

## **THE MILK OF PARADISE**



# THE MILK OF PARADISE

*The Effect of Opium Visions on the  
Works of DeQuincey, Crabbe, Francis  
Thompson, and Coleridge*

BY

M. H. ABRAMS



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**TO MY TUTOR**  
**ARTHUR COLBY SPRAGUE**

**“For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.”**

**KUBLA KHAN**

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

**T**HIS little book began as an essay in a sophomore survey course in English literature at Harvard, and two years later was expanded to its present form as a senior thesis for honors. In the early 1930's the subject of the effect of opium on imagination was an exotic one, which appealed to an undergraduate author precisely because it lay outside the realm of his conceivable experience. The passage of some thirty-five years has made the subject unexpectedly topical, now that drugs have become a standard means to force an "expansion of consciousness" by a direct assault upon the nervous system.

Were I writing this essay now, I would sharpen the discrimination between various modes of experience affected by opium, which in the present text are sometimes grouped under the general term "vision" or "dream." The drug may intensify or distort sense-perception, especially audition and the visual apprehension of space, structure, light, and color. To be distinguished from

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such perception of outer phenomena is the reverie or intense daydream—the sequence of fantasied images and experiences in the partly autonomous and partly controlled states of the waking mind which De Quincey, in discussing his opium experiences, called “trances, or profoundest reveries.” In a note on a manuscript of “Kubla Khan” which was not printed until 1934, just after this essay had been published, Coleridge wrote that the poem was “composed in a sort of Reverie brought on by two grains of Opium.” In attributing the genesis of his poem to a play of the waking fantasy Coleridge was more precise than in his later statement (in the Preface of 1816) that “Kubla Khan” was composed “in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses,” during which “all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort.” Both sense-perception and reverie are in turn to be distinguished from dreams, nightmares, and hallucinations. These last phenomena—the subject-matter of De Quincey’s “The Pains of Opium” and Coleridge’s “The Pains

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of Sleep"—are associated with deep addiction to opium, and are experienced especially during periods of deprivation or total abstinence.

I would also, if I were writing now, be more tentative in tracing opium experience in products of the literary imagination, for such matters do not permit certainty, but only various degrees of probability. Above all I would put greater stress on the brevity of the period of euphoria in opium addiction. In a very short time De Quincey's "The Pleasures of Opium" become merely negative, the assuagement of a savage craving, and the drug is recognized, in Coleridge's bitter words, as this "dirty business of Laudanum . . . this *free-agency-annihilating* Poison."

In *Coleridge, Opium and 'Kubla Khan'* (Chicago, 1953) Elisabeth Schneider put in question Coleridge's account of the origin of "Kubla Khan" in an opium reverie, marshalling evidence from recent medical reports on opium addiction to support her claim that the drug does not greatly affect sense-perception and that it neither stimulates nor alters the ordinary process of

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reveries and dreams. This type of evidence, however, is of dubious probative value with respect to the writers and writings treated in this essay. Modern investigators deal mainly with confirmed addicts who inject into the bloodstream morphine or heroin, which are alkaloid derivatives of opium; the authors I deal with all drank laudanum, which is raw or partially refined opium dissolved in alcohol, and some of the experiences they represent occurred in an early stage of their resort to the drug. The social and psychological ambience—which undoubtedly affects the nature of the experience with drugs—has also undergone a drastic change. Indulgence in opium is now a furtive, and in the United States a criminal activity, and often constitutes a deliberate gesture of defiance against society. Through much of the nineteenth century, however, opium was not only readily and legally available, but was recommended by reigning medical opinion for an enormous variety of ailments from earliest infancy on; opium-taking was subject to no sanction outside the judgment and conscience of

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the taker; and those who indulged often had extravagant expectations about the psychic effects of the drug. Most importantly, as De Quincey early pointed out, "If a man 'whose talk is of oxen' should become an opium-eater, the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all)—he will dream about oxen." "Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie." Anyone who investigates the effects of opium must take into account the differences—in sensory endowment, the tendency to fantasy, the proclivity to subtle self-analysis, the wealth of available literary memories, and the power of the trained imagination—between the representative addict who turns up in a modern clinic and Crabbe, Coleridge, De Quincey, and Francis Thompson. In a more recent book, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), Alethea Hayter examined thoroughly both the medical and psychological evidence about opium and the writings of addicted authors. Her conclusion was that indulgence in laudanum tends

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to effect characteristic patterns of imagery which are recognizable in a number of works of the literary imagination.

The books by Miss Schneider<sup>1</sup> and Miss Hayter are the only comprehensive studies of the effects of opium on literature which have appeared since 1934.<sup>2</sup> Their texts, together with the notes and bibliographies, provide a convenient survey, to date, of the medical, biographical, and critical studies of individual authors who have drunk the milk of a dubious paradise.

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June, 1969

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth Schneider, *Coleridge, Opium and 'Kubla Khan,'* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

<sup>2</sup> A recent study of the effect of drugs on French literature is Emanuel J. Mickel, Jr., *The Artificial Paradises in French Literature*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969.

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## PREFACE

FOUR eminent English authors were addicted to opium. Each author spent a considerable part of his life in a dream world which differs amazingly from that in which we live. Each author utilized the imagery from these dreams in his literary creations, and sometimes, under the direct inspiration of opium, achieved his best writing. Thus, a knowledge of the opium world these authors inhabited is essential to a complete understanding of their work.

In the cases where critics have not entirely neglected this factor, their analysis of opium effects is too often a flight of conjecture unimpeded by any burden of definite knowledge. Strangely enough, although "there is hardly a more difficult chapter in the whole of pharmacology than . . . a thoroughly exact analysis of the effects of drugs,"\* this is just the field wherein each man seems to consider himself expert. When a critic of established reputation is misled into characterizing all of Coleridge's finest poems as "the

\* Louis Lewin, *Phantastica*, London, 1931, Preface, p. x.

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chance brain-blooms of a season of physiological ecstasy,"\* it is time to examine the facts. Accordingly, I have based my investigation of the nature of opium phenomena on the statements of habitués and the findings of psychological authorities. Moreover, since to postulate addiction to opium merely from the "abnormality" of a man's work, although the usual method, is illogical, my approach to each of the authors under consideration is biographical.

Limitations of the length allowed for this thesis have imposed limitations in subject. I have dealt with no drug but opium, except in a passing reference in the Notes. Foreign authors I have had to omit; and of English authors I have been able to treat at length only those four whose long addiction to the drug is certain: DeQuincey, Crabbe, Francis Thompson, and Coleridge. Even with these men, it has been necessary to cut down evidence to a minimum, but indications for further investigation will be found in the Notes. There is no definite proof of addiction to opium in the lives of James Thomson and

\* John Mackinnon Robertson, *New Essays towards a Critical Method*, London, 1897, p. 190.

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Poe.\* In their works, too, indications of the influence of alcohol are so strong that it would be difficult to distinguish any possible effect of opium.

Since the date of the inception of Coleridge's opium habit is necessary for a determination of the influence of the drug on his great creative period, I have gathered in an appendix all the evidence available on this agitated question.

To Professor Lowes I owe a great debt for the material on Coleridge in *The Road to Xanadu*, and for access to his photostatic reproductions of Coleridge's manuscript Note Book. To Dr. David Worcester I am grateful for the benefit of his authoritative investigations on James Thomson. I wish to express my appreciation also to Professor Edmund B. Delabarre, of the Psychology Department of Brown University, and to Dr. Beebe-Center, for guidance in matters connected with the subject of narcotic phenomena.

\* The more important books which I have consulted are listed in the bibliography.



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WHEN HOMER sang of "the drug to heal all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow,"<sup>1</sup> he heralded a long succession of poets who paid tribute to the enchantment of opium. Vergil knew the "poppies soaked with the sleep of Lethe";<sup>2</sup> and in his *Aeneid*, the dragon which protects the distant Hesperides succumbs to this chastening gift of Somnus, god of sleep.<sup>3</sup> The great English poets, too, felt the poppy's spell. Chaucer twice mentions opium;<sup>4</sup> Shakespeare knows the effect of "the drowsy syrups of the world";<sup>5</sup> Milton recalls Homer with

The Nepenthes which the wife of Thone  
In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena.<sup>6</sup>

These poets were allured by the mystery inherent in the golden drug of Asia; but when English authors, early in the nineteenth century, actually took opium themselves, they were inspired to ecstasies. "A spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountain and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste of sands!"<sup>7</sup> So Coleridge hailed it, and found therein a refuge from the turmoil of

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aspiration and disillusion at the turn of the century. DeQuincey apostrophized the drug more grandly: "Just, subtle, and all-conquering opium!" . . . "*Eloquent opium!*" For he saw not only a sanctuary, but a new sphere opened to his imagination in the glowing splendors it built "upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain." <sup>8</sup>

The great gift of opium to these men was access to a new world as different from this as Mars may be; and one which ordinary mortals, hindered by terrestrial conceptions, can never, from mere description, quite comprehend. It is a world of twisted, exquisite experience, sensuous and intellectual; of "music like a perfume," and "sweet light golden with audible odors exquisite," <sup>9</sup> where color is a symphony, and one can hear the walk of an insect on the ground, the bruising of a flower.<sup>10</sup> Above all, in this enchanted land man is freed at last from those petty bonds upon which Kant insists: space and time. Space is amplified to such proportions that, to writer after writer, "infinity" is the only word adequate to compass it. More striking still, man escapes at last from

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the life of a transiency lamented by poets since time immemorial, and approaches immortality as closely as he ever can in this world; for he experiences, almost literally, eternity. This is not the abstract "eternity" of the mystic, not Vaughan's vision of "a great ring of pure and endless light," but the duration of an actual, continuous experience so long that DeQuincey throws up his hands in an attempt to measure it by mundane standards:

In valuing the *virtual* time lived during some dreams, the measurement by generations is ridiculous—by millenia is ridiculous; by aeons, I should say, if aeons were more determinate, would also be ridiculous.<sup>11</sup>

This fantastic land is not the fleeting shadow of an ordinary dream, but is a reality nearly as vivid as actual experience.<sup>12</sup> The important and almost neglected fact is that in "the well of memory" the fragments of this land assume as legitimate a place as any recollections from life. When the poet's selective spirit hovers over the well, these images rise to the surface as readily as any others, to be incorporated in his creation side by side with the scenes from everyday life.

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To reconstruct the world of dreams vividly enough to distinguish its fragments in the works of men who have roamed its exotic paths is the hazardous task I have undertaken.

In all the writings of the four men with whom I am concerned, DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* is the only acknowledged description of opium visions. Coleridge so denoted only the passing reference, in his letters, to the "green spot of fountain and trees"; we know of Thompson's recourse to opium only through the indirect testimony of Everard Meynell;<sup>13</sup> and if it were not for an incidental acknowledgment by Crabbe's son,<sup>14</sup> and a friend's hasty jotting on a copy of his poems,<sup>15</sup> Crabbe's addiction might have escaped notice altogether.

Whether or not the impulse which caused DeQuincey to break this bond of silence was his avowed intention to be "useful and instructive,"<sup>16</sup> his *Confessions* may serve as a key to the mysteries of the opium world. That his descriptions of the effects of opium are authentic is verified, not only by his own reiterated insistence,<sup>17</sup> but by the fact that

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psychological investigators still draw on the *Confessions* for data.

DeQuincey, an Oxford student of nineteen, took opium for the first time in 1804, under coercion of excruciating rheumatic pains of head and face.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with accepted medical opinion, an acquaintance recommended opium, and DeQuincey tried it without question.<sup>19</sup> So enticing was the "abyss of divine enjoyment" revealed to him that for ten years he tasted the delights of the drug with indulgences at three-week intervals,<sup>20</sup> until in 1813 an "appalling irritation of the stomach" led to a daily resort to opium, and the addiction which lasted until his death. As with other authors, dreams of horror after long consumption of opium, rather than the pleasures experienced at the inception of the habit, stimulated most his desire for literary expression.<sup>21</sup> The visions described in the *Confessions* are the "Iliad of woes" attendant upon a futile struggle against the drug;<sup>22</sup> the "pleasures of opium" are lauded, but with no specific detail.<sup>23</sup>

The first symptom upon which DeQuincey comments, he calls "the re-awakening of a state of eye oftentimes incident to child-

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hood": an endless succession of scenes passing through his mind; the subject, perhaps, voluntarily chosen, but its evolution out of control.<sup>24</sup> Havelock Ellis, in *The World of Dreams*, also remarks upon this "constant succession of self-evolving visual imagery," and felicitously likens it "to the images produced by the kaleidoscope."<sup>25</sup> Dupouy, describing the same effect in greater detail, notes, too, that "les pensées et les tableaux se succèdent sans arrêt, faisant défiler les vies, les générations, et les siècles."<sup>26</sup>

DeQuincey then analyzes the distorted perceptions which seem to characterize all opium visions, whether of pleasure or of pain, the enormous extension of space and time.

Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity. This disturbed me very much less than the vast expansion of time. Sometimes I seemed to have lived for seventy or a hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience.<sup>27</sup>

"Le temps n'existe plus, l'espace est illimité," Dupouy corroborates;<sup>28</sup> and adds that if the addict imagines himself on a lake,

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“ce lac est immense, sans fond ni bournes; les montagnes qui l’entourent sont d’une hauteur prodigieuse, et lui-même met un temps illimité, 10,000, 20,000 ans à en accomplir la traversée.”<sup>29</sup>

In the early stages, these exalted splendors of DeQuincey’s dreams were chiefly architectural, “such pomp of cities and palaces as never yet was beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds.” To these succeeded “dreams of lakes and silvery expanses of water,” which, by the alchemy of opium, were soon amplified: “From translucent lakes, shining like mirrors, they became seas and oceans.”<sup>30</sup>

Now began the affliction so horrible that it has impressed itself more deeply than any other dream experience on the work of every opium author. DeQuincey calls it “the tyranny of the human face”; but this manifestation is only one aspect of a many-sided evil, the delusion of pursuit and persecution:

Upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to reveal itself; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing; faces that surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations.<sup>31</sup>

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But the many faces soon gave place to one, that of a Malay who, like a genie conjured by Aladdin's lamp, had appeared one day at DeQuincey's peaceful country cottage.<sup>32</sup> Fearfully metamorphosed from that harmless vagrant, the dream fiend transports his helpless victim, night after endless night, through fantastic scenes which are the accumulations of all DeQuincey's Asiatic memories, fused under the unifying principle of guilt and horror:

I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paraquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms. . . . I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia; Vishnu hated me; Seeva lay in wait for me. . . . I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. Thousands of years I lived and was buried in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.<sup>33</sup>

Note here the kaleidoscopic rush of scenes, and that omnipresent sensation of distorted time — “fixed for *centuries*,” “*thousands of years*,” “*eternal pyramids*.” And later in the

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same vision, "Over every form, and threat, and punishment, and dim sightless incarceration, brooded a killing sense of *eternity* and *infinity*." <sup>34</sup>

Into these dreams, although all before had been "moral and spiritual terrors," now entered circumstances of "physical horror":

Here the main agents were ugly birds, or snakes, or crocodiles. . . . All the feet of the tables, sofas, &c., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into ten thousand repetitions; and I stood loathing and fascinated. <sup>35</sup>

In the original manuscript of the *Confessions* appeared another passage which, although immediately cancelled by the writer, has since been published in Garnett's reprint. <sup>36</sup> The dreams become so terrifying, that, DeQuincey says:

At length I grew afraid to sleep, and I shrank from it as from the most savage torture. Often I fought with my drowsiness, and kept it aloof by sitting up the whole night and the following day. <sup>37</sup>

Yet he had to sleep at times; and turning back to the published *Confessions*, we find a new series of visions, beginning with the

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lovely one of the "Sunday morning in May." DeQuincey is standing at what seems the door of his actual cottage; but, with the usual exaltation of space, "the mountains were raised to more than Alpine height, and there was interspace far larger between them of savannahs and forest lawns." Then suddenly "the scene is an Oriental one . . . and at a vast distance are visible, as a stain upon the horizon, the domes and cupolas of a great city." <sup>38</sup>

There follows the breathless description of the finding, under Judean palms, of Ann, the forlorn little prostitute who had befriended him in London seventeen years before. Another turn of the kaleidoscope, vapors roll in, and DeQuincey is back in London. And again a flux of scene, heralded by the welling of sounds on a drugged mentality, as he hears

music of preparation and of awakening suspense. The undulations of fast-gathering tumults . . . gave the feeling of a multitudinous movement, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies.<sup>39</sup>

As the view unrolls, the scene again con-  
torts into one of horror, with "darkness and

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lights; tempests and human faces." Ann reappears, but only for a moment, then — "everlasting farewells!" And as the sound is reverberated — again and again, "everlasting farewells!" — he 'awakes in struggles, and cries aloud, "I will sleep no more!"' 40

To those who know George Crabbe as a sedate and dignified ecclesiastic, his classification with the comparatively disreputable DeQuincey, Thompson, and Coleridge may seem a bit incongruous, even irreverent; but a touch of the poppy makes the world of poets kin. In the biography written by Crabbe's son occurs a paragraph to the significance of which most critics have been as blind as was the author.<sup>41</sup> After Crabbe had experienced a fainting spell in 1790,<sup>42</sup> a certain Dr. Club was called who "saw through the case with great judgment," and declared, to quote the son:

"Let the digestive organs bear the whole blame; you must take opiates."<sup>43</sup> From that time his health began to amend rapidly, . . . a rare effect of opium; . . . and to a constant but slightly increasing dose of it may be attributed his long and generally healthy life.<sup>44</sup>

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From Crabbe himself we learn that this "constant but slightly increasing dose" finally resulted in the usual dreams of horror. What is apparently only one of many similar experiences is narrated in his journal of 1817:

For the first time these many nights, I was incommoded by dreams, such as would cure vanity for a time in any mind where they could gain admission. . . . Asleep, all was misery and degradation, not my own only, but of those who had been. — That horrible image of servility and baseness — that mercenary and commercial manner! <sup>45</sup>

The poet Fitzgerald, who in a twenty-two year friendship with Crabbe's son had learned much about the father's habits,<sup>46</sup> adds to the list of evidence. In Fitzgerald's copy of Crabbe's poems, Ainger informs us, there is a MS note, not signed "G. C.," and therefore Fitzgerald's own. It runs thus: "It (the opium) probably influenced his dreams, for better or worse." To this Fitzgerald significantly adds, "see also the *World of Dreams*, and his *Eustace Grey*." <sup>47</sup>

The opening stanza of the "World of Dreams" <sup>48</sup> confirms Fitzgerald's hypothesis that the visions described in the poem

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are of opium origin. The division of dreams into extremes of pleasure and pain at once echoes the keynote of DeQuincey's *Confessions*:

And is thy soul so wrapt in sleep?  
Thy senses, thy affections, fled?  
No play of fancy thine, to keep  
Oblivion from that grave, thy bed?  
Then art thou but the breathing dead:  
I envy, but I pity too:  
The bravest may *my* terrors dread,  
The happiest fain *my* joys pursue. . . .

I feel such bliss, I fear such pain;  
But all is gloom, or all is gay,  
Soon as th' ideal World I gain.

This "ideal World" of Crabbe's diluted phraseology, it soon becomes evident, is the same twisted world of opium into which DeQuincey had entered. With characteristic phantasmagoric succession, the restless scene shifts from "the wicked city's vilest street" to "a noble mansion," to "far-off rivers"; then, after a flash of the sea, to the land again; on and on, fading, receding, expanding, brightening.

In spite of DeQuincey's failure to give a detailed picture of his visions of pleasure, the following scene is enough like Cole-

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ridge's "green spot of fountain and flowers and trees" to indicate its type. The force of this description is lost upon those unacquainted with the usual cold restraint of Crabbe's style:

A garden this? Oh! lovely breeze!  
Oh! flowers that with such freshness bloom!  
Flowers shall I call such forms as these;  
Or this delicious air perfume?  
Oh! this from better worlds must come;  
On earth such beauty who can meet?

Then occurs the illusion of flight, which, though new to this investigation, is an authenticated characteristic of narcotic experience: <sup>49</sup>

'Tis easier now to soar than run;  
Up! Up! — we neither tire nor fall.  
Children of dust, be yours to crawl  
On the vile earth!

Unfortunately, these delights are soon metamorphosed into the familiar hallucinations of persecution and horror, crowded with "black Enemies," in which "the dark-brow'd throng" jostle a "female fiend" with "tainted bosom bare" and "eye of stone." Time is extended in "that sad, last, long endless day!" And again we hear the welling

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of noise, like DeQuincey's "undulations of fast-gathering tumults":

Heavens! how mighty is the throng,  
Voices humming like a hive!

Although the Orient held the greatest terror for DeQuincey, Crabbe, like a true eighteenth-century man of letters, seems to have feared most the horrors of the Gothic. He is brought into a "Gothic hall," and seated with

Kings, Caliphs, Kaisers, — silent all;  
Pale as the dead; enrobed and tall,  
Majestic, frozen, solemn, still;  
They wake my fears, my wits appal,  
And with both scorn and terror fill.

Strikingly close to similar experiences upon which DeQuincey had commented<sup>50</sup> is the reappearance in Crabbe's dreams of the friends of his childhood, "all whom he loved and thought them dead." And as DeQuincey had met Ann in his dreams, so Crabbe sees

One, the fairest, best,  
Among them — ever-welcome guest! . . .

Speak to me! speak! that I may know  
I am thus happy! — dearest, speak!

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But, as in DeQuincey's dream, the dear forms disappear in the tumult, the terrors become ever more unbearable, until Crabbe, by a last desperate struggle, frees himself; and so perfect is the illusion, we can almost hear him crying, as DeQuincey had done, "I will sleep no more!"

"Sir Eustace Grey," composed by Crabbe fifteen years after he had begun to take opium,<sup>51</sup> again confirms Fitzgerald's judgment. This time the opium phenomena are not merely described, but are placed in a framework of plot designed to account for their peculiarities: a madman's recital of the fiendish persecution attending him since the murder of his young wife's paramour. We may detect the line, I feel certain, where the transcriptions from Crabbe's dreams begin:

Soon came a voice! I felt it come;  
"Full be his cup, with evil fraught,  
"Demons his guides, and death his doom!"<sup>52</sup>

Immediately follows the usual eternal and kaleidoscopically varied persecution. Even the Malay who had been the supervisor of DeQuincey's tortures finds his counterpart in Crabbe's "two fiends":

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Then was I cast from out my state,  
Two fiends of darkness led my way;  
They waked me early, watch'd me late,  
My dread by night, my plague by day!

Space is again amplified in the "boundless plain," "vast ruins," and "pillars and pediments sublime"; and, as usual, the bonds of time are burst:

There was I fix'd, I know not how,  
Condemn'd for untold years to stay:  
Yet years were not; — one dreadful *Now*  
Endured no change of night or day.

As DeQuincey had been fixed for centuries at the summit of pagodas, so:

They hung me on a bough so small,  
The rook could build her nest no higher;  
They fix'd me on the trembling ball  
That crowns the steeple's quiv'ring spire.

Interminably, the tormenting fiends continue their savage game. Sir Eustace is pursued through a "bleak and frozen land," riveted to a tombstone, placed upon a shaking fen" where "danced the moon's deceitful light," hung upon "the ridgy steep of cliffs," plunged "below the billowy deep"; then abruptly, again like a sudden *awakening* from a nightmare, comes the call of grace to re-

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lease him from his tortures. But before I leave the poem, one bit of imagery I wish to emphasize because of its appearance in later writers:

They placed me where those streamers play,  
Those nimble beams of brilliant light;  
It would the stoutest heart dismay,  
To see, to feel that dreadful sight:  
So swift, so pure, so cold, so bright,  
They pierced my frame with icy wound;  
And all that half-year's polar night,  
Those dancing streamers wrapp'd me round.

That DeQuincey made no special comment on abnormal light perception in a drugged state does not prove he noticed none. It may rather be the result of an innate lack of sensitivity to light. Although ordinary dreams are prevailingly gray in color,<sup>53</sup> in opium visions, as Beaudelaire affirms, occur "des échappées magnifiques, gorgées de lumière et de couleur."<sup>54</sup> Dupouy, moreover, describes a sensitivity of the eye so great that it translates vivid ocular impressions in terms of actual physical pain.<sup>55</sup> Thus Crabbe could speak of *feeling* light as an "icy wound."

It seems strange that Saintsbury could describe as an exponent of "the style of drab stucco" the author of the stanza above,<sup>56</sup> yet

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this statement is not unfair when applied to almost any of Crabbe's work except the two poems most critics neglect: "The World of Dreams" and "Sir Eustace Grey." Significantly, these same two poems and no others that I could discover describe the world of Crabbe's opium dreams.<sup>57</sup> These poems offer, therefore, an unexampled opportunity to observe the effect of opium on that mysterious phenomenon, poetic inspiration. On two occasions something happened to Crabbe which "set the winds of inspiration blowing,"<sup>58</sup> tore him loose from the clutch of the heroic couplet, and caused the employment, in these two poems only, of an eight-line stanza with interlacing rhymes, almost as intricate as the Spenserian.<sup>59</sup> This same force, in at least a score of stanzas of "Sir Eustace Grey," freed Crabbe's language from the restraint of eighteenth-century poetic diction, and gave it a simplicity and inevitability which suggest Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner." With the evidence presented, is there much doubt that this stimulus, which incited Crabbe to dash off "Sir Eustace Grey" in a single night,<sup>60</sup> is the vivid recollection of an opium dream?

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However admonitory were DeQuincey's intentions, the list of addicts introduced to opium by his *Confessions* is a long one, and extends even to the present day.<sup>61</sup> The last gift that Francis Thompson received from his mother was a copy of the *Confessions*. He was then, in 1879, a misfit medical student wandering ill and friendless in dingy Manchester.<sup>62</sup> In this condition, and under the stimulation of DeQuincey's rhapsodies, a resort to opium was almost inevitable.<sup>63</sup> "Giver of life, death, peace, distress" Thompson later termed his mother,<sup>64</sup> and thereby summed up the conflicting doles of the drug to which she had unsuspectingly introduced him.

Thompson rarely alluded to this surrender, but we find the records of his opium addiction in the biography written by his friend, Everard Meynell. In 1882 he was already spending money on the drug,<sup>65</sup> and three years later he sold books and medical instruments to satisfy the cravings which had already become insatiable.<sup>66</sup> Because of the habit, in 1887 he lost a job given him by a kindly shoemaker.<sup>67</sup> Twelve years later the elder Meynell induced him to go to a private

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hospital for cure.<sup>68</sup> Although the impression left by the biography is that this treatment succeeded, a later record indicates that its success must have been temporary at best; for in November, 1907, Thompson confessed to Wilfrid Meynell, "I am dying from laudanum poisoning."<sup>69</sup>

That Thompson experienced, too, the usual opium dreams, is certain. Thus, Meynell comments, "his letters contain complaints of dreams akin to Coleridge's," and then quotes Thompson's description of "a most miserable fortnight of torpid, despondent days, and affrightful nights, dreams having been in part the worst realities of my life."<sup>70</sup>

I have not space to deal in detail with Thompson's poetry, although much of it is swiftly phantasmagoric, often approaching the imagery we have come to recognize as a consequence of addiction to opium. The danger is that one may go too far and attribute, glibly, all its strangeness to a "ghostly aura from quick-burning nerves."<sup>71</sup> Thompson himself has tempted such overemphasis by the following testament in a poem suggestively entitled "The Poppy":

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The sleep-flower sways in the wheat its head,  
Heavy with dreams, as that with bread. . . .

I hang 'mid men my needless head,  
And my fruit is dreams, as theirs is bread. . . .

Love! *I* fall into the claws of Time:  
But lasts within a leavèd rhyme  
All that the world of me esteems —  
My withered dreams, my withered dreams.<sup>72</sup>

Thompson's work also includes a prose fantasy, "Finis Coronat Opus," closely comparable to DeQuincey's visions of pain. Again, as in "Sir Eustace," the opium vagaries are moulded to fit a narrative frame designed to account for them, and again the pretext for the persecution is a murder; for the poet Florentian buys genius from an evil spirit at the price of killing his own sweetheart. Perhaps because of Thompson's inherent sensitivity, light phenomena are stressed early in the story. He describes a multitude of parti-colored lamps:

Above them were coiled thinnest serpentings of suspended crystal, hued like the tongues in a wintry hearth, flame-colour, violet, and green; so that, as in the heated current from the lamps the snakes twirled and flickered and their bright shadows twirled upon the wall, they seemed at length to undulate their twines, and the whole

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altar became surmounted with a fiery fantasy of sinuous stains.<sup>73</sup>

These sinuous undulations of light rays on a narcotized retina are very like the experiences of Sir Eustace.<sup>74</sup>

Dupouy treats at some length the effect of opium on auditory perceptions, of which some signs have already appeared in De-Quincey and Crabbe:

*L'ouïe devient d'une délicatesse exquise; les moindres bruits sont perçus . . . la marche d'un insecte sur le sol . . . le froissement d'une herbe . . . et si ce bruit revêt une intensité tant soit peu marquée, l'oreille est douloureusement affectée.*<sup>75</sup>

The contrasted blasting and exquisiteness of sound effects, so difficult to describe in terms of normal audition, occur within a single paragraph of "Finis Coronat Opus"; for with hearing as with sight, there is no quiescence in the opium world; everything is in a constant flux of intensification or recession. To Florentian appears an idol, "soaked with fire."

There issued from the lips a voice that threw Florentian on the ground: "Whom seekest thou?" . . . A voice came forth again, but a voice that sounded not the same; a voice that seemed to

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have withered in crossing the confines of existence, and to traverse illimitable remotenesses beyond the imagining of man; a voice melancholy with a boundless calm, the calm not of a crystalline peace but of a marmoreal despair, "Knowest thou me; who I am?"<sup>76</sup>

Later is repeated the effect of attenuated sound on ear drums almost painfully keen. With it appears the familiar persecution theme, again through time without end, but in a new form: the hypnotic effect of accusing eyes holds the dreamer as a snake's stare holds a bird.<sup>77</sup> The poet strikes down his bride, and

then — her eyes opened. I *saw* them open, through the gloom I saw them; through the gloom they were revealed to me, that I might see them to my hour of death. . . . Motionless with horror they were fixed on mine, motionless with horror mine were fixed on them, as she wakened into death.

How long had I seen them? I saw them still. . . . All my senses are resolved into one sense, and that is frozen to those eyes. Silence now, at least, abysmal silence; except the sound (or is the sound in me?), the sound of dripping blood, except that the flame upon the altar sputters, and hisses, and bickers, as if it licked its jaws. Yes! there is another sound — hush, hark! It is the throbbing of my heart. . . . The loud pulse dies slowly away . . . and again I hear the licking of the flame.<sup>78</sup>

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A flash again of undulating light phenomena, as he sees that "the hideous, green, writhing tongue was streaked and flaked with *red!* I swooned . . . swooned to myself, but swooned not to those eyes." <sup>79</sup>

A monstrosity appears, like the crocodile which had kissed DeQuincey "with cancerous kisses": "When I recovered consciousness, it was risen from the ground, and kissed me with the kisses of its mouth." <sup>80</sup> And the persecution goes on and on, sustained by an agency as persistent as the "fiends" we already know. "For two years . . . it had spoken to me with her lips, used her gestures, smiled her smile." <sup>81</sup> And long afterward:

I can fly no farther, I fall exhausted, the fanged hour fastens on my throat . . . hurrying retributions whose multitudinous tramlings converge upon me in a hundred presages, in a hundred shrivelling menaces, down all the echoing avenues of doom. <sup>82</sup>

Although Coleridge, who had taken opium several times before 1791, was the first author of the four to experience the effects of the drug, <sup>83</sup> I have hitherto reserved treatment of his work, in order to gain all possible

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momentum of evidence before approaching the contested question: did opium influence the composition of "The Ancient Mariner"? The problem hinges upon the issue whether before the conception of the poem in November, 1797, Coleridge had experienced the type of opium dreams which might have exerted such influence.

The data concerning Coleridge's early use of opium I have collected in an appendix. The indubitable facts are: one, that as early as 1791 Coleridge had tried opium; and two, that the suffering which led him to do so continued until 1796, when definite proofs of addiction occur in March, and again in November and December. An investigation of the works which he composed in 1796 reveals, too, startling indications that he had experienced, even in that year, not only the pleasures, but the pains attendant either upon long addiction or upon overdoses.

In Coleridge's Note Book of random jottings, upon which Professor Lowes has based his study of Coleridge's reading,<sup>84</sup> occurs a series of passages about which, Mr. Lowes confesses, except for some possible resemblances to a lightning storm in Bartram's

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*Travels*, he has "not the remotest notion what they are." <sup>85</sup> The following quotation is a part of "one of the most wildly incoherent pages of the Note Book," <sup>86</sup> spaced just as Coleridge jotted it:

a dusky light — a purple *flash*  
crystalline splendor — light blue —  
*Green* lightnings —  
in that eternal and delirious (misery) <sup>87</sup>  
wrath fires —  
    inward desolations  
an horror of great darkness  
    great things — on the ocean  
    counterfeit infinity — <sup>88</sup>

The time of the three pages of these confused entries <sup>89</sup> has been definitely placed in the month or two before the composition of the "Ode to the Departing Year," written December 24–26, 1796. Upon this point, based on the inclusion of germinating fragments of the "Ode" amid the entries, Campbell, <sup>90</sup> Lowes, <sup>91</sup> and Brandl <sup>92</sup> unhesitatingly agree. The significant thing is that in Coleridge's letters of those months, we discover more frequent references to his recourse to opium than he ever made again within the same length of time. <sup>93</sup>

It is fairly clear that the disorder of these

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pages is due to extravagances induced by a combination of drugs and physical pain, and that at least the passage I have quoted is an excerpt from an opium vision itself. The hitherto inexplicable confusion of entries is shot through, moreover, with indications that Coleridge was preoccupied at that period with the subjects of opium and dreams. In the Note Book, immediately preceding the first fragment of the "Ode to the Departing Year," is the statement: "Dreams sometimes useful by giving to the well-grounded fears and hopes of the understanding the feelings of vivid sense."<sup>94</sup> Immediately following the same fragment occurs what is evidently Coleridge's description of a dream of pain: "In a distempered dream things and forms in themselves common and harmless inflict a terror of anguish";<sup>95</sup> and this statement is in turn followed by another bit from the "Ode."<sup>96</sup> Farther on, in the first draft of a scene later used in *Osorio*, occurs a mysterious reference to opium:

It had been a damning sin to have remained  
An opium chewer with such excellent grapes  
Over his cottage.<sup>97</sup>

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And finally, on the same incoherent page with the "green lightnings" passage, come significant jottings of "deep sighings," and "unbind the poppy garland," which again may possibly be allusions to opium.

Even without these vanes to point the wind, internal evidence indicates the opium origin of the excerpt I quoted above. The lights and colors are certainly as close to Crabbe's "dancing streamers" and Thomson's color experiences of red, violet, and green crystal as they are to Bartram's lightnings. The rest of the passage, which an appeal to Bartram leaves entirely unexplained, is paralleled in every detail by known opium phenomena. The "eternal and delirious misery," the "wrath fires," "desolations," and "horror" represent again that omnipresent theme of persecution through eternity; and in the "great things" and "counterfeit infinity" of the ocean, space once more undergoes its limitless expansion.

In the "Ode to the Departing Year" itself — a poem in which, as Brandl puts it, Coleridge's "Gemüts<sup>er</sup>regung steigert sich bis ins Fieberhafte" <sup>98</sup> — are evidences of opium delirium even more definite than the confu-

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sion of the structure. In one passage Coleridge describes a horrible vision which has appeared to him:

And ever, when the dream of night  
Renews the phantom to my sight,  
Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs;  
My ears throb hot; my eye-balls start,  
My brain with horrid tumult swims;  
Wild is the tempest of my heart;  
And my thick and struggling breath  
Imitates the toil of death!

If there is doubt that these lines refer to the effects of a dream of terror caused by opium,<sup>99</sup> a striking parallel occurs in "The Pains of Sleep," 1803,<sup>100</sup> which Coleridge himself classifies with the opium dream, "Kubla Khan."<sup>101</sup> Its similarities both to DeQuincey's experiences and to the excerpt above are apparent even from a few lines of quotation:

But yester-night I prayed aloud  
In anguish and in agony,  
Up-starting from the fiendish crowd  
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:  
A lurid light, a trampling throng,  
Sense of intolerable wrong,  
And whom I scorned, those only strong! . . .

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Desire with loathing strangely mixed  
On wild or hateful objects fixed. . . .

For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe.

And farther on in the same poem, he describes

The third night, when my own loud scream  
Had waked me from the fiendish dream.

Such dreams in 1803, when Coleridge was undeniably deep in the toils of opium, are understandable; but, in view of the traditional opinion, it may still be hard to believe that the dreams also occurred as early as the "Ode" of December, 1796. A letter of Coleridge's dated September 22, 1803, clinches the case. After relating the same dreams described in the "Pains of Sleep," from which, awakening, he "blest the scream which delivered him from reluctant sleep," he makes this neglected statement: "Nine years ago I had three months' visitation of this kind."<sup>102</sup> "Nine years ago" would have been in 1794. Certainly there is no reason here for conscious misstatement, and even Coleridge's fickle memory could not have recalled as "nine years" anything less than seven years. It seems probable that Coleridge is remem-

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bering, although hazily in regard to date, the very dreams of 1796 with which we are concerned.<sup>103</sup>

In the afternoon of November 13, 1797, Coleridge conceived the plan of "The Ancient Mariner," and brought the poem, completed, to read to the Wordsworths on the evening of March 23, 1798.<sup>104</sup> Now that we know Coleridge had already experienced opium dreams of horror in 1796 of sufficient intensity to have left their impress on his poems of that year, the question of the influence of opium on "The Ancient Mariner" must be viewed in a new light. The problem resolves itself into two distinct questions: whether opium had a part in inspiring the conception and scheme of the work; and aside from that, whether the scenery and sensations of Coleridge's dreams were utilized in the details of the poem.

Mr. John Mackinnon Robertson, in the answer to the first question which has had so much influence on the popular conception of Coleridge, represents the type of criticism I am trying to avoid. At one fell swoop he stigmatizes "The Ancient Mariner," the first part of "Christabel," and "Kubla

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Khan" as "an abnormal product of an abnormal nature under abnormal conditions,"<sup>105</sup> all having been "conceived and composed under the influence of opium."<sup>106</sup>

In view of the phantasmagoric quality of all drug visions, I concur with Mr. Lowes in his denial of the specious theory that so highly wrought a piece of conscious artistry as "The Ancient Mariner" could have been "*composed* under the influence of opium,"<sup>107</sup> but I cannot agree with him that opium played no part in the inspiration of the poem.

There can be no question of the great gulf, both in subject and style, between "The Ancient Mariner" and Coleridge's earlier work, which had tended to didacticism and rhetoric, and had employed, in Coleridge's own scornful words, "such shadowy nobodies as cherub-winged *Death*, *Trees of Hope*, bare-bosomed *Affection* and simpering *Peace*."<sup>108</sup> Reduced to baldest terms, the factors to which Mr. Lowes attributes this change are the influence of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, and "that equipoise of the intellectual and emotional faculties, which [Coleridge] christened 'joy!'"<sup>109</sup>

These causes explain a gradual ripening

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rather than a sudden metamorphosis of technique, and leave unexplained Coleridge's use of the supernatural theme so foreign to Wordsworth's temperament. I put most of my faith in Mr. Lowes's final hypothesis:

Above all, for the first time in his life Coleridge had hit upon a theme which fired his imagination, and set him voyaging again through all the wonder-haunted regions of all his best-loved books.<sup>110</sup>

The point where I differ from Mr. Lowes is in my belief that this theme was not a happy accident of the imagination, but had its source and development in Coleridge's opium hallucinations. We have seen that such dreams had already influenced Coleridge's poetry, and might be very likely do so again. Against this theory, too, the objection that the "superb, unwavering imaginative control" of the poem "is not the gift of opium"<sup>111</sup> would not be valid. "The Ancient Mariner," I venture to say, underwent the same process to which both "Sir Eustace Grey" and "Finis Coronat Opus" were subjected: a framework of plot was constructed expressly to contain the pre-existent fabric of dream phenomena.

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A careful interpretation of Wordsworth's account of the poem's origin bears out this theory. In the course of a walk, he says,

was planned the poem of the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator . . . the spectral persecution.<sup>112</sup>

Wordsworth also related to the Reverend Alexander Dyce substantially the same story of the famous walk, with the additional detail that the original dream was of "a skeleton ship, with figures in it."<sup>113</sup> Wordsworth's accounts agree that his own share in the poem was limited to the suggestion of two incidents: the shooting of the albatross, and the navigation of the ship by the dead men.

The significant information here is to be read between the lines. Coleridge seized upon the detail of "a skeleton ship," but the spectral persecution is his own idea. Wordsworth evidently added, after its conception, the detail of a crime to motivate this persecution. And by the time Wordsworth later suggested the supernatural navigation, it is

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apparent that the plot had been completed, up to this point, by Coleridge himself.

DeQuincey, moreover, gives evidence that such a plan had been forming in Coleridge's mind, independently of Cruikshanks's dream:

It is very possible, from something which Coleridge said on another occasion, that, before meeting a fable in which to embody his ideas, he had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream-scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes.<sup>114</sup>

And this account, Mr. Lowes affirms, "carries its own conviction."<sup>115</sup>

"A poem on delirium," "dream scenery," "spectral persecution"! These compose the structure which rose at once in Coleridge's mind at the mere suggestion of a skeleton ship. Finally, notice DeQuincey's statement that this material *preceded* the conception of "a fable in which to embody his ideas." What better confirmation could there be not only of the hypothesis that the inspiration of "The Ancient Mariner" was an opium dream of persecution, but also that the plot was a consciously designed framework of later addition?

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The effect of opium on the poetry of George Crabbe has already been discussed. His imagination, too, was unleashed from his desire to portray humble life "as Truth will paint it,"<sup>116</sup> and went soaring into the "high latitudes"<sup>117</sup> with their fiends, and horrors, and spectral persecutions. But he returned at once to rustic subjects and a lukewarm style. For Coleridge, the dreams sent his creative imagination voyaging in the strange literature of Elizabethan travellers and alchemistic handbooks, which harmonized so well with his dream experiences; and all these elements, fused in the heat of his imagination, were later consciously shaped into the artistic whole which is "The Ancient Mariner."<sup>118</sup>

The possibility of opium influences on the details of the poem is not eliminated by the fact that Mr. Lowes has already traced much of the imagery of "The Ancient Mariner" to parallels in Coleridge's reading. Opium dreams, as DeQuincey indicates, feed upon the fragmentary memories of earlier experience.<sup>119</sup> From the Note Book it is evident that Coleridge had opium hallucinations while in the very process of reading about the

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material he later utilized in the poem. It is almost unbelievable that scenes which impressed him so vividly should not sink into his memory, to be later metamorphosed in the crucible of dreams; <sup>120</sup> and indeed, as Mr. Lowes points out, this is the actual process recorded in "Kubla Khan"! <sup>121</sup> Possibly, too, Coleridge more or less consciously clothed the bits from his reading in the new and glowing material of his dream memories. Whatever the explanation, this is a matter incapable of absolute proof. It is for me but to present parallels; the decision must be left to the reader.

Sir Eustace had murdered a friend; Florentian had slain his sweetheart; the Ancient Mariner had killed an albatross. It is the killing of the albatross which sets off the long train of "spectral persecution." <sup>122</sup> As Sir Eustace had attributed his sufferings to the "two fiends of darkness," Florentian to an indescribable monster, DeQuincey to a Malay, so the Mariner places all the blame on a spirit. And significantly, some of the sailors "*in dreams* assured were" of the fiend who had engineered all the persecution. Throughout the endless duration of these tortures (no

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track is kept of time, but the general impression is of interminable extension) appear other characteristic phenomena.

The equivalent of DeQuincey's "unutterable abortions" occur in

The very deep did rot: O Christ! . . .

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea. . . .

And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.

And again in

I looked upon the rotting sea.

There are, too, frequent reminiscences of the terrors of sleep:

Fear at my heart, as at a cup,  
My life-blood seemed to sip.

And once occurs almost the very wording of the dream in the "Ode to the Departing Year," with its "my ears throb hot, my eye balls start," and the "cold sweat drops" that "gather on my limbs":

I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls like pulses beat;

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For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the  
sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye.

And later:

The cold sweat melted from their limbs.

Perhaps the most striking descriptions are those of light and color. Remembering the serpentine mass of "flame-colour, violet, and green" in "Finis Coronat Opus," can we attribute Coleridge's perceptions to a different source? <sup>123</sup>

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death fires danced at night;  
The water like a witch's oils  
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

The same picture of writhing snakes which Thompson used to express this sinuous motion is repeated by Coleridge:

They moved in tracks of shining white,  
And when they reared, the elfish light  
Fell off in hoary flakes. . . .

Blue, glassy green, and velvet black,  
They coiled and swam; and every track  
Was a flash of golden fire.

The "dancing streamers" of Sir Eustace's visions play again in the Mariner's sky, in a

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passage of sound, movement, even wording  
amazingly close to that of Crabbe:

The upper air burst into life!  
And a hundred fire-flags sheen.  
To and fro they were hurried about!  
And to and fro, and in and out,  
The wan stars danced between.

Later the effect is repeated:

Like waters shot from some high crag,  
The lightning fell with never a jag,  
A river steep and wide.

Sound perception again ranges between  
the two extremes upon which Dupouy has  
commented. There is the crash of noise on  
abnormally sensitive ear drums:

It cracked and growled, and roared and  
howled,  
Like noises in a swound! . . .

The ice did split with a thunder-fit.

And at the end of the poem, sound becomes  
loud enough to sink the ship! But there is  
also the "délicatesse exquise" of hearing:

With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
Off shot the spectre-bark. . . .

And every soul, it passed me by,  
Like the whiz of my cross-bow.<sup>124</sup>

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Yet another similarity in a detail of persecution is "the curse of the eye" which played so prominent a part in "Finis Coronat Opus." I can only summarize the Mariner's frequent references to this appearance. The first is:

Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
And cursed me with his eye.

This look, we discover, "had never passed away," and was seen "seven days and seven nights"; later their "stony eyes" again gleamed in the moon; still, he "could not draw his eyes from theirs"; and finally,

Their stony eye-balls glitter'd on  
In the red and smoky light.<sup>125</sup>

Even from the quotations given, although they contain the more obvious similarities only, can be seen how significantly close is the imagery of "The Ancient Mariner" to the opium effects we already know. Such parallels can be extended, less certainly, to most of the details of the poem: for example, thirsty "Death" and "Life in Death" and the sensation of floating.<sup>126</sup>

To its quotation by Mr. Lowes<sup>127</sup> I owe the original draft of another poem which

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seems clearly the product of opium, despite the obscurity of this fact in its later and familiar version.<sup>128</sup> It was found in a note book dated 1800, prefaced by Coleridge's own hastily jotted note: <sup>129</sup>

It is eleven o'clock at night. See that conical volcano of coal, half-an-inch high, ejaculating its inverted cone of smoke — the smoke in what a furious mood — this way, that way, and what a noise!

Not only is the flection of the smoke typical of opium perceptions, but Coleridge's extreme sensitivity to the noise of the burning coal is exactly like Florentian's perception of the loudly bickering flame in "Finis Coronat Opus." The poem itself is even more revealing, with the felicitous expression of that sublime expansion of space which opium effects:

The poet's eye in his tipsy hour <sup>130</sup>  
Hath a magnifying power,  
Or rather emancipates his eyes  
Of the accidents of size.  
In unctuous cone of kindling coal,  
Or smoke from his pipe's bole,  
His eye can see  
Phantoms of sublimity.

With "Kubla Khan" we reach the end of this little pilgrimage through "straunge

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strondes." This poem does not merely reconstruct the world of dreams; it was itself composed within that very land. Coleridge's account of its composition is too familiar to need repetition in full. Enough that in the summer of 1798,<sup>131</sup> under influence of an "anodyne" now definitely known to have been opium,<sup>132</sup> he fell asleep while reading in *Purchas his Pilgrimage*, and in that state composed a poem "in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions without any sensation or consciousness of effort."<sup>133</sup> The recording of this dream composition upon awakening was interrupted at the fifty-fourth line, and was never completed.<sup>134</sup>

Thus Coleridge's verse caught up the evanescent images of an opium dream, and struck them into immobility for all time. The dream quality of "Kubla Khan" cannot be analyzed; like the rainbow tints of a butterfly's wing, it turns to dust on the fingers. But the swift shuttling of vistas is there to perfection. From "Alph, the sacred river" the scene shifts to brilliant gardens; then, after a flash of "that deep romantic

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chasm," turns to the dome of pleasure; and suddenly, in that vision within a vision, emerge the glowing forms of the "Abyssinian maid" with a dulcimer, and the wild-haired youth who, like Coleridge, has "drunk the milk of Paradise."<sup>135</sup>

No pain phenomena occur in the poem, for this is that rarity, a dream of pleasure purely, with all the intoxication and none of the tortures of opium. But Mr. Lowes's quick eye has caught, as most characteristic of "Kubla Khan," an effect which we know is the mark of opium: the extraordinary mutations of space. The little river at the opening of the poem expands into a mighty fountain which flings rocks like chaff; contracts into a peacefully meandering creek; then, by another dilation, becomes a huge primordial river sinking through measureless caverns — and all at once is the pellucid stream of the sunny dome of pleasure.<sup>136</sup> And through all is maintained a restless ebb and flow of style, to match the eternal unrest of the dream scenery itself.

The Mrs. Barbaulds are always with us, although the criticism of the early nineteenth century that "The Ancient Mariner"

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“had no moral”<sup>137</sup> now gives place to the more sophisticated demand that the entire poem be discarded as the product of a pathological mentality.<sup>138</sup> But surely the Mrs. Barbaulds are wrong. The important fact is that these four authors did an incredible thing: they opened to poetry an entirely new world. And with Coleridge and the apotheosis of this poetry in “Kubla Khan” came that rarest phenomenon, the true originality which is not just the “restitution of something old,”<sup>139</sup> but is something no one had conceived since poetry began. With it was struck that “new note” of lyricism<sup>140</sup> of which the reverberations have not yet died away.

Alas! the vision and the flight are pitifully brief before outraged nature exacts its vengeance. For “opium gives and takes away,” as DeQuincey said,<sup>141</sup> and while aspirations and projects are exalted, the will to execute is soon blasted.<sup>142</sup> Pathetic footnotes in the annals of literature are the tremendous metaphysical tractates both Coleridge and DeQuincey planned, but neither ever began.<sup>143</sup> In Shelley’s figure, “the mind in creation is as a fading coal,” and although the wind of

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opium may fan it into an instant's supernal brightness, the flame soon exhausts its fuel, wavers, and dies.

For fleeting moments of relief and revelation, Coleridge paid with a loss of creative power,<sup>144</sup> even of moral sense,<sup>145</sup> and with a lifetime of physical and mental torture. But to those moments we owe part of "The Ancient Mariner," all of "Kubla Khan," and both are like oases in our dusty lives. There is nothing frightening in their rich strangeness. Rather, they are to be the more dearly cherished because of the fearful toll exacted for beauty stolen from another world.



## **APPENDIX**



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### COLERIDGE'S USE OF OPIUM BEFORE 1798

THE earliest evidence of Coleridge's use of opium occurs in a letter to his brother George, dated November 28, 1791, in which Coleridge describes a painful attack of rheumatism, and then suddenly remarks: "Opium never used to have any disagreeable effects on me — but it has on many." <sup>1</sup> That Coleridge, even at nineteen, could speak familiarly of past indulgences in the drug, and the evident association in his mind between rheumatism and opium, makes it probable that Professor Lowes is right when he states, "there is every reason to believe . . . that laudanum had been prescribed for [Coleridge] at school (which he had left but two months before), when he was suffering from rheumatic fever." <sup>2</sup>

The implications go even farther. For every sort of pain opium, we know, was freely prescribed, even for children, by doctors of the late eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> And there is much evidence that Coleridge as a boy was uncommonly subject to physical

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distresses. In a letter to Poole, October 16, 1797, Coleridge describes how he had run away, when a child of seven, to avoid punishment for a serious fault, and how he had been exposed to a rain storm all through a cold October night. When found, he says, "I was put to bed and recovered in a day or so, but I was certainly injured. For I was weakly and subject to the ague for many years after." <sup>4</sup> Campbell records another such adventure, which befell Coleridge as a schoolboy:

Once, as he told Gillman (*Gillman's Life*, p. 33), he swam across the New River in his clothes, and let them dry on his back, with the consequence, apparently, that "full half his time from seventeen to eighteen was passed in the sick-ward of Christ's hospital, afflicted with jaundice and rheumatic fever." <sup>5</sup>

In the summer of 1790, Coleridge himself, in a "Sonnet on Pain," speaks of "frequent pangs," and the "Seas of Pain" which "seem waving through each limb." <sup>6</sup>

At any rate it is certain that before 1791, and in that year, Coleridge was taking opium for rheumatic pain. As there are frequent indications that this subjection to pain and illness continued, it is probable that the use of

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opium for relief continued as well. Thus, Campbell mentions a letter of 1792 in which Coleridge complains of toothache; <sup>7</sup> and in other letters of February 5, 1793,<sup>8</sup> and of February 9, 1793,<sup>9</sup> Coleridge complains again of a decayed tooth, and consequent fever. On April 12, 1794, he also describes a "violent pain in his limbs," which almost prevents him from writing.<sup>10</sup>

On Saturday, March 12, 1796, Coleridge wrote to the Reverend Mr. Edwards:

Since I last wrote you, I have been tottering on the verge of madness — my mind overbalanced on the *e contra* side of happiness — the blunders of my associate, etc., etc., abroad, and, at home, Mrs. Coleridge dangerously ill. . . . Such has been my situation for the last fortnight — I have been obliged to take laudanum almost every night.<sup>11</sup>

That this turmoil of mind dates back at least to February 22 is evident in a letter of that date,<sup>12</sup> and that it lasted until the end of March is clear from a letter to Poole of March 30.<sup>13</sup> The significant point here is that now Coleridge is taking opium, for a few weeks at least, not for pain, but for mental troubles. This, as Hahn points out, is the indication of danger.<sup>14</sup> I disagree, then, with

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Mr. Lowes that "the first hint of the deadly peril lurking in the remedy appears in the letter of April, 1798<sup>15</sup> . . . for in the reference to the divine repose of opium and to the spot of enchantment which it creates a new and ominous note is heard."<sup>16</sup> The ominous note had in reality sounded two years before that date.

The greatest siege of the drug came in the last two months of 1796. On Saturday night, November 5, Coleridge wrote to Poole:

On Wednesday night I was seized with an intolerable pain from my right temple to the tip of my right shoulder, including my right eye, cheek, jaw, and that side of the throat. . . . It came on . . . several times on Thursday . . . but I took between sixty and seventy drops of laudanum, and sopped the cerberus. . . . But this morning he returned in full force, and his name is Legion. . . . I have a blister under my right ear, and I take twenty-five drops of laudanum every five hours, the ease and *spirits* gained by which have enabled me to write you this flighty but not exaggerated account.<sup>17</sup>

For several days, then, it is certain that Coleridge took opium in large amounts. Mr. Lowes has added another bit of evidence by his quotation of Coleridge's unpublished note to Cottle, evidently referring to the same

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occasion. "I have a blister under my right ear — and I take laudanum every few hours, twenty-five drops each dose." <sup>18</sup> Cottle added a postscript to the hastily scrawled note: "Oh that S. T. C. had never taken more than twenty-five drops each dose." <sup>19</sup>

On December 13, 1796, Coleridge wrote a wildly confused letter to Poole, about which Campbell says:

It is a whirl of appeals, adjurations, reproaches, cries *de profundis*, plans and plans of life framed and torn up and resumed to be again abandoned, in bewildering profusion.<sup>20</sup>

In view of the evidence of the recourse to opium the month before, and the "flighty" letter which resulted, it seems clear that this second letter to Poole had a like origin.

There is evidence that the painful afflictions of November continued through the next month. On December 17, 1796, Coleridge describes another "rheumatic pain in the back of my head and shoulders, accompanied with sore throat and depression of the animal spirits"; <sup>21</sup> and on the next day, in a letter to Poole, we get a further account:

I am very poorly, not to say ill. My face monstrously swollen — my recondite eye sits distent

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quaintly . . . and I have a sore throat that prevents my eating aught but spoon-meat without great pain. And I have a rheumatic complaint in the back part of my head and shoulders!<sup>22</sup>

And on December 26, in the dedication of the "Ode to the Departing Year," Coleridge refers again to the rheumatic complaint as having lasted until December 24.<sup>23</sup> His painful ailments, some recourse to opium, and the probability of continued addiction thus extended through both months.

There is later indirect evidence which may also point to continued, although irregular, use of opium before the composition of "The Ancient Mariner." Coleridge writes to Joseph Cottle in the spring of 1797:

On the Saturday, the Sunday, and the ten days after my arrival at Stowey, I felt a depression too dreadful to be described. . . . I am not the man I have been — and I think I never shall; a sort of calm hopelessness diffuses itself over my heart.<sup>24</sup>

When we realize that in March he had already taken opium to relieve such mental strain, the following statement to Thelwall is ominous:

I should much wish, like the Indian Vishnu, to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the

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flower of the Lotus, and wake once in a million years more.<sup>25</sup>

And in April, 1798, comes this letter to his brother:

Laudanum gave me repose, not sleep: but you, I believe, know how divine that repose is, what a spot of enchantment, a green spot of fountain and flowers and trees in the very heart of a waste of sands.<sup>26</sup>

This was written just after the completion of "The Ancient Mariner," but the significance is in the note of *reminiscence* of the pleasures found in opium. It was in the very next month, May, 1798, that "as a result of a serious quarrel with Lloyd," Coleridge took the opium dose which resulted in "Kubla Khan."

From this material it is evident that Coleridge had taken opium to assuage pain at least several times before 1791, and that he probably continued to do so for the painful afflictions which came in succeeding years. On March 12, 1796, he took opium "almost every night" for mental disturbances which had already lasted a fortnight, and which continued until the end of the month. We know definitely that in November of the

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same year, on Thursday the third, he took opium, and that on the following Saturday, at four or five hour intervals, he took large doses. This time the painful condition lasted for two months, until December 26. Certainly it is not rash to assume that the recourse to opium continued as well. In the spring of 1797, Coleridge again felt the great depression of mind which had already led to opium in the past; and in March comes the significant reference to opium as a "spot of enchantment."

At all events, it is certain that Coleridge, before the conception of "The Ancient Mariner," had sufficiently experienced the effects of opium to make the proof of its influence on "The Ancient Mariner" dependent only upon evidence in the poem itself.<sup>27</sup>

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1. *The Odyssey*, Butcher and Lang translation, book IV. There seems no doubt that Homer refers to opium. See Louis Lewin, *Phantastica*, London, 1931, p. 34; Benno Hahn, *Die Morphin-Erkrankungen*, Heidelberg, 1927, pp. 1-2; Charles E. Terry and Mildred Peelens, *The Opium Problem*, New York, 1928, p. 55.
2. *Georgics*, I, 78. "Lethaeo perfusa papavero somno."
3. *Aeneid*, IV, 486. "Spargens humida melle soporiferumque papaver."
4. *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, New York, 1933; "The Knight's Tale," ll. 1471-1472; "The Legend of Good Women," ll. 2669-2670.
5. *Othello*, III, iii, 331.
6. *Comus*, ll. 675-676.
7. *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London, 1895, I, 240.
8. *The Collected Writings of Thomas DeQuincey*, ed. David Masson, London, 1896, III, 395.
9. Arthur Symons, "The Opium Smoker," *Days and Nights*, London and New York, 1889, p. 18.
10. Roger Dupouy, *Les Opiomanes*, Paris, 1912, p. 93.
11. "Suspiria de Profundis," *Writings*, XIII, 339.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 335.

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13. *Life of Francis Thompson*, New York, 1926.
14. *Life of the Rev. George Crabbe*, Cambridge and Boston, 1834.
15. See p. 14, below.
16. *Selections from DeQuincey*, ed. M. H. Turk (*Athenaeum Press Series*), Boston, 1902, p. 151. This edition contains the first and shorter version of the *Confessions*.
17. "Recollections of Charles Lamb," *Writings*, III, 76; Letter in *London Magazine*, *Writings*, III, 464-465.
18. "Confessions," *Writings*, III, 379. (This is the revised and longer version of 1856.)
19. To understand why authors from DeQuincey to Thompson were so easily induced to take opium, it must be realized that medical opinion from the time of Hippocrates and Galen until well on in the nineteenth century concurred in praise of the drug as "a sacred anchor of life." As late as 1791, a certain Hast Handy recommended opium for all diseases from dyspepsia to syphilis, and added a gratuitous encomium on "the charm of this agreeable ecstasy." (Terry, *The Opium Habit*, pp. 59-60.) See also Lewin, *Phantastica*, pp. 37-41.
20. "Confessions," *Athenaeum Edition*, p. 157.
21. See Dupouy's distinction between "la reverie" of early addiction, with its pleasant processions of idealized scenery, and "l'intoxication et l'ivresse," which proceed from an overdose or from long continued addiction, and in which the hallucinations become disordered, terrifying, and more vividly realistic.

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22. David Masson, *DeQuincey*, London, 1926; *Writings*, XIII, 337.
23. The period of DeQuincey's addiction and his spasmodic attempts at abstinence, so obscure in his accounts, is summed up in the *Athenaeum Edition*, p. 468. Although re-worked opium dreams occur in "Suspiria de Profundis," "Daughter of Lebanon," and "The English Mail Coach" (*Athenaeum Edition*, pp. 470-471), they repeat the phenomena of the *Confessions*.
24. "Confessions," *Writings*, III, 434.
25. London, 1926, p. 28.
26. *Les Opiomanes*, pp. 99-100. The same effect is cited by D. W. Cheever, "Narcotics," *North American Review*, XCV (1862), 388.
27. "Confessions," *Writings*, III, 435.
28. *Les Opiomanes*, p. 100.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 115. Confirmation of these symptoms occurs in almost any opium chronicle. See Cheever, *North American Review*, XCV (1862), 388; Walter Cotton, *Knickerbocker Magazine*, VII (1836), 421. Baudelaire, the French opium poet, testifies in "Le Poison" (*Oeuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire*, Paris, 1922, *Les Fleurs du Mal*, p. 80):

L'opium aggrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,  
Allonge l'illimité,  
Approfondit le temps.

That Arthur Symons has written an opium poem will surprise many. His sonnet, "The Opium Smoker" (*Days and Nights*, London, 1889, p. 18), is so little known, yet so clearly describes the same twisted sense perceptions

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in a rare vision of pleasure, that the octave is worth quoting in full. The italics are mine:

I am engulfed, and drown deliciously.  
Soft music like a perfume, and sweet light  
Golden with audible odors exquisite,  
Swathe me with cerements *for eternity*.  
*Time is no more*. I pause and yet I flee.  
*A million ages* wrap me round with night.  
I drain *a million ages* of delight.  
I hold the future in my memory.

30. "Confessions," *Writings*, pp. 439-441. Bodies of water seem characteristic of much dream scenery. (See Baudelaire, *Petits Poèmes en Prose*, Paris, 1869.) Ludlow, again, describes similar visions from hasheesh (*The Hasheesh Eater*, p. 34).
31. "Confessions," *Writings*, III, 440.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 402-405.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 441-442.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 443. Italics mine.
35. *Ibid.* These monstrous appearances suggest a phase of addiction to opium that modern psychology seems to neglect. Opium may be eaten, smoked, injected subcutaneously as morphine, or drunk in the form of laudanum (Dupouy, p. 22). In each case, the effects differ widely. (See Jean Cocteau, *Opium*, New York, 1932, pp. 94-95.) DeQuincey, in the period of these visions, drank 8,000 drops of laudanum each day (*Writings*, p. 401). Since laudanum is opium dissolved in alcohol, he consumed at the same time 48 ounces of proof spirits, composed, in turn, of 50 % to 60 % grain alcohol (John W. Robertson,

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- Edgar A. Poe*, New York, 1923, pp. 65-66). DeQuincy drank, then, the equivalent of a pint of whiskey each day. Since Dupouy maintains that the ordinary opium vision is pleasant (pp. 107, 173) — although he mentions experiences similar to DeQuincey's following excessive indulgences in opium alone — the dreams of "physical horror," as opposed to the "moral and spiritual terror," may very well be due to this attendant alcoholic indulgence. Such an assumption seems to be confirmed by the description of alcohol hallucinations of "monsters, serpents . . . vermin, reptiles . . . monkeys," etc. (Edmund Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions*, London, 1897, pp. 41-43. Cf. George B. Cutten, *The Psychology of Alcoholism*, New York, 1907, pp. 148-149).
36. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, ed. Richard Garnett, London, 1885, p. 263.
  37. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.
  38. *Writings*, III, 444-445.
  39. *Ibid.*, p. 446.
  40. *Ibid.*, pp. 446-447. A few opium users deny that the drug is conducive to visions at all. (See the anonymous *Opium Habit*, New York, 1868, p. 53; Robertson, *Poe*, p. 67.) The evidence of DeQuincey, the long and scholarly analysis of opium visions, based on numerous observations, by Dupouy in *Les Opïomanes*, and the testimony of other addicts whom I quote throughout the essay, is surely enough to refute such a belief. But this conflict of testimony can easily be reconciled. Opium stimulates the imagination, but cannot create

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a strong imaginative faculty where none has existed before. As Parish explains, "The sensory deceptions vary in character with the imaginative power of the individual" (*Hallucinations*, p. 189). Some addicts feel only the "negative pleasure" of physical relief; the "positive pleasure" of vision is reserved for the fortunate few already rich in imaginative equipment. (See Lawrence Kolb, "Pleasure and Deterioration from Narcotic Addiction," *Journal of Mental Hygiene*, IX (1926) 699.)

Ludlow tells of two friends one of whom experienced rich visions upon taking hash-eesh, although the other felt only the negative effects of physical pleasure (*The Hasheesh Eater*, pp. 102-107).

41. It remained for Arthur Ainger, in 1903, to ascribe to opium any influence upon Crabbe's work. (See *Crabbe*, "English Men of Letters," London, 1903, pp. 84-85, 88-89).
42. Although the son is lax as to dates, Ainger places the event in this year (*Crabbe*, p. 79).
43. Cf. note 19, above.
44. George Crabbe, *The Life of the Rev. George Crabbe*, Cambridge, 1834, pp. 153-154. The analysis was over-optimistic.
45. Extract from a Journal of July 21, 1817 (*Crabbe, Life*, p. 243). That Crabbe admitted using scenes from his dreams in his poetry appears in a letter from J. G. Lockhart to the younger Crabbe (*Life*, p. 270).
46. Ainger, *Crabbe*, p. 177.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.
48. *Poetical Works of the Rev. George Crabbe*, ed. by his son (George Crabbe), London, 1834,

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- IV, 116 ff. The poem was found undated in a manuscript (Ainger, *Crabbe*, p. 88).
49. "I was hardly sensible of my feet touching the ground; it seemed as if my feet slid along the ground, impelled by some individual agent, and that my blood was composed of some ethereal fluid, which rendered my body lighter than air." (D. W. Cheever, "Narcotics," *North American Review*, XCV [1862], 388.)
50. See DeQuincey, *Writings*, III, 435.
51. Ainger (p. 78) dates it in 1804-1805.
52. *Work of George Crabbe*, II, 261 ff.
53. Havelock Ellis, *The World of Dreams*, London, 1926, p. 33.
54. Charles Baudelaire, *Edgar Poe*, Paris, 1885, p. 31. For similar light phenomena in Crabbe's own dreams, see "World of Dreams," stanza xxx.
55. *Les Opiomanes*, p. 94. Arthur Symons, the author of "The Opium Smoker," in another poem, "The Crisis," exhibiting all the characteristics of opium dream persecution, describes the brilliant pain of light (*Days and Nights*, London, 1889, pp. 99 ff.). Close in detail to Crabbe's descriptions are the "scattered flash of lights, leaping, and whirled, and mixed inextricably"; and the following:
- Suddenly forth  
Sprang from the farthest clouds and leaped and  
    flashed  
Cleaving and shearing through the veil of rain  
Incessant arrows of the lightning.
56. George Saintsbury, *Essays in English Literature*, London, 1890, "Crabbe," p. 21.

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57. In "The Hall of Justice" is a stanza which may be reminiscent of his dreams of terror. See *Works*, II, 287.
58. See John Livingston Lowes, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1931, p. 131.
59. For Crabbe's verse forms, see Hermann Pesta, *George Crabbe, Eine Würdigung Seiner Werke*, Wien and Leipzig, 1899, pp. 60, 71 ff.
60. *Life*, p. 252.
61. See Terry and Peelens, *The Opium Problem*, pp. 62-63, 100.
62. Everard Meynell, *The Life of Francis Thompson*, New York, 1926, p. 37.
63. For the interesting question of how deeply the desire for drugs may have been innate in these poets, see Dupouy, p. 299; Cocteau, p. 151; and especially, Benno Hahn, *Die Morphin-Erkrankungen*, Heidelberg, 1927, pp. 59-62.
64. Meynell, *Life*, p. 39.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 264. Cf. *Confessions*, Garnett edition, p. 263.
71. Jeannette Marks, *Genius and Disaster*, New York, 1925, p. 41.
72. *Works of Francis Thompson*, New York, 1913, I, 8-9. As an example of likenesses to opium imagery, the autobiographical "Sister Songs" is a good example (*Works*, I, 25 ff.). For eternal persecution, see p. 36; for fluidity of

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outline, p. 31, and cf. Dupouy, p. 94; for light phenomena, pp. 31-32; for sound, p. 28; and for monsters, p. 45.

73. *Works*, III, 118.

74. Arthur Symons furnishes still another close parallel in his "Andante of Snakes" (*The Fool of the World and Other Poems*, London, 1906, p. 81), in the rich colors and flection of light, and even in the figure of snakes to express it. Here are a few lines only:

They weave a slow andante as in sleep.  
Scaled yellow, swampy black, plague-spotted  
white . . .

Woven intricacies

Of Oriental arabesques awake,  
Unfold, expand, contract, and raise and sway,

then

Droop back to stagnant immobility.

Ludlow too, pp. 34-38, records a somewhat similar hasheesh phenomenon.

The heavy paneling of the walls was adorned with grotesque frescoes of every imaginable bird, beast, and monster, which, by some hidden law of life and motion, were forever changing, like the figures of the kaleidoscope.

Cf. also DeQuincey's vision, p. 10, above.

75. Dupouy, p. 93.

76. *Works*, III, 120-121.

77. Crabbe had this experience, when he saw the "female fiend" in the "World of Dreams" (*Poems*, IV, 118). "Why fixed on me that eye of stone?" he cries. Closer still is Symons's "Crisis." In addition to the sea of twisting

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faces that DeQuincy saw, Symons notes the accusing eyes through eternity:

Faces in the dark,  
Through the hot-throbbing age-long nights . . .

Staring upon him with *wide opened* eyes,  
Eyes of an *ageless* agony endured, —  
Faces absorbed upon a sea of mist,  
Still, tossing, floating, shuddering, intertwined  
Going and coming.

(*Days and Nights*, p. 102. Italics mine.)

78. *Works*, III, 125-126.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 135. Again, cf. Symons's "Crisis": "the haunting thought," which tracked him and "crept up, as with a *hot breath on his neck.*"
83. See Appendix.
84. See *The Road to Xanadu*, Boston and New York, 1930. The Note Book is a "small manuscript volume of ninety leaves," embracing a period from the spring of 1795 to the summer of 1798. (Lowe, *Xanadu*, p. 5). It is *add. MSS.* 27901, in the British Museum, and has been reprinted in a faulty edition by Aloys Brandl, "S. T. Coleridge's Notizbuch aus den Jahren 1795-1798," *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen*, XCVII (1896), pp. 332 ff.
85. *The Road to Xanadu*, p. 191.
86. *Ibid.*
87. Lowe's reading, *Xanadu*, p. 517. Brandl reads "pang" (*Archiv*, p. 369).

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88. *Note Book*, fols. 77b, 77a; *Archiv*, p. 369.
89. They begin fol. 75b, and continue through fol. 78a (*Xanadu*, p. 517).
90. *Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. James Dykes Campbell, London, 1893, pp. 457-458.
91. *Xanadu*, p. 517.
92. *Archiv*, p. 337.
93. See Appendix.
94. The passage occurs on fol. 27b (*Archiv*, p. 346); the excerpt from the "Ode" on fol. 28b (*Archiv*, p. 356).
95. Fol. 29a; *Archiv*, p. 357.
96. *Ibid.*
97. Fol. 53b; *Archiv*, p. 364. An interesting example of a shot in the dark striking home is Brandl's guess about these jottings, based on the single reference to "an opium chewer"; "*Vermutlich war auch Opium mit im Spiel*" (*Archiv*, p. 337). I discovered this hypothesis only after my own investigations had led me to a similar opinion.
98. *Archiv*, p. 337. Again Brandl struck near the truth when he called the Note Book the "pathologische Kommentär" to these lines, and attributed them to "seelische Überhitzheit," not "dichterische Übertreibung."
99. Cf. DeQuincey's *Writings*, III, 447.
100. *Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, Oxford, 1912, p. 389.
101. Preface to "Kubla Khan," *ibid.*, p. 297.
102. *Memorials of Coleorton*, ed. William Knight, Boston and New York, 1887, p. 7.
103. Before leaving the subject of Coleridge's

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dreams of horror, I must mention a few lines in "The Visionary Hope" (?1810) which seem to describe the same experiences of "obscure pangs," and "dreaded sleep . . . each night scattered by its own loud screams" (*Poetical Works*, p. 416).

104. *Xanadu*, p. 139.
105. *New Essays towards a Critical Method*, London, 1897, p. 187.
106. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
107. See *Xanadu*, pp. 414 ff.
108. *Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, London, 1895, I, 222-223.
109. *Xanadu*, p. 420.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 422.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 425.
112. Prefatory note to "We Are Seven," in *Memories of William Wordsworth*, ed. Christopher Wordsworth, London, 1851, I, 107-108.
113. Campbell, *Poems*, p. 594.
114. DeQuincey's *Writings*, II, 145. It is important that DeQuincey is attacking Coleridge for denying Shelvocke's albatross as a source for "The Ancient Mariner"; and thus this statement weakens his own case!
115. *Xanadu*, p. 136.
116. George Crabbe, *Poetical Works*, "The Village," II, 76.
117. It is interesting that both "Sir Eustace" and "The Ancient Mariner" utilize polar scenery. Sir Eustace felt the "icy wound" through "all that half-year's polar night"; and, in Coleridge's poem, the "wondrous cold" and "ice, mast high" play an impor-

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- tant part. Walter Cotton, *Knickerbocker*, VII (1836), 422, describes a vision in which he had been frozen upon an iceberg. Some light may be thrown on the causes of these phenomena by DeQuincey's descriptions of the feeling of great cold caused by an under-supply of opium (*Writings*, XIV, 275-276).
118. Another bit of evidence which may be significant appears in the sub-title, "A Poet's Reverie," appended to the 1800 edition of the poem (*Xanadu*, p. 306). Mr. Lowes's explanation is that this was added to ward off the accusation of improbability from Mrs. Barbauld and her kind. Might it not refer rather to the opium revery in which the material for the poem first took shape?
119. *Confessions*, *Athenaeum Edition*, pp. 239-240.
120. Mr. Lowes mentions this possibility. See *Xanadu*, pp. 418, 425.
121. *Xanadu*, pp. 343 ff.
122. The problem why so unimportant a crime should have such dire consequences has long been a matter of discussion. (For example, see *Xanadu*, pp. 298-303.) Comparison with opium dreams by other authors offers an explanation, at least in part. In many descriptions of opium persecution — and this is true for those which are merely descriptive, as well as those which were later fitted with a crime for motivation — there is, to be sure, a sense of guilt, yet also a feeling that the punishment is *undeserved*. In the "World of Dreams," although "it is his sin" which begins the torment, Crabbe "per-

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ceives and yet endures *the wrong*." In "Sir Eustace" occurs: "Harmless I was, yet hunted down, for treasons to my soul unfit." The persecutions of Symons's "The Crisis," although attending "a deadly sin," are later said to follow "the shadow of a *fancied* crime." In Coleridge's own "Pains of Sleep" he cries that "all seemed guilt, remorse or woe"; yet, he asks, though these punishments may befit others, "wherefore, wherefore fall on me?"

123. The colors are close to those described in the opium passage of the Note Book. It is interesting that Mr. Lowes, without knowing the source of these appearances, suggested that the colors "may have been at least a contributory blue in the nebulous mass which finally took form in the auroral lightings of the *Mariner's* sky" (*Xanadu*, pp. 191-192).
124. The following is a part of the long passage on the "sweet sounds" which rise as the seraphs leave the corpses:

Around, around, flew each sweet sound.  
Then darted to the Sun;  
Slowly the sounds came back again,  
Now mixed, now one by one. . . .  
Sometimes all little birds that are,  
How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
With their sweet jargoning!  
And now 'twas like all instruments,  
Now like a lonely flute.

If there is doubt whether the uncertain flection, the abnormal sweetness, and the intense acuteness of these sounds originated in a narcotic state of hearing, I add bits from

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a similar passage in Thompson's "Sister Songs":

I heard a dainty dubious sound  
As of goodly melody;  
Which first was faint as if in swoond,  
Then burst so suddenly  
In warring concord all around  
That whence this thing might be,  
To see  
The very marrow longed in me! . . .

So heavenly flutes made murmerous plain  
To heavenly viols, that again  
— Aching with music — wailed back pain;  
Regals release their notes, which rise  
Welling, like tears from heart to eyes.

125. Quoted in *Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, Oxford, 1912, I, 204, note. (From the *Lyrical Ballads* edition of the poem, 1798.)
126. Comparisons may be made between:
1. Thirst, and Ludlow, pp. 59 and 72;
  2. "Death" and "Life in Death," and Crabbe's spectres ("World of Dreams," stanza III);
  3. The sensation of lightness and floating, and Ludlow, pp. 26-27, and Crabbe's "World of Dreams."
127. *Xanadu*, p. 407.
128. For the usual version see "Apologia pro Vita Sua," *Poetical Works*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, I, 345.
129. See *Xanadu*, p. 407.
130. "Genial hour" was substituted for "tipsy hour" in the later version. Coleridge cer-

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- tainly was referring to opium, not alcohol. Wine is not conducive to exaltation of space.
131. Coleridge wrote "the summer of 1787"; but 1798, according to E. H. Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, I, 295, note, is the correct date.
  132. This is proved by Coleridge's own manuscript note. See *Xanadu*, p. 417; *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, I, 245, note; *Poetical Works*, I, 295, note.
  133. Coleridge's preface to "Kubla Khan," *Poetical Works*, I, 295-296.
  134. Havelock Ellis in the *World of Dreams* (p. 275), doubts whether in a real dream Coleridge could have recalled more than one or two lines. In my opinion, "sleep" is as ambiguous as "anodyne." Coleridge should have written "opium reverie," which is a different thing from an actual dream. This would explain away the difficulty, for composition in an "opium reverie" could still be conscious enough to be remembered, yet have all the flux and other characteristics of the opium vision (Dupouy, 99 ff.) Cocteau tells of a dramatic scenario composed in such a state, and later recollected in detail, dialogue and all (*Opium*, p. 149).
  135. See *Xanadu*, pp. 406-409, for an understanding of how tremendous were the shifts to widely disparate images from Coleridge's reading.
  136. *Ibid.*, pp. 407-408.
  137. Mrs. Barbauld's statement, quoted in *Xanadu*, pp. 301-302.
  138. The judgment expressed by Jeanette Marks, *Genius and Disaster*, New York, 1925, pp.

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- 169-170, is typical. She puts the issue thus: "Is drug mentality to set a standard for English poetry and prose? Is drug imagination to be the matrix on which we shape the imaginative powers?" If not, "it means a revision of our list of so-called 'classics' by the help of the literary alienist or pathologist. The other way it means a clear-eyed acceptance of the abnormal, of the diseased, of the morbid, as pacemaker in what we call our best literary achievements."
139. See John Livingston Lowes, *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, Boston and New York, 1919, pp. 98 ff.
  140. See George Saintsbury, *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, London, 1927, p. 62.
  141. *Writings*, III, 206.
  142. See *ibid.*, III, 433; and the Garnett edition, p. 264.
  143. See *Confessions*, *Athenaeum Press*, pp. 233-234, and Campbell, *Coleridge*, pp. 128, 137.
  144. After the great period of the "Mariner," "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel, Part I," Coleridge wrote little which again attained so high a standard. The evidence of opium in "Christabel" or any later work is not prominent enough to warrant further treatment.
  145. See *Unpublished Letters*, II, 111.

## NOTES TO APPENDIX

1. *Unpublished Letters*, I, 3.
2. *Xanadu*, p. 415.
3. See note 19, above.

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4. E. H. C., *Letters*, I, 14–15.
5. Campbell, *Life*, p. 14.
6. *Poems*, I, 17.
7. Campbell, *Life*, p. 23.
8. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, I, 45.
9. *Unpublished Letters*, I, 7.
10. *Ibid.*, I, 28.
11. *Ibid.*, I, 45.
12. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, I, 154–155.
13. *Ibid.*, I, 156.
14. Hahn, *Die Morphin-Erkrankungen*, pp. 59 ff.
15. See below, p. 59.
16. *Xanadu*, p. 417.
17. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, pp. 173–175.
18. *Xanadu*, p. 604h, 604i.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Quoted in *Xanadu*, p. 518.
21. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, I, 193.
22. *Ibid.*, I, 209.
23. *Xanadu*, p. 518.
24. *Unpublished Letters*, I, 70.
25. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, pp. 228–229.
26. *Letters*, ed. E. H. Coleridge, p. 240.
27. For evidence from sources outside Coleridge's letters that his recourse to opium was even more habitual than his letters indicate, see *Xanadu*, pp. 599–600.

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