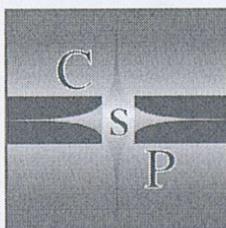


Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns:
Essays on Fiction and Culture

Edited by

Penny Gay, Judith Johnston, and Catherine Waters



Cambridge Scholars Publishing

BRITISH LIBRARY
DOCUMENT SUPPLY CENTRE

27 NOV 2008

m08/
36346

Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns: Essays on Fiction and Culture,
Edited by Penny Gay, Judith Johnston, and Catherine Waters

This book first published 2008 by

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2008 by Penny Gay, Judith Johnston, and Catherine Waters and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-84718-662-9, ISBN (13): 9781847186621

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	xi
Penny Gay	
Acknowledgement.....	xiii
Introduction	1
Victorian Turns, NeoVictorian Returns	
Judith Johnston, Catherine Waters	
Part One: Victorian Turns	
Chapter One.....	14
Two Disappointed Doctors: Keats and George Eliot's Lydgate	
R. S. White	
Chapter Two	29
Jane Austen, Jane Fairfax, and <i>Jane Eyre</i>	
Jocelyn Harris	
Chapter Three	39
The Body of Language Dancing to the Music of Time: Mind, Body	
and Style in De Quincey	
Daniel Brown	
Chapter Four.....	50
"Thus far and no farther!": The "Proper Lady" and the Ends	
of Melodrama	
Katherine Newey	
Chapter Five	59
Gaskell and Eliot on Women in France	
Joanne Shattock	

Chapter Six	68
Economies of Love and Law in <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	
Simon Petch	
Chapter Seven.....	78
<i>The Mill on the Floss</i> : “more instruments playing together”	
Gillian Beer	
Chapter Eight.....	91
George Eliot in Australia	
Elizabeth Webby	
Chapter Nine.....	102
“It was now mistress and maid no longer; woman and woman only”:	
The Lesbian Menace in Victorian Popular Fiction	
Robert Dingley	
Chapter Ten	113
French Realism Englished: the Case of M.E. Braddon’s <i>The Doctor’s</i>	
<i>Wife</i>	
P.D. Edwards	
Chapter Eleven	124
The Rivals of George Eliot: French Fiction as Interpreted by Margaret	
Oliphant	
Joanne Wilkes	
Chapter Twelve	135
Gissing’s Italian Vision	
Roslyn Jolly	
 Part Two: NeoVictorian Returns	
Chapter Thirteen.....	148
From Picturesque to Palimpsest: Landscape and History in the Fiction	
of Walter Scott and Graham Swift	
John Rignall	

Chapter Fourteen	158
“Trifling Deviation”: Stage and Screen Versions of Mary Shelley’s Monster William Christie	
Chapter Fifteen	171
The <i>Nice Work</i> of Victorian Novels in Thatcher’s Britain Rosemarie Bodenheimer	
Chapter Sixteen	182
Portable Property: Postcolonial Appropriations of <i>Great Expectations</i> Jennifer Gribble	
Chapter Seventeen	193
The Message from Her: Anthony Thwaite’s <i>Victorian Voices</i> and George Meredith’s <i>Modern Love</i> Barbara Garlick	
Chapter Eighteen	205
<i>The French Lieutenant’s Woman</i> : Goodbye to All That Joseph Wiesenfarth	
Contributors	215
Index	221

CHAPTER THREE

THE BODY OF LANGUAGE DANCING TO THE MUSIC OF TIME: MIND, BODY AND STYLE IN DE QUINCEY¹

DANIEL BROWN

The broad philosophical orientation with which the mature De Quincey approaches experience is indicated in his essay “Mrs. Hannah More,” which he wrote after the popular author’s death in 1833. He recalls having been asked by More to explain both Kant’s critical philosophy and Hume’s theory of causation, and congratulates himself for having “so dovetailed the two answers together, that the explanation of Kant was made to arise naturally and easily out of the mere statement of Hume’s problem on the idea of necessary connexion.”² Hume observes that relations amongst things and ideas cannot be regarded as intrinsic to their terms, as held together by necessity, but that they are on the contrary external to them, superadded by experience through their repeated association together. Kant responds to Hume by trying to reinstate a form of necessary connection within and between thoughts through his principle of synthetic *a priori* judgements and the bureaucratic faculty psychology that facilitates them. De Quincey explains this relation between the two philosophers at some length in the account he gives in the *Autobiography* (1840-41) of his developing thought in 1805. Frustrated by Hume he looks hopefully to Kant for “the keys of a new and creative philosophy,” but after “six weeks study” finds it to be on the contrary “a philosophy of destruction.”³ “Mrs. Hannah More” shows that Kant’s importance for De Quincey has receded, as has the need he felt in 1805 for a “solution” to “Hume’s problem.” Instead the “problem” itself appears to have risen in his estimation, for he describes it here not only as “that famous discovery” but furthermore as “unquestionably the most remarkable contribution to philosophy ever made by man” (vol. 9, 355). Such high praise indicates De Quincey’s faith that, despite his disappointment with Kant’s response

to it, the Humean idea could still furnish the basis for “a new and creative philosophy.” Distrustful of philosophical systematising, the mature De Quincey appears to have found Hume’s open question preferable to any complete answer to it. Hume’s radical recognition of contingency as prior to and foundational for mental activity attributes the mind with a creativity and freedom that the Kantian faculty psychology constricts in its imperative drive to secure the objectivity and necessity of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. As Gilles Deleuze observes, Hume’s epistemology replaces the model of knowledge with that of belief, so that mental life ultimately takes the form of a “delirium”⁴ in which impressions and ideas enjoy complete freedom of association. The freedom and creativity of thought that Deleuze’s account highlights provide the premise for De Quincey’s own theory of mind and a foundational presupposition for his diverse writings.

The sixty-seven year old De Quincey offers a moving and lyrical account of the memory in his first essay on “Sir William Hamilton, Bart.” (1852). It sees thoughts to be mobilised and organised in part through the principle of association, which assumes a form here that suggestively prefigures Proustian involuntary memory:

And as regards myself, touch but some particular key of laughter and of echoing music, sound but for a moment one bar of preparation, and immediately the pomps and glory of all that has composed for me the delirious vision of life re-awaken for torment; the orchestras of the earth open simultaneously to my inner ear; and in a moment I behold, forming themselves into solemn groups and processions, and passing over sad phantom stages, all that chiefly I have loved. (vol. 17, 146)

This “delirious vision” consequent upon the individual mind’s associations is like a dream or nightmare. The gothic tenor of his stories *Klosterheim* (1832), “The Avenger” and “The Household Wreck” (1838) allows De Quincey to describe and explore similarly liminal states of mind, principally those between waking and sleeping, in which the capacity for associative mental activity is unleashed. The “approach of sleep” (vol. 8, 252), and the state of “nervous apprehensiveness” that yields a “creative state of the eye,” cause the mind to shape images associatively from such sensory stimuli as fire, tapestries, and, more abstractly, “occasional combinations of colour, modified by light and shade” (vol. 9, 244) But it is the “unimaginable chaos” (vol. 9, 266) of the dream itself, rather than the hypnagogic and hypnopompic states that lead to and from it, that most strongly suggests the associative delirium that Deleuze attributes to the Humean model of mind. In “The Household Wreck” De Quincey

describes the ways in which the conscious mind works creatively to reinstate order from such chaos in his account of the process of waking up, “when the clouds of sleep, and the whole fantastic illusions of dreaminess are dispersing, just as the realities of life are re-assuming their steadfast forms—re-shaping themselves—and settling anew into those fixed relations which they are to preserve throughout the waking hours.” Being subject to dispersal and shaping, mental images and thoughts are accordingly reducible to more fundamental elements. The “crisis of transition from the unreal to the real” (vol. 9, 234) as we come to consciousness and our thoughts become reliable, move from chaos to order, occurs as an *a priori* “re-shaping” of such elementary mental representations, a reinstatement of “fixed relations.”

It is, De Quincey observes in “Style No. III” (1840), “most instructive to see how many apparent scenes of confusion break up into orderly arrangement, when you are able to apply an *a priori* principle of organization to their seeming chaos” (vol. 12, 57). Such *a priori* principles are for the mature De Quincey not Kantian but creative and often idiosyncratic. Even in writing a testimonial in 1852 for J. F. Ferrier, whose metaphysics of consciousness itself springs largely from German idealism, De Quincey repudiates such objectivist theories of mind, asserting instead that “Every man’s private impressions have an internal truth for himself—are self-lighted by an evidence which cannot be transferred to another” (vol. 17, 252). The Proustian reverie contained in the essay on Hamilton cited earlier, where particular sounds summon up by association memories of dead loved ones, offers an example of this phenomenon. De Quincey’s sceptical appreciation of the contingent “self-lighted” “internal truth” of individual thought indicates a Humean epistemological model of belief rather than classical models of knowledge. He recognises another such epistemological principle of belief in prejudice, a consideration that he suggests threatens to undermine Descartes’ universalist project to establish a philosophy of consciousness. Finding it laughable that one of the “golden rules” with which Descartes begins his philosophical investigations is “that he would guard himself against all ‘prejudices,’” De Quincey argues in the “Philosophy of Herodotus” (1842) that prejudices are inevitable and, by definition, invisible to those who hold them: “Those are the true baffling prejudices for man, which he never suspects for prejudices” (vol.13, 106). The “prejudices” and “private impressions” that have such conviction for individuals suggest Hume’s principles of “custom and habit,” by which he sees relations to be formed amongst impressions and ideas. This governing principle makes the association of ideas, as Deleuze puts it, “a practice of cultural and *conventional*

formations (conventional instead of contractual), rather than a theory of the human mind. Hence, the association of ideas exists for the sake of law, political economy, aesthetics, and so on" (*ES ix*). Hume wrote not only on philosophy but also on politics and history, fields of experience where the contingent "custom or habit" to which his philosophy traces our ideas of relation play decisive roles. De Quincey also implicates cultural life in epistemology, finding the medium and focus for the formal principle that Hume attributes to "custom or habit" in the great social convention of language.

De Quincey discusses the containment and shaping of thought in his 1853 essay "Table-Talk" through an empiricist metaphor for language as "the mould, the set of channels, into which the metal of the thought is meant to run." The "mould" is a principle extrinsic to thought, which is given form by it and figured here as either mercuric or, more probably, molten metal, which holds the implication that it can become set, formed finally by its mould, like lead type. The specific "mould" referred to here is a poetic form, an epigram on Milton by Dryden. De Quincey finds that in this case the perfection of the form has distracted readers from noticing the mere "accidental filling up of the mould" (vol. 18, 32), that is, that it has no content. The discussion suggests Lessing's thesis in *Laocoön*, a work that De Quincey began to translate and abridge in 1827, which maintains that the peculiar forms of each art occasion its expressive possibilities. The power of language forms is discussed further in "Style [No. I]" (1840), again through the metaphor of the mould. Here, however, it is not poetry but the forms of everyday language that are seen to shape collective thought, and to in turn perpetuate such modes of expression and thought, a scourge of pedantry that he attributes to the widespread readership and emulation of newspaper style: "Pedantry, though it were unconscious pedantry, once steadily diffused through a nation as to the very moulds of its thinking, and the general tendencies of its expression, could not but stiffen the natural graces of composition, and weave fetters about the free movement of human thought" (vol. 12, 16).

Style functions, in De Quincey's example of journalism, as a principle of intellectual and social engineering. But as well as replicating itself, stamping its forms upon minds en masse in the manner of industrial machinery, language can also function as a generative machine that facilitates individual and creative thought. De Quincey uses the analogy of mechanics in "Style [No. I]" to explain two complementary aspects of style:

Style may be viewed as an *organic* thing and as a *mechanic* thing. By organic, we mean that which, being acted upon, reacts—and which

propagates the communicated power without loss. By mechanic, that which, being impressed with motion, cannot throw it back without loss, and therefore soon comes to an end. The human body is an elaborate system of organs: it is sustained by organs. But the human body is exercised as a machine, and, as such, may be viewed in the arts of riding, dancing, leaping &c., subject to the laws of motion and equilibrium. Now the use of words is an organic thing, in so far as language is connected with thoughts, and modified by thoughts. It is a mechanic thing, in so far as words in combination determine or modify each other. The science of style, as an organ of thought, of style in relation to the ideas and feelings, might be called the *organology* of style. The science of style, considered as a machine, in which words act upon words, and through a particular grammar, might be called the *mechanology* of style. (vol. 12, 24-5)

Language, De Quincey suggests, like the “human body[,]is exercised as a machine,” but as such depends upon an “organic” principle that articulates its mechanical parts, the words and grammar that correspond here to the body’s systems of the nerves and the muscles and the bones they lever.⁵ The “*mechanology* of style” recognises the mechanical body of the language system, “in which words act upon words, and through a particular grammar.” This machine is, however, presented as rather like the steam engine, which dissipates part of its capacity for work in unusable heat; “that which, being impressed with motion, cannot throw it back without loss.” Analogous to the human body, which “is sustained by organs,” the mechanics of style requires the idealised Newtonian economy of the organic principle, “that which, being acted upon, reacts—and which propagates the communicated power without loss.” The “*organology* of style” sees language to function “as an organ of thought”: it fulfils the *a priori* organising principle of “expressing all possible relations that can arise between thoughts and words—the total effect of a writer, as derived from manner.”

The analogy of the body attributes to style an essential integrity, for as De Quincey puts it in “On the Present Stage of the English Language” (1850), in its highest form, “style cannot be regarded as a *dress* or alien covering, but . . . the *incarnation* of the thoughts. The human body is not the dress or apparel of the human spirit; far more mysterious is the mode of their union.” In contrast to mere rhetoric, the organic nature of imagery and other parts of style “absolutely *makes* the thought” (vol. 17, 67). De Quincey argues in this essay that the “offices of style,” namely “to brighten the *intelligibility* of a subject” and “to regenerate the normal *power* and impressiveness of a subject,” “are really not essentially below the level of those other offices attached to the original *discovery* of truth” (vol. 17, 66). Style is in its highest form seen to enhance the epistemological

efficacy of language. Its mechanology facilitates the free association of ideas and impressions within the mind, much as classical Newtonian mechanics allows and theorises the interactions of all physical entities, while the organic principle, “that which, being acted upon, reacts,” creatively draws together relations amongst these ciphers according to the “ideas and feelings” that distinguish the individual “human spirit.” De Quincey’s coinages “mechanology” and “organology” demonstrate the creative potential of language they serve to explain, which facilitates the recognition by its practitioners of new relations. Neologism is explained in “On the Present Stage of the English Language” as the creative response of thought and language to the changing events and perceptions that in the extract cited earlier from “Logic” (which also dates from 1850) describe the “revolutionary character” of his own time: “Neologism, in revolutionary times, is not an infirmity of caprice . . . but is a mere necessity of the unresting intellect. New ideas, new aspects of old ideas, new relations of objects to each other, or to man—the subject who contemplates those objects—absolutely insist on new words” (vol. 17, 56).

De Quincey’s principle of style effectively extends the thesis of Lessing’s *Laocoön* in a proto-structuralist manner to describe the artifice of the language system, recognising it as a great generative structure, a machine for facilitating and organising thought and experience. So, for example, he writes in “Style No. II” (1840) that “for the Pagan of twenty-five hundred years back, and for us moderns, the arts of public speaking, and consequently of prose as opposed to metrical composition, have been the capital engine—the one intellectual machine—of civil life” (vol. 12, 30). We can recall from the passage cited earlier from “Style [No. I]” that “The human body is exercised as a machine, and, as such may be viewed in the arts of riding, dancing, leaping &c., subject to the laws of motion and equilibrium,” a remark that echoes directly an earlier statement that De Quincey makes of Lessing’s thesis in a footnote to his translation of the *Laocoön*: “the freedom of a fine art is found not in the absence of restraint, but in the conflict with it. The beauty of dancing, for instance, as to one part of it, lies in the conflict between the freedom of the motion and the law of equilibrium which is constantly threatened by it” (vol. 6, 53). The mechanology of language that provides the conditions by which linguistic creativity can be realised is presented in “Style [No. I]” as analogous to the natural laws of the Newtonian physical world, which similarly facilitate the creativity of the dancer. He writes in his essay on “Conversation” (1850) that “an able disputant . . . cannot display his own powers but through something of a corresponding power in the resistance

of his antagonist,” and he amplifies his point with the analogies of “playing at ball, or battledore, or in dancing” (vol. 17, 8).

The metaphor of the dance is amusingly invoked in De Quincey’s *Encyclopedia Britannica* entry on “Pope” (1838-9), where, in glossing what he judges to be the decadent rhetorical exercises of eighteenth-century “fine letter writing,” he nonetheless illustrates concretely the rather abstract analogy from “Style [No. I]” that describes style as like the human body: “To us, in this age of purer and more masculine taste, the whole scene takes the ludicrous air of old and young fops dancing a minuet with each other, practising the most elaborate grimaces, sinkings and risings the most awful, bows the most overshadowing, until plain walking, running, or the motions of natural dancing, are thought too insipid for endurance” (vol. 13, 255). The mechanics of the body, suited to “plain” walking and other such “natural” motions, are manipulated elaborately into the co-respondent stylised movements of the minuets, much as the letter-writers, “Every nerve . . . strained to outdo each other,” draw from the material of language and thought “a filagree work of rhetoric” (vol. 13, 254). While the letters of Pope and his peers are smeared with the taint of effeminacy, the countervailing principle of good prose style is for De Quincey epitomised by “the purity of female English” to be found in letters by certain women from his own age. In lauding these natural expressions of personal independence and dignity made by “the interesting class of women unmarried upon scruples of sexual honour” (vol. 12, 12-13), De Quincey expresses his enthusiasm for such purity and chastity rather jarringly with a direct appeal to the reader’s “desire” and an urgent entreaty that it be satisfied through rapacious acts of criminal violation: “Would you desire at this day to read our noble language in its native beauty, picturesque from idiomatic propriety, racy in its phraseology, delicate yet sinewy in its composition—steal the mail bags, and break open all the letters in female handwriting” (vol. 12, 12). The body of language here is exhibited in its “native beauty,” perfectly poised, “delicate yet sinewy in its composition”. In contrast to the foppish minuets of Pope and his peers,⁶ good prose is, as De Quincey observes in the “Philosophy of Herodotus,” again invoking the analogy of the body, the healthy but nonetheless accomplished natural exercise of language: “To walk well, it is not enough that a man abstains from dancing” (vol. 13, 85).

The analogy that De Quincey draws of style to the body allows him to emphasise and explore language’s responsiveness to change, and ultimately to find in language the basis for an historicist epistemology. In contrast to objective uses of language he notes, such as those used by positivist science and for simple place names (vol. 12, 73, 10), in which

matter prevails over manner, subjective uses necessarily demand stylistic creativity. De Quincey instances this with the case of classical Greece, which as a result of “accidents of time and place” was, he writes in “Style No. IV”, “obliged . . . to spin most of her speculations, like a spider, out of her own bowels” (vol. 12, 66). Like the spider’s web the Greeks’ speculations emerge *a priori* but apt for their immediate purposes in the outside world. Once again, creativity is seen to be demanded by changing circumstances and perceptions, a historical factor that makes the subjective employments of language, which largely describe style for De Quincey, necessarily less “durable” than the objective and external uses. As he observes in another essay from 1841, “Homer and the Homeridae Part III,” by “applying itself to the subtler phenomena of human nature, [the subjective use of language] exactly in that proportion applies itself to what is capable of being variously viewed, or viewed in various combinations, as society shifts its aspects” (vol. 13, 49). This presupposes a normative physicalist model of reciprocal forces, “that which, being acted upon, reacts,” a subtle responsiveness in “proportion” to societal change. Style is for De Quincey the body of language dancing to the music of time.

The analogy of the human body and its pre-adaptation to the Newtonian physical world, which allows it to maintain a dynamic equilibrium with it, demonstrates De Quincey’s commonsense approach to language and the supple epistemological functions he sees it to serve. Just as the body negotiates the forces that the outside world subjects it to, happily heightening the conflict to exercise its own nature in such activities as walking and dancing, so style, the active body of language, similarly engages in the Newtonian reciprocity of action and reaction with both the objective world and subjective thought and experience.

The metaphor of dynamic equilibrium that promotes the vivacity of language in De Quincey’s discussions of style is paralleled in his discussions of politics, ethics, and manners, where it tends toward conservative principles of moderation.⁷ He also applies it to the history of philosophy in a footnote to his 1852 essay on Hamilton, where he examines Zeno’s paradoxes as archetypal statements of the conflict between idealism and empiricism, the former of which, recognising “one among the many confounding consequences which may be deduced from the endless divisibility of space” (vol. 17, 165), discredits the principle of motion, while the latter credits it: “Metaphysics denied it as conceivable. Experience affirmed it as actual.” “The conflict depends,” for De Quincey, “upon the parity of the conflicting forces,” a “centrifugal force, which . . . corresponds to a centripetal force” and so forms an “equilibrium.” With these appeals to a favourite analogy from physics De Quincey cuts through

the “Gordian knot” (vol. 17, 165) of Zeno’s paradox and the subsequent restless oppositional history of Western philosophy, of idealism and empiricism, that he sees it to anticipate. As he finds this dialectic entrenched in language itself he also argues his case by analogy with the integrity of the word: “But how is that antinomy, a secret word of two horns, which we may represent for the moment under the figure of two syllables, lessened or reconciled by repeating one of these syllables, as did Zeno, leaving the secret consciousness to repeat the other?” (vol. 17, 168). In contrast to the partisanship of the philosophical tradition, language is implicitly credited with facilitating balanced and complete acknowledgements of thought and empirical experience. Each of the syllables of philosophy’s devilish “secret word of two horns” is credited with an ontological reality and parity, much as reciprocally and more playfully the “four male guardians” of De Quincey’s childhood in the “Sketch from Childhood No. V” and VII, which also date from 1852, are similarly designated by their initials and treated as physical parts of speech: “the consonants, the vowel, and the hermaphrodite aspirate” (vol. 17, 142).

De Quincey observes in “Style No. II” that Socratic dialectic, in contrast to the irresolvable antinomies of Kant’s Transcendental Dialectic, presupposes that truth reveals itself “by moments, (to borrow a word from dynamics)” (vol. 12, 39), the principle by which different forces combine as a third summary force, which is Hegel’s foundational metaphor for the process of *aufhebung* that impels his grand historical dialectic. Akin to Hegel, the foundational analogies that De Quincey draws from mechanics are rooted in romantic science, his familiarity with which is clear from his translation of one of Kant’s scientific essays under the title of “The Age of the Earth.” Such phenomena as combustion and electricity are theorised here as polar “forces of attraction and repulsion”, a principle that chimes in with his physicalist metaphors of dynamic equilibrium and also forms the basic principle for Mesmerism, which De Quincey champions in “Animal Magnetism” (1834). Mesmerism provides the bridge between “mineral magnetism” and the romantic value of sympathy, for which the compass accordingly becomes an exemplar in this essay: “Never was any natural agent discovered which wore so much the appearance of a magical device; nor even, to this day, has science succeeded in divesting of mystery that sympathy with an unknown object, which constitutes its power” (vol. 9, 359). Conversely, in “Style No. II” he attributes the national and historical schools of artistic creativity to a universal equilibrium of affect, a parallel to the magnetic forces that suffuse the physical world: “This contagion of sympathy runs electrically through

society, searches high and low for congenial powers, and suffers none to lurk unknown to the possessor" (vol. 12, 53).

Parallel to the polar powers of sympathy that he naturalises in his romantic science, De Quincey's *Sketches from Childhood* looks back to his earliest formative experiences to describe complementary principles of sympathetic imagination. Through one of these capacities, an adjunct to the principle of memory introduced earlier through the extract from the "Hamilton" essay, he participates, helplessly and haunted, in the ultimate human realities of death and suffering. This is exemplified most poignantly by his recollection of some impoverished, deaf, scrofulous and mentally simple twin girls, who died of scarlatina: "The mother it was . . . that revived, by the altered glances of her haunted eye (at least revived for me), a visionary spectacle of twin sisters, moving for ever up and down the stairs—sisters born apparently for the single purpose of suffering" (vol.17, 138). However, in the case of his father, who died when De Quincey was eight, he knows him only "through *a priori* ideas" (vol. 17, 75), a facility for shaping reality that is suggestive for his later reflections on language and thought, and which he practises in games with his elder brother William, such as the wars between William's imaginary kingdom of Tigrosylvania and his imaginary island of Gombroon, the inhabitants of which are rendered primitive and ineffectual by the brother's decree that they instance Lord Monboddo's evolutionary hypothesis. The *Sketches* begin with the death of Thomas's older sister and, after many vivid and amusing accounts of William, close with the elder brother's death, a few terse statements in helpless positivist language: "My brother separated from me for ever. I never saw him again . . . before he had completed his sixteenth year, he died of typhus fever" (vol. 17, 144). William was the boy who with "the vertiginous motion of the human top would overpower the force of gravitation" (vol. 17, 80), while the mature Thomas engages this mortal force of falling with correspondingly vigorous ideas and words, walks and dances performed by the more permanent body of language.

Notes

1. This essay draws upon material that was first published in a review essay on *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vols. 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17 and 18, in *Studies in Romanticism* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2005). This material is published here with the permission of the Trustees of Boston University.

2. Thomas De Quincey, *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, eds. Grevel Lindop and Barry Symonds (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), vol. 9, 355. Subsequent volume and page references are given parenthetically within the text.

3. Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. David Masson, vol. 2 (London: A. and C. Black, 1897), 86.
4. Gilles Deleuze, *Empiricism and Subjectivity: An Essay on Hume's Theory of Human Nature*, trans. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 23, 83. Subsequent page reference is initialled *ES* and given parenthetically within the text.
5. This mechanistic understanding of the body was well understood by the early 1840s. See for example Sir Charles Bell's Bridgewater Treatise *The Hand: Its Mechanism and Vital Endowments as Evincing Design* (London: William Pickering, 1833), 111-15.
6. Cf. "Pope" (1838-9): "the best of those later letters between Pope and Swift, &c. are not in themselves at all superior to the letters of sensible and accomplished women, such as leave every town in the island by every post" (*The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. 13, 256).
7. See "A Tory's Account of Toryism, Whiggism, and Radicalism, Part I" (*The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, vol. 9, 395); "On Reform as Affecting the Habits of Private Life" (vol. 8, 350); "Lord Carlisle on Pope [I]" (vol. 17, 208); "French and English Manners" (vol. 17, 44).