleridge theorizes habit in relation to a "Maelstrom." See Chapter 3.

<sup>10</sup> Baillie incorporates multiple references from Act I of *Hamlet* to explain the high stakes of her literary experimentation in the "Introductory Discourse" to *A Series of Plays*. In addition to direct reference to *Hamlet*, Baillie's final footnote in the "Introductory Discourse" foregrounds Shakespeare's contribution to the development of tragedy as a dramatic genre in relation to her own emphasis on feeling and passion: "Shakspeare [*sic*], more than any of our poets, gives peculiar and appropriate distinction to the characters of his tragedies... He never wears out our capacity to feel, by eternally pressing upon it. His tragedies are agreeably chequered with variety of scenes, enriched with good sense, nature, and vivacity, which relieve our minds from the fatigue of continued distress" (113).

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Wordsworth is quick to detect shared concerns between Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" and Wordsworth's "Preface." See "Introduction." Yet, an important difference between the two is how both use habit to ground their respective points. Wordsworth's "Preface" advocates for the development of *new* habits necessary to understand and enjoy his poetics, while Baillie's theory of dramatic spectatorship is based on pre-established habit.

<sup>12</sup> Baillie admits that "the dress and manners of men" are convenient substitutes for difficult to interpret physiological cues. But it is because sympathetic curiosity is "so strongly implanted within us, the attention we pay to the dress and manners of men would dwindle into an [insipid] employment" (69). While sympathetic curiosity strives to trace the psychological habits of others, it is also sparked by the sartorial habits of others in ordinary situations. See also Henderson for more on dress and Baillie.

<sup>13</sup> See Benedict for a cultural history of curiosity as a mode of enquiry.

<sup>14</sup> Baillie is even more direct about the pedagogic importance of the theater when she states: "the theatre is a school in which much good or evil may be learned" (104).

<sup>15</sup> The "Plays on the Passions" went through three editions which all included prefatory introductions. The first edition appeared anonymously in 1798 and included the most famous of the prefaces, the "Introductory Discourse." In addition to *Count Basil*, *The Tryal*, and *De Monfort*, the second edition was published in 1802 and included: *The Election* (hatred), *Ethwald* (ambition), and *The Second Marriage* (ambition). The final edition appeared in 1812 and featured *Orra* (fear), *The Siege* (fear), *The Alienated Manor* (fear), and *The Beacon* (hope). Her dramaturgical design echoes Godwin's in his "Preface" to *Fleetwood*: "The thing in which my imagination reveled the most freely, was the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses, which led the personages I had to describe primarily to adopt the particular way of proceeding in which they afterwards embarked" (xi).

<sup>16</sup> See Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* for contemporary analysis of the suspect pleasures of viewing bodies in pain. She uses Wordsworth to show how this problem existed in the nineteenth century: "The argument that modern life consists of a diet of horrors by which we are corrupted and to which we gradually become habituated is a founding idea of the critique of modernity—the critique being almost as old as modernity itself. . . In 1800, Wordsworth, in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, denounced the corruption of sensibility produced by 'the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies'" (106-07). See also Sontag's "Regarding the Torture of Others."

<sup>17</sup> Excited critical attention has explored the connections between spectatorship in Baillie's "Introductory Discourse" alongside the medical and anatomical spectatorship of her brother, Dr. Matthew Baillie. Frederick Burwick notes that "Joanna Baillie enters into the very same province of aberrational psychology that Matthew Baillie had begun to explore in his 1794 lectures on the nervous system. She too, seeks to ground her analysis of behavior on empirical observation, and to identify the symptoms which foreshadow an impending emotional crisis" (51). See also McMillian for connections between Baillie and her famous medical brother.

Matthew Baillie was a premier medical figure and was the physician *extrordinare* to George III and maintained a close relationship with his sister throughout his lifetime.

<sup>18</sup> I would like to thank Richard Sha for drawing my attention to these “Notes from an unidentified medical student” at the Wellcome library.

<sup>19</sup> Lucy Aikin states that the actual authorship of the “Introductory Discourse” was attributed to John Hunter’s wife. Such speculation occurs because of the dedication in 1802 to Matthew Baillie: “for the unwearied zeal and brotherly partiality which have supported me in the course of this work” (quod in Burwick 49). Though, such a warm reference to “brotherly partiality” would seem to suggest that one of Matthew Baillie’s sisters were the authoress.

<sup>20</sup> See also Richardson: “Her interest in sympathetic projection and its relation to self-knowledge (and to moral life generally) links Baillie’s project with the ‘mental theatre’ of the canonical Romantic poets” (133-34).

<sup>21</sup> When the narrator eventually does address Martha Ray as she sits at the side of the grave, he notes “I did not speak—I saw her face, / Her face it was enough for me” (199-200).

<sup>22</sup> In *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes equates the brain to an attic that collects furniture: “Depend upon it there comes a time when for every addition of knowledge you forget something that you knew before. It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones” (13).



## CHAPTER THREE

### DE QUINCEY, COLERIDGE, AND THE LITERARY MODEL OF HABIT

In this chapter, I move from examining habit's relation to psychology to thinking about habituation as a product of repeated opium consumption in discourses by De Quincey and Coleridge. I argue that De Quincey presents his opium use in the *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* as an entirely manageable habit. From the 1820s to the 1850s, De Quincey creates caricatures, fictional dialogue, and literary allusion to figures who struggle with habit to characterize what he considers to be Coleridge's illicit opium use. I argue that by framing Coleridge's opium consumption in relation to illegitimate habituation, De Quincey becomes the more prominent, 'authentic' opium-eater of the two. De Quincey's creativity that underwrites images of the irresponsible habituate influences the emergence of the 'addict' as a literary type at the end of the nineteenth century.

Throughout De Quincey's *Confessions*, he invokes standard images of habituation that have run through many of the models of habits discussed in previous chapters, though he is quick to frame his relationship to habit as one of complete control:

If opium-eating be a sensual pleasure, and if I am bound to confess that I have indulged in it to an excess, not yet *recorded* of any other man, it is no less true, that I have struggled against this fascinating enthrallment with a religious zeal, and have, at length, accomplished what I never yet heard attributed to any other man—have untwisted, almost to its final links, the accursed chain which fettered me. Such a self-conquest may reasonably be set off in counterbalance to any kind of degree of self-indulgence. Not to insist, that in my case, the self-conquest was unquestionable, the self-indulgence open to doubts of casuistry, according as that name shall be extended to acts aiming at the bare relief of pain, or shall be restricted to such as aim at the excitement of positive pleasure. (1822: 4-5)  
[original emphasis]<sup>1</sup>

De Quincey's "confession" in the above quotation is remarkable in that he confesses to astoundingly little. Allowing that the origins of his "self-conquest" and "self-indulgent" opium consumption may appear suspicious, De Quincey nevertheless presents his opium-eating as perfectly in balance with itself: the "sensuality," "fascinating enthrallment," and "positive

pleasure” of opium are offset by the “religious zeal” and the heroism of “untwist[ing], almost to its final links, the accursed chain” of habituation. De Quincey identifies himself as an opium-eater capable of managing habit, and the absence of rival opium-eaters with subsequent “records” of their own certainly makes his the loudest voice about opium consumption in the opening decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Victorian and *fin de siècle* temperance movements will look back and blame De Quincey for championing opium use for the general public, but it is worth remembering that he actually frames his sundry opium experiences in terms of a functional, balanced, and manageable habit that he “confesses” to in name only.<sup>3</sup>

In a footnote elaborating upon his use of the phrase “not yet *recorded*,” De Quincey makes dubious reference to another, more famous opium-eater. He chides, “‘Not yet *recorded*,’ I say: for there is one celebrated man of the present day, who, if all be true which is reported of him, has greatly exceeded me in quantity” (4n) [original emphasis].<sup>4</sup> All major textual editors of De Quincey’s 1822 text agree that nineteenth-century readers would have easily recognized this “celebrated man of the present day” as a thinly-veiled reference to Samuel Taylor Coleridge—whose life experiences Charles Lloyd borrowed heavily from in his epistolary novel, *Edmund Oliver*, and whose lounging melancholic indolence Wordsworth made famous when he described the “noticeable Man with large grey eyes, / And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly / As if a blooming face it ought to be” in “Stanzas Written in my Pocket-Copy of Thomson’s ‘Castle of Indolence’” (39-41).<sup>5</sup> The rumors and so-called “reports” of Coleridge’s opium-eating from the footnote are far more significant than appear at first blush: they are deliberate, artful, *literary* reproductions of Coleridge that dramatize his binge opium consumption and subsequent habituation.<sup>6</sup> It is easy to mistake De Quincey’s footnote as little more than a casual swipe at Coleridge (his sometime friend and sometime rival dating back to 1803), but when we take into account how it evokes multiple imagined, fictitious reconstructions of Coleridge, we get a

glimpse of how effectively literary representation of opium consumption underwrites lasting perceptions of abject habituation in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter, I argue that De Quincey spins literary “reports” of Coleridgean habit into a posthumous “record” of Coleridge’s illicit opium consumption and habituation. In biographical essays from the 1830s and 40s, and in the enlarged 1856 *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, De Quincey manufactures the missing “record” of Coleridge’s opium habitation through suggestive allusion to literary figures who themselves struggle with and/or represent cultural anxieties about habituation. In De Quincey’s hands, Coleridge (and his habits) become alternate versions of Marley’s Ghost from *A Christmas Carol*, of Caliban “fretting his very heart-strings against the rivets of his chain,” and of a squabbling “Transcendental Philosopher” engaged in farcical debate with hired servants at a druggist’s shop (1856: 20). Invoking texts from Shakespeare to Dickens allows De Quincey to concoct situations and scenarios suggestive of Coleridge’s dangerous mismanagement of his opium habits—ones that stand in direct contrast to the more balanced and respectable habituation De Quincey works so hard to convince readers of in the opening quotation of this chapter. In short, the more fictional Coleridgean habituation appears, the more authentic De Quincey and his own manageable habit become by comparison.

The literary allusions and exaggerated fictional encounters that underwrite images of Coleridgean habit in De Quincey’s work constitute a literary model for theorizing habituation—one that borrows and superimposes the supernatural, the exotic, and the comically absurd in popular literary texts from Shakespeare to Dickens that reinvigorate cultural anxieties about unmanageable habituation. *A Christmas Carol*, *The Tempest*, and even De Quincey’s own cutting caricatures of Coleridge present a constellation of images and associations that textualize the dangerous long-term effects of unmanaged habituation: including habit’s haunting presence in the afterlife, the lingering metaphysical suffering and regret associated with habit, habit-formation as a product of free will, the racial coding and subservience of habituation, and the

debilitating effects of illicit appetite upon the reasoning intellect. Critics invoke “addiction” as a catch-all term for understanding opium experiences in the nineteenth century, but, as Berridge reminds us, “the type of terminology now taken for granted in discussing opiate use and abuse was not at all applicable to the situation when opium was openly available” (49). Berridge’s point is especially relevant for a figure like De Quincey, whose life, literary output, and opium-eating habits span the period when opium was “openly available” in the Romantic period to when it was the subject of growing social, economic, political, and medical concern in the Victorian period.<sup>8</sup> Opium-eaters like De Quincey and Coleridge explained their own opium consumption by combining habit with physical images of bondage and abject slavery. De Quincey takes this one step further and re-inscribes standard images of bondage and slavery with literary allusion and fictional representation that not only contribute to cultural anxieties about habit and individual agency, but actually implicate Coleridgian habit within the same model. The result is an inter-textual exchange between De Quincey and the literary past that conjures images illustrative of illicit consumption and unmanaged habituation.

The literary model of habit marks a philological pre-history to Addiction Studies, one that informs Foxcroft’s recent “Making” of addiction and Zieger’s “Invention” of the addict during the nineteenth century. Zieger refers to habit as “an attractive concept for thinking about the relationship between acts and identities, [but] it is the very background of disappointed agency from which addiction emerges” (8). My purpose in this chapter is not to slight “addiction” as a vaguely anachronistic concept for De Quincey or Coleridge, but rather to spotlight the correlation between habit and literary allusion that forms the contours of the “emergence” of addiction as a diagnostic concept and the addict as a recognizable type. The embedded literary allusions, invented dialogues, and choreographed fictional situations that constitute a literary model of habit provide a nuanced, historical perspective of how habituates theorized (and explained) correlations between desire and appetite. In the opening quotation, De Quincey

insinuates that he has relatively little to confess for himself, though this will not stop him from assuming the responsibility of confessing on Coleridge's behalf and producing a "record" of mismanaged habituation that entangles Coleridge's legacy as an opium-eater in a model of habituation reliant upon its own textuality.

## II

How De Quincey substantiates and maintains this "legitimate" status as an authentic voice in opium debates is a critically underappreciated component of his work. Audiences throughout England know De Quincey by the apt sobriquet 'The Opium-Eater,' and the *OED* credits De Quincey with coining the terms "opium-eating," "opium-taking," and "opium-shattered."<sup>9</sup> Though he reinvents the way posterity talks about opium consumption, part of De Quincey's "legitimacy" as a trustworthy and authentic opium-eater is in how he fits within the way readers *already* implicitly contextualize the relationship between opium and habit, and habit and the individual.

By 1821, De Quincey's readers would have had a general understanding of the varied applications and effects of opium upon users. Its widespread availability at druggist shops (in paste form, pill form, and/or as a potent ingredient in elixirs such as 'Godfrey's Cordial' and 'Black Drop') and as a topic of longstanding quasi-medical discussion made opium's effects commonly understood among British audiences.<sup>10</sup> Medical historians concede that opium consumption was an absolute necessity in the early nineteenth century: "it was the only effective analgesic available at that time to people living with poor sanitation, pathogenic environments, and limited access to often rudimentary medical care. Aspirin, for example, now similarly and routinely self-administered, was not introduced to the market until 1899" (Foxcroft 11). The medical benefits notwithstanding, one must be cautious about oversimplifying claims about opium's wholehearted acceptance in nineteenth-century British culture. After all, William and Dorothy Wordsworth's concern over Coleridge's inability to leave off opium was one (among

many) reasons for the rift in their friendship. Even early nineteenth-century medical treatises like Dr. Thomas Trotter's *An Essay, Medical, Philosophical, and Chemical on Drunkenness and Its Effects on the Human Body* warn against the debilitating mental and bodily effects of opium.<sup>11</sup> Nineteenth-century attitudes about opium consumption become complicated when situations like those of De Quincey and Coleridge emerged: each began using opium for legitimate medical treatment, but their continued use of the drug (and the pleasures and indulgences incumbent in such use) destabilizes what was originally considered acceptable use.<sup>12</sup>

Then as now, vexed attitudes about opium are grounded in anxieties about the strength of the repetitions that are involved in extended, habitual use.<sup>13</sup> Unlike habit's function in discourses of education (where repetition inscribed within habit establishes protocols for impressionable child's early training), long-term repeated opiate use fuels a steadily increasing, socially unacceptable desire for the drug. That is, repeated use of opium produces more cycles of repetition. A habituate's opiate use becomes a perpetual negotiation between embracing the pleasures of intoxication while also staving off the psychological and physical pains of withdrawal symptoms. Visible side effects of opium habituation include extreme hot and cold flashes, excessive perspiration, dilated pupils, changes in skin color, and uncontrollable shaking; all are public markers of opium's impact upon the body. Coleridge's publisher and biographer, Joseph Cottle, remembers a dinner party at Hannah More's residence in 1814 where Coleridge's "hands [were] shaking to an alarming degree, so that he could not take a glass of wine without spilling it, though one hand supported the other!" (267).

The opium habit is distinct from other forms and models of habit considered in this dissertation because its repetitions are rooted in a combination of the chemical properties of the substance in addition to the psychological/behavioral characteristics of habit that have been discussed in previous chapters. Since the chemical properties of opium do not become the subject of steadfast medical or scientific study until after the passage of the Pharmacy Act in

1868, *habituation* becomes the default culprit for threats posed by opium in the early nineteenth century. Habit is paradoxically a cause of public anxiety as well as a side-effect of itself when repetition facilitates the move from acceptable self-administered medical use to illicit, dangerous recreational use by habituates like De Quincey and Coleridge.

In anticipation of readers' lurking suspicions about opium consumption and habit, De Quincey devotes the "Preliminary Confessions" section of the *Confessions* to "forestall[ing] question[s]" about his opium consumption (1821: 7). He appropriates the voice of the reader and asks himself a series of charged questions about his own opium habit: "How came any reasonable being to subject himself to such a yoke of misery; voluntarily to incur a captivity so servile, and knowingly to fetter himself with such a seven-fold chain?" (1821: 7).<sup>14</sup> Undoubtedly, layering these dramatic images on top of each other—the "yoke of misery" confirms a 'servile captivity' which entangles him in a "seven-fold chain"—invokes the kind of heroic, sensational struggle designed to captivate a reading audience. But by opening the section with the readers' questions and concerns about habit in their own voice, De Quincey relies upon and openly endorses the standard, recognizable images associated with cultural perceptions of opium habituation. For a brief moment at the opening of the *Confessions*, readers become the narrator, parroting back their own opinions and anxieties about opium consumption and the resulting habituation. Such a rhetorical move grounds the *Confessions* in the language and imagery of De Quincey's nineteenth-century reading audience and provides a base to which De Quincey can return when testing the elasticity of these images in his increasingly literary characterizations of Coleridge in the 1830s, 40s, and 50s.

While images of bondage and metaphorical slavery are nothing new to perceptions about the dangers of habit, the *Confessions* foregrounds a subtle shift in how society intuits the power relationship between the opium habit and the individual. Repeated opiate use inscribes habit with an agency that renders the individual unconscious of its behavioral or psychological

influence (thus fueling the desire for repeated doses of opium), but the *Confessions* undermines this threat by suggesting that habituation is entirely preventable by any judicious person. In the previous quotation, the voice of the reader insists that a “reasonable being” should consciously avoid “subjecting himself” to the slavery of opium habituation. The chains of opium habituation are heavy, but the voice of the reader in the *Confessions* maintains that individuals can “voluntarily” and “knowingly” ward off the slavery that accompanies opium habituation. Unlike the allegorical Habit of Samuel Johnson’s “The Vision of Theodore” discussed in my Introduction, opium habits do not lurk menacingly in the background and hijack the individual. One should be able to see and anticipate the opium habit’s approach—by reading habit on the bodies of habituates like Coleridge or by interpreting the experiences of an opium-eater like De Quincey in the *Confessions*.

### III

De Quincey’s preoccupation with Coleridgian “habits and hankerings” begins in earnest with the publication of a four-part biographical series in *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* in 1834 (Sept: 511-12).<sup>15</sup> The purpose of the “Samuel Taylor Coleridge” articles was “merely to supply a few hints and suggestions [about Coleridge] drawn from a very hasty retrospect” (Jan: 246). The insinuations built into De Quincey’s “hints and suggestions” about Coleridge’s life run the gamut from the personal (merely *hinting* that Coleridge was actually in love with Dorothy Wordsworth and not his wife, Sara) to the professional (simply *suggesting* that Coleridge’s failed London lecture series on Poetry and the Fine Arts in the winter of 1808 was a result of overindulgence in opium) (Sept: 516-17, Oct: 594-95). Despite widespread popularity among the general reading public, criticism of the articles was intense: Crabb Robinson called them “shameful articles,” and one anonymous critic lambasted De Quincey’s villainous “coarse caricature” of Coleridge (2: 464) (JCH: 22). Robert Southey famously advised Hartley Coleridge to “take a strong cudgel, proceed straight to Edinburgh, and give De Quincey, publicly



in the streets there, a sound beating” (Carlyle 324).<sup>16</sup> The anecdotal nature and gossipy tone of the *Tait’s* articles reduces the collection to tattling sensationalism—a prevailing characteristic of much of De Quincey’s biographical journalism. Southey objects to De Quincey’s “betrayal” of the friendship by providing information and opinions he thinks should remain secluded in the private realm. Yet, in order for De Quincey to continue establishing his status as an authentic voice of opium habituation, he must first present Coleridge as an example of one entirely incapable of such feats of self-control.

Instead of providing a strict chronological report of Coleridge’s life beginning with his birth and parentage in Bristol in 1772 and concluding with his death at Dr. Gillman’s residence in 1834, De Quincey opens his biographical account with *his* first introduction to Coleridge in 1807. In the opening lines of the September installment, De Quincey struggles to remember when he actually first saw Coleridge: “It was, I think, in the month of August, but certainly in the summer season, and certainly in the year 1807, that I first saw this illustrious man, the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and most comprehensive, in my judgment, that has yet existed amongst men” (Sept: 509). The breezy, anecdotal nature of the “Samuel Taylor Coleridge” articles easily wins readers over, in part, because De Quincey lets the rough edges of his biographical treatment of his subject show throughout the series. De Quincey charmingly fumbles around for a specific date, but his inability to do so does not stop him from launching into the kind of hyperbole reserved for the most enthusiastic of devotees. De Quincey’s biographical treatment of Coleridge privileges first-hand impressions and accounts of the poet-philosopher, as opposed to the strict chronology of traditional biographies.<sup>17</sup> For De Quincey, biography starts when *he* first sees Coleridge with his own eyes, and the result is a framing device that treats the subject of biography solely in relation to the biographer.<sup>18</sup> Such an approach obfuscates whose life and whose “record” De Quincey reports upon in the *Tait’s* essays.

By far the most important encounters De Quincey reports on within this anecdotal approach to Coleridge's biography are those with Thomas Poole and Lord Egmont—each of whom tells De Quincey first-hand about Coleridge's plagiarism and opium habits. Poole downplays Coleridge's literary and conversational plagiarism, passing over it as “a singular infirmity besetting Coleridge's mind” (Sept: 510). De Quincey goes to exorbitant lengths to expand upon Poole's accusation, and after an extended digression on Coleridge's plagiarisms, he ultimately equates these “thefts” to the sporadic and irrational pilfering of a small child:

Philosophy is puzzled, conjecture and hypothesis are confounded, in the attempt to explain the law of selection which *can* have presided in the child's labors: stones remarkable only for weight, old rusty hinges, nails, crooked skewers, stolen when the cook turned her back, rags broken glass, tea-cups having the bottom knocked out....Such in value were the robberies of Coleridge. (Sept: 512) [original emphasis]

Coleridge's plagiarism habit occasions the kind of regression meant to embarrass the memory of the poet-philosopher's claims upon originality. He becomes the most illogical of children whose motivations are near impossible to account for. De Quincey assumes the role of a concerned mother rifling through her child's the pockets, and we immediately detect how De Quincey uses habit to construct alternate versions (with alternate power dynamics) of himself and Coleridge. One could argue that an image of Coleridge stuffing stolen bits of intelligentsia into his trouser pockets locates this unconventional biography in Coleridge's “youth.” Yet, even as De Quincey puts these habits aside, he focuses more exclusively on the habits that so substantially ruin Coleridge's life.

As in his conversation with Poole, De Quincey learns from Lord Egmont about a series of other Coleridgian habits, most notably that Coleridge was “under the full dominion of opium, as he himself revealed to me, and with a deep expression of horror at the hideous bondage” (Sept: 513). After De Quincey first meets Coleridge and mentions his plan to use opium as an analgesic, Coleridge's response is memorable as he recounts his misfortunes with opium: “At what time or on what motive he had commenced the use of opium, he did not say; but the

peculiar emphasis of horror with which he warned me against forming a habit of the same kind, impressed upon my mind a feeling that he never hoped to liberate himself from the bondage” (Sept: 517). Just as opium habitation, itself, is the responsibility of the individual (not the substance) in early nineteenth century, so too is sobriety. Such a description portrays Coleridge as abandoning all hope of “liberating himself” from opium habitation—entirely unlike how De Quincey brags about “untwist[ing], almost to its final links, the accursed chain which fettered [him]” (1822: 6). De Quincey considers his own account of *his* opium consumption as a more authentic of habit than that of Coleridge. After all, habit has rendered Coleridge as irrational as a pilfering child, frightened and desperate about his own relationship to opium habitation.

De Quincey pauses to wonder aloud at all he had ever heard and seen of Coleridge before that memorable first introduction in 1807: Coleridge’s “captivity to opium,” the “torpor [that] must result from continued artificial excitement” and the impossibility of “unthreading the fatal links that have been wound about the machinery of health, and have crippled its natural play” all preoccupy his thoughts (Sept: 518). De Quincey points to this as the exact moment when he decided to write about Coleridge: “I reverted, at intervals, to all I had ever heard of Coleridge, and strove to weave it into some continuous sketch of his life. I hardly remember how much I then knew; I know but little now—that little I will here jot down upon paper” (Sept: 518). His own opium habits prompt him to compose the *Confessions*, and now Coleridge’s opium habits motivate him to create a version of Coleridge’s life, as well.

Thirty pages into the first installment of the “Samuel Taylor Coleridge” series, De Quincey reverts to a more conventional, linear organization: he methodically glosses over Coleridge’s roots in Bristol and progresses forward in fits and starts to account for his schooling, his ill-fated stint in the army, his unhappy marriage, and his collaboration with Wordsworth, etc.—descriptions peppered, of course, with digressions and asides one comes to expect from De Quincey’s writing. But even within this revised organizational approach, De Quincey marks

major moments in Coleridge's life with unceasing reference to his opium habit. Coleridge's trip to Malta in 1804 is "an unfortunate chapter in his life...he there confirmed and cherished, if he did not there form, his habit of taking opium in large quantities" (Oct: 593).<sup>19</sup> Coleridge's mood and his engagement with the Royal Institution to give a series of lectures about Poetry and the Fine Arts in the winter of 1807-08 are marred by ill health brought about by opium habituation: "His spirits flagged; and he took more than ordinary doses of opium" (Oct: 594). Indeed, Coleridge's opium consumption was so excessive that its effects were on full display during his presentation: "His appearance was generally that of a person struggling with pain and overmastering illness. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in color;" (Oct: 594).<sup>20</sup> Even Coleridge's residence in the Lake District is overshadowed by his unhappiness occasioned by "the accursed drug [which] poison all natural pleasure at its sources" (Nov: 686). These struggles conclude with Coleridge's death—a subject that De Quincey addresses in tandem with how his opium habits were responsible for his downfall:

Not, however, to make any mystery of what requires none, the reader will understand that *originally* his sufferings, and the death within him of all hope—the palsy, as it were, of that which is the life of life, and the hearth within the heart—came from opium...Opium, therefore, subject to the explanation I have made, was certainly the original source of Coleridge's morbid feelings, of his debility, and of his remorse. (Jan: 4) [original emphasis]

By framing Coleridge's life in relation to his habits—and in particular, his opium habits—De Quincey creates an alternate "record" to run alongside his own in the *Confessions*. Coleridge shows no evidence of being able to control his habit or to unshackle himself from the bondage of his slavery.

Of the *Tait's* series as a whole, Crabb Robinson returns to familiar objections about the "fragmentary" structure of De Quincey's writing: "De Quincey writes nothing (at least under the name of the Opium-eater) which has not a reference to himself. I suspect he is not capable of composing a work of art or elaborate and continuous thought—so he scatters in fragments his

observations on men..." (451). For Crabb Robison, De Quincey was *too* "emulative" of Coleridge in the *Confessions* and in the *Tait's* biographical series, and he is *too* focused on himself. By incorporating himself in the *Tait's* series, he makes it a shared record of opium habituation that augments the record established in the *Confessions*. The series inaugurates an inclination in De Quincey to rewrite Coleridge's characterization in more overt literary terms in the 1840s and 1850s.

#### IV

"Coleridge and Opium-Eating" was published anonymously in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* in 1845, and it swiftly rejects claims about Coleridge's opium consumption made in Dr. James Gillman's *Life of Coleridge* in 1838.<sup>21</sup> Gillman's biography includes excerpts from Coleridge's private letters that decry his "unsuspecting delusion" and his innocent victimization in the wake of the "Maelstrom, the fatal whirlpool" of habituation (247). Enraged at such evasive justifications, De Quincey opens his article by rejecting the vitality of both the biography and the biographical subject:

What is the deadeſt of things earthly? It is, ſays the world, ever forward and raſh—'a door-nail!' But the world is wrong. There is a thing deader than a door-nail, viz., Gillman's Coleridge, Vol. I. Dead, more dead, moſt dead, is Gillman's Coleridge, Vol. I.; and this upon more arguments than one. The book has clearly not completed its elementary act of reſpiration...Gillman's Coleridge, Vol. I., deals raſhly, unjuſtly, and almoſt maliciously, with ſome of our own particular friends...and therefore, though the world was ſo far right, that people *do* ſay, "Dead as a door-nail," yet, henceforwards [*sic*], the weakeſt of theſe people will ſee the propriety of ſaying—'Dead as Gillman's Coleridge.' (117) [original emphasis]<sup>22</sup>

These opening lines serve as both a brutal book review and a rejection of Coleridge's self-assessment of his own opium habituation. By collapsing the biography and the biographical subject into the same identity ("Gillman's Coleridge"), De Quincey reserves his harshest criticism for the reincarnated specter of Coleridge emerging from the biography. Despite his claim that the biography never "completes its elementary act of respiration," De Quincey works hard in this opening paragraph to pronounce "Gillman's Coleridge" "dead, more dead, most

dead” on arrival. The only productive moment of the biography is the revision of “dead as a door-nail” to “Dead as Gillman’s Coleridge,” an attack set up from the first casual mention of the cliché in the opening sentence. Lingering throughout this blustering critique of Coleridge is the cultural and literary resonance of “dead as a door-nail,” a phrase that would remind readers of the abject habituation of one of Charles Dickens’s most tortured ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*.

Opening “Coleridge and Opium-Eating” in January 1845 by invoking “dead as a door-nail” would have been familiar to nineteenth-century readers, since two years earlier Charles Dickens introduced *A Christmas Carol* by using the phrase “dead as a door-nail” to insist upon Marley’s mortality:

Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it: and Scrooge’s name was good upon ’Change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

Mind! I don’t mean to say that I know, of my own knowledge, what there is particularly dead about a door-nail. I might have been inclined, myself, to regard a coffin-nail as the deadest piece of ironmongery in the trade. But the wisdom of our ancestors is in the simile; and my unhallowed hands shall not disturb it, or the Country’s done for. You will therefore permit me to repeat, emphatically, that Marley was as dead as a door-nail. (1)<sup>23</sup>

The startling similarity between De Quincey and Dickens’s openings was bound to kindle comparative instincts, especially since “Coleridge and Opium-Eating” appeared on the heels of the December publication of Dickens’s second Christmas story, *The Chimes*—the highly anticipated follow-up to *A Christmas Carol*.<sup>24</sup> Alluding to Dickens’s fictional biography of Ebenezer Scrooge and his reunion with the enslaved ghost of his former business partner, Marley, provides De Quincey with a chance to recast Coleridge, his mortality, and his habituation in the afterlife as an alternate version of Marley’s Ghost.<sup>25</sup> After all, Coleridge (like Marley) has already attempted to theorize his own opium habituation from beyond the grave through Gillman’s *Life of Coleridge*, and Marley’s Ghost (with all his overt metaphorical signs of habit’s impact on his tortuous afterlife) becomes a point of comparison for conceptualizing the

metaphysical perils of mismanaged Coleridgean habit. Habit's impact and intervention on the behaviors of the afterlife (also alluded to Coleridge's 1803 Hamletian notebook entry analyzed in Chapter 2), the culpability of habit-formation as a product of free-will, and the metaphysical penance and punishment of habit dominate the confrontation between Marley's Ghost and Scrooge. Together, De Quincey and Dickens's vision of habituation in the afterlife contribute to a dangerous (and undeniably fictionalized) mid-nineteenth-century understanding of the consequences of an inability to exert control over habit.<sup>26</sup>

Before Marley's Ghost materializes in Scrooge's room on Christmas Eve, Scrooge hears chains dragging in the wine cellar—a sound he immediately associates with spiritual haunting, but one that could also be readily associated with the figurative enslavement of abject habituation.<sup>27</sup> By failing to connect dragging chains with the consequences of habituation, Scrooge reaffirms the purpose of his being visited by multiple ghosts throughout the story: his ignorance illustrates an inability to recognize the signs of habituation that endanger him. When Scrooge sees Marley's Ghost for the first time, he notices the chains entwined around the ghost's transparent body: "The chain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and wound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge observed it closely) of cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses wrought in steel" (13). The items binding Marley's Ghost's body represent the greedy habits he cultivated in life, and Scrooge's "close observation" of these individual links betrays his curiosity about their function in the afterlife. The moral lesson of Scrooge's journey in *A Christmas Carol* begins precisely at the moment when Marley's Ghost uses his own chain of habituation as a prop to illustrate the dangerous path Scrooge follows in life. Analyzing them in the context of an essay on opium habituation, one wonders about the equivalent of "cashboxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds, and heavy purses" for the opium habituate's chain—the same kind that De Quincey claims to have so masterfully unraveled in the opening quotation of this chapter. Nevertheless, the metaphysical bondage of

habituation in the afterlife is on display in *A Christmas Carol*. In the imagined, literary world of the De Quincian and Dickensian afterlife, Coleridge's Ghost and Marley's Ghost share a similar fate because of the habits they were unable to keep in check while alive.

The description of the chain as “[winding] about [Marley's Ghost] like a tail” suggests something vaguely demonic about the visitation *and* the habits that forge the chain. Such perilous bondage in the afterlife is the dominant image throughout the conversation between Scrooge and Marley's Ghost, with the latter repeatedly shrieking and rattling these chains to focus Scrooge's attention on the consequences of cultivating the wrong habits in life. When Scrooge finally musters the courage to ask Marley's Ghost about his chain, he replies, “I wear the chain I forged in life...I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange to *you*?” (16) [original emphasis]. Of course, the chain is famously *not* strange to Ebenezer Scrooge, as he (at least in the first Stave) “forges,” “makes,” and “girds” his own invisible chains by rejecting the needs of the poor, shrugging off the affection of his nephew, and ignoring the comfort of his only employee.<sup>28</sup> Marley's Ghost accepts the blame for his habituation because, he maintains, it is a product of his own greedy desires and misguided free will. For Dickens, habit is a choice the individual makes—one capable of self-regulation regardless of the push and pull of individual desire. In Coleridge's articulation from Gillman's biography, habit is an externalized, chaotic force of nature that subsumes and batters the helpless individual.

*A Christmas Carol* imagines the effects of habit in the afterlife, and as the reunion between Marley's Ghost and Scrooge concludes, Scrooge witnesses the listless wandering in store for those who, like Marley, were unable to manage their habits in life. When Marley's Ghost exits through a window, he joins other floating spirits roaming the cityscape:

He [Scrooge] became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailing inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre [Marley's Ghost], after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated



out upon the bleak, dark night... The air filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few... were linked together; none were free. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever. (19)

The chain binding Marley's Ghost presents to Scrooge the consequence of habit on the individual, but as the spirits "wander hither and thither in restless haste... linked together," they forge a collective chain of habit. In Dickens's vision of habit in the afterlife, habit not only entangles the individual, but one actually *becomes* the very symbol of this enslavement in a system of punishment and penance reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*.<sup>29</sup> Well before the Ghost of Christmas Present introduces allegorized versions of Ignorance and Want to Scrooge, Marley's Ghost and the wandering spirits allegorize unmanaged habit in the afterlife.

Sustaining speculation on the dejected state of Coleridge's soul in the afterlife (forever wandering the earth with other irresponsible habitués and endlessly lamenting his inability to manage opium consumption) would have easily disqualified De Quincey from serious critique of Coleridgean opium consumption and opened him up to the mean-spirited rumor-mongering of the *Tait's* articles a decade earlier. Invoking Dickens's popular Christmas story in 1845 screens him from inflammatory insinuations about the misery of Coleridge's afterlife. By the end of the first paragraph of "Coleridge and Opium-Eating," Coleridgean habit is rendered guilty by association—even if associated with the ghost of an invented, fictional character.<sup>30</sup>

Reverberations of this comparison between Coleridge and Marley's Ghost echo throughout much of "Coleridge and Opium-Eating," particularly in relation to how readers may come to perceive De Quincey's own relationship to Coleridge. Beyond the opening paragraph, De Quincey objects to Coleridge's claims about the ease with which he attained unfettered sobriety from opium:

He speaks of opium excess—his own excess we mean—the excess of twenty-five years—as a thing to be laid aside easily and forever within seven days; and yet, on the other hand, he describes it pathetically, sometimes with a frantic pathos, as the scourge,

the curse, the one almighty blight which has desolated his life. (129-30)

With characteristic vigor, De Quincey dives into the many ways opium corrupted Coleridge's body and mind: it "killed Coleridge as a poet," drove his procrastination, and was generally the cause of *all* of his personal and professional problems (130-31). By rejecting Coleridge's assertion that he could so quickly and so successfully shrug off the opium habit in one week's time, De Quincey disqualifies Coleridge from the same kind of re-habituating and automatic character suggestive of Scrooge's experience in *A Christmas Carol*. If we bear in mind De Quincey's claim about his own managed habit from the opening quotation of this chapter, it stands to reason that he envisions *himself* as the Ebenezer Scrooge emerging at the end of the story.

Kathleen Poorman Dougherty uses an Aristotelian model of habituation from the *Nicomachean Ethics* to support the legitimacy of Scrooge's rapid character change in *A Christmas Carol*, and she maintains that such abrupt character change (what Elliot L. Gilbert and Edmund Wilson call "the Scrooge problem") is dependent upon a shift in how he views his surroundings: "Change, for Scrooge, is not a matter of 'rehabituating' himself to a different character, it is a matter of changing the way he perceives the world, and one suspects that given what he now sees, the prospect of going back seems virtually unthinkable" (308).<sup>31</sup> Scrooge's perception of the world is, by the end of the story, one of a man who can better manage his financial and moral economy. Like De Quincey's idealized version of himself, Scrooge can keep his habits in check in order to maintain healthy relationships with others and with himself—donating money to charity, joining his nephew's family for Christmas dinner, giving Bob Cratchet a higher wage, and becoming a "second father" to Tiny Tim (85). De Quincey's "perception of the world" (in Poorman's construction) includes a particular vision of Coleridgian habituation—one that artfully suggests that the more Coleridge resembles the lamentable and

irresponsible Marley's Ghost, the more De Quincey resembles Scrooge and his successful management of habit by the end of the story.<sup>32</sup>

Athena Vrettos argues that Dickens's most eccentric characters (most notably Pip from *Great Expectation* and Dombey from *Dombey and Son*) "confront the tension between individuality and mechanization that came to be at the center of [the debate about the social and psychological effects of habit]" (401). I read Coleridge and his opium habituation as off-shoots of such Dickensian eccentricity. Instead of embodying "the tension between individuality and mechanization," Coleridge is a foil for conceptualizing the dangers of mismanaged habituation and their consequences in the afterlife.

## V

Embedding *A Christmas Carol* into "Coleridge and Opium-Eating" subtly manipulates public impressions about the effects of mismanaged habituation, and suggests that the partnership between Scrooge and Marley resembles (at least in passing) the friendship and rivalry between De Quincey and Coleridge. Such a close relationship, it would seem, grants De Quincey license to critique and question Coleridge's opium habit, and just as he brags about being "the foremost of [Coleridge's] admirers" in his biographical essays in the 1830s and 40s, he also insists that he remains the "sole authority" on opium habituation in the enlarged 1856 *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (Sept: 510) (1856: 15).<sup>33</sup> Ian Jack dismisses the renewed attention to Coleridge in the 1856 *Confessions* as gratuitous "skirmishing" and "dog-fighting," though Jack's critique undervalues the sheer variety of fictional representations De Quincey employs to textualize Coleridge's mismanaged habituation.<sup>34</sup>

At the center of the renewed attention to Coleridge in the 1856 *Confessions* are multiple dramatizations of the connection between Coleridgean habit and slavery. De Quincey asks the reader, "What then was it, after all, that made Coleridge a slave to opium, and a slave that could not break his chain? He fancies in his headlong carelessness, that he has accounted for this habit

and this slavery” (19). The parallel construction that maps “*this habit*” onto “*this slavery*” underwrites the multiple caricatures in the text that set the stage for rethinking Coleridge and opium as an alternate version of Caliban and Prospero in *The Tempest*—an apropos comparison given Coleridge’s conceptualization of habit as a “Maelstrom.” As with *A Christmas Carol* in “Coleridge and Opium-Eating,” literary characterization engineers cultural perceptions about mismanaged habit by textualizing Coleridge’s experiences in relation to uncontrollable appetite, bankrupt individual agency, and the disappointed intellectual potential of one of the century’s most celebrated poet-philosophers.

Though, unlike the muted influence of *A Christmas Carol* on “Coleridge and Opium-Eating,” the 1856 *Confessions* is far more transparent in how it fabricates dialogue, invents fictional encounters, and orchestrates scenarios that reaffirm De Quincey’s managed (and therefore more legitimate and authentic) opium habituation at Coleridge’s expense. In one such example, De Quincey casually impersonates Coleridge, calling attention to how mismanaged habituation overwrites an individual’s sense of subjectivity. Appropriating Coleridge’s voice, De Quincey announces, ““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 [De Quincey] is a buccaneer, a pirate, a flibustier [*sic*], and can have none but a forged licence [*sic*] in his disreputable pocket. In the name of Virtue, arrest him!”” (17-18) [original emphasis]. This impersonation digresses into an account of Coleridge’s “inaccuracy as to facts and citations from books,” a statement that leads Frederick Burwick to conclude that De Quincey links “as cause and effect, Coleridge’s opium addiction and his plagiarism” (1856: 18) (Burwick 44-45). But leaning (as it does) on an important *literary* reference to opium-eating from Wordsworth’s “Stanzas Written in my Pocket-Copy of Thomson’s ‘Castle of Indolence,’” the impersonation hinges just as much on authentic opium experience as it does spurious literary originality.<sup>35</sup> By self-identifying through a truncation of his actual identity (Samuel Taylor Coleridge becomes the abbreviated “S.T.C.”)

only to be substantiated by a more complete description of his “presents” as “*a noticeable man with large grey eyes*” De Quincey suggests that Coleridge endorses the validity of the general malaise and indolence of his representation in Wordsworth’s poem.<sup>36</sup> De Quincey choreographs the statement so that literary representation is an intractable quality of Coleridge’s sense of subjectivity, and the impersonation has Coleridge actually textualizes *himself*.<sup>37</sup> As a result, the exaggerated sensitivity to the legitimacy of his “licensed” opium-eating credentials in contrast to De Quincey’s “forged licence” comically overcompensates for Coleridge’s own troubled habits. The reader never forgets who pulls Coleridge’s strings, and determining who is the imposter (or, the “buccaneer, pirate and flibustier” holding a “forged licence”), and who maintains a more authentic experience hardly requires any further extrapolation.

De Quincey builds upon this cutting impersonation by staging a theatrical re-enactment between Coleridge (cast as a “Transcendental Philosopher”) and a servant paid to forbid him access to a druggist’s shop. The situation is adapted from actual experience, and I quote it at length to showcase the extent to which De Quincey reinvents a situation that shapes correlations between Coleridgian desire, appetite, and the reasoning intellect:

It is notorious that in Bristol (to *that* I can speak myself, but probably in many other places) he went so far as to hire men—porters, hackney-coachmen, and others—to oppose by force his entrance into any druggist’s shop. But, as the authority for stopping him was derived simply from himself, naturally these poor men found themselves in a metaphysical fix...And in this excruciating dilemma would occur such scenes as the following:—

‘Oh, sir,’ would plead the suppliant porter—suppliant, yet semi-imperative (for equally if he *did*, and if he did *not*, show fight, the poor man’s daily 5s. seemed endangered)—‘really you must not; consider, sir, your wife and—’

*Transcendental Philosopher*.—‘Wife! what wife? I have no wife.’

*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 down 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—quite unlooked for. No matter what I told you in times long past. That which I *now* tell you, is—that, if you don’t remove that arm of yours from the doorway of this most respectable druggist, I shall have a good ground of action against you for assault and battery. (20-21) [original emphases]<sup>38</sup>

De Quincey’s adaptation dramatizes the troubling logic produced by Coleridge’s uncontrollable appetite for opium. In the span of a single conversation, Coleridge contradicts his own explicit orders to a servant to bar him access to a druggist’s shop, he rejects the consideration (and even the very existence) of his own wife, and his own suspicious conception of what constitutes a “shocking emergency” satirizes the bloated desires that co-opt his reasoning intellect. This encounter provides a troubling snapshot of the transcendentalism of this “Transcendental Philosopher,” one that showcases how mismanaged habit corrupts one’s sense of time, subjectivity, social hierarchy, and even legal recourse. The Coleridge presented here is one who does not necessarily fail at transcendental experience, but when he performs his habituation, one gets a clearer sense of how uncontrollable appetite manipulates the innate mental principles that drive his transcendental perspective. The Coleridge determined to keep himself out of a druggist shop one day, only to lash out like a tyrant the next day threatening (however ridiculously) to bring a lawsuit against his servant for “assault and battery” anticipates the frenetic psychological desires and fractured identities Robert Louis Stevenson will present in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1868.<sup>39</sup> And just as Jekyll and Hyde are fictional characters, so too is this reincarnation of Samuel Taylor Coleridge a product of De Quincey’s imagination in the 1856 *Confessions*.

These two examples of textualized representation illustrate how De Quincey’s own reimagined portrayals of Coleridge critique a particular kind of opium-eating habit. Alongside De Quincey’s own invented caricatures is a literary allusion that dramatizes the relationship between Coleridge and opium as comparable to that of Caliban and Prospero in *The Tempest*. De Quincey explains, “A slave he was to this potent drug not less abject than Prospero and

Caliban—his detested and yet despotic master. Like Caliban, he frets his very heart-strings against the rivets of his chain. Still, at intervals through the gloomy vigils of his prison, you hear muttered growls of impotent mutineering swelling upon the breeze...” (20). Coleridge performs his habituation in “gloomy vigils,” plucking the “rivets of his chain” and “muttering growls of impotent mutineering.” It is no far stretch for De Quincey’s reader to consider the “muttering growls of impotent mutineering” as the lamentable cry of the “buccaneer, pirate, and flibustier” from De Quincey’s earlier caricature.

Just as Caliban is cowed by Prospero’s “despotism,” Coleridge similarly shrinks under opium’s powerful influence, which suggests a correlation between Prospero’s magic and the effects of opium. Coincidental or not, the sedative, mollifying effects of opium upon the individual simulate the effects of Prospero’s magic. When he casts a spell on Miranda to induce sleep, Prospero could just as easily be talking about opium when he gently declares that “’Tis a good dullness, / And give it way. Know thou canst not choose” (1.2.185-86). Likewise, Caliban could just as easily be talking about the physiological effects of opium when he worries over Prospero’s anger: “From toe to crown he’ll fill our skins with pinches, / Make us strange stuff” (4.1.232-33). The seemingly magical effects of the drug that so captivate and metaphorically enslave Coleridge are easily (if unscientifically) defined through recourse to England’s most influential playwright.

But such an explanation is not without its complications, especially since the end of the play has Prospero willing to abandon his own power and influence over others. In Act 5, Prospero meditates upon his great magical power, and he resolves to cast it aside, return everybody to their former states of consciousness, and forego all mystical practice:

...I have bedimmed  
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,  
And twixt the green sea and the azured vault  
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder  
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove’s stout oak

With his own bolt; the strong-based promontory  
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up  
The pine and cedar; graves at my command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By my so potent art. But this rough magic  
I here abjure, and when I have required  
Some heavenly music—which even now I do—  
To work mine end upon their sense that  
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,  
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,  
And deeper than did ever plummet sound  
I'll drown my book. (5.1.41-57)

Whether or not De Quincey has this soliloquy and the “potent art” and “rough magic” culled from the “*mutinous winds*” in mind when characterizing Caliban/Coleridge’s “impotent *mutineering* swelling upon the breeze” is speculative. If we substitute Prospero’s determination to abandon his magic, for the dependency of opium, it suggests that opium (like Prospero) has the capability and willingness to divest *itself* of its own power. By breaking his staff, burying it deep in the earth, and submerging his book of magic in the sea, Prospero resolves to change his life (perhaps reminding us of us in this context of Scrooge’s resolve to give up greedy habits in *A Christmas Carol*). This is, of course, an entirely theoretical claim since we never actually see Prospero act upon this promise. In fact, the play ends with Prospero promising Alonso “calm seas, auspicious gales” and he can, supposedly, fulfill such promises because of his magic. Such a characterization raises questions about opium’s agency in habituation, though above all, De Quincey wants readers to understand that opium, itself, is not the problem—the problem is in the person who cannot control his own relationship to habit.

Literary allusion, fictional representation, and textualized slavery to opium shape Coleridge’s legacy as an opium-eater throughout De Quincey’s 1856 *Confessions*, though positioning him as an alternate version of Caliban also facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the underlying sophistication of one of Shakespeare’s most misunderstood characters. In a lengthy footnote to his posthumously published biography of William Shakespeare, De Quincey



complains of the fragmented and misguided interpretations of Caliban that fail to take into account his intellectual potential and his inherent dignity:

Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. For all Shakespeare's great creations are like works of nature, subjects of unexhaustible [*sic*] study... Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either, uses a more elevated language, not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder as they are... He trembles indeed before Prospero; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom; for when he finds himself in the presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power. (99)

De Quincey hardly follows his own recommendation to suspend judgment when he uses Caliban and his "muttered growls" to frame Coleridge's experiences. One could certainly read this as De Quincey's acknowledgement of Coleridge's intellectual powers. But just as Caliban is a foil for a new textualized Coleridgian habit as slavery, it stands to reason that Coleridge can just as easily inform new perceptions about Caliban. The "intellectual power" and "partial respect" owed to Caliban can be contextualized through Coleridge. Within this textualized, literary model of habit would seem, at least in De Quincey's hands, to tell readers just as much about its own literary antecedents as it does about Coleridgian habit. Caliban is a subject "of unexhaustible study," and De Quincey's thirty-five years of theorizing Coleridgian habit from the footnote of the first edition of the *Confessions* to the final edition in 1856 exemplifies how study of Coleridge is also limitless.

## VI

In the first flush of De Quincey's death in 1859, Henry M. Alden eulogized De Quincey's life and influence by placing him alongside the most influential writers of the century: his life "inclosed [*sic*], as an island, a whole period of English literature, one, too, which in activity and originality is unsurpassed by any other, including the names of Scott and Dickens, of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, and Southey, of Moore, Byron, Shelley, and Keats" (346).<sup>40</sup>

Alden makes an extraordinary claim that De Quincey was somehow more “active and original” than any other writer of his generation, and he insists that Coleridge “as an opium-eater, is the only individual worthy of notice in the same connection [as De Quincey]” (360). How the Victorians remember De Quincey and Coleridge alongside each other becomes a register for perceptions of dangerous mismanaged habituation through a literary model of textualized Coleridgean habituation.

Victorian critics rely on literary allusion to shape De Quincey’s legacy as an opium-eater, essayist, and provocateur. David Masson (an early editor of De Quincey’s collected works and one of his most sympathetic biographers) quotes Shadworth Hodgson’s description of De Quincey in relation to Thomson’s “Castle of Indolence,” a poem that has become all too familiar when theorizing an opium-eater’s identity in the nineteenth century:

Mr. Shadworth Hodgson, who knew him [De Quincey] personally, vouches that no description of him could surpass for exactness that provided beforehand by the poet Thomson in the stanza of his *Castle of Indolence* in which he introduces the bard Philomelus:—

He came, the bard, a little Druid wight  
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,  
With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,  
As is his sister in the copses green,  
He crept along, unpromising of mien.  
Gross he who judges so! His soul was fair,  
Bright as the children of yon azure sheen.  
True comeliness, which nothing can impair,  
Dwells in the mind: all else is vanity and glare (qutd. in Masson 150) [original emphasis]

The remarkable coincidence that both De Quincey and Coleridge’s identities would (by separate people) be tied to Thomson’s poem is a microcosm for a particular interpretive dilemma that Victorians faced when conceptualizing the nineteenth century’s most famous opium-eaters. With De Quincey figuring as an extension of the *original* poem, it suggests that he is somehow more authentic than Coleridge’s second-hand representation as the “noticeable Man with large grey eyes” within Wordsworth’s poetic *copy* of Thomson’s “The Castle of Indolence.”

However, Victorian comparisons of the two opium-eaters maintain that the opposite of this assumption is true: that is, they treat De Quincey as the copy of Coleridge, which showcases the instability of the literary model of habit in making lasting distinctions between the two opium-eaters and differentiating their habits.<sup>41</sup>

Arthur Symons grumbles that “Not even Coleridge is so uneven as De Quincey” (47), and George Saintsbury scoffs at how De Quincey’s “pure rigmarole” meanders throughout his texts “till the reader feels as Coleridge’s auditors must have felt...” (317-18). Symons and Saintsbury isolate literary elements in their comparisons, and at least for Saintsbury, readers get implicated by the comparison: De Quincey’s reader is beset by the same frustrations as Coleridge’s “auditor.” De Quincey not only resembles Coleridge into the Victorian period, but his readership begins to resemble Coleridge’s readership to the detriment of both. George Gillfiles sees this “rigmarole” as a valuable attribute, one among many that the two writers share:

It is told of Coleridge, that no shorthand-writer could do justice to his lectures; because, although he spoke deliberately, yet it was impossible, from the first part of his sentences, to have the slightest notion of how they were to end—each clause was a new surprise, and the close often unexpected as a thunderbolt. In this, as in many other respects, De Quincey resembles the ‘noticeable man with large grey eyes.’ Each of his periods, begin where it may, accomplishes a cometary sweep ere it closes. (299-300)

While this remembrance is complimentary to both writers, it does foreground how De Quincey “resembles the ‘noticeable man with large grey eyes.’” By evoking Coleridge’s famous sobriquet, one must assume that De Quincey’s resemblance also includes the opium habit.

It comes as no surprise that given De Quincey’s consistent attention to Coleridge from the 1820s through the 1850s, Victorian readers and critics quickly associate the two and interpret their situations and habits alongside each other—though Coleridge emerges as not only the more prominent of the two, but the more authentic of the two habitués. Harriet Martineau comments, “De Quincey must have strongly resembled Coleridge. Both were fine Grecians,

charming discourses, eminent opium-takers, magnificent dreamers and seers, large in their promises, and helpless in their failure of performance” (95). The similarities Martineau detects give the impression that theirs is a one-way resemblance. De Quincey “strongly resembles” Coleridge, but this is not to say they actually resemble *each other*. She glosses over individual differences: their equally “charming” conversation, “eminent” opium consumption, and “magnificent” imaginative capacities blend into each other as much as does their disappointing “failure of performance.” For Martineau, the strength of De Quincey’s resemblance to Coleridge renders them practically indistinguishable from one another.

Leslie Stephen puts a finer point to Martineau’s comparison, and states “he [De Quincey] not only had not [*sic*] strength to stand alone, but he belonged to a peculiar side-current of English thought. He was the adjective of which Coleridge was the substantive; and if Coleridge himself was an unsatisfactory and imperfect thinker, his imperfections are greatly increased in his friend and disciple” (260). Stephen recognizes the dire effects of the De Quincey/Coleridge affiliation: Coleridge’s “unsatisfactory and imperfect think[ing]” rubs off on De Quincey, and such intellectual imperfections become “greatly increased” and exasperated in “his disciple.” Martineau and Stephen each treat Coleridge as a baseline by which to understand De Quincey. As a result, De Quincey gets remembered either as a carbon copy of Coleridge for the one, or more woefully Coleridgian than Coleridge for the other.<sup>42</sup> In what amounts to a devastating blow to any textualized, literary model of habit De Quincey established to distinguish his authentic, managed opium habit from that of Coleridge’s illegitimate, mismanaged habit, Stephen reduces both De Quincey and Coleridge to a pair of over-simplified literary terms.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> The *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was first published anonymously in serial form in September and October 1821 in *The London Magazine*. Lindop argues that “the authorship of the *Confessions* was no mystery to those who knew De Quincey” and he uses Crabb Robinson’s diary entry for 10 September 1821 to carry this point (251). Crabb Robinson notes: “Sept. 10 [*Glasgow*.]...I lounged at the Tontine Coffee Room, an institution to which strangers have

access. Here I read a strange article, *Confessions of an Opium Taker* [*sic*] in *London Magazine*, which must be by De Quincey” (1: 267). In the context of this complete diary entry, Crabb Robinson’s language suggests more surreptitious discovery of De Quincey’s authorship than Lindop gives him credit for—the “must be by De Quincey” appears accidental. Nevertheless, a book version of the *Confessions* (published by Taylor and Hessey, the publishers of *The London Magazine*) appeared in 1822 and included only minor revisions from the 1821 serial version. A significantly enlarged edition of the *Confessions* appeared in 1856 as part of De Quincey’s collected works, *Selections Grave and Gay*. Unless otherwise noted in the text, all quotations from the *Confessions* are from Milligan’s edition of the 1822 text.

<sup>2</sup> De Quincey even stumbles into the *OED* through a separate reference to “opium taking” by twentieth-century humorist and travel writer, Bill Bryson: “Thomas de Quincey [*sic*], in between bouts of opium taking, found time to attack the expression *what on earth*” (2C1b) (Bryson 142) [original emphasis].

<sup>3</sup> Hayter notes that “De Quincey is often blamed, and rightly, for the terrible fascination of his masterpiece in drawing in others to follow his example” (*Opium* 35). See Morrison, Schivelbusch (Chapter 8) and Berridge (Chapter 5) for how De Quincey’s self-reported opium experiences have been used to understand not only his legacy as a writer, but how nineteenth and twentieth-century audiences conceptualized drug use. Berridge, in particular, draws a direct line between De Quincey’s account of his opium habit and how England thought through the heroin “epidemic” of the mid-twentieth century: “a paraphrase of De Quincey’s life was quite a regular component of medical journals at the height of the drug ‘epidemic’ of the 1960s” (50).

<sup>4</sup> The variety and purpose of De Quincian footnotes are too diverse to explore here, though it is worth noting that he regularly incorporates footnotes that clarify the precise meaning of terms and phrases he uses. Similarly, he includes new footnotes to the American edition of his collected works published by Ticknor and Fields which were not originally included in the British editions. Coincidental to my attention to habit in this chapter, De Quincey invokes habit, repetition, and originality to define the slang term “Birmingham” in the third installment of the “Samuel Taylor Coleridge” articles in the American edition of his collected works: “Why the word *Birmingham* has come for the last sixty or seventy years to indicate in every class of articles the spurious in opposition to the genuine, I suppose to have arisen from the Birmingham habit of reproducing all sorts of London or Paris trinkets, *bijouterie*, &c., in cheaper materials and with inferior workmanship” (Ticknor and Fields: 238) [original emphases].

<sup>5</sup> See Hayter (Penguin, 1971), Lindop (Oxford, 1998), and Milligan (Penguin, 2003) for the most recent critical editions of the *Confessions*. The details Lloyd adapts from Coleridge’s personal experience include his abandonment of a university education, his failed enlistment in the army, his running away from friends and family, and his opium consumption. In the “Advertisement,” Lloyd makes oblique reference to Robert Southey as the source of information about Coleridge’s stint in the army: “The incidents relative to the Army were given me by an intimate friend, who was himself eyewitness to one of them, and can produce testimony to the truth of the other two” (xii). See also “Letter LXXXV” in E. Hartley Coleridge’s (ed) *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* for extended footnotes on Coleridge’s offense at his portrayal in *Edmund Oliver*. Wordsworth’s “Stanzas Written in my Pocket-Copy of Thompson’s ‘Castle of Indolence’” was published in 1815, and inaugurates Coleridge’s lasting reputation as “the noticeable Man with large grey eyes.” In 1886, T. Hall Caine argues that the “noticeable Man with large grey eyes” is

not Coleridge, though he provides no other candidate to whom this reference would refer in Wordsworth's poem (417).

<sup>6</sup> Coleridge contributes to his own public image as an opium habituate. In the short preface to "Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream," he dramatizes opium consumption (or, "prescribed anodynes") and identifies it with the process of literary creation (511).

<sup>7</sup> Crabb Robinson calls *The Confessions* "a melancholy composition, a fragment of autobiography in emulation of Coleridge's diseased egotism" (1: 267). While such criticism casually dismisses the *Confessions* as "melancholy," "fragmentary," and blandly imitative, it anticipates the ease with which audiences will intuit correlations between De Quincey and Coleridge's characters though their long-standing habits throughout the nineteenth century.

<sup>8</sup> Berridge's *Opium and the People* is the standard text for discussions of how the medicalization and politicization of opium in the Victorian period shifted attitudes about opium consumption in the nineteenth and twentieth century.

<sup>9</sup> The *OED* credits the etymological introduction of these three terms to the 1822 *Confessions* and the autobiographical essay, "The English Mail Coach." It should come as no surprise that De Quincey participates in the growth of the English language since his article, "Language," reminds his readers of the inevitability of a growing English vocabulary: "No language is stationary...New ideas, new aspects of old ideas, new relations of objects to each other, or to man—the subject who contemplates those objects—absolutely insists on new words" (161).

<sup>10</sup> Dr. John Jones's *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* (1700) and Dr. Richard Mead's *A Mechanical Account of Poisons* (1702) remained standard treatises on the physical and mental effects of opium consumption through the nineteenth century. See Berridge (Parts 1-4) for early nineteenth-century attitudes of opium consumption. See Schivelbusch for a social history of intoxicants and Hayter's *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Chapters 1-2) for a brief account of the history of opium in England. Hayter directly addresses Jones's medical treatise with characteristic candor. She calls *The Mysteries of Opium Revealed* "an insidious misleading book, not the less engaging for being slightly mad" (25).

<sup>11</sup> See Gill's excellent *Wordsworth: A Life* (Chapter 8) for an account of how Coleridge's opium habit and consequent ill health put undue pressure on his friendship with William and Dorothy Wordsworth. Coleridge's opium use was known among his circle, and in a letter to Lady Beaumont, Dorothy Wordsworth expresses her concern over the extent of his reliance on opium: "Coleridge is pretty well at present, though ailing at some time in every day. He does not take such strong stimulants as he did, but I fear he will never be able to leave them off entirely...." (*MY*: 1.111). While Dr. Thomas Trotter's *Essay* is specifically about the dangers of alcohol, he regularly addresses the potential threat of opium: "It is admitted, I think on all hands, that narcotic medicines, or I will take the chief of them, opium, is universally found to be hurtful and improper, in all *sthenic* diseases, or those reputed to be inflammatory in the nature" (41) [original emphasis].

<sup>12</sup> In "Coleridge and Opium-Eating," De Quincey first raises the question about how both he and Coleridge began to use opium as a medical treatment: "...toothache is recorded in that book [the 1822 *Confessions*] as the particular occasion which first introduced the author to the knowledge of opium. Whether afterwards, having been thus initiated by the demon of pain, the opium

confessor did not apply powers thus discovered to purposes of mere pleasure, is a question for himself; and the same question applies with the same cogency to Coleridge. Coleridge began in rheumatic pains. What then? That is no proof that he did not end in voluptuousness” (132). De Quincey avoids the question of his own “voluptuous” indulgence of opium by hiding behind the anonymity of his own authorship of the article. Though, after the infamous 1834-35 *Tait’s* biographical “Samuel Taylor Coleridge” series, De Quincey’s authorship of this article would not have been difficult to surmise. All in all, this quote calls readers’ attention to the opium-eaters’ own knowledge about what constitutes acceptable and forbidden use of opium in the nineteenth century.

<sup>13</sup> Without question, attitudes towards drugs change over time, though the threats associated with drug use seem to consistently center around the problems of long-term repeated use. Driscoll reminds us of how our preconceived notions of the effects of drug use tend to overwrite the substances, themselves: “Culture makes the leap from ‘drugs’ to ‘addiction’ magically instantaneous. For us drugs *means* addiction, and visa versa” (9) [original emphasis].

<sup>14</sup> See Whale (Chapter 5) for analysis of how De Quincey positions his reader as a mediator between himself and the confession genre he works within.

<sup>15</sup> Any impropriety leveled at De Quincey for publishing biographical articles so soon after Coleridge’s death has more to do with the anecdotal content of his reportage and less with his timing. After all, Heraud’s “Reminiscences of Coleridge, Biographical, Philosophical, Poetical, and Critical” appeared in *Frasier’s Magazine* in October 1834—only one month after De Quincey’s first installment in *Tait’s*.

<sup>16</sup> Carlyle’s assessment of the *Tait’s* articles is more forgiving than Southey’s: “I believe I had myself read the paper on Coleridge, . . . In this paper there were probably within some domestic details or allusions, to which, as familiar to rumour, I had paid little heed; but certain, of general reverence for Coleridge and his gifts and deeds, I had traced, not deficiency in this paper, but glaring exaggeration, coupled with De Quincean drawbacks, which latter had alone struck Southey with such poignancy; or perhaps there had been other more criminal papers, which Southey knew of, and not I?” (324-25). Lindop looks beyond what critics historically perceive as the adversarial posturing and “exaggeration” of the *Tait’s* articles, and suggests that the articles have the “tone of one who is too close to his subject” (*Life* 317).

<sup>17</sup> As in the *Confessions*, De Quincey positions himself as the most authoritative of Coleridgian biographers. He explains how his response to the anonymous publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* proves he has a track record of seeing what others do not: “Mr. Wordsworth had published the first edition (in a single volume) of the “Lyrical Ballads,” at the end or beginning of which was placed Mr. Coleridge’s poem of the *Ancient Mariner*, . . . It would be directing the reader’s attention too much to myself, if I were to linger upon this, the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind. Let me say in one word, that, at a period when neither the one nor the other writer was valued by the public,—both having a long warfare to accomplish of contumely and ridicule before they could rise in their present estimation,—I found in these poems “the ray of a new morning,” and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men” (Sept: 509). De Quincey implicitly acknowledges that his own discerning critical judgment allows him to actually see beyond the criticism battering the *Lyrical Ballads’s* reception at the time. He is, by his own account, a vigilant reader and a brave critic—one who recognizes “an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds” when others do not.

Undoubtedly, this same kind of skill makes De Quincey a trustworthy biographer of Coleridge despite the many harsh claims he will make about Coleridge.

<sup>18</sup> Such an approach to biography that privileges personal anecdote over factual reportage is evident in how De Quincey announces Coleridge's death in the final installment of the series: "Coleridge, as I now understand, was somewhere about sixty-two years of age when he died. This, however, I take upon the report of the public newspapers; for I do not, of my own knowledge, know anything accurately upon that point" (Jan: 5). De Quincey gives the impression that he hears of Coleridge's death second-hand and that the only information of any bearing is the kind he can weave into his narrative through anecdotal evidence.

<sup>19</sup> See Hayter for more on Coleridge in Malta. In specific, the entries for "Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> April" for the effects of opium upon Coleridge's dreams and how he blames the weather, curiously enough, by invoking slavery: "He maintained that he was an absolute slave to the weather..." (*Voyage* 49).

<sup>20</sup> In *Portraits of Coleridge*, Paley states that James Northcote's portrait of Coleridge in 1804 contains a "dramatic *sturm und drang* quality...In Northcote's rendering the familiar parted lips and visible front teeth contribute to the impression of emotional intensity. A faint dew of perspiration appears on his forehead and the end of his nose, and light reflects from these prominent features" (35-36). Of this reflective "faint dew," Paley revives Kathleen Coburn's speculation that this artistic detail, when considered in conjunction with Coleridge's journal entries at the time of his sitting for Northcote, potentially illustrates the physical side-effects of opium use on Coleridge's face.

<sup>21</sup> See Vickers for Coleridge's early nineteenth-century interaction with the medical establishment.

<sup>22</sup> Gillman's *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* appeared in 1838—a full seven years before De Quincey objects to the claims in the biography.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that Dickens *does* alter this cliché in *Little Dorrit*. Blandois tells Little Dorrit that Gowan's dog has been murdered, and instead of saying the dog was "dead as a door-nail," he puns between "dog" and "Doges" (the chief magistrate of the Venetian Republic). Blandois sneers, "somebody has poisoned that noble dog. He is as dead as the Doges!" (527).

<sup>24</sup> *The Chimes* was published as a novella by Chapman and Hall in 1844. See Standiford for a recent examination of how the popularity and profitability of *A Christmas Carol* saves Dickens from imminent financial ruin after the disappointing sales of his historical novel, *Barnaby Rudge*.

<sup>25</sup> Lindop lists Dickens among a variety of authors influenced by De Quincey: "His [De Quincey's] literary influence has been inconspicuous but remarkably pervasive, a vein of fantasy, introspection and unease tingeing the work of Poe, Stevenson, Dickens, Baudelaire, Proust, Dostoevsky, Borges and many others" (392). As De Quincey's appropriation of the opening of *A Christmas Carol* suggests, Dickens also influences De Quincey to an equally inconspicuous degree.



<sup>26</sup> See Saint-Amour for a parallel reading of *A Christmas Carol* with Joyce's "The Dead." Saint-Amour reads both stories in relation to hospitality, and argues that "the *Carol* invites us to act before the inevitable happens; 'The Dead' asked us to be vigilant in case the unforeseeable should arrive" (112).

<sup>27</sup> See Zieger (Chapters 2 and 3).

<sup>28</sup> In addition to theorizing habit as a metaphysical concept, Dickens makes passing reference to some of Scrooge's idiosyncratic habits when he meets Marley's Ghost. He states, "Scrooge was not in the habit of cracking jokes" and it "was a habit with Scrooge to put his hands in his breeches pockets" (14, 16).

<sup>29</sup> Though Bertman makes no mention of this scene in his analysis of *A Christmas Carol* and Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, he does assign Scrooge (and by extension, Marley) a home in one of Dante's Circles of Hell: "Dante would have consigned Scrooge to the Fourth Circle of his multi-level Hell, a place where misers like Scrooge were perpetually punished by pushing heavy weights that symbolized the burden of materialism" (168).

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 2 for an extended discussion of Coleridge's notebook entry on habit. In this entry, he articulates this fear about what awaits the habituate in the afterlife. He wonders, "Is not *Habit* the Desire of a Desire?—As Desire to Fruition, may not the faint, to the consciousness *erased*, Pencil-mark-*memorials* or relicts of Desire be to Desire itself in its full prominence... Must not the Soul then work eternally inwards, Godward, or Hell-ward—will it not all be Habit?" (*Notebooks* 1: 1421) [original emphases]. Coleridge acts out a paralytic psychosomatic response to opium habituation, and his fear about the soul's resiliency to move "Godward, or Hell-ward" reflects dominant cultural anxieties about habit's impact upon the afterlife.

<sup>31</sup> See Gilbert for a history of the "the Scrooge problem" first addressed by Wilson.

<sup>32</sup> William James acknowledges the possibility of abrupt character change in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, and it would seem as if he has Scrooge in mind when drawing a correlation between habit and punishment: "Sudden conversions, however infrequent they may be, unquestionably do occur. But there is no incompatibility between the general laws I have laid down and the most startling sudden alterations in the way of character... the general laws of habit are no wise altered thereby... the hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way" (53).

<sup>33</sup> In response to this claim to being "the foremost of his admirers," the anonymous critic who blasts De Quincey's "course caricature" sneers, "Heaven preserve all honest men from such forward admirers!" (20).

<sup>34</sup> The textual differences between the 1822 and the 1856 revision of the *Confessions* have been meticulously addressed by Kenneth Forward and Ian Jack. Forward traces how a "painful recollection" (244) of libelous attack in reviews from the 1820s and 1830s motivates revision decisions in the 1856 revision of the *Confessions*, and Jack goes into extraordinary detail about the organizational, stylistic, and elaborated content shift from the first to the final edition.

<sup>35</sup> See Mazzeo (Chapter 2) for a discussion of De Quincey's accusations of Coleridgean plagiarism in relation to habit.

<sup>36</sup> See Paley for a history of Coleridge's portraiture and how his opium-eating influenced his representation in prose sketches and formal portraiture. In particular, see the discussion of the Northcote portrait (pages 35-36) and speculation about how his "glistening" forehead in the portrait may be suggestive of opium withdrawal.

<sup>37</sup> It is worth remembering that Coleridge, himself, already claimed affinity with Shakespeare's Hamlet. He states, "Hamlet's character is the prevalence of the abstracting and generalizing habit over the practical...I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so" (quod. in Bate 160-61).

<sup>38</sup> De Quincey also mentions this scene in the January edition of his "Samuel Taylor Coleridge" series. He refers to the scene as a way Coleridge tried to control his own "thralldom" to opium.

<sup>39</sup> See Wright for connections between psychology, addiction, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

<sup>40</sup> Determining whether the "activity and originality" Alden addresses is in reference to De Quincey or to the collective effort of all the writers he names is frustratingly indistinct. Ticknor and Fields (the editors of *The New Atlantic*) probably embraced such a vague construction given that they released installments of a 22 volume American collection of *De Quincey's Writings* in 1851.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle incorporates a brief mention of De Quincey in the fictional world of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. In "The Man with the Twisted Lip" Watson recalls that "Isa Whitney... was much addicted to opium. The habit grew upon him, as I understand, from some foolish freak when he was at college, for having read De Quincey's description of his dreams and sensations..." (113). The "foolish freak" of reading De Quincey suggests Watson's (and Doyle's) dismissive opinion of De Quincey's work and influence.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen's suggestion that De Quincey is more Coleridgean than Coleridge is similar to how Coleridge identifies himself as more Hartlean than Hartley in a 1794 letter to Robert Southey. Coleridge says, "I am a compleat [*sic*] Necessitarian—and understand the subject as well almost as Hartley himself—but I go farther than Hartley and believe the corporeality of *thought*—namely, that it is motion" (*Letters* 137).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HABIT, LITERARY CREATION, AND THE ‘MAGNETIC SLUMBER’ OF WILKIE COLLINS

De Quincey’s description of his own manageable opium habit and Coleridge’s “record” of habituation failed to influence Victorian distinctions between the two opium-eaters, and Harriet Martineau and Leslie Stephen’s blasé recollections hint at a broader Victorian unwillingness to differentiate between individual cases (and causes) of opium habituation. It is not surprising that out of this climate emerges the Pharmacy Act of 1868: legislation limiting the open sale of opium to a rising professional class of pharmacists. As Virginia Berridge notes, with the passage of the Pharmacy Act came heightened medical and political interventions in discussions about opium that continue to this day.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, I shift from thinking about habit in relation to mid-century literary allusion and textuality to analyzing the relationship between Wilkie Collins’s unconscious literary creation and William James’s educational and psychological theories of habit and hypnosis. Anecdotal accounts of Collins’s abusive educational experience with a bully as a child project the intensity of Jamesian models of habit in education and, I argue, are also the experiences that guide hypnotic suggestion and make unconscious literary creation as an adult possible in Collins. I argue that habit (not opium) is responsible for Collins’s unconscious literary creation while dictating *The Moonstone*. In the novel, Collins explicitly outlines the psychosomatic effects of opium as a behavioral stimulant (not a creative agent) in the imagination. For Collins, opium establishes the conditions for educational and psychological models of habit to spur literary creation. My purpose is to use Collins’s unconscious literary creation as a filter for understanding how late nineteenth-century models of habit converge and form connections between habit, unconscious cognition, invention and creativity, and literary creation.

The same year that medical and political institutions began controlling opium's availability, Wilkie Collins published *The Moonstone*—a novel whose *dénouement* centers on the mysterious behavioral influence of opium, and whose very composition owes much to the influence of opium upon the author.<sup>2</sup> According to anecdotal evidence, when Wilkie Collins dictated *The Moonstone* to an amanuensis, he consumed extraordinary amounts of laudanum (a combination of wine and opium) to combat depression and rheumatism. He repeatedly lost consciousness throughout his working sessions, though he continued a coherent unconscious narration of the novel. Collins's opium habituation was common knowledge to his friends and inner circle, and he credits opium with helping him complete the novel on schedule for its serial publication in Dickens's *All the Year Round*.<sup>3</sup> It is easy to infer how such personal knowledge of opium influences his fiction; after all, as Alethea Hayter quips, *The Moonstone* “has a Chinese box intricacy; the actions of an opium-dosed man are described by an opium addict who is the invention of a writer heavily dosed with opium” (*Opium and the Romantic Imagination* 259). While Hayter convincingly debunks the myth about drug use's influence upon creative capability, in the absence of any other plausible reason for such a seemingly unaccountable situation, it is all too easy to continue to reduce the literary merits of Collins's “intricacy” and “invention” in *The Moonstone* to opium's imagined influence upon the authorial imagination.

Collins first explained the tumultuous circumstances complicating the composition of *The Moonstone* in the 1871 “Preface” to the revised, second edition of the novel. He remembers the devastating combination of his mother's death and the debilitating pains of rheumatic gout as “the bitterest affliction of [his] life and the severest illness from which [he has] ever suffered” (xxxiii). The emotional distress and physical pain (accentuated, perhaps, by the pressures of looming deadlines) threatened to jeopardize the serial publication of the novel. To combat the emotional distress occasioned by his mother's death and to allay the physical pain of gout, Collins consumed large amounts of laudanum to ease his physical and mental suffering. With the

brio of a man looking back and recognizing he has outlasted his own personal challenges, Collins notes in the 1871 “Preface” how completing *The Moonstone* was a crossroads in his literary career: “I doubt if I should have lived to write another book, if the responsibility of the weekly publication of this story had not forced me to rally my sinking energies of body and mind—to dry my useless tears, and to conquer my merciless pains” (xxxiii). The fruits of successfully fulfilling his authorial “responsibilities” are evident in the lasting popularity of *The Moonstone* in the late nineteenth and twentieth century—a novel T.S. Eliot called “the first and greatest of English detective novels” (“Collins and Dickens” 377).<sup>4</sup>

The plot of novel centers on the disappearance of an exotic yellow diamond bequeathed to Rachel Verinder on her eighteenth birthday by her unscrupulous uncle, Colonel John Herncastle. The diamond is universally admired and described as “large, or nearly, as a plover’s egg! The light that streamed from it was like the light of the harvest moon” (68). It is sought after by a trio of Indian jugglers who have inherited the responsibility of returning the diamond to its original home in India. Their lurking presence outside the Verinder estate inspires anxiety about the safety of the diamond, and makes them chief suspects when it is eventually stolen out of Rachel’s bedroom. Multiple narrators share the task of detailing the circumstances surrounding the inexplicable disappearance of the gem: including Gabriel Betteredge (the house steward), Miss Clack (Rachel’s comically overzealous cousin), Franklin Blake (the chief protagonist), Sergeant Cuff (a celebrated detective), and the mysterious Ezra Jennings (an opium-addicted medical assistant to Mr. Candy). After multiple failed investigations into the disappearance of the diamond, Jennings pieces together clues suggesting the original culprit was acting in an opium-induced, hypnotic trance.

In short, on the evening of the disappearance Mr. Candy slips a moderate dose of opium into Franklin Blake’s drink as a practical joke. Later that night, in an opium-induced somnambulistic trance, Blake walks into Rachel Verinder’s bedroom, takes the diamond from

her dressing table, and disposes of it without retaining any memory of having participated in its disappearance. Near the conclusion of the novel, Jennings proposes recreating the situation of the original night of the gem's disappearance, and he administers a dose of opium to Blake—who then unconsciously retraces his own steps the night of the disappearance in an identical somnambulistic state. In the 1868 "Preface" to the novel, Collins insists on the verisimilitude of this "physiological experiment": that is, opium not only produces unconscious physical behavior, but by staging the exact circumstances of the original night, opium consumption reproduces the very same original acts. Collins "declines to avail [himself] of the novelists' privilege of supposing something which might have happened, and have so shaped the story as to make it grow out of what actually would have happened—which, I beg to inform my readers, is also what actually does happen, in these pages" (xxxix). Such authorial assurances about the truthfulness of Blake's experience blur the line between fact and fiction, and we should therefore assume that the principles set in place about opium in the text are the same for the real world of the reader and the author.

Unlike the drama of the missing diamond, Collins does not draw out the mystery of the psychosomatic effects of opium upon the individual. Blake, like the reader, demands a plausible explanation for how opium prompts such strange, unconscious behavior. Jennings's account is worth quoting at length because he elaborates on how opium heightens subconscious anxieties and stimulates somatic behavior in response to psychological unrest:

'The action of opium is comprised, in the majority of cases, in two influences—a stimulating influence first, and a sedative influence afterwards. Under the stimulating influence, the latest and most vivid impressions left on your mind—namely, the impressions relating to the Diamond—would be likely, in your morbidly sensitive nervous condition, to become intensified in your brain, and would subordinate to themselves your judgment and your will—exactly as an ordinary dream subordinates to itself your judgment and your will. Little by little, under this action, any apprehensions about the safety of the Diamond which you might have felt during the day would be liable to develop themselves from the state of doubt to the state of certainty—would impel you into practical action to preserve the jewel—would direct your steps, with that motive in view, into the room you entered—and would guide your hand to the drawers of

the cabinet, until you had found the drawer which held the stone. In the spiritualized intoxication of opium, you would do all that. Later, as the sedative action began to gain on the stimulant action, you would slowly become inert and stupefied. Later still you would fall into a deep sleep. When the morning came, and the effect of the opium had been all slept off, you would wake as absolutely ignorant of what you had done in the night as if you had been living at the Antipodes.' (435)<sup>5</sup>

In Jennings's account, opium affects the mind in two ways: it actively "stimulates" somatic behavior in response to heightened states of emotional anxiety, and then its influence tapers off and leaves the individual in a passive, "inert and stupefied" state of mental relaxation and amnesia. Opium translates an impression on the mind into a physical manifestation of that anxiety, so the first time Blake consumes opium the night of Rachel's birthday it triggers him to unconsciously dramatize his psychological anxieties over the safety of the diamond. But herein lay a chief misconception about opium's impact on the mind. Opium does not create Blake's paranoia; it simply prompts an unconscious expression of those mental anxieties. After all, opium only "*impels* [Blake] into practical action," "*directs* [his] steps," and "*guides* [his] hand to the drawers of the cabinet." In the life of the novel, opium is not responsible for creating anything in the imagination, only taking sensations and motivations that are already lodged in the mind and translating them into physical action.

The psychosomatic effects of opium are explained by Ezra Jennings, the novel's resident opium habituate, but it is worth remembering that Collins makes it clear Franklin Blake is *not* habituated to opium. Blake owns that he is not "accustomed" to its effect, and until Mr. Candy slipped opium in his drink, he "never had tasted [opium] in [his] life" (423, 426). Even though Blake is not an opium habituate, the "physiological experiment" of the novel relies upon similar principles of repetition, embedded desires, and unconscious mental and physical activity that simulate habituation. In Collins's novel, even isolated acts of opium consumption resemble states of habituation. It is perhaps this very property of opium to *resemble* habituation that so unnerves Victorian audiences and prompts passage of the Pharmacy Act of 1868.

All information about opium in the novel comes exclusively from the opium-addicted Ezra Jennings. As with Collins, his habituation is a result of medical necessity: “the progress of the disease [an incurable internal complaint] has gradually forced me from the use of opium to the abuse of it....My nervous system is shattered; my nights are nights of horror” (422).<sup>6</sup> Biographer Kenneth Robinson wonders aloud about the relationship between the author and his character: “who can doubt that Wilkie had endured many a night such as that described in Ezra Jennings’ journal?” (223). Despite all of these physical tortures, Jennings can continue to work as a medical assistant and aid in the investigation into the disappearance of the diamond—much as Collins continues to write the novel while under similar physical and mental distress. Jennings even goes so far as to suggest that opium influences him (because of his habituation) far differently than it does with Blake. Before Jennings provides the important explanation of opium’s impact upon the mind quoted above, he states that he is currently under the effects of opium: “I am, at this moment, exerting my intelligence (such as it is) in your service, under the influence of a dose of laudanum, some ten times larger than the dose Mr. Candy administered to you” (434). In Collins’s text, opium produces behaviors reminiscent of habit in those who have never used opium before. Opium only simulates habituation in Blake, but the opium habit’s impact upon the mind of a habituate like Jennings (or even Collins) is altogether negligible.

Critics and biographers rely on two anecdotal accounts of Collins’s opium consumption to contextualize its impact upon his literary production. In their memoirs, William Winter and Mary Anderson each outline their relationship to Collins and both make suggestive reference to Collins’s personal account of his opium consumption while dictating *The Moonstone*. Winter downplays the role of opium to the overall composition and originality of the novel, and his anecdote is worth quoting in its entirety because he so stridently insists on the merit of Collins’s literary production despite the author’s opium use:



On the occasion of my last meeting with Collins...not long before his death (on September 23, 1889), we sat together from noon till after midnight, talking of many subjects,—men, women, books, opinions, feelings and events...At that time, and indeed throughout his later years, he was obliged, occasionally, to consume laudanum. He had originally been compelled to use that drug because of excruciating pain, caused by rheumatic gout in the eyes, and it had become to him, more or less, an indispensable anodyne.

‘My suffering was so great,’ he said, ‘when I was writing ‘The Moonstone,’ [sic] that I could not control myself and keep quiet. My cries and groans so deeply distressed my amanuensis, to whom I was dictating, that he could not continue his work, and had to leave me. After that I employed several other men, with the same result: no one of them could endure the strain. At last I engaged a young woman, stipulating that she must utterly disregard my sufferings and attend solely to my words. This she declared that she could and would do, and this, to my amazement (because the most afflicting of my attacks came upon me after her arrival), she indubitably and exactly did. I was blind with pain, and I lay on the couch writhing and groaning. In that condition and under those circumstances I dictated the greater part of ‘The Moonstone.’

Collins mentioned, I remember, that the accession of pain began at the point where Miss Clack is introduced into the narrative, so that the essentially humorous part of that fascinating story was composed by its indomitable author when he was almost frenzied with physical torture. The art of the fabric, nevertheless, is perfect: the invention never flags; the playful, satirical humor, with its vein of veiled scorn for canting hypocrisy, meanness, and spite, flows on in a smooth, silver ripple of felicitous words, and the style is crystal clear. ‘Opium sometimes hurts,’ he said, that day, ‘but also, *sometimes*, it helps. In general, people know nothing about it.’

The reader must not infer, from what is here said, that Wilkie Collins was a man of weak character, self-indulgent, and subservient to the ‘opium habit.’ Such an inference would be unjust to the memory of a great writer and a noble person...He possessed an extraordinary mind, and in adding a body of original, vital, imaginative fiction to the literature of his country he accomplished an extraordinary work. But during the greater part of his life he was an invalid, and, remembering the circumstances under which he wrote, it is amazing that he accomplished so much. (211-15) [original emphasis]

Winter’s first person approximation of Collins’s conversation creates the illusion of hearing much of this story directly from Collins, himself.<sup>7</sup> Throughout the anecdote, Winter downplays Collins’s opium use by presenting it in relation to a “compulsion” for “occasional” use only due to excruciating rheumatic pain throughout his life. While opium may be an “indispensable anodyne” throughout Collins’s life, Winter insists he never becomes “self-indulgent, and subservient to the ‘opium habit’”— a reflection of the suspicion about opium consumption discussed at the opening of this chapter. Undoubtedly, Winter attempts to preserve Collins’s dignity and integrity as a writer, and he chooses to celebrate the inventiveness of the novel by

highlighting the originality and vitality of Collins's imagination despite the excruciating pain the author experienced. But his effusive praise for the "smooth silver ripple of felicitous words" becomes entangled in Collins's own opinion about opium. Indeed, the most striking phrase in the entire anecdote comes from Collins about his relationship to opium: "Opium sometimes hurts...but also, *sometimes*, it helps. In general, people know nothing about it." In this statement, Collins claims to understand opium better than most people, and given Winter's efforts to shield Collins from perceptions about opium, Collins would probably lump him in the category of those who know little about opium.

Mary Anderson's anecdote, like Winter's, expands upon Collins's unconscious literary creation, and she records a conversation with Collins about the pain he suffered while writing *The Moonstone*.<sup>8</sup> While Winter minimizes the influence of opium upon Collins's creative processes, Anderson emphasizes the effects of opium on Collins's imagination:

A great sufferer from gout in the eyes, he was forced to seek relief in opium. It was under its potent influence, he told me, that he invented the *dénouement* of 'The Moonstone' [*sic*]. 'I could find no amanuensis,' he said, 'to take down my dictation uninterruptedly, for at every paroxysm of pain they would invariably stop work to come to my assistance. Finally a young girl was found who wrote on steadily in spite of my cries. To her I dictated much of the book, the last part largely under the effects of opium. When it was finished I was not only pleased and astonished at the *finale*, but did not recognize it as my own.' (141-42) [original emphases]<sup>9</sup>

Anderson frames Collins's opium use as something "forced" upon him because of bodily pain, and she indirectly seconds Winter's assertion that Collins was not a needlessly indulgent habituate. While Winter tries to screen Collins's literary creation and legacy from the potentially tainting influence of opium, Anderson's account implies that opium contributed to the very aspects of the novel Winter so enthusiastically celebrates. Placed back in the context of opium's "stimulating and sedative" effects outlined by Jennings in *The Moonstone*, opium would seem to simply translate ideas that were already lodged in Collins's mind into literary expression. Unlike his characters, Collins does not wander around looking for a diamond, but he does compose

sections of a novel based on knowledge and ideas already in his mind. And just as Blake did not remember his own unconscious actions, Collins tellingly “did not recognize [the *finale*] as [his] own.” Oscar Wilde’s aphorism, “Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life” rings especially true for Wilkie Collins and the composition of *The Moonstone* (82).

Biographers and critics draw different conclusions from Winter and Anderson’s respective accounts of Collins’s unconscious literary creation. Anthea Trodd notes how a “heavily drugged” Collins “duplicates his hero’s activities in the novel” and yet cannot duplicate the invention and success of *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* for the remainder of his career. But Alethea Hayter insists that such a decline in the quality of his literary production is not attributable to opium consumption. For Hayter, Collins is the definitive proof supporting her argument in *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* that opium consumption has a negligible impact upon one’s capacity for literary production: the case of Collins “finally disposes of the theory that opium necessarily prevents a writer from doing his work, if further proof were needed in the face of shelves-full of works produced by Coleridge and De Quincey” (259). Biographers such as Kenneth Robinson, William Marshall, and N. P. Davis gloss over the unconscious literary creation as more conclusive evidence of his opium dependency into the 1860s and 70s, and William M. Clark is more interested in speculating on the identity of the female amanuensis who successfully worked through Collins’s expression of his mental and physical pain. John Sutherland concludes that Collins’s unconscious literary creation is a fabrication, a relatively harmless “misremembering or a fib—inspired, I would guess, by Scott’s fib about *The Bride of Lammermoor*” (xxxvi).<sup>10</sup> Throughout the remainder of this chapter, I argue that theories of habit as an educational and psychological agent explain such unconscious literary production of the novel beyond myths about opium’s supposed impact upon the imagination.

## II

William Winter draws special attention to Collins's ingenuity in Miss Clack's narrative, and he applauds Collins's ability to maintain the humor of the narrative despite his own physical suffering.<sup>11</sup> Clack's section of the novel is an appropriate entry point into questions about psychology, habit, education, and literary production because she so stridently makes connections between habit and her own contribution to the narrative. Since childhood, Clack has recorded noteworthy events in her diary, and she is eager to convince readers that her sensible and dedicated habits invest her share of the narrative with a deliberate organizational principle:

I am indebted to my dear parents (both now in heaven) for having had habits of order and regularity instilled into me at a very early age.

In that happy bygone time, I was taught to keep my hair tidy at all hours of the day and night, and to fold up every article of my clothing carefully, in the same order, on the same chair, in the same place at the foot of the bed, before retiring to rest. An entry of the day's events in my little diary invariably preceded the folding up...I have continued to fold my clothes, and to keep my little diary. The former habit links me to my happy childhood—before papa was ruined. The latter habit—hitherto mainly useful in helping me to discipline the fallen nature which we all inherit from Adam—has unexpectedly proved important to my humble interests in quite another way...Everything was entered (thanks to my early training) day by day as it happened; and everything down to the smallest particular, shall be told here...All I can do is to state the facts as they were stated...proceeding on the plan which I have been taught from infancy to adopt in folding up my clothes. Everything shall be put neatly, and everything shall be put in its place. (214-18)

The "order and regularity" of Clack's narrative is predicated upon the strength of the habits she has cultivated from youth. Her narrative mimics her methodological approach to organizing her clothes: "everything shall be put neatly, and everything shall be put in its place" (218).<sup>12</sup>

Multiple habits (sartorial, psychological, and educational) converge in Clack's eagerness to contribute to the narrative structure of the novel. Clack's capacity for narrative creativity is limited by her secondary role in the novel; nevertheless, habit makes her contribution possible as she "stat[es] the facts as they were stated" and "proceed[s] on the plan which [she has] been taught from infancy."<sup>13</sup>

Miss Clack links habit and literary production in the text, and I use William James's *The Talks to Teachers on Psychology* (1899) and *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to connect

Collins's own early habit formation in educational situations with the unconscious literary creation of *The Moonstone*. In *Talks to Teachers* James calls mankind "mere bundles of habit, we are stereotyped creatures, imitators and copiers of our past selves...it follows first of all that the teacher's prime concern should be to ingrain into the pupil that assortment of habits that shall be most useful to him throughout life" (48).<sup>14</sup> Habit's importance to models of education has been explored at length in Chapter 1, but I use Jamesian habit in pedagogic situations to foreground questions about what, exactly, Collins "stereotypes," "imitates" and "copies" from his younger self as he unconsciously composes *The Moonstone*.

Collins recounts a formative educational experience from his childhood in a private conversation with novelist and memoirist Lucy Walford. During a dinner party, she remembers Collins "in a retrospective and expansive mood," and at her suggestion he began telling stories about his early childhood education (60). He includes a story about the perils of sharing a room with a roommate he called a "bully and a bad sleeper":

His school-days, he said, were for some time embittered by his having as a bedroom mate a great, hulking fellow, his senior by some years, who was a bully and a bad sleeper.

'Since *he* could not sleep, no one else should—in especial, the little wretch who would have slumbered soundly under his very nose, if he had been allowed. The little wretch had a knack for telling stories, which he must be made to exercise for the benefit of betters.

'Accordingly, sleepy as I was and often dead tired, I had to sit up and invent,' said Mr. Collins, 'and horrid it was, I can tell you. My tyrant made for himself a cat-o'-nine tails; and as often as my voice died away, he leaned across his bed and gave me a cut or two with it which started me afresh.

'I cried, of course, what little chap wouldn't?—but all the same, I had no difficulty in making the story go, if only I were kept awake—and my tormentor saw to that.

'And do you know, I owe him a debt of gratitude,' continued Mr. Collins, looking down on me thoughtfully, 'though he little meant to do me a good turn, and was only bent on his own selfish amusement.

'But it is a fact that it was this brute who first awakened in me, his poor little victim, a power, of which but for him I might never have been aware. Certainly no one in my own home credited me with it; and when I left school I still continued story-telling for my own pleasure. After a while,—well, you know the rest...' (62) [original emphasis]<sup>15</sup>

This interaction between young Collins and his bullying roommate stands as a formative, educational moment for the young story teller. Recalling his own “knack for telling stories, which he must be made to exercise for the benefit of betters,” Collins credits the bully with actually helping him cultivate a habit for instantaneous literary creation and creativity. The relationship between young Collins and the bully is reminiscent of that between a student and his teacher—reminding us, perhaps, of Montaigne’s ‘violent and deceiving schoole-mistris’ from Chapter 1. Through repeated nightly “exercise,” the bully unwittingly trains young Collins so that his rudimentary “knack” for creativity becomes the substantial habits of invention that he refers to as “a power, of which but for him I might never have been aware.” The end of Collins’s anecdote is especially striking in that it credits his success as an author to this otherwise brutal educational experience. The anecdote raises more questions than it answers about how this situation with the bully resonated into his later life as an author: were the nightly storytelling sessions prolonged and repeated enough to engrain habits of instantaneous invention deep enough to last into adulthood? Did the “awakening” and the “power” Collins mentions involve the desire or the capacity to tell stories?

James’s *Talks to Teachers* can help make sense of how habits settle in young Collins with each repetition of the nightly confrontations with the bully. James describes educational environments as akin to those on a battlefield: “In war, all you have to do is to work your enemy into a position from which the natural obstacles prevent him from escaping if he tries to...Just so in teaching, you must simply work your pupil into such a state of interest in what you are going to teach him that every other object of attention is banished from his mind (16).<sup>16</sup> Young Collins’s bully “worked [his] pupil into such a state of interest” with the help of his cat-o’-nine tails which correlates with James’s emphasis on the importance (among other psychological principles) of early habit formation as a strategy for instilling disciplined student attention. James does not advocate such corporal punishment, though he does task teachers with the

responsibly to maintain control over students. He lists a variety of maxims designed to help teachers discipline students toward the right kinds of educational and life habits. From “launching ourselves with as strong and decided an initiative as possible” to “Keep[ing] the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day,” James is more interested advising teachers how to use habit in the classroom as opposed to theorizing how habit operates in the mind, which he explores in greater detail in the *Principles of Psychology* (49, 52).<sup>17</sup>

The relationship between habit and education is integral to James, and he insists that “Ninety-nine hundredths or, possibly, nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of our activity is purely automatic” (48). Such a statement refers to myriad of behaviors and tasks individuals repeat throughout the course of a day, but to extend this behavior to unconscious literary creation in Collins helps account for how he dictated *The Moonstone*. Of his experience with the bully, Collins has said that “I learnt to be amusing on a short notice—and have derived benefit from those early lessons” (qtd. in Robinson 31). This is a suggestive moment if we consider what he means by “deriving benefit” from those early lessons in relation to his larger career as an author.

James concludes his lecture on habit in *The Talks to Teachers* by equating proper habit formation to, oddly enough, a kind of metaphorical homeowner’s insurance:

Asceticism of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his house and goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return. But if the fire *does* come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin. So with the man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things. (52-53) [original emphasis]

This pedagogical moment with the bully in Collins is the very same “insurance” he pays on his own literary future. But the question remains whether the situation with the bully was repeated enough to embed habits of spontaneous literary creation in Collins—whether he had been “inured to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial” enough to last into his adulthood. There is no denying from Collins’s anecdote that he sees his nightly story-telling with the bully as a formative experience, but was it enough to act as the kind of “insurance”

James calls attention to when he was suffering under the effects of rheumatic gout and his mother's death when he was composing *The Moonstone* in 1866 and 1867?

James deals with how this behavioral asceticism takes root in the psyche in *Principles of Psychology*. In *Principles of Psychology*, there is a connection between the long-term effects of habit and the strength of a single, isolated sensation: "It scarcely, indeed, admits of doubt, that every state of ideational consciousness which is either *very strong* or is *habitually repeated*, leaves an organic impression on the Cerebrum; in virtue of which the same state may be reproduced at any future time, in response to a suggestion fitted to excite it...The 'strength of early associations' is a fact so universally recognized, that the express of it has become proverbial" (116) (original emphases). James sets up an either/or scenario for how habits embed themselves in the psyche: habits are produced either by repetition extended over time, or through the strength of an impression. James provides two scenarios in which instantaneous creation could either have been habitually engrained in Collins through nightly routine with the bully, or the strength of the bully's "cat o' nine tails" impressed upon him this skill. If the latter, this is especially interesting because it stands as an example of habit formation that does not require repetition to embed itself in the mind. Within a Jamesian system of behavioral psychology repetition produces habit, but strong impressions also have the power to *simulate* habit in the mind without the temporal constraints of repetition.

The two ways habit can form in James's theory of habit do not actually impact the power of habit to forecast behavior over time. After all, James memorably refers to habit as the "fly-wheel of society," linked especially to early training and vocation:

Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and the frozen



zone. It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again.<sup>18</sup>

Habit, broadly conceived as it is in the above quotation, buffers individuals from the stresses inherent in class and vocation. For James, habit is a combination of individual nature and “early choice” and it preserves the social order despite the many hardships inherent in one’s vocation—perhaps reminding us of the asceticism of habit formation described in *The Talks to Teachers*. Habit “keeps” the fisherman on his boat despite harsh weather, “holds” the miner in the pits despite the dangers, and “nails” the lumberjack to his forest. In Collins’s case, habit keeps the novelist to his writing—despite his mother’s death, despite the pains of rheumatic ocular gout, and despite the unconsciousness of an opium-induced hypnotism.<sup>19</sup>

What remains puzzling is *how* habit influenced unconscious literary creation. In order to flesh out a theory of how to understand Collins’s unconscious literary creation, we can continue to rely on Jamesian habit in relation to hypnosis as outlined in the *Principles of Psychology*.<sup>20</sup> In “Hypnotism,” James discusses the multiple ways to induce the “‘hypnotic,’ ‘mesmeric,’ or ‘magnetic’ trace” through any variety of relaxation techniques, focusing the attention on a stationary object, or being told they are taking or touching items that have been “magnetized” (1194-95). James notes how the combination of habit and hypnosis produces an alternate educational environment: “The law of habit dominates hypnotic subjects even more than it does waking ones. Any sort of personal peculiarity, any trick accidentally fallen into in the first instance by some one subject, may, by attracting attention, become stereotyped, serve as a pattern for imitation, and figure as the type of a school” (1201). The patterned “stereotyping” is familiar to discussions of Jamesian habit and education—after all, he referred to men as “stereotyped creatures, imitators and copiers of our past selves” (*Talks to Teachers* 48). James thinks through the hypnotic state as being propelled by unconscious habits.<sup>21</sup>

James outlines the theory of suggestion as the most effective way to induce hypnotic

states. But for suggestion to work, a “trance-like” state must already present. He states, “All the facts seem to prove that, until this trance-like state is assumed by the patient, suggestion produces very insignificant results, but that, when it is once assumed, there are no limits to suggestion’s power. The state in question has many affinities with ordinary sleep. It is probable, in fact, that we all pass through it transiently whenever we fall asleep” (1199-1200). The opium-induced trance Collins was already in coupled with the entrenched habits of creative production from his experience with the bully would appear to prepare Collins for hypnotic suggestibility.

A school bully forces a young Wilkie Collins to stay up late at night and invent stories on the spot or else face physical assaults. From the distance of upwards of forty years, Collins looks back on this experience with his bullying roommate as a formative experience in his life. Within a Jamesian model of habit, the strength of an early impression (as opposed to its repetition) can engrain itself with the psyche of an individual, investing it with “the power of suggestion” to induce a hypnotic state. The unconscious literary creation of Collins’s narration may be occasioned by opium use, but the creativity and literary production have roots in early habit formation, educational precedent, and the recall occasioned by hypnotic suggestion.

### III

William James’s model of habit helps us clarify how literary production is even possible in an opium-induced, unconscious trance. Sadly, Collins himself never elaborates upon his own creativity while writing *The Moonstone* beyond the two anecdotes in William Winter and Mary Anderson’s memoirs. But Collins does explain his own procedures of literary creation for novels like *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* in a short article, “How I Write My Books: Related in a Letter to a Friend.” Unfortunately, instead of expounding upon his own creativity, he reduces novel writing to a formulaic, step-by-step process—using *The Woman in White* as an exemplar for explaining how he arrives at a suitable subject, develops his characters, and settles on the conflicts that will define plot and action. He states, “All my novels are produced by the

same literary method...My first proceeding is to get my central idea—the pivot on which the story turns...First effort: to begin at the beginning. Second effort: to keep the story always advancing...Third effort: to decide on the end... The end being decided on, I go back again to the beginning, and look at it with a new eye, and fail to be satisfied with it” (546). Within the scope of a few short sentences, Collins simplifies novel writing to a relatively unimaginative set of prescriptions, and it is all too easy to mistake commentary about his own creativity in what is an otherwise bland explanation of his own procedures in “How I *Write My Books*.”

To be fair, Collins momentarily moves beyond the processes by which he writes his books and he touches on how he invents his characters. He notes the difficulty he experienced when trying to envision a female character to stand in counterpoint to Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*. He states, “Experience tells me to take no more trouble about it, and leave that other woman to come of her own accord. The next morning, before I have been awake in my bed for more than ten minutes, my perverse brains set to work without consulting me” (546). The character that materializes from this vague explanation is Marian Halcolmbe. But Collins’s explanation of how he invents such an important character like Halcolmbe is frustratingly indistinct. Within this construction, creative invention is an embodied, externalized agent, coming and going of its own accord, ultimately finding literary expression incidental to any sort of active, authorial imaginative agency. Collins may provide a thorough account of how he “writes” his books, but the underlying creative process is shrouded in as much mystery as his novels.

The “perverse,” mechanistic mind moving ahead with storylines without Collins’s conscious awareness has an obvious corollary in the opium-induced unconscious literary creation of *The Moonstone*. By highlighting experience, time, repetition, and the unconscious mind in his above explanation of how Marian Halcolmbe springs to life in his imagination, Collins actually foregrounds the aggregates of habit formation as the underlying principle of his own creative

endeavour. In “How I Write My Novels,” Collins makes novel writing appear effortless—in part, because habit operates in the mind like the Jamesian “flywheel.” By the end of “How I Write My Novels,” Collins continues to side-step questions about the ease of his own literary production: “You are kind enough to allude, in terms of approval, to my method of writing English, and to ask if my style comes to me easily. It comes easily, I hope, to you” (547).

Collins does not directly answer the question, though by thinking through how habit mechanizes the creative process during bouts of unconsciousness while writing *The Moonstone*, it is less that creativity and invention come easily to Collins as much as it is that invention becomes tied to habit formation in the literary imagination.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> See Berridge (Chapters 14-17) for an in-depth analysis of attitudes toward opium in the late nineteenth-century extending through the heroin epidemic in England in the 1960s. The force of legislation to control opium consumption and distribution was not limited to England. In the “Preface” to *Habits that Handicap* (1915), Charles Towns notes how legislation protecting Americans from opium abuse has been slow to catch on, despite laws against other substances like mercury. Towns insists that “opium and its derivatives threaten the entire public, especially those who are sick and in pain, and with a fate far more terrible than death—a thralldom [*sic*] of misery, inefficiency, and disgrace” (v).

<sup>2</sup> Driscoll argues that *The Moonstone* provides a pro-drug stance in contrast to the negative perceptions of opium use implied by the passage of the Pharmacy Act: “Collins was writing against the current of the Pharmacy Act and its line of thought...he was striving to maintain the place of opium as a substance that can help the community, rather than as a dangerous poison that it must expel” (24).

<sup>3</sup> Collins was absolutely unapologetic about his opium consumption even in the face of negative Victorian attitudes about its medical application. In a letter to Edward Pigott in 1887, Collins laments that Pigott continues to suffer from a cough and ends the letter with an emphatic, “If you could only take opium!—I say no more” (544).

<sup>4</sup> While Eliot thinks *The Woman in White* the better novel, he states that *The Moonstone* is “best balanced between plot and character” (377).

<sup>5</sup> Jennings pulls together both scientific and literary evidence to support his explanation about opium-induced unconscious behavior. He insists that “science sanctions my proposal,” and he makes passing reference to Dr. William Benjamin Carpenter’s *The Principles of General and Comparative Physiology* and *The Principles of Human Physiology*, as well as Dr. John Elliotson’s *Human Physiology* as his scientific precedent (432-33). He also hands Blake a copy of Thomas De Quincey’s “far-famed” *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and tells Blake to

read the section where De Quincey goes to the opera under the influence of opium to illustrate the kind of cognition that is possible while under the influence of opium (434).

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Yates's obituary for Collins (published on 25 September 1889 in *The World*) states that Collins "was in the habit of taking daily...more laudanum than would have sufficed to kill a ship's crew or company of soldiers" (qtd. in Gasson 119). This sounds a lot like De Quincey's claim to have given the visiting Malay a "quantity [of opium] enough to kill three dragoons and their horses" (1822: 63).

<sup>7</sup> Winter states that Collins used Sir Walter Scott to defend his opium consumption while writing *The Moonstone*. Indeed, Lockhart's description of Scott's physical pain resembles Winter and Anderson's anecdotes about Collins: "[Scott] often turned himself on his pillow with a groan of torment, he usually continued the sentence in the same breath. But when dialogue of peculiar animation was in progress, spirit seemed to triumph altogether over matter—he arose from his couch and walked up and down the room, raising and lowering his voice, and as it were acting the parts. It was in this fashion that Scott produced the far greater portion of 'The Bride of Lammermoor'—the whole of the 'Legend of Montrose'—and almost the whole of 'Ivanhoe'" (336). By the end of this quotation, Lockhart pushes Scott's opium consumption's influence upon his literary production beyond one isolated incident, and he gives the impression that it was a fundamental component of some of Scott's most memorable novels. Hall Cain reports that Collins thought Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor* the "greatest of all prose tragedies" (*My Story* 325).

<sup>8</sup> Anderson refers to Collins's "personal magnetism" when he admits how opium alleviated some of the pain of his gout. The phrase "magnetism" is also used in describing the trances in William James's explanation of hypnotic unconsciousness.

<sup>9</sup> An editorial flyleaf is included in this edition (housed at the Howard Tilton library at Tulane University) which calls special attention to Anderson's discussion of Wilkie Collins as a noteworthy aspect of the volume. The purpose of the flyleaf is stated as "*enclosed by the publishers, [and] intended simply as an aid to editors who wish to ascertain, with the least possible delay, the salient points of the book*" (supplemental) [original emphasis].

<sup>10</sup> See Millgate (page 171) for an analysis that contradicts Scott's claims of opium-induced literary creation. She examines the manuscript and concludes that his handwriting does not suggest the agitation of mind reported in Lockhart's biography.

<sup>11</sup> Part of the humor and skill Winter no doubt recognizes in Clack's section of the novel is how Collins's "smooth, silver ripple of felicitous words" find expression in a narrator with such a cacophonous-sounding name as "Clack."

<sup>12</sup> In *The Woman in White*, there is a similar emphasis on habit and literary creation, albeit with less attention to the process of habit formation but with similar emphasis on the regularity and order. Count Fosco notes, "Habits of literary composition are perfectly familiar to me. One of the rarest of all intellectual accomplishments that a man can possess is the grand faculty of arranging his ideas. Immense privilege! I possess it. Do you?" (552).

<sup>13</sup> Similar to Clack, Betteredge uses his daughter, Penelope's diary to remember dates for his sections of the novel (14).

<sup>14</sup> The *OED* defines “stereotype” in relation to textual reproduction and substitution as “the method or process of printing in which a solid plate or type-metal, cast from a papier-mâché or plaster mould taken from the surface of a form of type, is used for printing from instead of the form itself” (A1).

<sup>15</sup> In addition to the story of the bully, Collins recounts the story of “another boy at the same school who achieved notoriety in a singular way. He made a business of swallowing spiders!” (62).

<sup>16</sup> Henry Adams equates habit-formation to war in his autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*: “Chaos often breeds life, when order breeds habit. The Civil War had bred life. The army bred courage” (249).

<sup>17</sup> This makes sense, since James’s role as a public philosopher required him to address audiences in decidedly non-philosophical language. He strikes a balance between what his audience already knows about a subject and how it impacts their lives: “We speak, it is true, of good habits and of bad habits; but when people use the word ‘habit,’ in the majority of instances it’s a bad habit which they have in mind. . . . All our life, so far as it has definite form, is but a mass of habits—practical, emotional, and intellectual—systematically organized for our weal or woe, and bearing us irresistibly towards our destiny, whatever the latter may be” (47).

<sup>18</sup> James does not inscribe habit with the same overt social and hierarchical preservation in his *Talks to Teachers* as he does in the *Principles of Psychology*, but he wants teachers to inspire in students the “fighting instinct” and the “pugnacity and pride” that speaks to the same end (*Talks to Teachers* 42). See also Rowe’s analysis of habit in education in the early twentieth century.

<sup>19</sup> See “On a Certain Blindness” for James’s extended discussion on how one interprets the labor of others: “Wherever a process of life communicates an eagerness to him who lives it, there the life becomes genuinely significant” (134).

<sup>20</sup> Understanding Collins’s unconsciousness in relation to habit-induced hypnotic states requires some preliminary clarification. He was rendered physically unconscious by taking too much opium. On the one hand, his opium *habit* caused this unconsciousness, but we are more interested here in the psychological state that made the creation possible.

<sup>21</sup> While “The Gospel of Relaxation” does not deal with hypnotism directly, there are echoes of the kind of the automatic mental states of hypnotic trances: “It is your relaxed and easy worker, who is in no hurry, and quite thoughtless most of the while of consequences, who is your efficient worker; and tension and anxiety, and present and future, all mixed up together in our mind at once, are the surest drags upon steady progress and hindrances to our success” (125).

## EPILOGUE

In my conclusion, I shift focus from theories of habit in education, psychology, and opium consumption to touch on habit in models of evolutionary biology. I argue that Darwinian evolutionary theory expands the temporality of habit formation to extend into the distant past. In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), he argues that physiological expression is a genetically inherited “serviceable associated Habit” passed down through generations to address a specific evolutionary function. In contrast to an evolutionary model of habit, I argue that the connection between habit and literary invention I have traced throughout this dissertation pushes creative development in the future.<sup>1</sup>

*The Expression of the Emotions* connects expressive physiological behavior to evolutionary biology.<sup>2</sup> Darwin rejects the naiveté of previous explanations of the origins of physiological expression: “all the authors who have written on Expression... appear to have been firmly convinced that species, man of course included, came into existence in their present condition” (10). While *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man* form the contours of Darwin’s theory of evolution, *The Expression of the Emotions* assumes an established model of evolution that underwrites physiological expression as an inherited and habitual characteristic extended from a “common progenitor” (12). Countless acts of expression occur on a regular basis, from behaviors as mundane as scratching one’s head in confusion to blushing with embarrassment.

Physiological expression of such emotions is predicated upon three general rules: the principle of “serviceable associated Habit,” the principle of Antithesis, and the principle of actions due to the constitution of the Nervous System (28-29). Together, these components form the backbone of expressive behavior, with “serviceable associated Habit” emerging as the most influential in Darwin’s study of the evolutionary significance of expression. He states, it is “notorious how powerful is the force of habit. The most complex and difficult movements can in

time be performed without the least effort or consciousness” (29). By foregrounding the “notoriety” of habit’s power and its capacity to make “complex and difficult movements” easier to manage, Darwin plays off of perceptions about habit as a behavioral and psychological agent in everyday life established throughout this dissertation. But an evolutionary model shifts the temporality of habit over a significantly expanded period: cycles of repetition inscribed in habit are not limited to a single lifetime. Their “power” and “force” come from generations of repetitions. In contrast to the processes of habit formation outlined in this dissertation, individuals have no choice but to accept to the habits passed down through genetic inheritance.<sup>3</sup>

For a habit to move to subsequent generations, it must be of some use or “service” to the species. Darwin’s definition of “serviceable associated Habits” hinges on how this principle is actually a return to a pre-established mental state or set of conditions: “Certain complex actions are of direct or indirect service under certain states of the mind, in order to relieve or gratify certain sensations, desires, &c.; and whenever the same state of mind is induced, however feebly, there is a tendency through the force of habit and association for the same movements to be performed, though they may not then be of the least use” (28). In this construction, “the force of habit” always returns individuals to a previously determined state of being. Physiological expression is habit formation rooted in the past and generated independent of the individual.

Darwin leaves a small window for the cultivation of new habits in the form of reflex actions that can eventually be “modified” and “graduate into” behaviors resembling habit:

Thus reflex actions, when once gained for one purpose, might afterwards be modified independently of the will or habit, so as to serve for some distinct purpose. Such cases would be parallel with those which, as we have every reason to believe, have occurred with many instincts; for although some instincts have been developed simply through long-continued and inherited habit, other highly complex ones have been developed through the preservation of variations of pre-existing instincts—that is, through natural selection... it is necessary to show that at least some of them might have been first acquired through the will in order to satisfy a desire, or to relieve a disagreeable sensation. (42)



It appears as if reflex and instinct have the potential to produce new habits in individuals; like evolutionary “serviceable associated Habits,” they too are rooted in a “preservation of variations of pre-existing instincts.” Even the behavioral ticks Darwin cannot account for are rooted in the past: “with some individuals, certain strange gestures or tricks have arisen in association with certain states of the mind, owing to wholly inexplicable causes, and are undoubtedly inherited” (33).

But the important thing to remember is that evolutionary habits exist alongside the habits explored throughout this dissertation. Multiple systems of habit formation reliant upon different notions of temporality, repetition, and expression exist alongside each other in the individual. In one anecdote, Darwin dramatizes the mental confusion occasioned by extreme blushing that illustrates the confluence of different habits:

A small dinner-party was given in honour of an extremely shy man, who, when he rose to return thanks, rehearsed the speech, which he had evidently learnt by heart, in absolute silence, and did not utter a single word; but he acted as if he were speaking with much emphasis. His friends, perceiving how the case stood, loudly applauded the imaginary bursts of eloquence, whenever his gestures indicated a pause, and the man never discovered that he had remained the whole time completely silent. On the contrary, he afterwards remarked to my friend, with much satisfaction, that he thought he had succeeded uncommonly well. (322-23)

Unknown even to himself, the shy speech-maker only pantomimes his speech—suggesting that the expression of blushing (and its resulting mental confusion) jeopardizes one’s sense of self-awareness. But the result of such mental confusion is not as absolute as it may appear. After all, the shy speech-maker gesticulates his speech successfully enough that his audience infers meaning “whenever his gestures indicated a pause.” He may never actually orate, but he expresses himself with enough clarity through bodily movement to effectively communicate meaning. Darwin never explicitly explains why orality shuts down because of the mental confusion occasioned by extreme blushing, though it would appear from the above quotation that habit intervenes as a mechanism that drives the silent delivery of the speech. The shy man’s

silent “rehearsal” of the speech suggests the influence of repetition in his advanced preparation and actual delivery of the speech—enough repetition to “learn by heart” both the content and its accompanying gestures.<sup>4</sup> For the shy speech-maker, habit makes possible an alternate form of expression that presses beyond the mental confusion occasioned by psychosomatic blushing.

The example of the shy speech-maker illustrates how habit produces his peculiar behavior. While his performance generates applause over his “imaginary bursts of eloquence,” it is worth remembering that the creative content of his speech would similarly owe much to habit formation as explained in multiple models throughout this dissertation. The link between habit and creativity in models of education and psychology (as well as in discourses of opium consumption) is an overlooked and counterintuitive principle of literary creation. While the repetition inscribed in habit would seem to produce identical sets of behavior and attitudes in an individual (as the speech-maker’s performance would seem to demonstrate), habit’s importance to models of education and psychology outlined throughout this dissertation shows how it also influences acts of creative expression. Romantic and Victorian theories of literary production incorporate habit, forcing readers to reconsider myths of creativity and originality in nineteenth-century British literature.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Emotional distress and the pains of ocular gout obstructed Collins’s capacity to compose sections of *The Moonstone*, but it was actually his *expression* of such suffering that derailed his ability to narrate to an amanuensis. Such expressive behavior is a common reaction to grief and pain as explained in Darwin’s *Expression*: “As the muscles of the chest and vocal organs are habitually used, these will be particularly liable to be acted on, and loud, harsh screams or cries will be uttered” (72).

<sup>2</sup> *The Expression* was published in 1872 but Darwin’s observations on expression began in 1838 (*Expression* 18). His methodology included observing infants, the insane, photographs of emotions, observations of “common animals” like cats and dogs, and testimony from “missionaries or protectors of the aborigines” (16). See pages 19-26 for specific names and locations of Darwin’s source material.

<sup>3</sup> Darwin’s notebooks provide an array of ways in which he is thinking through habit in relation to expression, and they ultimately feed into his examination of “serviceable associated habit” in

*The Expression of the Emotions*. He notes the “omnipotence” of habit, and how “by habit the mind tries to fix upon some object” (532). He defines habitual actions as “the reverse of intellectual, there is no comparison of ideas—one follows other as in blindest memory” (545). It is this blindest memory that feeds into his evolutionary model of habituation.

<sup>4</sup> The *OED* defines “rehearse” as “to repeat (information), either mentally or orally, so as to commit to memory” (6a).

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## VITA

Daniel R. Mangiavellano earned a Bachelor of Arts in English degree from Michigan State University in 2000 and a Master of Arts in Literature degree from American University in 2003. In 2003-04, he completed 1,700 hours of community service as a commissioned AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with Habitat for Humanity in West St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. Mangiavellano began his doctoral work in English at Louisiana State University in 2004. At LSU, he won the Gale Carrithers Outstanding Essay Prize for “‘A Source of First Principles’: Habit, Education, and Molding the Imagination” (2009) and the Dickens Project at LSU Essay Prize for “Diagnosing the Uncontrollable Body in Joanna Baillie and Dr. John Hunter” (2007). His publications appear in *Pedagogy* and *Persuasions: The Jane Austen Journal On-line*. In 2007-08, Mr. Mangiavellano established the “Jim Springer Borck Memorial Fund” housed at the non-profit LSU Foundation—a fundraising and advocacy campaign sponsoring competitive monetary support for graduate-student professional development in eighteenth and nineteenth-century British studies. Mangiavellano has won multiple teaching awards including the Sarah L Liggett Teaching Award (2008), the Sigma Tau Delta/English Undergraduate Club Teaching Prize (2008), and “Honorable Mention” for the English Department’s “Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Teaching Assistant” (2006 & 2008). In 2009-10, he held a Graduate Assistantship in LSU’s Communication across the Curriculum program for the College of Basic Sciences.