Involute Analysis: Virtual Discourse, Memory Systems and Archive in the Involutes of Thomas De Quincey

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INVOLUTE ANALYSIS

VIRTUAL DISCOURSE, MEMORY SYSTEMS AND ARCHIVE IN THE INVOLUTES OF

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

by

KIMBERLEY ANNE GARCIA

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
Involute Analysis
Virtual Discourse, Memory Systems and Archive in the Involutes of Thomas De Quincey

by

Kimberley Anne Garcia

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English
in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

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Brief Abstract: Thomas De Quincey’s *involutes* inform metaphysical thought on memory and language, particularly concerning multiplicity and the virtual, repetition and difference. When co-opting the mathematic and mechanic involute in *Suspiria de Profundis*, De Quincey generates an interdisciplinary matrix for the semiotics underpinning his philosophy of language and theory of memory and experience. Involutes entangle and reproduce. De Quincey’s involute exposes the concrete and actual through which all experience accesses the abstract or virtual. The materiality of their informatics and technics provides a literary model and theoretical precursor to a combination of archive and systems theory. The textuality of involute system(s)—both De Quincey’s mind and narrative—accommodates the intersections: archive recognizes proliferating layers of re-inscription or a *system of discursivity* and systems observes the self-regulation of processes and signals/messages in communication. De Quincey's involutes, as a method, transform memory and experience into *involute texts*: texts invested in the form and layered reading processes of fragmenting and sedimenting data within the strata of memory storage, actively sorted, re-fragmented, reiterated.

Thomas De Quincey’s coining of *involutes* parses as a metaphysical concept foundational to his theory of memory and his philosophy of language. By historicizing De Quincey’s nomenclature in the mathematics and mechanics of his moment—particularly geometric concerns—I locate the parameters of his concept as structuralizing the processes of language and memory. The result is a proto-post-human prior to the digital-technological age. De Quincey informs his own concept through related yet distinct figures: the palimpsest, the caduceus, the network (or spider-web), and the archive. I argue De Quincey provides a juncture between memory hardware and its operating system or software, *language*, through his own narratological exploration of semiotics and virtuality. De Quincey’s involute, as a basic unit of experience, exposes the technics of involutes as reinforcing the concrete and actual through which all experience accesses the abstract or virtual.

In *Suspiria de Profundis* Thomas De Quincey “coin[s]” “involutes” as the “perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects” of experience. He demonstrates these “compound experiences incapable of being disentangled” through the narrative structure of his essay (centered on exploring a childhood moment of “contracted” time). The essay traces his system(s) of
remembrance, excavating successively the “endless strata” of memory “not displaced” in “the simultaneity” of “the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain”—a storage system of sorting and assembling. His attempt renders, in effect, an involuted structure: “The situation of one escaping by some refluent current from the maelstrom roaring for him in the distance, who finds suddenly that this current is but an eddy, wheeling round upon the same maelstrom.” Incorporating philosophy, archaeology, geometry and mechanics (among other disciplines), De Quincey’s involute philosophy underscores a unique cyclicality of experience, encoding, and (re-)iteration: post-/modern concerns address these ideas across similar disciplines.

As a method for new media and technics, involute theory analyzes digital works and experiences invested in the fragmenting and sedimenting of data in layers of memory storage, actively sorted, re-fragmented, reiterated. Moreover, involutes are most germane to new media texts, such as video games, in which the compound text itself stores/sorts fragmented memory data and experience (re)-inscribes a text consisting of iterations actualizing virtual textual memory. In analyzing texts suspended in lines of differentiation, “involutes” engage texts as a virtual discourse system, foregrounding multiplicity and repetition (or for video games, play and replay: the save option). This dissertation will be a resource for De Quincey’s metaphysical ideas, attuned to his awareness of cross-disciplinary advances, which merits further discussion in Romanticist scholarship, and also will offer a method for system-archive literary-textual analysis, which, in practice, might be coined involute analysis.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Everything means something, otherwise nothing would(n’t) mean anything.

This dissertation blossomed and flourished under the direction of Alan Vardy, whose breadth of knowledge directed growth and subtle pruning through refracted illumination. Alan Vardy’s capacity for recall, his memory not unlike Thomas De Quincey’s own marvel, offered a living model for my work. Without an advisor alert to the varied areas intersecting in this project, this dissertation would never have come to fruition. The idea for this project germinated out of the scholarly direction Vardy provided in my first work on De Quincey’s “Savannah-La-Mar” and its architectural and temporal themes. De Quincey’s involutes rooted in my earlier groundwork with David Greetham, pursuing new media theories, textual scholarship, and the range of theory concerned with language and the text. Alexander Schlutz’s insights into metaphor, philosophy, and literary theory assisted in grafting the project’s engagement of systems and virtuality. Matt Gold’s attention to media and textuality trimmed and shaped the final form of this dissertation. I trust Thomas De Quincey’s involute may continue to fascinate others as much as his concept does for me. To all those directly and indirectly connected to my time on this project, you all contributed in ways beyond knowing—and I am grateful for each and every. To the one who journeyed with me from the beginning, providing a nurturing working environment, thoughts of you course within every word.
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Introduction

Even the inarticulate or brutal sounds of the globe must be all so many languages and ciphers that somewhere have the corresponding keys—have their own grammar and syntax; and thus that the least things in the universe must be secret mirrors to the greatest.

—Thomas De Quincey, “Infant Literature” (1851-1852), 74

Rather than providing strictly poetic expression in his sublime textuality, Thomas De Quincey’s expansive sense of utterances invites a provocative reading of the world’s contents as communicative and articulate. De Quincey’s claim expresses a Foucauldian sense of discourse: “discourse is constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that is, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of existence,” or, in other words, signification with an intended and signified meaning. The context of De Quincey’s observation is his childhood fascination with a literary passage involving geomancy, yet his lingering reflection on the passage conveys his preoccupation with semiotic inquiry. He positions language as guide for understanding or at least recognizing patterning, particularly sequence and series, while accepting the possibility that the underlying meaning, and potentially even the signifying

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2. Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge; and, The Discourse on Language, transl. A. M. Sheridan Smith, (1972; repr., New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 107. The translation is of the original French, L’Archéologie du Savoir, Éditions Gallimard, 1969. Foucault’s study grants analysis key presuppositions, including that statements possess layered usage or remanence (rémanence) and residual (rémanent) traces, and that their possession too of “additivity” must also take into account “recurrence”; enouncements, Foucault distinguishes as the collective whole of larger statements (123-5). Foucault stresses the language as an interdiscursive system, a comparable formulation for which I suggest involutes provide a concrete structure.

3. Foucault, 111: further, on the signifying structure of language, Foucault argues that “[t]he statement is not just another unity – above or below – sentences and propositions; it is always invested in unities of this kind, or even in sequences of signs that do not bey their laws (and which may be lists, chance series, tables); it characterizes not what is given them, but the very fact that they are given, and the way in which they are given.”
structure of the patterns themselves, may remain sealed from decryption. He aptly conveys the idea of elusive understanding through his ongoing apprehension of his own readerly intrigue. De Quincey provides this understanding in his “Infant Literature” discussion, located within his Works’s “Autobiographical Sketches” that amalgamates the first section of Suspiria de Profundis. In so appropriating “The Affliction of Childhood” there, De Quincey draws attention to Supirira de Profundis’s key underpinnings of literature and language that inform the core subjects of his study: memory and dreams. Suspiria is the focus of this dissertation. I pursue De Quincey’s linguistic framework as a basis for his theory of memory, which in turn informs his “human system”—all hinging upon his neologism, involutes.

Apprehending the complexity of Thomas De Quincey’s involutes, I argue, is central to appreciating the text in which he presents the metaphysical concept: Suspiria de Profundis is a model of applicable theory and methodology for today’s disciplines. As De Quincey identifies the sounds of the universe as languages and ciphers, he opens his understanding and philosophy of the mind to language studies and communication systems. Several of his analytical features merit attention: 1. foregrounding of linguistic metaphors; 2. applying order, through linguistic analogies, to chaos; 3. accepting unknowable parallels between systems of communication.

Linguistic analogies may be well worn, yet De Quincey appears to voice a semiotic sense of

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5. Thomas De Quincey’s Suspiria de Profundis is located in Vol.15 among Articles from Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine and Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine, 1844-1846; The Works of Thomas De Quincey, 126-204. The links and exchanges, as noted by the editors when introducing the publication and textual history, between Suspiria and his Autobiographical Sketches are complex: “This copy (=MS B) is now in the manuscript collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library, PML 5097 (see Vol. 2, p. 1 of this edition). In preparing the text of Autobiographic Sketches for SGG, De Quincey removed pages for the sections subsequently reprinted as ‘The Affliction of Childhood’, ‘Dream-Echoes of these Infant Experiences’, and ‘Dream-Echoes Fifty Years Later’ in SGG (see Textual Notes for details of De Quincey’s alterations): ‘‘The Daughter of Lebanon,’ originally written for 'Suspiria', was first published in SGG as a pendant to Confessions of an English Opium-Eater (1856)” (126).
communicative texts as well as their production within larger systems of thought. Not as readily adopted (or analyzed) as other terms and concepts of his (such as subconscious) or his fellow Romantics, involutes takes the forefront in my study. Literary scholarship’s merger of historicism and an appeal to current interdisciplinary theory directs my goal of positioning De Quincey’s concepts within the concerns of his period while tracing his ideas along the developments of germane theoretical avenues: these include archive, systems, and virtuality. The present study joins recent discussions of post-modern qualities in De Quincey’s work by appreciating the continuing relevance of his ideas. His individual philosophy combines elements quite of his time—particularly tied to science, mathematics, and technology. Suspiria de Profundis also generates a matrix for current theory and literary methodology.

De Quincey’s investment in language extends the sense of grammar and syntax to literature (his analyses recognize the role of affect, generic properties, and readerly responses). Literature exists in a reciprocal relationship with language (in terms of structure, processes, and interfacing). De Quincey privileges the written word, the inscribed text. Just as expansive as his sense of discourse is De Quincey’s post-modern sense of the text as any item that can be communicated, read, analyzed, and so forth. De Quincey’s decoding analogy (“ciphers”, “keys”, “secret mirrors”) accepts that abstract matter enables signs (“sounds of the globe”) to assign relations to objects and subjects (and other statements or enunciations, “so many languages”).


7. Contributing to this trend is the recent collection of essays concerning the sciences and internal states, the psyche, the emotions, see: Joel Faflak and Richard C. Sha, Romanticism and the Emotions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
that in turn constitute sequences and systems of meaning (“have their own grammar and syntax”). De Quincey appeals to linguistics in order to discuss literary experiences but also memory and remembrances, in effect reading them as texts. Here, in “Infant Literature” (as well as moments of Suspiria) he investigates the nexus: memories of experiencing literature. His explanation foregrounds linguistic metaphors as a means to apprehend chaotic organization, suggesting, moreover, that external linguistic influences impact internal imaginative organization. Equally significant for my study, these adult ruminations arise from repeatedly reassessing his perplexity during his nursery years. Repetition is a key feature of De Quincey’s theory of memory and experience. He corresponds the most significant issues of his childhood (and its repercussions on his mental faculties) to literature and literary associations he shared with his sister, Elizabeth, before her death; the compounding of these factors is the focus, in more ways than one, of his Suspiria de Profundis—and the following dissertation.

The core subject of Suspiria de Profundis is the experience of memory, which De Quincey examines in various ways. His terminology and metaphors, his art of memory or mnemotechnics, position him at a nexus of past traditions of philosophy, seminal contemporary developments in mathematics and sciences, and at the cusp of computational and digital technologies. Rather than categorized only with other memory theories, De Quincey’s ideas require parsing in terms of language, phenomena of experience, and the nature of reality. His interests in language and its media of conveyance welcome examination through conceptual metaphor theory, with its semiotic underpinnings. Relatedly, new media studies opens up the concepts of media and the text, in order to understand the material textuality of De Quincey’s remembrances and memory. De Quincey’s human system is one of interacting, and sometimes counteracting forces, he embodies in the language and form of Suspiria. This dissertation
deploys key premises of modern organization of systems and operational memory—found in computer science, manifold mathematics, relativity or quantum mechanics, and information theory—to suggest that common loci are found in *Suspiria De Profundis*. Memory and narrative serve to archive the processes of the mind. De Quincey’s ideas on memory appear in defense of his narrative explorations of past experiences, post hoc for his *Confessions* yet offering a provocative blueprint for its sequel *Suspiria*. Naturally enough for a wordsmith, De Quincey’s default conceptual domain is language (“in the imagery of my dreams, which translated everything into their own language”), yet he attempts “interpretation”\(^8\) or self-analysis of childhood lexical-cognitive associations impacting his experiences and memory in ways relevant to narratological and discourse theories.

De Quincey’s *memory* of experiencing a passage in the tale of Aladdin initiates his expansive textuality as a global network of ciphered utterances. The similarities between the more complete study of memory De Quincey pursues in *Suspiria de Profundis* and this moment in “Infant Literature” consist in organizational associations\(^9\) as well as content, particularly due to the means by which he arrives at it: “other experiences of mine of the same class [. . .] I had shared with my sister Elizabeth” (72). He addresses three “special and exceptional cases” of

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8. Though the figure appears in both “The Apparition of Brocken” and “Savannah-La-Mar”, as a separate *Suspiria* portion added posthumously in 1891, “The Dark Interpreter,” opens with the quote: “Oh, eternity with outstretched wings, that broodest over the secret truths in whose roots lie the mysteries of man—his whence, his wither—have I searched thee, and struck a right key on thy dreadful organ!” See: “The Dark Interpreter,” *The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey*, 2 Vols., ed. Alexander H. Japp (London: William Heinemann, 1891), 7-12. The opening image parallels the caduceus and dreaming apparatus. The Interpreter receives ample attention, typically in psychoanalytical veins, such as Joel Faflak’s (see previous two notes, including John B. Beer, 2012). My focus, however, is on the figure as modelling literary or textual *interpretation* (rather than psychoanalysis). De Quincey deploys the linguistic sense as one feature of the processes he recognizes within memory and his narrative process: “I am now undertaking […] as to the true interpretation of these final symptoms” (133).

9. *Suspiria de Profundis* and the “Autobiographical Sketches” found in De Quincey’s collected *Works* include a section entitled, “The Affliction of Childhood.” (See notes, above.)
literary effect for him alone, exhibiting his “individuality of mental constitution” (70).10 Suspiria de Profundis, published slightly earlier, begins with nursery experiences impacting (and even injuring) his mental faculties, including linguistic associations, in order to explore the mental faculty of memory. Due to the numerous trajectories of the serialized (and somewhat fragmented11) essay, Suspiria offers a far more complex model of analysis than that present in “Infant Literature”—the latter model is one examining literature, the former examines the mind influenced by it. It is worth following his concise literary analysis for parallels in content and methodology elsewhere in Suspiria. He examines his childhood intrigue (somewhere between the age of 5 and 6)12 over the passage and “the sublimity which it involved as mysterious and unfathomable, as regarded any key which I possessed for deciphering its law or origin” (73). The adult De Quincey presumably has the means for analysis the child lacked. De Quincey’s examination resembles semiotic and post-structural readings, attempting to understand the sublimity he felt, as a child, surrounding a passage in the tale of Aladdin and his lamp.

10. De Quincey further expands yet crystalizes the importance of analogy, transfiguring, and arrogate, all of which are vital to “the individuality of mental constitution” (70-1): “Something analogous to these spiritual transfigurations of a word or a sentence, by a bodily organ (eye or ear) that has been touched with virtue for evoking the spiritual echo lurking in its recesses, belongs, perhaps, to every impassioned mind for the kindred result of forcing out the peculiar beauty, pathos, or grandeur, that may happen to lodge (unobserved by ruder forms of sensibility) in special passages scattered up and down literature. Meantime, I wish the reader to understand that, in putting forward the peculiar power with which my childish eye detected a grandeur or a pomp of beauty not seen by others in some special instances, I am not arrogating more than it is lawful for every man the very humblest to arrogate, viz., an individuality of mental constitution so far applicable to special and exceptional cases as to reveal in them a life and power of beauty which others (and sometimes, which, all others) had missed.” De Quincey, as I argue, aligns the role of reader and literary text to provide for the space of interface as one of new and compound textuality.


12. De Quincey, 71: “The first case belongs to the march (or boundary) line between my eigth and ninth years: the others to a period earlier by two and a half years. But I notice the latest case before the others, as it connected itself with a great epoch in the movement of my intellect.” The first, concerns an Aesop fable, though of importance is the “immeasurableness” and the repetition of when, directing toward De Quincey’s interest in the temporality of event (71-72).
While De Quincey destabilizes meaning through the arbitrariness of representations, he notes cognitive organization from these meaning-making systems of signification. The magician in the story has the “demonic gifts” to “disarm Babel itself of its confusion”; the magician performs geomancy capable “of reading in [Aladdin’s] hasty movement an alphabet of new and infinite symbols; for in order that the sound of the child’s feet should be significant and intelligible, that sound must open into a gamut of infinite compass” (74). The philosophical and mathematical infinite resonates with his other interests as well. The scope the magician surveys and the discernment required for this feat fascinate De Quincey: “the innumerable sounds of footsteps that at that moment of his experiment are tormenting the surface of the globe; and amongst them all . . . he distinguishes the peculiar steps of the child Aladdin” (73). De Quincey offers, in this musing over the magician who “applies his ear to earth” in search of Aladdin, a broader challenge than actually seeking keys to unlock a secret code of existence or meaning (73). De Quincey applies “alphabet” and “symbols” to theorize the cognitive processes underlying the magician’s geomancy, thereby suggesting that even sounds translate into visual-linguistic signification, so strongly does language (and vision) govern thought processes. The process of translation “distinguishes the steps of Aladdin” into “new and infinite symbols” (75). The magician must not only hear, but see, and read chaos into an order “significant and intelligible.” Aladdin’s “movement” consists of a complex image: “The pulses of the heart, the motions of the will, the phantoms of the brain, must repeat themselves in secret hieroglyphics uttered by the flying footsteps” (75). De Quincey blurs the distinction between mind and body by distinguishing the brain from the will; likewise, he separates the heart from the will, as if the will—thought, intent, or deliberate action—is something integrally interconnected yet separate from the body. De Quincey celebrates converting these pulses, motions, and phantoms into
covert, stylized pictographs ("secret hieroglyphics") transmittable by treading the conduit of the earth. Certainly these interdependent systems such as languages and signification are key factors in the imagery of De Quincey’s description, but there is more at work here. This enunciating and readable mind-body complex hints at De Quincey reconciling external influences and individual imagination (along the lines of marrying Locke’s affective cognition with the Romantic imagination of Wordsworth). The internalization of language, including appropriating and coopting it, offers the medium for apprehending and processing all sensory data and experience. “Infant Literature” implicates the type of literature but also the type of reading: “All this, by rude efforts at explanation that mocked my feeble command of words, I communicated to my sister; and she [. . .] felt the passage in the same way as myself, but not, perhaps, in the same degree” (74). His sense of cognitive organization, application to interdependent systems, accepts the reciprocal influences of imaginative expression and external factors, namely visual-linguistic childhood models. The list of transmitted data is quite revealing: phantoms implicate the visual and revivifying influences imprinted through experience, motions suggests movement and the process of action, and pulses adds plurality or dynamism to the life—interestingly the noun can also refer to seeds, specifically edible ones of leguminous plants, 13 which are another key image De Quincey uses for germinating influences in his mention of “involutes of human sensibility” (73). 14 De Quincey opens his “Infant Literature” section with the seemingly paradoxical

13. Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. “pulse, n.”. Oxford University Press. (The abbreviation OED will appear in successive notes.) “Cultivated for food (peas, beans, lentils, etc.),” De Quincey may not intend the horticultural denotation; however, it nevertheless draws an interesting connection to his deliberate use elsewhere for generative properties, particularly concerning his caduceus.

14. His mention of involutes here further links the overlapping content of “Infant Literature” with the portion of “The Affliction of Childhood” (in Suspiria de Profundis) in which he “coins” the term. I discuss involutes later.
chronology of latent understanding: “‘The child,’ says Wordsworth, ‘is the father of the man;’”\textsuperscript{15} thus calling into conscious notice the fact else faintly or not at all perceived, that whatsoever is seen in the mature adult, blossoming and bearing fruit, must have pre-existed by way of germ in the infant . . . [which] once was latent” (68). He recognizes that what resonated then, and what he can read into or through the memory, is a latent germ of cognizance. De Quincey’s investment in literature and language allows him multiple examinations at once: he studies literary effects by analyzing his own reactions, but, even more so, he attempts tracing linguistic associations for their lingering impressions on the mind, the predisposed cognition that facilitates literary effects.

Literature and language provide model systems for reciprocal impact between external influences with internal processes: for De Quincey these include archiving experience, interpreting remembrances, and translating or recollecting the past into thought, his process of assessing “mysterious and unfathomable” impressions on memory (73). De Quincey sets three elements—visio-linguistic experience, memory, cognizance—here, as a trajectory toward deconstructing his own memories. De Quincey’s rather post-modern methodology aims to apprehend his own experience of reading. He excavates his memory, through layers of reflection, to the early moments of incomprehension: “one solitary section there was of that tale which fixed and fascinated my gaze, in a degree that I never afterwards forgot, and did not at that time comprehend” (73). Besides suggesting a post-modern appreciation of discourse and text, his analysis of Aladdin’s tale discusses key factors of experience and memory in a direct application to his coinage of involutes in \textit{Suspiria de Profundis}. This dissertation aims to thoroughly examine his involutes, suggest their metaphoric/linguistic associations, trace his involutes of

\textsuperscript{15} The passage, as noted in \textit{Works}, is from Wordsworth’s “My heart leaps up”; also De Quincey utilizes the quotation as “the epigraph to his own ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood’” (68).
memory, and offer *involute analysis* as a term for the methodology De Quincey introduces: memory and experiences are texts for analysis.

**Involutes and Suspiria de Profundis**

De Quincey’s involutes and the modeling of them that *Suspiria de Profundis* provides lend literary studies an example of tandem theoretical frameworks combining into a unique system. Delineating Thomas De Quincey’s interests reveals the important intersections he facilitates, perhaps due to the difficulty of disentangling the fields from his essentially interdisciplinary discussion. Crosscutting the parallel yet separate areas of semiotics, cognition, and memory reveals shared points of inquiry and provides a means of appreciating his compositional or narratological methodology as well as his philosophy of the mind: both interrelate and stem from his study of the “*involutes* of human sensibility” (73). De Quincey’s sense of the sublime occupies discussions elsewhere; instead, I’ll pursue the narrating De Quincey’s dismissal of it: he explains, in “Infant Literature” that his younger self did obstinately persist in believing a sublimity which I could not understand. It was, in fact, one of those many important cases which elsewhere I have called *involutes* of human sensibility; combinations in which the materials of future thought or feeling are carried as imperceptibly into the mind as vegetable seeds are carried variously combined through the atmosphere, or by means of rivers, by birds, by winds, by waters, into remote countries.¹⁶

Involutes, De Quincey’s concept and coining of which direct this dissertation, can be partially grasped in this passage as the “combinations” of germinating influences on individuals. Just “as vegetable seeds are carried” by innumerable avenues, means, and all “imperceptibly into the

mind,” involutes are part of a systematic transmission in an intangible communications network. The organic and natural imagery belies an ordered disorder that may appear comprehensible despite its subsystems, processes and routines remaining ineffable or untraceable. From such a premise poised between 20th Century semiotics and social theory, De Quincey exceeds a typical Romantic sensibility: experiences do not strictly imprint on an individual, they require parsing, deciphering, processing or analysis by some internal(-ized) system(s) already in place in the mind. Higher order cognition may seem apparent while lower order “combinations” and transmissions operate “imperceptibly.” De Quincey dedicates particular attention to translation and interpretation as key sub-processes or sub-routines in the human system; translation of experiences occurs in dream-language and interpretation of remembrances takes the form of a companion-reader he calls the Dark Interpreter. He offers as hardware the faculty of memory, the apparatus of dreaming, and palimpsest of the mind to encrust involute combinations; yet the program, software (perhaps even wetware), or operational language is language.

Involutes enter the mind as the materials—specifically “combinations”—that form “the materials of future thought and feeling.” Post-modern discourse resonates with the same imperceptibility of natural avenues for humans internalizing and becoming products of cultures and environments, seed migration; detailed operations may be imperceptible, though larger processes are recognizable. The passage in the tale of Aladdin is such a “case” of involutes: something more complicated than the simple sublimity of the text. The pursuit of these thoughts brings De Quincey to overtly link his interests in “literature jointly with philosophy,” offering something of a metaphysics of both: his methodology recognizes the “dark sublimity” in the powers of the mind, capable of deciphering or navigating the “mighty labyrinth of sounds, which Archimedes, aided by his arenarius, could not sum or disentangle” (75, 74). Disentangling, or
rather the inability to disentangle, factors into his coining of involutes in *Suspiria*. By accepting these premises of involutes, this case of Aladdin’s decoding magician, influence—plant the seed—De Quincey might credit with the concepts that facilitate his theory of involutes. De Quincey’s attention to linguistics and cognition certainly celebrates literature’s potency in the use of metaphor *and* for a wealth of metaphors. De Quincey is keen to recognize a reciprocal and interdependent relationship with the mind and the world. Taking into account De Quincey’s sense that involutes germinate into future comprehension not only sanctions what might otherwise seem anachronistic in deciphering his own memories, but relies on connecting his current interests and ways of thinking with those resonant aspects in the childhood experience recorded in the text.

Though the child fathers the man, De Quincey recognizes, so too, the issue of thwarted growth or detrimental impacts on development: “But not, therefore, is it true inversely—that all which pre-exists in the child, finds its development in the man” (68). *Suspiria de Profundis* explores the injuries from the trauma of Elizabeth’s death and a moment of *contracted time*, injuries to the mental faculty he associates with opium (ab)use. “Rudiments and tendencies, which *might* have found, sometimes by accidental, *do* not find, sometimes under the killing frost of counter forces, *cannot* find, their natural evolution”; to extend his horticultural analogy, experiences fertilize or stunt the child’s latent possibilities (68). “Infancy, therefore, is to be viewed, not only as part of a larger world that waits for its final complement in old age, but also as a separate world itself;” De Quincey asserts, distinguishing childhood as a separate but interrelated system, “part of a continent, but also a distinct peninsula” (68). Childhood and childhood memories become their own text, become *infant literature*. The germ or seed of childhood could be considered virtual, in a Deleuzian sense, making the adult man just one
actuality. This sense of mathematical and philosophical manifoldness, issuing from Riemann and Bergson, applies to De Quincey’s sense of experience and memory, literature and language, his involutes and philosophy of mind. The united principles of virtuality connect systems principles and archive through related ideas of fragmentation, inscription, difference and repetition.

“Through dreams, and the dreadful resurrections that are in dreams,” the past revives, re-produced, re-interpreted, re-actualized (449). My discussion of Suspiria de Profundis includes the separately published tangent, “The English Mail-Coach” for demonstrating involute textual analysis in action. The “fugues and the persecution of fugues” occurring in “The English Mail-Coach” showcase the tensions of dual (and dueling) systems, interacting and communicating, coupled and operating in tandem (449). The agitations of the human system are only the more evident exacerbated by opium and the impact of his nursery afflictions. The informational processing of the human mind-body at stake for De Quincey is one that permits the text of the mind to exceed even the text he renders it through. The spontaneous emergence, “only that at the last, with one motion of his victorious arm, he might record and emblazon the endless resurrections of his love,” completes the narratological, dreamed and immemorial self-organization of the involute self from the seeming chaos of the spiraling, layered, entangled characteristics of memory, (re-)experience, and narrative (449). De Quincey’s selects the involute, with its mathematic and practical gear application, and reinforces the mechanical apparatuses at work in the mind/brain. Between the materiality of informatics and the semiotics of virtuality, De Quincey maps the human system with the involute, carving out a post-human

adaption of digital-cyber mechanisms with only the available technics of his time. Ultimately, the mechanisms he offers for ordering thought and reality—involutes—expose the ordered disorder or dynamic systems behind the processes of human phenomena.

**Rendering Memory and Involute Analysis: Archive, System, and Virtuality**

By rendering memory I mean to bring readers into a view of De Quincey’s strategy to understand what we remember and how we relate memories—and relate to our memories—by examining the cognitive-linguistic processes that influence experience and involutes of memory. Rather than follow the avenue of cognitive science that Markus Iseli brilliantly advances in *Thomas De Quincey and the Cognitive Unconscious*,¹⁸ my analytical trajectory aims to connect involutes through De Quincey’s nascent theorizing of archive, systems, and virtuality.

When introducing *Suspiria de Profundis* as a sequel to his *Confession of an English Opium-Eater* De Quincey expounds the relationship of narrative form to the law or impetus for his written works, namely *Confessions* and its “sequel” *Suspiria*. He claims his involuted composition is meant to resemble a “caduceus.” While narrative theory informs my approach to *Suspiria de Profundis*, the conglomerate and fragmentary form also speaks to metaphor studies/discourse analysis. My study draws a model from De Quincey’s own attentiveness to the cognitive metaphors he employs, the relationship between his visual-linguistic experiences, and the struggle with language or, indeed, the battle of philosophy in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s sense of the “bewitchment of our intelligence by means of our language” (*Investigations*, §109).¹⁹ For

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¹⁸. See note 6, above.

background on linguistics, semiotics, narratological and discursive concerns I form a nexus of related ideas between theorists bridging these fields, often directly or indirectly discussing sign, metaphor, and narrative (Max Black, Umberto Eco, Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, I. A. Richards and Charles Ogden, Paul Ricoeur)—some of which also participate in the conversation on archive (Derrida, Michael Foucault). Without an established term for the concept he explores, De Quincey coopts involutes and coins a new definition (even cited in the Oxford English Dictionary)—the aim of this dissertation is to fully explain the implications of his deliberate selection.

The appropriateness of Aladdin’s tale from *Arabian Nights* deserves some attention as it connects the theories of archive, systems, and the virtual in memory. Calling De Quincey, “the most Scheherazadean of English Writers,” Judith Plotz compares him with Borges and their shared “infinite and labryrinthine spirit of the *Arabian Nights.*” *Suspiria de Profundis* offers a microcosm of De Quincey’s oeuvre. It traces his system(s) of remembrance, excavating the “endless strata” of memory “not displaced” in “the simultaneity” of “the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain”—a storage system of sorting and assembling. His attempt renders, in


effect, an *involute* structure: “The situation of one escaping by some refluent current from the maelstrom roaring for him in the distance, who finds suddenly that this current is but an eddy, wheeling round upon the same maelstrom” (176, 132). I address the contents of *Suspiria* in the broadest form (including “The English Mail-Coach”), primarily attending to the later *collected/complete* published forms, concerned by the fact that these *pieces* at one time or another fit together (according to both De Quincey and others). The underlying themes or connecting nodes interest me: De Quincey’s sections and subjects branch out from one childhood memory as if each successive episode is a type of recognition, kinesis, or prolepsis that offers a way to access the traumatic moment. Closely related to discursive systems is the interdependence of open systems in systems theory (Roman Jakobson and Niklas Luhmann). A related concept within systems theory, applicable for information and thermodynamics, concerns entropy, the decline into disorder or loss of thermal energy for work within a system. Neg-entropy suggests that open systems feed into one another to maintain energy level and allow the system to correctly function. The fragmentary nature of De Quincey’s writing—and the interlocking subjects and themes—permit rearrangement as if his works function as interdependent and open systems. His writings become a type of perpetual motion machine, generating meaning-making even in the seeming arbitrariness of their editorial arrangements. That he could shuffle the contents himself suggests he recognized these connections, and that they in some way represented the fluid arrangement experiences and memories also hold in his mind.

In form, the shifting contents of Suspiria (as well as his collected writings), regardless of collection, adheres to Joel Faflak’s sentiments in his review of the Grevel Lindop’s recently expanded Works of De Quincey: “far from consolidating his critical identity . . . [the edition] confronts us with that identity’s profoundly indeterminate nature” in the “palimpsest” of De Quincey’s writings. Uncertainty and indeterminacy of modern physics, privileging the role of the observer in directing reality, permeate post-modernity and speak too to the ability of De Quincey’s fragments to generate meaning through their juxtapositions. Media discussions in this dissertation range from scholars of Romanticism to media (Joel Faflak and Richard Sha, N. Katherine Hayles, Matthew Kirschenbaum, Gavin Lucas, Jussi Parikka, and Norbert Wiener). De Quincey’s serialized essay as it exists (compositionally and in time/space and editions) models the theory De Quincey conceives of memory and narrative. For complete engagement of involutes beyond the purely mathematic, I appeal to the akin philosophical principles of simultaneity, multiplicity/virtuality, and repetition of Henri Bergson, Gilles Deleuze, and, more recently, Manuel DeLanda. De Quincey’s sense of memory as “immortal


impresses” that “seem to be displaced, but [are] not displaced,” evokes the virtual memory of computer systems, fragmented data and the interrelationship of random-access memory and solid-state storage (even digital forensics). His mathematical and philosophical interests in time, “simultaneity,” like Henri Bergson’s durée, play a key role in his sense of involutes: “the simultaneity of arrangement under which the past events of life, though in fact successive, had formed their dread line of revelation” (176).28 The key concept De Quincey adds is his theory of involutes; he invokes the geometrical concept to align with his conceptual shaping of the memorial palimpsest, yet coins the term to define experiences, their encoding/inscription, as well as the processes of re-experiencing memories.

But beyond making observations about how language and memory interact, a reading of Suspiria de Profundis invites us to consider the play between De Quincey’s recognized associations as influencing the episodes he recalls and his recollection shaping the memories he renders in narrative. Related to memory and its complex relationship with time found in the Bergson-Deleuze philosophical vein, both archive and system theories appreciate commensurate dynamics in repetition, particularly between message and meaning. Archive is relevant for both literal and metaphorical concepts of memory. For Derrida, archive is a process of re-inscription, which, for memory here, records the remembrance over the memory.

Again, De Quincey’s memory of Aladdin demonstrates a useful example. This palimpsestic process appears to play a role in his re-collection of it. As Plotz concludes, De


28. This discussion of time is central to the narratological time of the essay but also of De Quincey internal memory-text. In my third chapter I explore this in detail, particularly concerning the water-clock, the clyseydra De Quincey invokes for “Savanah-La-Mar”; I apply this further in my fourth chapter, concerning temporality in “The English Mail-Coach.”
Quincey’s explanation of the opening of the tale “resembles no version current in his lifetime.”Archive theory, crucial for approaching De Quincey ideas of memory, recognizes proliferating layers of re-inscription or a “system of discursivity.” Joining with systems theory, that observes the self-regulation of processes and functions/actions (or signals/messages in communication, a related field), the social and informational applications of systems and archive might be redirected onto a material component: texts and textuality of memory. For information systems, feedback loops help maintain the ratio of signal to noise, maintaining the information, the message. Yet, the sense of a Freudian archive theory—Derrida’s model—permits reading the inscribed remembrance for the significance of the memory.

De Quincey compares the brain to a palimpsest; moreover, he reads memory as if it is a type of text. He links episodes through cognate images/imagery, often most affecting through conceptual contradictions, particularly summer/death and remembering the unrememberable: “countless are the mysterious hand-writings [. . .] which have inscribed themselves successively upon the palimpsest of your brain; and like [. . .] light falling upon light, the endless strata have covered up each other in forgetfulness [. . .] They are not dead, but sleeping” (176). Each remembrance accessing or activating memory’s apparatus, down to the sighs from the depths of the palimpsest, becomes an iteration or actuality of the virtual memory experience. The germ, the memory, the experience, the involute is further compounded, encrusted, with each remembrance.

De Quincey’s essay demonstrates involutes as the literary (and narratological) precursors to the interdisciplinary principles of archive and system—particularly because involutes unify concepts otherwise examined by each theory in isolation—and proves invaluable for literary-

29. Plotz, 1998a, 121.
textual analysis. And just as *Confessions* rendered these relationships in the narratological form of a “caduceus,” *Suspiria*’s fragmentary nature seems appropriate to the law and subject of the work. In an effort to address his lexical and conceptual location within a metaphoric framework that impacts virtuality and generates rhizomes, uncertainty or indeterminacy, and neg/-entropy, this dissertation unfolds a poetics of memory: a series of imaginative patterns that shape modern representations of memory, narrative, and ultimately thought. As part of a crucial interdisciplinary turn to memory as a text, this dissertation argues Thomas De Quincey’s exemplary mnemonic loci apply to interdisciplinary concepts by *thinking in involutes*.

**Involute Analysis in Action: Analyzing Time and “The English Mail-Coach”**

*Suspiria* establishes time as a principle of organization for De Quincey, evident as he elaborates its relevance both in his present narrative’s system and his internal system. Motion and agitations stem from his childhood affliction. The *human* network “overruled all obstacles into one steady co-operation,” resembling De Quincey’s previous descriptions of both self and narrative (409). The involute of the mail-coach, its turbulence as a specific self-replicating machine (an involute) issues an immediate ring of associated connotations—additional chains emanate outward from each node. The implication reconciles chaos and order, rather than establishing *disorder* as an antagonist. To survey the elements within the scholarship of chaos and order, the interdisciplinary aims of Hayles provides an accessible view that also accommodates the two opposing approaches to chaos/order in ways quite useful for De Quincey. Additionally, DeLanda’s sense of “The Actualization of the Virtual in Time” offers another view to reconcile dynamic and non-linear or heterogeneous continuums as a *plane of consistency*—
and recognize De Quincey’s application of involutes as not only a philosophy but a method of analysis.

The involute, first as a theory, then the core component of De Quincey’s philosophies of language, narrative, time and memory—and the interconnection of these systems—provides a methodology for examining “The English Mail-Coach.” In it, De Quincey returns to the memory archive as, to employ Parikka’s phrase, a dynamic and temporal network. The mail-system offers a communications backdrop to the transit (and transitory) systems the coach and De Quincey travel. The added complexity of recollections and dreams assists to model duration, the expanding of time and its experience/representation. De Quincey’s fascination with movement and travelling through time and space establishes the focus of “The English Mail-Coach,” based upon his own travels on it, the most notable of which culminates in a “dream-fugue” concerning the uncertain fate of an encountered vehicle. The suspended fate of the female figure, her indeterminate state, embodies De Quincey’s temporal focus as a participant in each level of the memory-text. De Quincey’s systems have archeological tendencies but more complexity than strata. De Quincey’s involutes in memory and narrative—like language—share the qualities of self-generation (or autopoeisis, in systems’ terminology) and recursion (related to the Foucauldian linguistic sense). De Quincey’s involute systems operate with inter-discursivity and intra-discursivity.

His impulse to revisit the sequence to locate a relationship between the order and disorder of the system, which he describes in organic functioning, invites reading the study as a juncture

31. Though I refer to the collected Works, both the edition by Lindop (Lindop, 2008 [1998]) of Confessions of and English Opium-Eater and Other Writings, and Robert Morrison’s new edition (2013) with his own introduction and notes, maintain the sequence of key texts in relation to each other (Confessions, Suspiria, and “Mail-Coach”), only removing Lindop’s inclusion of “On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth.” (De Quincey’s essay, a noteworthy piece of literary criticism, and arguably related to the object of Suspiria.) Regardless, both editions follow Suspiria de Profundis with “The English Mail-Coach,” placing the texts in proximity so as to position the latter as the culminating portion of the former (see note 4, above).
of text and externalized memory. The combination resonates in the movement from cinema to newer media of the digital age, particularly those digital texts that embed or en-script user experience/memory, often multiple iterations, the most notable example being video games. Memory in such a medium, applicable to Suspiria, operates as a system with interconnections between natural processes and media technologies or the human and non-human domains media theorist Jussi Parikka emphasizes in the leakage of various media into human communications, particularly in A Geology of Media.\footnote{32 Jussi Parikka, A Geology of Media. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).} Digital texts share characteristics of De Quincey memory system, they contain their own past iterations. Participatory digital texts, might offer a useful comparison of the two matrixes of memory (human and medium) in Suspiria: several genres of video games archive save files of user-game play, particularly narrative-based ones such as role-playing games (or RPGs). Suddenly the human experience and game medium create a matrix of dialectic exchange between each’s systems of memory storage. The player and game read the game content (rendered and interpreted) by both systems, human and machine; gameplay requires both systems to store experiences (both temporarily and in long-term); the variability, the multiplicity of replay and re-iterations of play-through become co-authored texts at the space of interface between the two interacting, cooperative systems.

Suspiria de Profundis stands, with all its appendages, tangents, and eddies, as a model and a study that defines De Quincey’s contingently defined notions of mind and text. Through current developments in theory and technology, the sciences and the arts that branch out common concerns for philosophy and mathematics present in De Quincey, shared interests become apparent. De Quincey’s parallel ideas place him within several trajectories of thought. Yet, while current semiotics, media theory, and philosophy offer avenues to appreciate De
Quincey’s commonality, they also distinguish his additions to each as contributions that can inform current thought. Reading *Suspiria de Profundis* with De Quincey’s involutes in mind transforms the act of reading to one that does not reduce a text to a single, homogenous meaning. Rather, *reading* for De Quincey, is a translation, is communication, is recollection, is *process*. Involute methodology is reading for the transformative act of involution, of entangling actuals around nodes of virtual, indeterminate signification and archiving each experience as a distinct iteration—but ever further and ceaselessly involuting.

**Chapters**

In the first part of this dissertation I examine De Quincey’s “Immaterial Media and Memory’s Metaphors.” Chapter One, “*Suspiria de Profundis* and Memory Narrative,” outlines the background for involutes in De Quincey’s own models: the palimpsest and the caduceus. I argue that De Quincey utilizes the conceptual metaphor of the palimpsest for memory and the caduceus for narrative representation of memory in order to construct his concept of involutes. I examine the early portions of *Suspiria de Profundis*, including the “Introductory Notice” for the discussion of the caduceus for narrative law and form, though I begin with the “The Palimpsest”. The palimpsestic brain and the palimpsestuous memory are destabilizing structures that allow De Quincey to talk about text and reading in such a way that he can acknowledge his attempt to have his reader journey through his re-presented psyche’s depths, just as he travels through his dream’s reproductive powers, and through the experiences that repeat and blossom anew therein. The image of the palimpsest archive (or library) reinforces the unidentified archivist, not unlike the compositor De Quincey sees himself as, an unrecognized agent of organization. Even for De
Quincey, the palimpsest is a limited metaphor, one which he is quick to qualify, along with the caduceus. He invokes the horticultural wreathing to describe the narrative tendrils around the central shaft (the narrative topic), similar to dreams developing past experiences (“growths and fruitifications from seeds at that time sown”), and thereby grants layers on the palimpsest a presence as with any material artifact that exists in time and space (134). Rather than expose the limitations of linearity, De Quincey underscores the fluid layers of the memory as a narrative-text. New Media’s expanding sense of textuality and interest in the externalization of memory directs attention to the material stages and layers of interface, mediation, or interpretation found with newer media, notably digital texts. Recognizing the distinct yet compound aspects of textuality speaks to De Quincey’s excavations of the layers of his memory-text. De Quincey’s archaeology of self recognizes a simultaneity through the medium: brain and manuscript. This discussion arrives at digital archeology and archive theory as vital for understanding De Quincey’s involutes.

Chapter Two, “De Quincey’s Involutes and Experiences in Memory,” explores involutes through their related denotations and delineates De Quincey’s original concept. I examine the coining passage, the significance of the experience recollected, and surrounding imagery related to his other models. With involutes of experience, the decentered subject is not the source or center for explaining events. The mind receives experience. The mind records experience. But, De Quincey explains the lack of transparency of these procedures. An involute combines a particular progression and spatial property for apprehending a distinct relationship between surfaces and vectors in mathematics. I pursue the mathematic (and technological) roles for involutes for appreciating the quantitative phenomenon or specific property of experience as matter. In the mechanical age, geometric involutes are vital for interlocking; involute forms are
forms of reciprocity, of interweaving, of entangling. These aspects illuminate such phenomena in De Quincey’s human system and his narrative system. This discussion develops into discussions of the philosophical sense of the virtual and the actual.

In the second part of this dissertation I examine De Quincey’s “Involute Media and Involute Methods.” Chapter Three, “Central Forces and Inextricably Entangled Systems of Involutes,” explores De Quincey’s memory system, corresponding to Suspiria’s narrative system, through his sense of translation in dream imagery. I examine De Quincey’s preoccupation with visual-linguistic patterns. The result of this semiotic approach in De Quincey is an appreciation of varied linguistic operations, functions, and procedures operating simultaneously and interrelatedly. De Quincey’s reversionary motions thwart any straight linear trajectory. He finds a stabilizing continuity in foresight and hindsight that reaffirms both rather than conflating them. In fact, what seems an opposition is apposition. The tensions of consciousness here, in conjunction with De Quincey’s involute, help to explain approaches to understanding differential implications beyond mathematics and space-time, beyond science.

Language provides an organizational comparison while also functioning as a system within thought. De Quincey’s underlying philosophy of involutes extends to his understanding of language as a semantic model and a system within thought and by extension the stages of involute sensibility: experience, memory, recollection, narrative.

Chapter Four, “Involute Texts and Involute Analysis: “The Vortex of the Merely Human,” examines “The English Mail-Coach” in light of involutes. The result is an example of involute analysis for narrative that also assists in informing systems theory and virtuality in terms of memory. The conflation of time as well as the temporal ties of each image demonstrates the dual trajectory of the involution. Self-organization ties actual instances to entangled virtual
multiplicities or mental markers, yet, the reflexivity differentiates to self-generate dreams that actualize. That the imagery coincides so fittingly with the geometric topology of virtual philosophy demonstrates De Quincey’s involute’s shared roots in philosophy and mathematics. The conflation of time as well as the temporal ties of each image demonstrates the dual trajectory of the involution. Self-organization ties actual instances to entangled virtual multiplicities or mental markers, yet, the reflexivity differentiates to self-generate dreams that actualize. That the imagery coincides so fittingly with the geometric topology of virtual philosophy demonstrates shared roots in philosophy and mathematics. Moreover, applying a general sense of physics’ complementarity, the images De Quincey offers behave as both recollection and experience, both virtual and actual, depending on what the observer appeals to in explaining the phenomena. Yet an underlying order, an unseen algorithm, a mysterious structure, the *involute* offers cohesion.
Part One – Immaterial Media and Memory’s Metaphors

Some of the phenomena developed in my dream-scenery, undoubtedly, do but repeat the experiences of childhood; and others seem likely to have been growths and fructifications from seeds at that time sown.

Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*, 134

*Suspiria de Profundis*, resembling one-part dream memoir and one-part memory treatise, permits Thomas De Quincey’s narrative representation of the dreaming faculty while advancing his theory of memory. He studies dream-phenomena as one access point to memory and his formative experiences, connected by shared characteristics of temporality, life and death.

“Dream-scenery” suggests a world landscape and a theater backdrop, with the latter implicating re-productive, re-presentational theatrical properties along with specialized stage scaffolding and mechanized apparatuses. De Quincey marries poetic and horticultural images with the seemingly disparate area of mechanized technology. Through the combination, he lays the groundwork for his mathematically influenced figures of involutes. De Quincey’s related use of the palimpsest (for the brain) and the caduceus (for narrative) illuminate the qualities he formulates for a working understanding of the textuality of the mind. Merging the communicative content of textuality in linguistics and literary theory with media concerns assists in appreciating that dream content is as important for De Quincey’s study as are dream contexts.

**Suspiria de Profundis**’s study of memory includes the “experiences of childhood” that undoubtedly . . . repeat” in his “dream-scenery”—but, these are only “some” of the dreaming faculty’s *phenomena*. To complete his study, and address the “others [that] seem likely to have been growths and fructifications from seeds at that time sown,” De Quincey’s memory-narrative digresses into tangential experiences that may as validly, though perhaps not as transparently, have germinated the elements of his dream content. Experience includes grafting new successions to previous experiences. The “phenomena” in his dreams develop out of memory and experience: the distinction becomes evident and vital once each sub-system reveals their ongoing processes over the course of his essay.

While experience and memory operate in tandem, “the imagery of dreams,” claims De Quincey, “translated everything into their own language” (132. In order to appreciate the textuality of the mind, De Quincey prioritizes language as the model for the operations of inscription and encoding. He separates dreams as distinct texts, each operating on their own system(s) of discourse. As latent content, De Quincey’s narrative digressions demand the same unconscious inclusion as if manifesting as dreams themselves. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud establishes that a dream’s manifest content is symbolic representation, which has collapsed or condensed the conscious and unconscious external conditions or experiences of life, requiring not only parsing but interpretation or translation. Ultimately, De Quincey finds ways of recognizing these multiple roles—reader, interpreter, translator—within himself (or selves). He recognizes that dreams are texts requiring interpretation just as remembering is a type of reading of memory’s text. *Suspiria* provides a matrix (which I explore in Part Two) for a

methodology directed toward such expansive understandings of text and intertextuality. Intertextuality between dreams, memory, and experience operate so fluidly in his essay because they do so in the mind.

De Quincey’s narrative not only renders the dreaming faculty but attempts to re-/de-construct it as part of his study of memory. Digressive paragraphs and a tendency for lengthy paratactic sentences assist in juxtaposing tangential associations in compositional content. The structural correlation of experience with memory episodes and narrative with the dreams faculty merge, intersect, or involve. Tandem operations of memory and experience mirror in narrative. Experiences of remembering dreams re-inscribe memory substrates; narrative retraces the act of remembering. The materiality, externalized inscription and metaphoric internalization, respective to the textuality of the essay’s systems (memory and dreams), operates in tandem and welcomes a new approach: an analytical approach beyond a strictly psychoanalytical reading of De Quincey’s re-collection of his dreams.

Part One, encompassing chapters One and Two, examines De Quincey’s initial envisioning of memory, dreams, and narrative as particular structures laying the theoretical groundwork for involutes. The type of physicality De Quincey attributes to the inscription of memory suggests a dialectic discourse between textual layers: this discourse is manifold, intertextual or hypertextual, and interdisciplinary. I examine De Quincey’s appeal to metaphor in light of Douwe Draaisma’s considerations in Metaphors of Memory, particularly focused on linguistics and abstractions of material objects. De Quincey dedicates a full section to his conceit of the human brain as a “palimpsest”; however, this only makes his parenthetical coining

of involutes—“(if I may coin that word”)—all the more intriguing (142). My focus is De Quincey’s coining and substantive application of involutes (see Chapter Two). The two primary conceptual images De Quincey uses to shape his theory are the palimpsest and caduceus (which I address in Chapter One). He reworks the palimpsest, after invoking its basic qualities and problematizing them in terms of memory, redrafting its structural functions to accommodate his theory of memory processes. De Quincey further embellishes the caduceus structure that he adopts to describe his past compositional aims (the content and imagery of which influences his manner of embellishing). Both metaphors evoke particular senses of multiplicity and cyclicality that combine and directly impact his sense of involutes.

In his narrative attempts at rendering memory processes, De Quincey further develops his appreciation for the complex that is memory. De Quincey’s psychological archaeology manifests in narrative as différance, both to differ and to defer, in Jacques Derrida’s sense of the term. By deciphering the stratified levels of experience, De Quincey’s study reveals that the memory complex generates a system of repetition and difference in line with Deleuze’s appreciation of actualization. In terms of discourse, the shift toward multiplicity in meaning and iteration of signs and signification appreciates the convulsions of destabilized movement and proliferation in De Quincey’s images of memory and narrative, the parallels between recollection processes or excavating the archive.

De Quincey’s technics of memory remain central concerns for externalized memory aids in our current age, a mnemotechnological milieu, recognized by Bernard Stiegler and other

media theorists who acknowledge the integral role of memory tools or mnemotechnics in human existence. De Quincey’s study of dreams constructs a conceptualization of memory reliant upon material forms and external objects. The result of De Quincey’s personal case study is a prescient philosophy that speaks to contemporary textuality as well as literary and cultural studies.

Digital archeology and archive theory assist understanding De Quincey’s involutes by illustrating the complex of iterations, fragmented data and subroutines built upon the core involute(s), whether concrete experiences or “the vortex of the merely human” (130). A channel for applying these post-modern theories is De Quincey’s preliminary model of the palimpsest, already participating in discussions of the destabilization of texts and reading prevailing in current literary theory. Informed by Gérard Genette and Sarah Dillon’s distinctions, the former establishing the textual qualities and the latter expanding the sense of the reading process, palimpsestic qualities for De Quincey foreground his larger concerns. I argue De Quincey utilizes the conceptual metaphor of the palimpsest for memory and the caduceus for narrative representation of memory in order to construct his concept of involutes. New Media’s expanding sense of textuality and interest in the externalization of memory resonate with De Quincey’s project. De Quincey explores, through narrative, his material and textual concept of memory and dreams.

The interconnected systems of writing, inscription, reading, interpretation, and reproduction blur into simultaneity in Suspiria de Profundis, directing De Quincey to the


fundamental elements of experience within each text—memory, dream, remembrance, narrative. De Quincey’s involute forms the basic unit, the “compound experience” (142). The compounded indivisibility of the involute initiates all the composite properties of the larger texts comprised of them. De Quincey views memory as a multilevel text requiring analytical reading—or at least awareness—of its separate structural layers. In the new media study Mechanisms, scholar Matthew Kirschenbaum distinguishes three key structural components found with newer media, notably digital texts: the material stages or layers of interface, mediation, or interpretation. The atypical materiality and textuality of the digital text provides a useful lens for understanding the remote and largely abstract texts De Quincey studies.

Rather than simply exposing the limitations of linearity or causality, De Quincey underscores the fluid layers of the memory as a narrative-text. I suggest De Quincey provides in his theory and narrative rendering of memory a working methodology for reading. Narratives exhibit their internal organization and processes as involute; involute analysis exposes these properties. In Part II, I pursue involute analysis for appreciating such involute phenomena as De Quincey outlines within the mind-text and also argue for its application with other newer texts, ones that exponentially complicate their stored and experienced iterations, most notably apparent in the medium and mode of digital texts with saved iterations of content as well as reader (or player, in the case of video games) progress, interaction or experience: complexes consisting of dynamic systems.

Chapter One  *Suspiria de Profundis* and Memory Narrative

Thomas De Quincey opens the “Introductory Notice” to *Suspiria de Profundis* by invoking the “colossal pace of advance” and “continual development” of his era’s technological landscape and its impact on his recollections (130). De Quincey’s concerns over “this fierce condition of eternal hurry” announce the ubiquitous presence of motion, time and technology in his essay on memory-generated dreams, or, rather, dream-reproduced memories (130). Time, always implicated to some extend in a work on memory, is more than simply a movement through personal episodes for De Quincey. Temporality is a subject within the important memories he recalls. The crucial memories are so impactful on him for their exposure of time’s qualities—regardless of whether he was aware at the time or only upon reflection. It is the latter that demonstrates the *techne*, or art and craft, involved in De Quincey’s narrative; the former displays his construction of technical properties of memory. *Suspiria de Profundis* exhibits both working in conjunction. He recalls experiences of irregular time (expanding and contracting) that permit exposing memory’s processes during the fluctuation. Also, his narrative attempts to prolong pacing when commenting on repeated recollection, in effect layering time’s passage over those experiences.

The new technologies on the periphery of De Quincey’s focus formulate his appreciation of machinery and apparatuses in mental processes as well as the technology of the *text*: the technology and techne in writing and in recollecting. De Quincey examines his own memory arts in terms of textuality, attending to aspects of writing, inscription, reading, interpretation, and reproduction. The inscriptive *impression* appears frequently in *Suspiria de Profundis*, for written records and psychical reactions (emotive, cognitive, conscious or unconscious). Certainly, direct
reference and literary allusions factor into De Quincey’s memorable experiences and narration of them, as scholarship notes. Yet the textuality of the mind is so integral to De Quincey’s conception, he never directly states that the mind is a text—instead, he clarifies which type of text it is. The mind, or specifically the physiological structure of the brain, is a palimpsest as De Quincey famously posits in the portion of Suspiria entitled, “The Palimpsest.” The technical and textual properties as outlined by De Quincey are the focus of this present chapter.

The “accelerations of the press” included on his list of technology’s “gathering agitation” does more than underscore a rapidity indirect to his occupation—whether the innovations of cylinder printing presses and cylinder mould machines or Fourdrinier’s continuous paper making machine textual reproduction suddenly approaches the speed of experience, ever shortening the gap between sequence and simultaneity: the instantaneousness of external representation and experiential inscription. Automatization and perpetual motion seem to threaten De Quincey on the horizon. The image conjures Herman Melville’s continued awe at pulp processing and its “procession along the wheeling cylinders” of a Paper-Mill. De Quincey captures, in his palimpsest-brain, a desire for the immediate record, further referencing the


42. Herman Melville, “The Tartarus of Maids” (1855), Melville’s short fiction, 1853-1856. ed. William B. Dillingham (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1977), 183-207, 205. The work is typically paired as, “The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids.” In the relevant portion, Melville explores a sublimity in generating the blankness of the pristine paper: “not wholly unlike that which one might experience at the fulfillment of some mysterious prophecy” (206).
photographic process of the daguerreotype, but also expresses a necessity for the infinite repository. De Quincey’s sense of textuality, a concept of the text as explored since modern literary theory, applies to the inscriptive properties of memory but also to external records, written or otherwise. The material quality De Quincey attributes to both representations, internal and external, draw attention to the challenges of storage (retrieval and capacity) that persist in our digital age.

The material and re-productive roles of writing and inscription provide De Quincey a schema for the complexities of memory. De Quincey’s memory shares common aspects with William Wordsworth’s spots of time, moments “of distinct preeminence” that potently influence the mind thereafter: such experiences as marks or spots of time “retain a fructifying virtue” to nourish and repair, “invisibly,” the mind, “especially the imaginative power” against the “trivial […] and […] ordinary.” Significant experiences are certainly generative for De Quincey, who also suggests that despite their obvious notability they also harbor concealed influences on mental faculties. Like Wordsworth, De Quincey engages the relationship of space and time for pinpointing or attempting to grasp preeminent moments, though his concept of experiences stresses points in time rather than spots of time. De Quincey distinguishes his poetics and theory of memory as founded in physics and mechanistically concretized. One intersection between the mechanized advances, including steam-locomotives, to which De Quincey also alludes, is the mathematics behind involved gears—and involutes are a concept vital to Suspiria de Profundis

43. For an insightful discussion of literary interest in photography, see: Andrew Miller, Poetry, Photography, Ekphrasis: Lyrical Representations of Photographs from the 19th Century to the Present. (Liverpool University Press, 2015).

(and this dissertation). De Quincey perceives memory and recollection processes as in motion—in development, growing and ripening—actual yet undergoing processing (perhaps something other than being in process or becoming). Rather than othering aspects of the self, De Quincey reconciles the material with the abstract, the external with the internal.

Suspiria’s compositional challenges in representing mental processes may indeed influence De Quincey’s understanding of the systems he attempts to render. De Quincey forces a meta-awareness of literary representations as much as of perception and of experience. Modern studies of media aid to inform De Quincey’s textual and external representations. De Quincey’s free indirect discourse of narrative’s remembrance as moving parts and moving images suggests some prefiguring of Deleuzian cinematicity—Gilles Deleuze’s paradigmatically claims cinema, an autonomous machine of replication and repetitions, is a lens that sees seeing. De Quincey’s dream-scenery possesses a similar meta-discourse of representation. Deleuze’s postmodern merger of literary theory and philosophy approaches similar metaphysical and structural interests as De Quincey. But without the medium of cinema, comprised of new technology though an arguably literary form, De Quincey appeals to other technology which share traits for manipulating time and perception that are crucial to his outlook. For De Quincey memory experiences experiencing. De Quincey acknowledges that properties transfer between experience and the mental storage apparatus. Primarily these traces attribute written inscription to experience (text) and memory (medium).

In Suspiria de Profundis De Quincey offers several analogous and heuristic images for apprehending his subjects. Initially, the palimpsest and palimpsest-archive are models of memory’s structure, the caduceus for its organization (in narrative), the caduceus-narrative for

the processes of memory and dreams (remembering consciously and the unconsciously), all of which attempt to record, reproduce, or render the “concrete objects” of experience, or involutes (142). De Quincey’s involutes provide, once he redefines each related concept within the properties of his memory network, the quintessential concept for operations and order within his system(s).

Section 1: Structuring Palimpsests in the Mind

Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished.

De Quincey, Suspria de Profundis, 175

De Quincey’s palimpsest-brain garners attention from scholars for its role in nineteenth-century thought and for its potency as a metaphor for the mind. De Quincey equates the brain with a palimpsest, establishing memory as functioning as a text, though a rather particular type that demands a specialized type of reading. Linear yet cyclical, layered yet successive, solitary yet re-inscribed, De Quincey outlines the palimpsest’s particular, conflicting properties in his definition: “A palimpsest, then, is a membrane or roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions” (172). As intricate a figure as the palimpsest appears in his definition, his brain-as-

palimpsest is still more complicated. He decisively attributes the brain as such a “natural and mighty palimpsest” that only seems “cleansed” (175). Successive imprints only seemingly overwrite past layers: the brain remains an immemorial monument to all. “Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before,” might describe the usurpation of new generations, possessors of the palimpsest, but with a Romantic nostalgia for the relic, the ruin, that houses the unsnuffed, immortal sparks of life—sparks which, if ever seemingly destroyed, De Quincey assures us that, “in reality, not one has been extinguished” (175). The implied metaphors of the grave and flame (certainly the empty tomb and the living flame), resonate with the death/life imagery woven into Suspiria de Profundis and demonstrate the figurative and semantic network underlying it.47 Among the “tumult of images, illustrative and allusive,” which De Quincey offers, is the “fable of the Phoenix” as a similar cyclicality, “through eternal relays of funeral mists, is but a type of what we have done with Palimpsests”: “We have backed upon each phoenix in the long regressus, and forced him to expose his ancestral phoenix, sleeping in the ashes below his own ashes” (174). De Quincey’s project is one of regression and recursion, in which the “modern magic” of “Chemistry [. . .] has extorted [. . .] from the dust and ashes of forgotten centuries, the secrets of a life extinct for the general eye, but still glowing in the embers” (174). “The image, the memorial, the record, which,” he claims, “is derived from a palimpsest”—just one of the “illustrative or allusive” images in “the coruscation of a restless understanding”—is characterized by, “the traces of each successive handwriting, regularly effaced [. . .] in the reverse order, been regularly called back” (174). The palimpsest-brain as an

47. Burwick (ed.) comments on De Quincey’s title in its publication history: “Without giving up the meaning, ‘Sighs from the Depths’, De Quincey replaced the word ‘Abysso’ with ‘Profundis’, echoing the Vulgate text of Psalm 130:1 – De pro-fundis elamavi ad te, Domine (‘Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord’). On 5 January 1845, he says of his progress on ‘Susperia’ that ‘I never succeeded so entirely to my own satisfaction’, declaring that ‘I am a new birth for composition’ (Houghton Library, Harvard, bMS Am 1631–107). It was perhaps the idea of ‘new birth’ that prompted him later to refer to the work as ‘Aurora’ (Works, 126).
immemorial text-artifact implicates the changing qualities and dynamic capabilities of its reception and readership.

Certainly, De Quincey’s conception of memory as writing is as old as the technology itself. Rather, his choice of metaphor—the brain as a palimpsest, instead of a wax tablet, codex, or even a mystic writing-pad—merits attention for an appeal to the archaic vellum scroll. Writing is “the oldest memory aid,” Douwe Draaisma notes in her comprehensive study, *Metaphors of Memory.* As the oldest memory technology, writing provides the oldest metaphor for memory. Certainly when De Quincey notes that memory records data that “have fallen upon your brain softly as light,” he acknowledges, perhaps, the bourgeoning photographic technologies, memory aids neither written nor printed, such as the 1830 daguerreotype and the talbotype. The light might also carry other associations, particularly concerning one of his central remembrances: the light when viewing his sister’s body. De Quincey, however, favors the reclaimed Medieval artifact. He prefers to align memory with an aspect of the arcane. The past-made-present, the uncanny presence-in-absence or absence-in-presence, locates De Quincey’s concept of memory in the post-Romantic, indeed, post-modern sensibility of texts, reading, and discourse. “In De Quincey’s autobiographical writing, the fantasy of the palimpsest of the mind does not secure a Romantic unity of mind,” argues Sarah Dillion in “Reinscribing De Quincey’s Palimpsest: The Significance of the Palimpsest in Contemporary Literary and Cultural Studies;” rather, his palimpsest “is instead implicated in a distinctly post-Romantic spectralization of the self, and of temporality, that is intimately related to Derrida’s theorization of spectrality in *Specters of Marx:*


50. I discuss this core memory later in this chapter and in Chapter Two, building upon his sense of narratology with his concept of involutes and the context of his nomenclature.
The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International (1994).” Indeed, the palimpsest destabilizes a Romantic sense of unity or order and displaces the role of the observer, the human subject. Yet, in so doing, De Quincey showcases his unique sensibility to a sublimity in phenomena, the unexpected collisions of memory and meaning in illustrative and allusive metaphor. His involute will build on the palimpsests’ characteristic displaced centrality.

For all the materiality of his choice of text, the palimpsest, De Quincey is not concerned with direct physiology or biology, or the science of the brain as an organ; metaphor is deliberate for its approximation and instability, its ability to evoke unpredictable interpretation. Through the palimpsest De Quincey can redefine the brain with the qualities he deems appropriate. Metaphor, the concept alone, is nuanced and varied by discipline, though Draaisma offers a concise breakdown which suffices for this first section. Traced back to Aristotle, metaphor offers parallel relations and comparison that “current literary studies generally reserve for parallel,” or an equal, “analogous relationship between objects, events, or relationships.” Yet, Aristotle also suggests an element of “transfer of meaning,” for which, as Draaisma clarifies, “the concept of ‘transfer’ indicates that the connotations of the word in its usual context are transferred to the new, ‘strange’ context.” The palimpsest, in his initial presentation, offers De Quincey a distinct type of text with particular associated material inscription that he compares to the human brain. The extent of the relationship between the brain and the palimpsest is something De Quincey spends time delineating, as if aware of the ambiguity a reader might find in such a likeness. There is a “lack of consensus,” Draaisma further notes on metaphor, on “precisely what the


relationship is between two contexts,” and by extension, “how metaphors are related to reality,” or “even whether literal descriptions exist at all.”\(^{54}\) Indeed, De Quincey may occasionally rely on fluctuating interplay in order to tease out meaning he may be unable to fully articulate or is still in the process of formulating. These are some of the very qualities De Quincey values in the palimpsest, “interwoven” layers of “language” and “revelations”: “the same roll has served as a conservatory for three separate generations of flowers and fruits, all perfectly different, and yet all specially adapted to the wants of the successive possessors” (173). The conservatory shares qualities of the archive, here, as a botanical archive (the same generative imagery he provides the caduceus I’ll address later). Derrida’s analysis of the Mystic Writing-Pad, in *Archive Fever*, is apt for De Quincey’s palimpsest: “the technical model of the machine tool, intended, in Freud’s eyes, to represent on the outside memory as internal archivization” (13).\(^{55}\) The same external movement draws out the brain as a palimpsest, then conservatory within memory’s archival operations. The correlating *archive* and *conservatory* underscore the horticultural imagery De Quincey links to literature (important for his caduceus-narrative, explored fully in Section 3) while nesting the layers of text and con-text.

The palimpsest-cum-conservatory archives “separate” and “perfectly different” texts, “yet,” each is a text “specially adapted to the wants of the successive possessors” (173). In this comparison, not only is the self manifold, an unspecified and potentially infinite number, the idealized three-layered palimpsest greatly simplifies the quantity of impressions fallen upon any human brain, especially De Quincey’s anticipated reader. The texts within the palimpsest possess

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a textuality that mutably and infinitely speaks to all readers/possessors. De Quincey’s palimpsest becomes an archive of infinitely generative textuality despite a finite number of texts. The possessors of such a text are unquantifiable. Extending these developments back to the brain, memory becomes the archiver(s) of the brain palimpsest’s infinity of texts.

Thomas De Quincey begins with one figural image and arrives at, or develops, another. Analogy and metaphor assist with his germinating and fructifying terms and concepts. I. A. Richard’s explanation in Philosophy of Rhetoric of metaphor’s properties open its possibilities to substitution, comparison, interaction, even heuristics. The functions and properties of metaphor preoccupy various and overlapping disciplines, including linguistics, psychoanalysis, cognitive studies. Equivocal metaphoric interplay becomes more pronounced for the metaphors De Quincey spends less time clarifying, but are nonetheless apparent even in the linguistic slippage of the “parchment” or “membrana” (172). For now, Jacques Lacan’s sense of metaphor as an effect helps explain De Quincey not using the term metaphor at all. Rather, the metaphoric effect does more than explain the brain’s structure and functions of memory. The palimpsest grants human internal framework an external property and plurality.

Delineating the “Conservatory” Palimpsest: Brain and Memory

De Quincey may pronounce the brain a faithful chronicle of “everlasting layers” that “in reality” are neither “extinguished” nor obscured, for himself and all—“Such a palimpsest is my


brain; such a palimpsest, oh reader! is yours” (175). But by no means is memory an eidetic author, recorder, chronicler. For his purposes, De Quincey revises one of the very distinguishing features of the palimpsest. Typically, Draaisma notes, “unlimited capacity and enduring traces exclude each other among the aids that we use to replace memory.” Indeed, De Quincey’s brain-palimpsest avoids effaced traces and limited capacity. De Quincey’s revised palimpsest bares the same idealization as Freud’s Mystic Writing-Pad. The ideal Wunderblock or Mystic Writing-Pad, consists of three layers with depth corresponding to lasting impressions: an indelible base wax, a transient sheet of wax paper, and a transparent celluloid sheet. “If one looks under the wax paper, one sees that at a deeper level an enduring trace has been preserved, the wax is now engraved with what was previously only visible on the wax paper,” in Freud’s model, thus permitting simultaneous reuse and recording: “The outer sheets are again blank, as though they had never been written on, while on the inner one everything has been preserved.”

Such a clear hierarchy of preservation and effacement is absent in De Quincey’s palimpsest. Yet, his terminology seems deliberate enough. De Quincey tenuously circumvents the contentious dichotomy of body/mind by distinguishing the palimpsest-brain from memory (perhaps a deliberate choice, rather than the mind), which has certain limitations: “Rarely do things perish from my memory that are worth remembering. Rubbish dies instantly” (153). De Quincey


59. “Mystic Writing-Pad is sometimes called a metaphor and sometimes an analogy or model, reflects the conceptual conflicts in this part of the linguistic world” (Draaisma, 2000, Metaphor, 10).

60. Draaisma, 2000, Metaphor, 8.

61. This description of his mind and the brain suggests the distinction in his mental categorizing systems: compare to the palimpsest: “The vellum, from having been the setting of the jewel, has risen at length to be the jewel itself; and the burden of thought, from having given the chief value to the vellum, has now become the chief obstacle to its value; nay, has totally extinguished its value, unless it can be dissociated from the connexion. Yet, if this unlinking can be effected, then – fast as the inscription upon the membrane is sinking into rubbish – the membrane itself is reviving in its separate importance; and, from bearing a ministerial value, the vellum has come at last to absorb the whole value” (De Quincey, 172). Memory is a compound structure of both mind and brain.
captures the *effect* as much as memory’s *affect*. Whereas Freud’s model underscores the role of the writer, (memory aides offer an enduring “remembrance” safe from “possible distortions to which it might have been subjected in my actual memory”62), De Quincey’s palimpsest highlights the role of the reader. Memory consists of a discerning agency apart from the automatic impressions of the palimpsest. Rubbish unworthy of *remembering* is cleansed, *seemingly*, “instantly,” expurgated from memory, hence removed from the *access* of remembering. In these respects, *memory* adheres more closely to the metaphor of the palimpsest, “cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions” (171). Here is, moreover, one of the few distinctions De Quincey will offer between memory and remembrance: memory houses and sustains whereas remembering conducts a type of *reading* that can be imperfect, impaired, or privileging.

To convey, fittingly, one example of past experiences among the “immortal impresses” brought to the surface of memory, De Quincey explains one common occurrence: literary “passages [. . .] which I never could have read but once (and *that* thirty years ago), often begin to blossom anew when I am lying awake, unable to sleep” (153). The written record implicates the *roles* of reading. Later in *Suspiria* De Quincey personifies a process within himself, the Dark Interpreter, that reinforces the reflective and more psychically complex literary procedure of *interpretation* as much as the initial physical or immediate cognitive sensory processing.63


[63] See Part II of this dissertation for full discussion of interpretation and the interpreter.
novelly to successive possessors, even the selves De Quincey may be tomorrow. He invokes the horticultural image, similar to dreams developing past experiences (“growths and fruitifications from seeds at that time sown”), and thereby grants layers on the palimpsest a presence as with any material artifact that exists in time and space.

The slippage between layers, the percolation up of a substrate or past inscription, destabilizes De Quincey’s position as remember-er or his role as a reader of the palimpsest-brain. The distinct images of palimpsests De Quincey offers, between the objective brain and subjective memory, maintain, nevertheless, key characteristics of the palimpsest as a manifold entity and intertextual fragment. Both palimpsests present in De Quincey’s metaphysics destabilize reading and texts in ways that resonate with literary theory since the New Critics. At its most basic, a text produces ambiguity in the disparate elements forming an organic whole. In this sense, the definition Sarah Dillon, building off Gérard Genette, offers of “palimpsestic,” as “the layering of a palimpsest,” might apply to any text. Indeed, palimpsestic shares traits with the polyvocality of discourse theory and semiotics (discussed in Chapter Two). Combining palimpsest studies and literary theory opens useful implications for the palimpsest image on De Quincey’s narrative rendering of memory.

Memory multiplies exponentially, if each layer on the palimpsest is a distinct text and every text is palimpsestic in its conglomeration. Each layer-text of the palimpsest recognizes its own intertextuality within and apart from the whole. Memory, as a type of reading for De Quincey, initiates the manifold relationships Genette explores in his sense of hypertextual

64. In addition to those included directly, namely I. A. Richards, the influential list also includes William Empson, William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley.

reading: “the hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading.”

With a hypertext, similar to following embedded hyperlinks, the reader may oscillate between juxtaposed layers during the reading experience. This relational reading Dillon distinguishes as “palimpsestuous” or “the subsequent reappearance of the underlying text.”

Genette provides a useful nexus between the literary approaches to structure and the theory surrounding the palimpsest itself. A Structuralist, Genette inherits the shared interests in language of Ferdinand de Saussure and Claude Lévi-Strauss, or semiotics and social anthropology, respectively, among other fields.

Structuralism is mainly a linguistic method concerned with signs and discourse, particularly narrative, though Claude Lévi-Strauss’s term “intellectual bricolage” is an apt description as structuralism depends on the study of cultural systems by spanning a range of disciplines. This scope is vital for De Quincey and acknowledging ways of appreciating both his images and metaphors of memory. Interdisciplinary cross-sections appreciate De Quincey’s intellectual bricolage and breadth of knowledge spanning mathematics, philosophy, and language.

The palimpsest is key as both a sign/signifier and a type of discourse. More than symbolic, De Quincey stresses the unstated associations and relationships in metaphor. Moreover, De Quincey underscores his own linguistic preoccupation in notable instances, including his examples of pre-sleep or pre-conscious remembrance. “Words revive,” De Quincey

68. Gérard Genette, “Structuralism and Literary Criticism,” in Modern Criticism and Theory. ed. Nigel Wood and David Lodge. (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2014). This collection offers an insightful discussion of these theoretical intersections.
explains, “and they arrange themselves gradually into sentences,” to such a point as he *humbly* claims his ability to tolerably recreate a page or a verse (153).\(^7\) Though in this general example De Quincey does not recognize any trigger for bringing these sentences to mind, the episodes of memories and dreams in *Suspiria de Profundis* suggest a “system of latent relations,” as if in line with pursuing Genette’s “structural synthesis” for which “thematic analysis” of networks locates relations between systems of forms and meanings or similarities—or homologies.\(^7\) Homologies, a term originating in chemistry and biology concurrent to De Quincey, identifies similar relative structures or relative positions. Cognates are homologies; philology studies homologies among languages. De Quincey is alert to the concept (if not the term). Homologies, in evolutionary terms, refer to branching species with common ancestry, a structural approach Genette utilizes; Genette suggests language and literature (as well as literary genres) as a homology, with shared structural relationships, particularly in the manner that they partition meaning. The shared principles of this homology include language and literature behaving with culturally defined perceptions of reality, of segmenting experience, of the relations between form and meaning that possess a systematic relationship underlying culture.\(^7\) Meaning and signs, when analyzed structurally for synthesis as well as homology, demonstrate interconnecting networks but also

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overlapping trajectories of linguistic phenomena. De Quincey uses the idea of analogy when he explains the associations that make his memory so remarkably (though approximately) accurate. Interestingly, De Quincey expresses this palimpsestuous reading, or relational reading between layers by adopting a secondary role for readership: “I become a distinguished compositor in the darkness” (153). In remembering, or compositing, De Quincey suspends himself between layers, texts, and roles, “a suspended relation to meaning and reference,” that Jacques Derrida locates in all literature.\(^\text{73}\) Dillon emphasizes the interdisciplinarity of palimpsests, among their arbitrary layers that “bear no necessary relation to each other,” yet which showcase “the involvement, entanglement, interruption and inhabitation of disciples in and on each other.”\(^\text{74}\) Poststructuralist or Deconstructive readings further appreciate the gap De Quincey establishes between successive layers in texts and even, perhaps, the two distinct palimpsests operating in the mind. The undecideability, or “madness” Derrida reads in Søren Kierkegaard as “the moment of decision,”\(^\text{75}\) opens the rift inherent in the palimpsest as a text and destabilizes the act of reading as multiple. Compositing, as with either re-collecting or re-membering, suggests the same sense of rupture and suture, of fragment and collage.

For De Quincey, the subjective memory-archivist takes on the role of compositor. The palimpsest suggests “correlative spaces” rather than “unbroken linearity,” concepts Michel


\(^\text{75}\) Derrida, 1978, "Cogito," 40; furthermore: “The attempt to write the history of the decision, division, difference runs risk of construing the division as an event or a structure subsequent to the unity of an original presence, thereby confirming metaphysics in its fundamental operations.”
Foucault demonstrates in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Postulating a type of archaeological or archival excavation of discursive knowledge, or “enveloping theory,” Foucault speaks almost for De Quincey when he articulates his project: "If philosophy is a memory or a return of the origin, what I am doing cannot, in any way, be regarded as philosophy; and if the history of thought consists in giving life to half-effaced figures, what I am doing is not history either.”

De Quincey’s archaeology of self recognizes a simultaneity through the medium: brain and manuscript. De Quincey selects the image of the palimpsest in order to talk about text in such a way. The palimpsestic brain and the palimpsestuous memory discernable in light of these destabilizing influences appears consistent. Palimpsests, for De Quincey, offer actual (literal) material traces for conveying the multiple and the fragmentary nature of texts, memory, and experience. The “palimpsestuous” or composite quality of the memory/text and of remembering/reading becomes more clear. Memories remembered, similar to the texts layering a palimpsest, become multiple, along with their contents.

**Palimpsest Archives and Libraries**

Any anachronism in reading such post-modern senses of destabilized texts vanishes when De Quincey scales his metaphor to include, finally, the all-encompassing storage system of palimpsests, “lying amongst the other *diplomata* of human archives and libraries” (175). The image of the archive (or library) reinforces the unidentified *archivist*, not unlike the compositor De Quincey sees himself as, an unrecognized agent of organization. Even for De Quincey, the

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palimpsest is a limited metaphor, one which he is quick to qualify. “In the vellum palimpsest,” there is arbitrariness to the successive inscriptions, “which by pure accident have consecutively occupied the roll” (175). In “our own heaven-created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain,” De Quincey explains, “there are and cannot be such incoherencies” (175). De Quincey finds himself reorienting his position from reader-compositor to the cataloguing librarian.

De Quincey develops the archive-library for juxtaposed order, for categorical organization. Two layers may be relationally read without the “grotesque collisions of those successive themes, having no natural connection,” as otherwise found on an actual palimpsest (175). “The fleeting accidents of a man’s life, and its external shows, may indeed be irrelate and incongruous,” admits De Quincey; “but,” he acknowledges the existence of “organizing principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres” (175). The organizing principles of the archive form their own discourse, which, as Foucault would suggest, seeks, "to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to absolute axes of reference; it is trying to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to a single system of differences, a scattering that is not related to absolute axes of reference; it is trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre."78 These fixed nodes of palimpsests within “predetermined centres" of the archive, require navigation. With no privileging, absolutes, relations or reductions to reference, the archive/library resembles the decentered palimpsest, requiring directive principles that anticipate the reader.

The role of the archivist suddenly shares the role of inscriber—and by extension the reader or remember-er are each different points on the same line, each conducting similar tasks.

Each remains non-centralized or, in Foucault’s sense, decentered. To employ the vellum scroll further, the line is not straight. Rather the line is a curve, involved and cyclical. Textually, in narrative or memory, if experiences are mathematic or, more precisely, geometric points, rather than spots of time or space, the location is one without set parameters or coordinates. While represented by a dot, a geometric point in a topological space is a structure-preserving placeholder, map, or a morphism between objects or infinite expanses. De Quincey’s vellum scroll demonstrates displaced interpretive positions of the self or selves (his Dark Interpreter persona provides a distinct yet reciprocal procedure-set) positioned on the circle rather than in the center, among a fluid cycle of points involuting a potential abyss.

De Quincey deploys his sense of “consciousness” to function in a similar capacity as the decentered archivist: “Said but once, said but softly, not marked at all, words revive before me in darkness and solitude and they arrange themselves gradually into sentences, but through an effort some times of a distressing kind, to which I am in a manner forced to become a party” (153). Such moments of remembrance (or recollection) occur “when unable to sleep,” requiring, even forcing, in “an effort some times of a distressing kind,” active participation by the conscious mind to form fragments into a cohesive sequence, though perhaps only a larger fragment (153). De Quincey can reproduce “sometimes [. . .] half a page of verses, that would be found tolerably correct if collated with the volume that I never had in my hand but once” (153). The indelibility of his memory may require conscious management after storage, as if undergoing perpetual processing or reorganization. De Quincey’s consciousness is, “forced to become a party” in recomposing or recollecting utterances “not marked at all” by the conscious mind upon initial hearing: “Still it is a fact that this pertinacious life of memory for things that simply touch the

79. De Quincey’s Dark Interpreter, discussed at length later in Chapter Three, as part of the communication system model, returns to this idea of decentered selves as involute points on the vellum’s curve or the center.
ear, without touching the consciousness, does in fact, beset me” (153). The immediacy and passivity apparent here figures into his concept of involutes (explored fully in Chapter Two, informed by his own supporting models); it is important to recognize he grants a “life” and existence—pertinacious and seemingly incongruous—to memory. Also, he grants that he can recognize (rather than recall) these “things” registered by the senses but not necessarily his attentive thoughts. Memory processes are living and ever on-going, occasionally rupturing into thought or forcing active participation. In computing storage, the phenomenon of disk fragmentation offers a viable comparison here. Fragmentation of files and data comprises shuffling file pieces and storing them fluidly rather than in a solid state. The result can reduce the efficient performance of more main routines or the capacity for the system to retrieve with optimal alacrity entire files. In relating this to De Quincey’s memory model, unconsciously stored data requires conscious processing and re-collecting of fragments; his conscious mind is forced to defragment files, restring or concatenate a series of data for more organized or accessible archiving.

Much as the archive juxtaposes storage of palimpsests by some cataloging system, “whatever heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated from without, will not permit the grandeur of human unity greatly to be violated,” De Quincey argues (175). He suggests a new type of palimpsestic text that is categorical or thematic, associated by similarities or Genette’s homologies. Archive theory provides a key sense of archivization as reading and compositing, which De Quincey finds “accumulated” within a “human unity,” distinct from the “heterogeneous elements of life.” The exteriorization of memory is a part of, yet apart from, human unity. The models of external memory that De Quincey utilizes, namely the palimpsest and archive, adhere to certain rules of human unity: to order the “irrelate and incongruous” and
will not permit “its ultimate repose to be troubled, in the retrospect from dying moments, or from other great convulsions” (175). The nearest explanation De Quincey can offer for his seeming exceptional memory, far from photographic, is “the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies, and by means of those aerial pontoons passing over like lightning from one topic to another” (153). Analogy, a type of juxtaposition that pairs relationally by content or meaning, functions similarly to metaphor, and shows just how important such associations appear to him and to ordering his cognitive functioning. The mind archives complex imprints, ordering and storing memory's manifoldness though the unity of analogy and relational associations.

Thus far the metaphor of the palimpsest and the archive address conscious remembrance. The role of the dreaming apparatus complicates the palimpsest-archive, speaking to Derridean archive theory, a joint structure of both the psychic apparatus and the exterior-technics of material mnemonic traces. When Jacques Derrida explores a psychoanalytical 'impression' of archives (in Archive Fever), his discussions of inscriptions and imprints of the exergue echo De Quincey. In “the possibility of the archiving trace,” Derrida expresses the complexity of “separating the impression from the imprint.” This "immanent divisibility, the possibility of its fission, haunted it from the origin," notes Derrida of the imprint, cautioning that, "the faithful memory of such a singularity can only be given over to the specter.” The construction of the specter is yet another role for an aspect of De Quincey. In order to explore this further, De

80. Expanded later in Section 3 of this chapter.
82. Derrida, 1998, AF, 100.
Quincey’s palimpsestic brain and palimpsestuous memory must first impact his narrative. Narrative renders a type of remembering that exposes a distance between the original memory and the act of re-inscription/membering.

Certainly archive recognizes proliferating layers of re-inscription (of Derrida) as well as a ‘system of discursivity’ (of Foucault); yet, De Quincey privileges the human palimpsest with a certain homogenous order, though the fusing and gathering that occurs via a decentered, spectral agency. The qualification De Quincey offers to these “everlasting layers” that “in reality” are neither “extinguished” nor obscured, is the limitation of whatever agent perceives these memories. To borrow the sense of an archivist-reader of the manuscript, in Wolfgang Iser’s sense of reading, the text is actualized or concretized and shaped with meaning in the act of reading: “reading can be characterized as a sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, recollections,” in which the process of reading becomes one of interaction between textual elements of the text and very act of reading itself. The agent of perception implicates both his own consciousness and his audience’s. De Quincey aligns his sense of consciousness with and the dreaming apparatus (or the subconscious mind) as the selective, subjective reader or


86. De Quincey 130; 130-1: “Among the powers in man which suffer by this too intense life of the social instincts, none suffers more than the power of dreaming. Let no man think this a trifle. The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind. But if this faculty suffers from the decay of solitude, which is becoming a visionary idea in England, on the other hand, it is certain that some merely physical agencies can and do assist the faculty of dreaming almost preternaturally Amongst these is intense exercise; to some extent at least, and for some persons: but beyond all others is opium, which indeed seems to possess a specific power in that direction; not merely for exalting the colours of dream-scenery, but for deepening its shadows; and, above all, for strengthening the sense of its fearful realities.”
archivist operating within the mechanic, automatic record or database of the memory-palimpsest (the brain and its sensory system).87 The palimpsest models of memory influence De Quincey’s metaphor for the structure of a narrative rendering memory. The composite materiality of the palimpsest as a conceptual model influences the greater philosophy of De Quincey and the schema of Suspiria de Profundis, or sighs from the depths.

Section 2: Inter-Medial and Re-produced as Re-“Collected” Works

Here now was the case, that had once seemed so impressive to me in a mere fiction from a far distant age and land, literally reproduced in myself [. . .] should repeat within my own inner experience.

De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis, 168

If dreams “blossom anew” our past experiences, a figment of a fiction is “literally reproduced” in a reader, and internalized fictional exploits can “repeat within” one’s “own inner experience,” De Quincey moves beyond the slippage and manifoldness of even a palimpsestuous reading of memory and experience. De Quincey’s “inner experience” reproducing his memory (again, his unique recollection of Aladdin’s magician)88 resembles the “reproductive faculty of dreaming.” Moreover, De Quincey’s distinction of inner experience, as opposed to some external stimuli, reinforces the repetitious, palimpsestic layering generated by purely interior activity, a type of enveloping and branching that occurs by remembering, or re-inscribing the membrane. Re-reproduction, problematic since Plato argued the illusory—and elusory—execution of

87. Each successive chapter advances these concerns; Part II addresses system, temporality, and virtuality.

88. See discussion in my Introduction.
mimesis in representing the world, finds added complications with rendering in text the experience of memory, which is itself conceived of as a text.

In his Introductory Notice to *Suspiria de Profundis*, De Quincey initiates a metadiscussion of narrative that introduces the “law” and “form” of his “former *Confessions*” as an evident compositional guide for *Suspiria de Profundis* (131). De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821) achieves a scientific yet confessional report on his own case study of the experiences that expose and exemplify dreaming properties and the functions of the dreaming apparatus (the events also contribute to factors culminating in his opium addiction). The related subjects of both his ‘confessional’ essays, as he explains them, aim to examine dreams and the dreaming faculty. *Suspiria*, however, re-presents and embodies the experiences of the dreaming faculty, particularly its organization of related entries, grafting and hybridizing the phenomena of his dream-scenery.

Autobiographical in content that echoes other portions of De Quincey’s oeuvre, *Suspiria*’s further confessions certainly invite appreciation informed by biographical events outside its parameters. Yet, to do so risks dissolving its elements into tangential anecdotes or footnotes for other works among De Quincey’s collection—something perhaps of which De Quincey himself is guilty. In “dismembering *Suspiria*,” for revision and expansion of its various section, Lindop notes, “by pillaging the text for its autobiographical material,” De Quincey “rendered [. . .] impossible” his “continued promise that he would append a satisfactory version of *Suspiria* to the revised *Confessions*.,” 89 For Lindop, this suggests *Suspiria* as “an undefined repository for all [of De Quincey’s] more fantastical prose.” 90 To adopt Derrida’s adage, “there is

nothing outside the text” or “there is no outside-text” for appreciating the moments *Suspiria* (if not De Quincey) links together. ⁹¹ Though Lindop finds De Quincey’s claims “some years later that not only ‘The Daughter of Lebanon’ but also ‘The English Mail-Coach’ had been intended for *Suspiria de Profundis* strain credulity,” he includes the latter in his edition ⁹² separate but successive to *Suspiria*, as if accepting some relationship between the pieces, though original publication in *Blackwood’s* was separated by several years. Nevertheless, just as subsequent revisions appealed to the idea of “Dream Echoes” of his experiences, ⁹³ the decipherment of these dreams and echoes, requires recognizing reverberations.

If De Quincey’s palimpsest-archive describes a text, and moreover memory as such a text, the only access is through the language of its layers: narration, remembrance, and inscription. The “human unity” compassing the fragmented texts on the manuscript and the indistinguishability of palimpsest layers assists in establishing an exteriority to the organizing principles of memory (and possibly consciousness) and narrative to represent, reproduce, and render its fluid fragments (175). Fragment does not necessarily denote incompleteness.

Alexander Regier in *Fracture and Fragmentation in British Romanticism* informs a difference in the “unfolding” process of fragmentation, which “by definition, resist totalization.” ⁹⁴ Rather, Regier directs the sense of “a break that is located on a structural level,” onto fracture. ⁹⁵ Though

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fracture and fragment can overlap, “fracture can be likened to a condition, part of a structure; fragmentation more to a process, an unfolding.”96 The unfolding, in De Quincey’s case, seems appropriate to his image of the palimpsest. Regier’s sense might couple with that of computing memory, both storage and access, as well as Derrida’s decision and division in différance. Due to the key role of narrative and language in relating dreams and memory, and perhaps primarily in appreciation of De Quincey’s sense of linguistic and literary properties, the challenge becomes one of temporarily cordoning off the essay to puzzle out its cohesive components, and perhaps, the spaces or points between them, by engaging in the dialectic process of unfolding and producing the synergy of the whole work.

**Palimpsestic Fragments and Palimpsestuous Collections**

Recent attention to Thomas De Quincey positions him firmly within scholarship’s recent cultural/critical turn toward celebrating the uncertain, the fragment, the scattered. Commenting on the most recent collection of De Quincey’s works, which includes hitherto unpublished or not since first serialized material,97 Joel Faflak lauds the efforts at inclusion, “his thought scatters itself and is scattered across the cultural landscape of the entire first half of the nineteenth century”98—a far cry from Darbishire’s attempts a century earlier, in De Quincey’s Literary Criticism, to gather the “scattered” matter through blatant efforts of expurgating digressions or “the abridgement of a tedious and technical argument,” selecting passages to be “disentangled


97. For the full publication history, see explanatory notes concerning *Suspiria*: 2001-2003, 126.

from their contexts.”99 Those who judged that “the subject fares no better than the style,”100 disregard the synergistic discourse. De Quincey offers “a kind of serialized, interdisciplinary pandemonium of thought,”101 that resonates today—a culture formed by the scattering of broadcast media at our fingertips. No longer a “disappointing” critical identity with a “heterogeneous mass of prose, in which passages of profound reflection alternate with pages of rambling, incoherent argument or trivial reminiscence,” De Quincey can be read apart from the axiology that found little relevance in juxtaposition, wherein, “pieces of serious and subtle criticism lie bedded in matter whose interest is long since dead, or whose values belongs to a lower plane.”102 The critique inadvertently speaks directly to De Quincey’s palimpsest, which defends De Quincey against such selective appreciation. De Quincey finds appreciation in having rendered in his works a “profoundly indeterminate nature.”103 The title most indicative of Thomas De Quincey’s corpus, Suspiria de Profundis, manifests the key features and offers a microcosm of his works and a crystallization of his philosophies.

Perhaps because scholarship accepts Suspiria de Profundis as both a singular and plural entity, an essay or series, makes the work the most suitable medium for the matter. Suspiria is, according to Thomas de Quincey, a sequel to his earlier Confessions of an English Opium-Eater. Published serially in 1821 and as a single volume in 1822, his first Confessions model a similar pattern, of content rather than form, for the sequel. First appearing in 1845, and subtitled, “Being

a Sequel to the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater,” the fragmentary sequel was serialized in the Spring and Summer editions of Blackwood’s Magazine. De Quincey later added and altered the content for his collected works (a feature not singular to Suspiria), while still more material awaited inclusion until posthumous publications. More still were intended, either unwritten or lost. The pair of confessions have seen a long history of being published together, though the contexts of Suspiria often vary. The fluidity of its contents offers interconnected portions similar to the approach Margaret Russett proffers in De Quincey’s Romanticism: Canonical Minority and the Forms of Transmission: Russett’s “intertextual fragments” in her selected “dispersion of focus” on De Quincey is an approach that “substitutes involuted analysis for extensive view.” For now, the cursory sense of involute suffices: something curled up, complicated, abstruse. Once again the palimpsest seems an appropriate image. Russett’s seminal approach, that “constitutes both more and less than a synechdoche of De Quincey’s achievement,” underscores the recent critical recognition and appreciation of his fragmentary and intertextual style. Suspiria de Profundis exemplifies this type of compositional plasticity and literary modernity.

104. In the Prefatory Notice to the New and Enlarged Edition of 1856, De Quincey claims that inclusive to Suspiria de Profunds was the plan for, “a succession of some twenty or twenty-five dreams and noonday visions, which had arisen under the latter stages of opium influence,” in which “Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow,” “rehearse or prefigure their course;” located in: Thomas De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Selected Essays. ed. David Masson (New York: A.L Burt, 1856).


106. In the following chapter, Chapter Two, I detail the extensive background of involute(s) and involution, the central concern of this dissertation, to fully explores first De Quincey’s coining of it and secondarily applying it as a methodology.

The greatest and most frequent portion or “little paper” (in De Quincey’s terms) separated (rather than “implausibly” omitted) is Suspiria’s Part II, or, “The English Mail-Coach,” which De Quincey admits, “according to [his] original intention, formed part of the ‘Suspiria de Profundis.’” For a momentary purpose” (and likely monetary) De Quincey “did not scruple to detach” and “to publish it apart.” For that reason alone, it finds inclusion in the later portions of this project. De Quincey, in his collected works, includes an explanatory notice, making the case for his “original design,” leaving it to “the reader to judge how far this design, is kept in sight through the actual execution.” De Quincey’s appreciation of the distance between authorial intention and the text is quite in line with post-modern critical sentiments. His nearly Foucauldian claim is that the author is not a final authority but an historical function in the conversation between the text and readers. Having been surprised by his contemporary critics, who “deliberately in print, professed their inability to apprehend the meaning of the whole, or to follow the links of the connection between its several parts,” De Quincey redirects his readers to a type of reading for design and pattern recognition among links that can detach, allowing pieces to stand a-part yet all the while retain a place in a whole. The role of reception and readership (even critique) is one of vital participation in De Quincey’s palimpsest as well as his appreciation of memory and texts.


109. Thomas De Quincey, Memorials: and Other Papers. Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1856, xii. These explanatory notes to the American publication of De Quincey’s selected writings offers insights on not only his sense of textual reproduction, but also compositional or “design” fluidity—and also critical and readerly reception.

110. De Quincey, Memorials, xii.

111. De Quincey, Memorials, xii.

112. De Quincey, Memorials, xii.
Presumably, *Suspiria* is *whole* even with a part missing, making the more accurate translation of the basic gestalt principle quite apt: the whole is *other* than the sum of its parts. Russett’s *synecdochal* reading or the relational palimpsestuous reading is not only permissible but necessary for the types of textuality that are palimpsestic or synecdochal. De Quincey invokes the types of meaning-making found within in the links or connections of the larger woven pattern, in the spaces of the literary puzzle, a gestalt or *corpus* consisting of several *parts*. De Quincey’s sense of archive is rather Derridean and extends to his body of works. Derrida, in analyzing the etymology of archive ("archē, we recall, names at once *commencement* and the *commandment"*) in *Archive Fever*, arrives at the sheltering relationship of the archon, a merger and separation between the shelter and the person sheltering, only to arrive at a blurring of the objects, person, and place. The “indeterminate” sense or “notion” of the archive to which Derrida alerts us returns back to the object. Relatedly conflated, the palimpsest-archive that De Quincey presents redirects appreciating the archive of his works with understanding the archive of the mind.

The fluidity of parts or fragments that are encoded to be recalled as a certain serial plastic whole resembles, remarkably, the fragmentation of files within the random access memory of computers. Yet, that modern process suggest an arbitrariness that the archive, both Derrida’s and De Quincey’s, will not permit: “In an archive, there should not be any absolute dissociation, any heterogeneity or secret which could separate (secernere), or partition, in an absolute manner,”

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notes Derrida,\textsuperscript{116} echoing De Quincey. De Quincey prefigures ways of thinking and organization that, while typical of the digital age, adhere to “the archontic principle of the archive [. . .] a principle of consignation, that is, of gathering together.”\textsuperscript{117} Though he perceived “The English Mail-Coach” (and perhaps each part of \textit{Suspiria}), “as sufficiently intelligible even when dislocated from its place in a larger whole,” he recognizes that he “may not be an indifferent and neutral judge in such a case,” being, himself, “little able to understand where the difficulty lies, or to detect any lurking obscurity, as those critics found themselves to unravel [his] logic.”\textsuperscript{118} De Quincey’s empowering role of readership, of shifting meaning-making, as well as his post-modern embrace of “dislocation” and fragmentary cohesion, are just some possible explanations for his recent critical popularity. The challenge he sets forth pervades all his works: “to unravel [his] logic.” Certainly, intentionality is pointless, or as Lindop suggests aptly, for De Quincey, “attempts to discover [De Quincey’s] intentions are probably misguided.”\textsuperscript{119} Lindop elaborates that, “Although De Quincey sketched out two plans for \textit{Suspiria} [. . .] neither of these outlines need be taken very seriously, for De Quincey never wrote to a predetermined plan preferring to make decisions about both form and content as he went along.”\textsuperscript{120} As with Reiger’s \textit{unfolding}, De Quincey’s sense in \textit{unravelling} the logic, (perhaps the compositional form following the law of the work), suggests dislocation of parts to (re-)locate the relational links. His logic is indeed \textit{analogic}. One sense of the logic De Quincey’s palimpsest offers is through analogy—his

\begin{footnotes}
  \footnotetext[116]{Derrida, 1998, AF, 3.}
  \footnotetext[117]{Derrida, 1998, AF, 3.}
  \footnotetext[118]{De Quincey, \textit{Memorials}, xii.}
\end{footnotes}
memory excels due to “the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies [. . .] like lightning from one topic to another” (153). Analogy’s organizational relationships network memories, for the inscriber, archivist, and reader: operations in tandem with and tethered to that of experiencer, recollector, and narrator. Analogic, palimpsestic archives offer a useful figure for De Quincey’s compositional cohesion.

Organization by Analogy

Analogy, especially in the manner with which De Quincey invokes the concept, establishes relational meaning as a fundamental principle for the interconnectedness of memory, experience, and narrative. Synechdoche and metaphor are the most relevant figures of speech for capturing the nuances of relational meaning-making beyond analogy. The micro-macro associations or part-for-whole relationship of synecdoche resembles relativistic co-existence on a vertical axis—not unlike the caduceus, the figure De Quincey invokes for connecting the composition and content of his narrative (ultimately interwoven with memory). Jerome McGann delineates similar characteristics concerning exchange along corresponding trajectories when discussing metaphor in *Towards a Literature of Knowledge*; the use of metaphor in the communicative matrix of text and reader is *dialectic*, aiming for a resolution that merges and synthesizes. 121 His distinct sense of metaphor has completely different application among other theorists, particularly in Lacanian psychoanalysis. 122 In McGann’s sense of metaphor, De

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Quincey offers textuality that coexists whether dislocated as separate parts or located as part of larger work. A text, for De Quincey, engages in dialectic exchange between its constituent parts. Yet, De Quincey credits analogies with his mnemonic acuity. The relationship between analogy and metaphor, as figures of speech, is worth considering. Metaphor collapses or effaces the comparative relationship obvious in analogy. Metaphor’s meaning is similar to the palimpsestic archive’s nodes of organizational centers and relies on interpreting the invisible links or silences in a network of meaning-making. So while De Quincey may first compare the palimpsest to the human brain, he crafts a qualified immemorial palimpsest archive as the metaphor, with revised and perfected characteristics. It is this metaphor, his fantasy of the perfect palimpsest archive that offers a clear conceptual metaphor for memory and textuality.

For cognitive science, a conceptual metaphor presents an idea, typically one perceptually based, in relation to another. This image, for De Quincey it’s a palimpsest, or conceptual domain, provides a coherent organization constituent elements of the source and the target to which it is applied, both grounded in De Quincey’s personal experience, including space, time, motion, and other sensory or embodied events. Conceptual domains offer the imagery for metaphoric expression, hence all the associated meanings for palimpsests—which De Quincey rewrites and idealizes in relation to one another. Analogical reasoning and inferences rely on conceptual domains and the networks of conceptual metaphors underlying metaphoric expressions that render linguistic schemas. The unstated collation of meaning in the metaphors De Quincey invokes, including the palimpsest, requires deciphering or retracing the underlying


relationships. De Quincey appeals to analogy to explain the efficacy of his memory, implicates analogy in the associative organization of memory, and, ultimately, underscores the importance of analogy, and metaphor, in his own writing.

The guiding principle or “logic” De Quincey locates in his work resembles the new ways of thinking, perceiving, and feeling Deleuze underscores as philosophy, distinguishing it from science or art (and literature).125 In What is Philosophy? Deleuze and Guattari develop a philosophical triumvirate: concepts, percepts, and affects—newness for all of which are requisite for the infinite of creative movement of the philosophical concept: “As whole it is absolute, but insofar as it is fragmentary it is relative.”126 Suspiria de Profundis provides new philosophical concepts possessing such creative movement. De Quincey explores new concepts while simultaneously demonstrating their influence on his perception; the palimpsest-archive of the mind demands his particular senses of textuality and materiality for experience(s). His rendered narrative produces or affects those very concepts. Suspiria exemplifies what Deleuze and Guattari explain of the relationship between concept and event: “The concept speaks the event, not the essence or the thing—pure Event, a hecceity, an entity.”127 De Quincey’s personal or confessional narratives within both Suspiria and his Confessions build a type of empirical evidence for what otherwise forms a treatise on memory amid his memoirs of opium-enhanced dreaming. His philosophy includes his theory of memory’s structural behavior and the role of


126. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, What Is Philosophy? trans. Hugh Tomlinson, Graham Burchill, (London: Verso, 2015), 21. And additionally, Deleuze and Guattari define—in ways that speak to the qualities of interest to De Quincey—the concept as an entity: “It is infinite through its survey or its speed but finite through it movement that traces the contour of its components” (21).

what he calls the “dreaming faculty” in accessing the deep or obscured, “the shadowy” (188). De Quincey’s philosophy, whether he explicitly recognizes it as such or not, guides *Suspiria de Profundis* (including *The English Mail-Coach*). Undercurrents of philosophical and metaphysical influences certainly pervade his thought. The “logic” in the strictest sense is De Quincey’s attempts, not directly at science or philosophy, but rather at general inquiry based on abductive reasoning—to utilize Charles Sanders Peirce’s sense. Abduction, according to Peirce, is “the process of forming explanatory hypothesis,” locating “the only logical operation which introduces any new idea,” or basically, “all the operations by which theories and conceptions are engendered.” De Quincey examines his own ‘case study’ of memory and dreams—a study equally dependent on examining his compositional and narratological elements.

De Quincey addresses compositional logic in terms of the “law” of the narrative. When he discusses his prior or “original *Opium Confessions*” in the Introductory Notice to *Suspiria de Profundis*, he offers a rather modern sense of the link between message and medium, which underscores more than genre conventions: “the law of the work” is “the principle which determined its form” (131). Besides recognizing Genette’s sense of *structural synthesis*, De Quincey seems to be conducting a thematic analysis of his earlier work. The *object* or “purpose” of his *Confessions* is vital to the *law* of the essay. De Quincey claims, his “*Opium Confessions* were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself; and the

128. He refers to the “shadowy” several times; see additionally: 129 and 143. The full quotation I refer to also expresses items of note concerning reading, archive, and excavation: “THE Oxford visions, of which some have been given, were but anticipations necessary to illustrate the glimpse opened of childhood, (as being its reaction.) In this SECOND part, returning from the anticipation, I retrace an abstract of my boyish and youthful days so far as they furnished or exposed the germs of later experiences in worlds more shadowy” (188).

outline of the work travelled in this course” (131). Foremost is “displaying the faculty itself,” rather than isolated dreams. Display of the faculty includes its functioning. Moreover, he refers to this as, “the reproductive faculty of dreaming” or “the faculty of dreaming splendidly” (131, 130). The dreaming faculty develops past experiences, memories. *Suspiria de Profundis* examines the “early events in [his] life [that] had left a weakness in one organ which required (or seemed to require) that stimulant” (131). De Quincey generates his understanding of the dreaming faculty by studying his own experience with opium-intensified dreams, opium having enhanced the faculty’s general functions. In turn, opium’s effects expose for him key factors of dreams and a means to study the faculty’s functioning.

As the brain and memory are palimpsest-archive-esque entities, dreams repeat childhood episodes but also include “growths and fructifications from seeds at that time sown” (134). In this sense the core memories resemble the “predetermined centres” of the archival organizational principles of human “harmony” (175). Later developments “gather about” associations, cores, centers, or scrolled vellum. De Quincey’s primary purpose to display this faculty, not solely the dream content “developed,” but the dreaming process and its function is a synthesis of its structure and organization (134). How he displays the faculty and of what the faculty consists concern him as he undertakes his sequel—shared concerns of this present analysis. From the narrative experiment itself a model of cognition emerges.

Dreaming and memory, reflected in his composition, are always and already engaged in interpretation and aesthetics, or reproduction. Offshoots, generated and generational growth and fructifications direct both forward and back, to the shared point of the readerly imprint. Keenly, De Quincey suggests that “the outline of the work,” narrative’s representation or “displaying” of its subject (the dreaming faculty), followed the purpose and “travelled in this course”—however,
“precisely in the inverse or regressive order” (131). His re-production or re-presentation of the mind seems informed by his awareness of narrative and writing as a construction: “The work itself opened with the narration of my early adventures. These, in the natural order of succession, led to the opium as a resource for healing their consequences; and the opium as naturally led to the dreams” (131). Much as the palimpsest invokes particular senses of organization and structure, De Quincey alerts his reader, his critic, and even his own selves (archivers, interpreters, readers) to the relationship between structure and purpose, particularly a cyclicality and recursion similar to the vellum scroll. Yet, here, De Quincey recognizes a purposeful agent propelling his work: a remember-er, narrator, compositor.

The faculty, complementing his composition on it, is one of retrograde motion. Similar to the arcane palimpsest there is co-operative dialogue between past and present, between layered events, texts. While clarifying the cause-effect relationship, he suggests a transparency to his compositional aims: “but in the synthetic order of presenting the facts, what stood last in the succession of development stood first in the order of my purposes” (131). Composition synthetically negotiates purpose and means, “object” and subjects, requiring a retrospection and revelation of “facts” into a “natural order of succession.” He realizes his objectives run counter to the chronology of events, yet correspond to the “synthetic order” of re-collecting or re-membering.

Dreams repeat the past with similar retrospection and cycling backward. In Derrida’s archive, he explains the archive as hypomnesic: “if there is no archive without consignation to an external place which assures the possibility of memorization, of repetition, of reproduction, or of reimpersion,” Derrida posits, “then we must also remember that repetition itself, the logic of repetition, indeed the repetition compulsion, remains, according to Freud, indissociable from the
death drive. And thus from destruction.”

In this sense the archive pervades each level of text in De Quincey, even dreams.

In the act of writing, De Quincey discovers the role of form in meaning-making. As McGann notes, “the act of writing has thoroughly materialized and socialized the field of the imagination’s activity […] a dynamic interchange between various parties each of whom plays some part in the total transaction.” The material palimpsest, its textuality influencing De Quincey’s understanding of the palimpsestic brain and palimpsestuous memory, either has impacted or been generated from his philosophical outlook on structures and organization, particularly that of the literary and textual. Besides the structure and organization of memory (and the brain), the experience is vital to De Quincey’s representation.

Section 3: Caduceus in Narrative

The faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of the heart, aided by a slight defect in my eyes, grew upon me at this time. And I recall at the present moment one instance of that sort, which may show how merely shadows, or a gleam of brightness, or nothing at all, could furnish a sufficient basis for this creative faculty.

De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis, 148

The viewer-De Quincey, a type of Derridean specter-archivist, locates a useful generative aspect or organizing principle in perception, even with a “slight defect”—or perhaps due to it. The “grouping” together or “faculty of shaping images […] out of slight elements” seems a perfect explanation of the gestalt system of reification, in which gaps or spaces in information


are generated to constitute the missing information in a visual stimulus. The resulting composite image, De Quincey points out, derives from such fleeting stimuli as “shadows,” “a gleam,” “or nothing at all.” Certainly this seems akin to the delireium of reading that Derrida puns by merging to read (the French lire) with delirium, an argument for delirious or hallucinatory reading experiences which later scholarship on reading practices advance toward the dynamics of reading.\(^{132}\) De Quincey recognizes the cognitive processes at work in meaning-making within the gaps or negative space between signifiers, images, memories. The conflated space of the palimpsest permits intertextual discourse and relational reading as do the spaces of communion between reader and text. Here, a mental faculty has active agency in “grouping” images to take shape in the void of the middle, rather than examining post hoc the pieces that “gather about” the “predetermined centres” organizing the memory archive. The faculty of shaping images out slight elements, of creatively completing a meaningful image out of partial visual stimuli is not only a useful one for compensating for perception, it reinforces the symbiosis between structure and organization. Moreover, it traces the importance of visual images in De Quincey’s philosophy and also the role of observer to perceive negative spaces as meaningful connections for the larger picture or network of meaning, particularly in language.

\(^{132}\) Andrew Bennett, in his Introduction to Readers and Reading, crystalizes the moment in which different literary approaches merge on the dynamic processes of reading: “Reading may be understood in terms of what we might call the ‘trance of reading’ – ‘trance’ as in transition or transit, transference, transposition, translation, transformation, transgression and, finally, entrancement. In the trance of reading, the identity of the reading subject is itself unstable, yet to be determined or constituted in the ‘experience’ of reading. In its most extreme form, the trance of reading would involve forgetting one’s surroundings, being ‘lost in a book’ – in what [Maurice] Blanchot calls ‘fascination’ of reading and what Derrida [(1979, 94) quoting Blanchot] refers to, in a portmanteau neologism, as delireium” (12); for complete context see: Andrew Bennett, Readers and Reading. (1995; repr., New York: Routledge, 2013). Rather than complete loss of self or total consciousness, De Quincey implies subprocesses continue imprinting experiences—both conscious and unconscious; this would extend to inscribing the memory-text and also re-inscribing the literary text as one reads it.
The Whole Narrative Course: How Merely Shadows

As with the brain/memory, De Quincey co-opt another visual figure as his own heuristic tool, now, for narrative. The similarities between visual figures—palimpsest and caduceus—also reflect the similarities his narrative is meant to have with the subjects depicted. De Quincey redefines memory, from the manifold and discursive text to its library-archive wherein associative organizing proliferates juxtaposed meaning further. De Quincey’s narratives engage memory but also the proliferation memory finds in distinct but interrelated systems of textuality: dreams. The caduceus is related to the palimpsest, and even perhaps a composite of the qualities De Quincey’s conception retains. A figure consisting of interrelated parts, De Quincey’s caduceus is a symbol contingent on linguistic and literary properties, the relationship between structure and organization, the semantics of narrative and cognition.

Suspiria functions with a recursion similar to Confessions, a related yet separate rendering of dreaming and memory. No longer concerned with the opium experiences, De Quincey focuses on the formative events that surface in his opium dreams. “Whereas Confessions is narrative and diachronic, Suspiria is a hybrid between narrative and various symbolic episodes that offer synchronic versions of the self,” according to the psychoanalytic reading Joel Faflak offers in Romantic Psychoanalysis: The Burden of the Mystery. Faflak’s survey of the “latter sections” of Suspiria argues they, “stand outside the experimental to imagine a radically contingent and literary apparatus within which to anatomize a subject self-


134. Faflak includes a survey of each section included in the posthumous versions of Suspiria as well as the changes in titles. I remain committed to the original publications—simply for the sake of the parameters of this project—even though I include “The English Mail-Coach.”
analyzed by the doubles, shadows, and phantoms of his own psychic interiority.” The added complication, which the caduceus’s form—co-opted from the palimpsest—seems insightful of, is that interiority is also externalized and the self is manifold.

Though De Quincey applies the caduceus to his *Confessions of An English Opium-Eater*, its relevance to *Suspiria de Profundis* is perhaps even more striking. The ancient symbol of a curious double helix design certainly demonstrates narrative trajectory in a way that orders his episodic material, but only through the ordered chaos of its ornamental digressions—perhaps even then an over-simplification of “displaying” or re-presenting the systems of memory (131). The description and extended imagery of the caduceus focus his study on the sequence surrounding his sister Elizabeth’s death: “an intolerable grief” that De Quincey recognizes as “a ‘passage’ in childhood” (133, 134). His use of quotations signals his awareness of it as a “trial” into adulthood but the condensation of meaning in “passage” is a verbal pun on the euphemism of death, doubling his ordeal with his sister’s passing. De Quincey both “prefix[es]” this account and “rehears[es] in extenso the particulars of that case in childhood” (134). He also acknowledges the reflection of himself as the adult as part and yet apart from those of himself as the child: “An adult sympathizes with himself in childhood because he is the same, and because (being the same) yet he is not the same. He acknowledges the deep, mysterious identity between himself, as adult and as infant [. . .] and yet, […] he feels the differences between his two selves” (133). The parallel selves, tethered and mirrored, must work together to represent the instances he aims to relate: “these facts move through a wilderness of natural thoughts or feelings; some in the child who suffers; some in the man who reports” (134). This representation, however,

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adheres to the law and form relationship, a structural synthesis of content and its narratological rendering, De Quincey already established.

Externalized memory technics define De Quincey’s sense of brain’s storage capacity and enduring imprints which he must excavate. For Faflak’s psychoanalytical reading, “Suspiria’s lyric condensation and allegorical obscurity sublate interminability through a bricolage if heterogeneous psychic episodes—some autobiographical, some theoretical, some apocalyptic—which the visionary sweep of the subject across the genealogy of his disparate parts.” Yet, these disparate parts are layered within the texts of memory and dreams, to which De Quincey must play the role of reader/recollector and speaker/narrator. De Quincey’s project in Suspiria de Profundis is to render the properties of the dreaming faculty through language and narrative—yet this process occurs through De Quincey engaging in studying his own experience within the methodology he outlines.

Palimpsestic form and palimpsestuous intertextuality are certainly at work in De Quincey’s narrative and the caduceus reflects this. The destabilized linearity, conflated dialectic layers of the palimpsest, are exposed to a hierarchy that elevates the conscious mind, the immediately visible layers, with the hidden depths of deep memory and dreams. He stabilized his schema with the brain as an externalized storage entity, a library-archive of palimpsests, adhering to human unity’s predetermined organization: “And the dreaming organ, in connection with the heart, the eye and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind” (130). Memory, the archivist, the remember, navigates with a discernment in active remembering (aligned with conscious state) that dreams do not

require, dredging deep (unconscious) layers that seemed buried. The memories haunting De Quincey’s dreams involve the death and burial of his sister.

De Quincey’s opium use becomes a magnifier of an injured psyche, the “consequences” of his “early adventures” (131). The sequel must answer the question, “Was it opium, or was it opium in combination with something else, that raised these storms?” (134). The storms of opium-enhanced dreaming dredge the unconscious of its long-buried memories, “repeated, and ten thousand times repeated, by opium, for those who are its martyrs” (134). The repeating experiences of childhood become the subject and the content of his sequel, particularly the most grievous trauma: “It resulted that the terrific grief which I passed through drove a shaft for me into the worlds of death and darkness which never again closed, and through which it might be said that I ascended and descended at will, according to the temper of my spirits” (134). The shaft grief creates resembles not only an excavation site but echoes the core shape of the caduceus and its significant likening to the dreaming faculty: “The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy” (130). And such a trajectory, into the depths of memory, De Quincey conceives in his medium as well as mode: “Here, at the point where I have called a halt, the reader has reached the lowest depths in my nursery afflictions” (169). In drawing attention to the section and publication break, De Quincey further acknowledges his attempt to have his reader journey through his re-presented psyche’s depths, through his dream’s reproductive powers, and through the experiences that repeat and blossom anew.

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137. De Quincey claims to view opium differently, no longer as a salve, adding: “The work itself opened with the narration of my early adventures. These, in the natural order of succession, led to the opium as a resource for healing their consequences; and the opium as naturally led to the dreams. But in the synthetic order of presenting the facts, what stood last in the succession of development stood first in the order of my purposes” (131).
The law and form of *Suspiria* further complicate the confluence of streams of chronology to assist in “displaying” or re-presenting the profound—all senses of the term apply—in memory. Beyond associating the concurrence of courses or the fathomless ocean with representing the mind, De Quincey posits, with thematic and semantic implications, the more provocative form of his narrative as a caduceus. It becomes clear that the arid stock of his subject does more than support the generative layers of ornament, his digressive representation of memories—after all, the form relates to the subject. De Quincey acknowledges that writing “must exhibit the law of the work; that is, the principle which determined its form.” Narrative is an act, consisting of both *affect* and *effect*.

**A Caduceus: Or A Gleam of Brightness**

From that point, according to the principles of art which govern the movement of these Confessions, I had meant to launch him upwards through the whole arch of ascending visions which seemed requisite to balance the sweep downwards, so recently described in this course. But accidents of the press have made it impossible to accomplish this purpose in the present month’s journal.

De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*, 169

The ease with which Thomas De Quincey recognizes the “purpose” and “art” of his new confessions, and more broadly of narrative, while maintaining the imagery he establishes for dream, his childhood afflictions, and the descent or rising, situates the conflation he also sees between himself and his readers. Certainly, “*Suspiria* resituates the dream, the unconscious, repetition, trauma and the primal scene within an aesthetic metapsychology, an interpretation of dreams,” which Falfak recognizes as, “literary and aesthetic rather than scientific.”138 Certainly

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as Faflak recognizes, “De Quincey’s decomposing body of dreams signifies a free-associating imagination that endlessly reproduces itself through the ‘myriad’ [...] associations of his unconscious.”\footnote{139 Faflak, 2008, \textit{Psychoanalysis}, 157.} Faflak further suggests this is “the pathology of a free-associating imagination [that] dehumanizes the \textit{Anthropos}.”\footnote{140 Faflak, 2008, \textit{Psychoanalysis}, 176.} But as with any interpretation, analysis must recognize the \textit{reader}. Far from an examination of free associations, De Quincey invests in excavating deep-rooted associations. Memory technics, even external ones are deeply humanizing—especially when they involve language and semantic exchange.

Whereas De Quincey, the rememberer, performed the role of reader, as narrator he has the added role of speaker. Separating the role of speaker from author, and bracketing momentarily the intentional fallacy, Foucault suggests: “If language expresses, it does so in so far as it is an imitation and duplication of things, but in so far as it manifests [...] the fundamental will of those who speak it.” (316)\footnote{141 Michel Foucault, \textit{The Order of Things}. (2002 [1966]; repr., New York: Routledge, 2012).} De Quincey selects the caduceus, coopts it, and merges meaning. The caduceus narrative, like the dreaming apparatus, grants access to the depths of memory, allowing the immortal sighs to grow in narrative tendrils. In \textit{De Oratore}, Cicero explains metaphoric speech as a tethered trajectory that orbits the words evoking the things themselves.\footnote{142 Markus Tullius Cicero, \textit{M. T. Cicero De Oratore: or, His Three Dialogues upon the Character and Qualifications of the Orator}. trans. William Guthrie. (Boston: R. P. & C. Williams, 1822). Of countless translations of \textit{De Oratore}, this, the First American Edition, shares a poetic turn of phrase suiting this discussion of De Quincey.} De Quincey applies the same movements of thought and mental exercise in the operations of memory. In addition to publication breaks and titled sections, the fragments also indulge in frequent digressions, as he refers to them, which further produces the effect of
memory’s system and the reproductive faculty of dreams. *Suspiria de Profundis* (and De Quincey) invite readers to apprehend the same quasi-sensory vividness of intensified dreaming.

The caduceus implicates De Quincey in a relationship with his reader. The shape of the caduceus does not simply represent De Quincey present and past, with all the relational memories associated with the ones he aims to narrate. Participation in reading, De Quincey imagines, is participatory: it means joining him in excavating his memories and dreams. With De Quincey’s sense of his own digressive style, Cicero’s sense of metaphoric functioning works well: “the hearer is drawn into a train of reflection, which carries him further than he should otherwise go, and yet not out of his way.”

“If an object has not a word appropriated to itself […] then we are obliged to use metaphors to express them;” Cicero further establishes in the classically foregrounding of the device that potent or “best chosen” metaphors “are applied to the senses, especially the seeing, which of all senses is the more exquisite […] they place in the eye of the imagination objects which otherwise it is impossible for us to see or comprehend.”

Metaphor, Cicero explains, is “the great ornament of language;” not only does De Quincey apply *ornamentation* to his revision of the caduceus, he invests in the interwoven properties of language Cicero expresses when cautioning that, “it is from the *metaphorical* that the *enigmatical* way of speaking arises; which last does not consist in words, but in periods; that is, a certain fabric of words.” And aside from traditional associations, the caduceus has the potential to invite similar generative shaping from the creative faculty. And, just as certain palimpsestic qualities require revision or substitution—the library/archive of perpetual

143. Cicero, *De Oratore*, III.xl.274.

144. Cicero, *De Oratore*, III.xl.274.

palimpsests—the narrative caduceus seems already impacted by metaphoric effect or a dynamic interchange between meanings, particularly in the alteration of its physical components. Language, furthermore, plays such a role with the tropes of metaphor and metonymy. The juncture of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, of semiotics and sociology, demonstrates the fundamental tool, or mechanism, analogical associations offer.

Lacan introduces the distinction between metonymy and metaphor into the linguistic concepts of both Saussure and Jakobson. Metonymy functions as combination or, adapting Freud, displacement whereas metaphor functions as substitution or condensation. Condensation is clearly at work in the caduceus. By invoking ideas in forms different from their original content, such as the caduceus, the psyche’s interplay crystalizes images to be both recognizable and certain objects unrecognizable to consciousness. The caduceus-narrative, therefore, presents content in a unknowable form, familiar material in an unfamiliar shape, to the point of potentially self-alienating the narrative from itself, in effect doubling it.

Through the experience of writing *Confessions*, De Quincey arrives at a conceptual metaphor for its form as well as one suitable to its subject:

I tell my critic that the whole course of this narrative resembles, and was meant to resemble, a *caduceus* wreathed about with meandering ornaments, or the shaft of a tree's stem hung round and surmounted with some vagrant parasitical plant. (135)

Appealing to the caduceus, De Quincey talks about several things at once. The caduceus invokes immediately Mercury’s staff and his key aspects. The caduceus is a short staff, sometimes winged, entwined by two snakes. De Quincey appeals to the caduceus not solely for its shape

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146. While wings do not feature here for De Quincey’s image, the sense of flight would be relevant for the circumstances of the remembrance initiating his coining of involutes (in detail later in Chapter Two), naming his mind’s flight heavenward during a trance induced during his secret viewing of Elizabeth’s body. This returns to Derrida’s sense of *délire*um (making her body a conceptual image/domain or text instigating De Quincey’s re-reading of it, experience, and memory).
and structure. The two-snake design has ancient and consistent associations with trade, eloquence, trickery, and negotiation, which De Quincey in effect rewrites by shifting the imagery of these snaking ornaments. More complex than two snakes, the wreathed and meandering vines overgrow their host plant, having “surmounted” the tree’s shaft to the point of obscuring the supporting core. The resemblance between the structure/organization of the caduceus and the dream apparatus cannot be overstated.

The implied or anticipated reader of Suspiria is an embodiment of De Quincey’s reading (and interpretation) of his own dreams. De Quincey indulges in some defense of his work that betrays key repetition in diction, and not solely through horticultural imagery. The horticultural description De Quincey provides in his invocation of the caduceus is just as important as his sense of the subject matter and its relationship to narrative. By replacing or surmounting the snakes, De Quincey avoids any confusion with Esculapius’s healing aspects—the narrative’s “reproductive” object is not about restoration. Hastening and excursion, perhaps even exchange, resonate more with the cyclical growth of the wreathing tendrils. It is through moments later in life that De Quincey glances the childhood experiences at the root of his memoir. Not just two but multiple returns to the “growths and fruitifications” of childhood experiences shape his narrative. His efforts never produce full restoration of a memory, but rather re-productions of remembrance (s), re-experiences. Each recollection must navigate and view through entangling layers of previous recollection.

Elaborating on the caduceus as a metaphor, he claims “the true object” of Confessions of an English Opium-Eater “is not the naked physiological theme” of addiction—“the murderous spear, the halbert”—but “those wandering musical variations upon the theme, those parasitical thoughts, feelings, digression, which climb up with bells and blossoms round about the arid
stock” (135). De Quincey suggests entering a system of discourse with a “surmounted” subject; the narrative is just as much the trappings as it is the anchoring topic (135). The whole course consists of both the subject-shaft and its “wreathed . . . meandering ornaments” or “wandering musical variations upon the theme.” Memory must wander the wreathed structure’s ever-meandering différance. Mercury\textsuperscript{147} evokes commerce and communications, which are apt for De Quincey’s vocation. The staff, an extension or tool of the trade, would correlate well to his writing. Other, less common patronages of Mercury offer unexpectedly apt effects for his metaphor of these two works in particular. The caduceus is distinct from the symbol adopted by medical professions, identified as the rod of Asclepius, with which it is often confused, that consists of the single snake wrapped around a pole. The caduceus of classical antiquity was said to wake the sleeping and send the awake to sleep. If applied to the dying, their death was gentle; if applied to the dead, they returned to life. The form of a caduceus seems even more appropriate for his sequel. The imagery carries directly onto the central childhood experiences surrounding the death of his sister, Elizabeth, and his realization of mortality.

Having already asserted the reflection of form into the law of writing, De Quincey’s caducean narrative invites analysis of symbolic (cultural) associations as much as the shape and his unique descriptions of its form. The unpredictable effect likens the form of his digressive style as well as the dreaming faculty to the structure of meandering ornaments of the staff, invoking both ancient revelatory art and liminal movement between the living and the world of the dead. This reinforces the associations the caduceus has with death.

The core memory, which he describes as the “suspension” of his mind, occurs when he surreptitiously views the body of his deceased sister Elizabeth in her bedchamber: “The particular case to which I refer in my own childhood was one of intolerable grief; a trial, in fact, more severe than many people at any age are called upon to stand” (133-4). Traditionally messages and communication included divination and Mercury’s role as a guide to the underworld also implies his position as a liminal figure, crossing the boundary between life and death. Associated with Hermes and later Mercury, the staff borne by heralds gains new meaning with the Roman guide of the dead. So this staff of the messenger-guide seems appropriate for his study of dreams and the imprints of his sister’s passing. The atmospheric imagery and terminology pervades his thoughts: “Those vast clouds of gloomy grandeur which overhung my dreams at all stages of opium, but which grew into the darkest of miseries in the last, and that haunting of the human face, which latterly towered into a curse—were they not partly derived from this childish experience?” (134). The sequence includes a network of signification: hearing her pained moans of illness and the nurse’s announcement of Elizabeth’s impending death, ascending a staircase to reach his sister’s bedchamber wherein her body has been lain; the first time he successfully enters and describes the light through the window cast on her face; his return trip thwarted by the locked door, and the final image of her coffin lowered into the ground.

Even this brief section of narrative sequence is interrupted several times with digressions including an imagined memory of a similar but nightmarish staircase in an unidentified novel.148

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The image set informs his approach to the memory through associated digressive memories—real or imagined—or episodes of experiences with similar visual echoes or afterimages, or, in Derrida’s “Freudian” archival sense, *inscriptions*.

**Digressions: Or Nothing At All**

Thoughts, feelings, digressions which [. . .] ramble away from it at times with perhaps too rank a luxuriance; but at the same time, by the eternal interest attached to the subjects of these digressions, no matter what were the execution, spread a glory over incidents that for themselves would be less than nothing.

*De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis*, 135

De Quincey arrives at a philosophy of memory while analyzing the synthetic construction metanarrative of reconstituting memory. Narrative further replicates, “with perhaps too rank a luxuriance,” in its very attempt to render the reproductive dreaming faculty and the revelations of dreaming. As with the palimpsest-archive, there is an organizing principle, though, it is textually-based, “by the eternal interest attached to the subjects of these digressions.” The dimensions he adds with “digressions” assist to explain rendering narrative through lateral trajectories. As with all metaphor, the distinct and seemingly disparate subject matters mingle. “Incidents that for themselves would be less than nothing”—a peculiar mathematic feat—have meaning generated in their gathering about central subjects. As with dreams manifesting content that is relevant, though perhaps not marked by consciousness, analogy in memory brings relational memories and readings into conversation. The relationship between structure and organization becomes more relevant. “Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives,” Derrida insists reinforces, linking the *predetermined* centers of narrative with the
memory-archive that gathers them. For Derrida the process begins with the printed impression on the exergue, though successive impressions are part of the archive or palimpsestic encrusting of memory. De Quincey’s appeal to the palimpsest in conjunction with the caduceus relays the same concern for content and medium.

Co-determination adds the vital doubling of the law/form and organization/form paralleled in De Quincey’s memory and narrative—but also the complex images he selects consciously or unconsciously. But, as Derrida warns of impressions, “we have only an impression, an insistent impression through the unstable feeling of a shifting figure, of a schema, or of an in-finite or indefinite process.” Similar to condensation in dreams, the caduceus represents childhood memories of life and death, waking and dreaming, remembering and narrating. Note the agency he privileges in the vagrant parasitical plant and the contrast of the subject or the caduceus’s center and the surmounting ornaments: “The mere medical subject of the opium answers to the dry, withered pole, which shoots all the rings of the flowering plants, and seems to do so by some dexterity of its own; whereas, in fact, the plant and its tendrils have curled round the sullen cylinder by mere luxuriance of theirs” (135). Continuing to speak horticulturally, the structural poetics in De Quincey’s appeal to the caduceus maintain key aspects of the palimpsest. Death links the caduceus with his subject matter in Suspiria; however, here he underscores the generative “luxuriance” of “the plant and its tendrils” that has curled round the “sullen cylinder” of their own deliberate dexterity. Significantly, the caduceus is also used as a symbol representing printing, again by extension of the attributes of Mercury (in this case associated with writing and eloquence). He further blurs the metaphoric distinction of the

narrative discourse. The “murderous spear, the halbert” is itself a “dry, withered pole,” “sullen cylinder,” suggests a stagnancy that is not present in the plant growing up around it. The ornaments are parasitic yet attractive, thriving bells and blossoms, while the theme is now “arid stock.” The effects of this trauma on his mental faculty remain ongoing in the mind and in rendering both the trauma and memory processes in narrative.

A phenomenology of reading underlies the analysis thus far of the poetics of memory for De Quincey. Umberto Eco, in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, builds off Ingarden’s literary application of Husserl’s theory, suggesting that texts are produced in the act of reading.\(^{151}\) Similarly, Wolfgang Iser proclaims that, “a text can only come to life when it is read, and if it is to be examined, it must therefore be studied through the eyes of the reader.”\(^{152}\) De Quincey adopts the role of such a reader, reading his memory-text and the experiences of his dream-texts. Without engaging phenomenology extensively, (there is further discussion in Chapter Two, in relation to involutes), Roman Ingarden’s distinguishing between autonomous and heteronomous objects seems vital.\(^{153}\) Literary texts are classified as heteronomous objects requiring a subject-object relationship, rather than autonomous objects with immanent properties that do not require consciousness for completion. Heteronomous objects possess a combination of immanent properties and properties attributed to them by


consciousness and therefore do not have full existence without the participation of consciousness. A text requires concretization or realization by a reader.\textsuperscript{154} Considering dreams as such heteronomous objects seems akin to articulating a dream as a vital step in psychoanalysis. Furthermore, the literary concept of an implied or encoded reader, an anticipated audience, prefigured within the text, seems particularly relevant to De Quincey as he bridges the role of reader-archivist and speaker-rememberer.

To advance the spaces of communal meaning-making it is key to locate the central image of the caduceus: the staff, the shaft, the tube, the pall, the void through which the archaeologist-archivist navigates. The reading and impulse Derrida notes in Freud pertains dually to De Quincey. Derrida views Freud—and the archive drive or, what De Quincey calls the ‘wants of the possessors’—as wanting, desiring “to be an archivist who is more of an archaeologist than the archaeologist [. . .] He wants to exhume a more archaic impression, he wasn’t to exhibit a more archaic imprint than the one the other archaeologists.”\textsuperscript{155} But this is an impulse that is both futile and false. Either, as examined earlier, the impression merges and discursively interconnects with the successive layers, or (perhaps and), requires the reading archivist-archaeologist to concretize the text through the reading process. Aware of this, the effort is false as well, for the archaeological-archivist realizes that to retrace the imprint is to lay another layer on the exergue: “an imprint that is singular each time, an impression that is almost no longer an


archive but almost confuses itself with the pressure of the footstep that leaves its still-living mark on a substrate, a surface, a place of origin.”\textsuperscript{156} The elusory impulse is one of unity, “an archive without archive, where, suddenly indiscernible from the impression is its imprint.”\textsuperscript{157} Ultimately, Derridan archive assists to understand the philosophy De Quincey locates in the relationship between memory and narrative rendering of it. Rather than something along the lines of current psychoanalytic readings, Derrida’s ‘Freudian archive’ recognizes proliferation of \textit{experiences} in the layers of the archive and inscription.

De Quincey’s caduceus narrative enables readers (and himself) to re-\textit{experience} the \textit{experiences} memory, particularly through the phenomena of dreams. Derrida recognizes unity in the act of re-inscription, a suspension of the moment: “In the instant when the printed archive is yet to be detached from the primary impression in its singular, irreproducible, and archaic origin. In the instant when the imprint is yet to be left, abandoned by the pressure of the impression” (97). This, for Derrida, is, “the instant of pure auto-affection, in the indistinction of the active and the passive, of a touching and the touched,”\textsuperscript{158} that resembles the rambling luxuriance of De Quincey’s ornamental digressions, surmounting the caduceus. The instance collapses the sense of material interaction with the archive, textual levels of writing, inscription, interpretation, reading, and reproduction.

Unlike \textit{Confessions of An English Opium-Eater, Suspiria de Profundis} embodies the form of a caduceus. The \textit{sighs from the depths} link interconnected dreams and episodes, presents its subject of—and with—ascending revelations, in relief, sighs that surface \textit{through} the meandering

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{156} Derrida, 1998, \textit{AF}, 97.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Derrida, 1998, \textit{AF}, 98.
\item \textsuperscript{158} Derrida, 1998, \textit{AF}, 97.
\end{itemize}
ornaments, vaster layers, depths of dreams and experiences of adulthood. The digressions and
growths, the caduceus’s ornaments, offer connections between intersections that resonate on
various levels. “And this is the condition of singularity, the idiom, the secret, the testimony,”
Derrida finds that, “the trace no longer distinguishes itself from its substrate. No longer
distinguishes between *themselves* . . . must be rediscovered—but this presupposes both memory
and the archive, the one and the other as the same, right on the same subjectile in the field of
excavation.”159 With external and material textuality and inscription as the foundational
properties of his conceptual metaphors, De Quincey stresses the plasticity of repetition, the
unwritten links of analogy based in language and signs. Narrative follows mental functions,
operating in distinctly different systems of memory. Before examining the relationship between
language and system, at its most basic, joining semiotics with information and systems theory
(Part II), the most fundamental *text* of De Quincey’s philosophy provides a template for a
methodology: the involute.

In many ways the most current technological memory aid to exhibit the layered
archivable text that *Suspiria* resembles, is the multiple save files of video games. Each a text, a
narrative remembrance, yet distinct in execution and iteration (or reading and speaking), the co-
existence of related yet separate save files catalogues experiences. Grounded in repetition and
difference, the video game itself models the phenomenology of reading and textuality present in
De Quincey’s philosophy. Even such a digital text possesses layers for examination: from
interface or inscription, mediation or medium, and interpretation or reading. At the center of De
Quincey’s philosophy is the most crucial image, the base inscription for each remembrance, of
memory and experience: the involute, a *concrete* object of experience. The involute is also

virtual; virtual in the sense of a digital text, in the associative gaps in analogy and metaphor, in the juxtaposed meaning on digressions in his narrative on memory. Most significantly, the involute recognizes the participatory work of consciousness in heteronomous objects while adding a rather Deleuzian sense to its virtuality—the virtual is not abstract or ideal but concrete, however, always ever-yet-to-be-actualized.¹⁶⁰ And the nomenclature of De Quincey’s term demonstrates his further interest in using the language of technology for analogies of experience as well as his philosophical and mathematical interests in the life of moments as artifacts existing in time and space.

Chapter Two: De Quincey’s Involutes and Experiences in Memory

Let me pause for one instant in approaching a remembrance so affecting and revolutionary for my own mind, and one which (if any earthly remembrance) will survive for me in the hour of death [. . .] And, recollecting it, often I have been struck with the important truth, that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects, pass to us as involutes (if I may coin that word) in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us directly, and in their own abstract shapes.

Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria De Profundis*, 142

Cited in the Oxford English Dictionary, Thomas De Quincey’s usage of *involutes* is considered “rare.” De Quincey’s definition is indeed the only source for the denotation, “something involved or entangled,” including solely his two citations, the latter from *Sketches from Childhood*: “one of those many important cases which elsewhere I have called involutes of human sensibility.” “Elsewhere” directs toward his coinage in *Suspiria de Profundis* but also indicates the pervasiveness of the idea, even to himself, in three significant domains: over the corpus of his writing, through the span of his exploring human sensibility, in the depths of his psychical world—or his cognitive semantics, the way he apprehends, through language, the world around him. A term ripe for his co-option, involutes for De Quincey provide a term he can both elaborate and simultaneously entangle with its other senses, as with caducean embellishments entwining around a core subject-shaft. Furthermore, *elsewhere* reinforces the parenthetical deferral, his subtle aside, to “coin that word,” *involutes*, when his own original sense relies heavily on pre-existing denotations. De Quincey’s co-option is a process of layered and discursive meaning, as if arising from palimpsestic structure and palimpsestuous interrelations. His nomenclature for experiential units, influenced by previous inscriptions and


162. *OED*, s. v. “involute, adj. and n.”. denotation: B.n.1. For my continuing discussion of the OED’s definitions and citations for “involute,” I refer to the specific alpha-numeric designation such as, in this case, B.n.1.
impacting future ones, may seem unexpected without knowledge of the disciplinary span of involutes’ other denotations. De Quincey’s coinage seemingly models linguistically the properties he establishes in his concept of involute experience.

The definition provided by the OED, “something involved or entangled,” avoids De Quincey’s specifics of “thoughts and feelings” and “concrete objects,” opting instead for the unspecified and inexact something. Rather than anything, something suggests a narrower albeit unknown entity. The choice betrays some difficulty in parsing De Quincey’s coining-passage. The simplified something (something of a swift solution), similarly as indirect as De Quincey’s elsewhere, implies objects, perhaps more so than the figurative or adjectival senses of involute. Listed as the first noun form (the adjective and its four denotations precede), De Quincey’s usage shares company with only one other noun form, from geometry: “A curve such as would be traced out by the end of a flexible inextensible string if unwrapped (being still kept stretched) from a given curve in the plane of that curve; the locus of a point in a straight line which rolls without sliding on a given curve.”

Restated, the typical rendering or example for drawing the involute of a circle is with a pencil tethered to a spool of thread, and in unwinding it, moving every element of arc along this rotating locus. Practical application of involutes includes gear mechanics, for notably locomotive valve gears, and also gears with interlacing teeth, aptly called involute gears, such as those found in time-pieces. The mathematic involute’s

163. OED, s. v. “involute,” B. 2. (n.)
164. The full-scale railway system in England arrived in the early years of the turn of the 1800s. For more history of the technology and the culture, see: Ian Carter, Railways and Culture in Britain: the Epitome of Modernity. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); and, Michael Freeman, Railways and the Victorian Imagination. (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999).
165. Earlier texts on this subject exist, however; for one useful text offering the applied geometry, see: George B. Grant, A Handbook on the Teeth of Gears, Their Curves, Properties, and Practical Construction: With Odontographs, for Both Epicycloidal and Involute Teeth, Rules for the Strength of Teeth, a Table of Pitch Diameters, and Much Other General Information on the Subject. (Boston: Grant, 1885).
calculative procedures are perhaps only a different class of abstraction from De Quincey’s noun. The mathematics adds to De Quincey’s conceptual understanding of his objects as ones determined through a frame of reference relational to other figures, shapes, and topographies.

De Quincey’s co-option of the involute follows from its pre-existing geometric bases. Evolving and involving describe the motion required either to roll a string round a circle or conversely unfurl a circle for measurement. 166 “Correlative to evolute n. and adj.,” the geometric noun 167 first appears in Charles Hutton’s Mathematic & Philosophical Dictionary from 1796, addressing that, “the involute of a cycloid, is also a cycloid to the former”—a sense related to the adjectival form of the earliest use, in 1661, by Robert Lovell, describing concholelogical or cockle patterning as, “turbinate, which are either involute, as the Nautilus . . . or oricular, as the Welke.” 168 The measurable involute develops from more general descriptions into a significant mathematical abstraction. Similarly, De Quincey extracts from real world objects concepts somewhat removed from them. De Quincey’s other key models and images (the vellum palimpsest and caduceus) lean toward cyclicality over linearity, tangential bifurcation over convergence, and expansive differentiation over simplification.


167. OED, s. v. “involute,” B. 2. (n.)

168. OED, s. v. “involute,” A. 2. (adj.). As a reference, the OED cites, usually abbreviated, A Compleat History of Animals and Minerals [sic], R. Lovell, Panzooruktologia : Sive, Panzoologicomineralogia. Or a compleat history of animals and minerals, containing the summe of all authors, both ancient and modern, galenicall and chymicall, touching animals, viz, beasts, birds ... and man, as to their place, meat, name, temperature, vertues, use in meat and medicine, description, kinds ... With the anatomy of man, his diseases, and their definitions, causes, signes, cares, remedies ... As also a history of minerals, viz, earths, mettals, semi-mettals, their naturall and artificiall excrements, salts, sulphurs, and stones, with their place, matter, names, kinds, temperature, vertues, use, choice, dose, danger, and antidotes. Al. (Oxford: Printed by Henry Hall, for Jos. Goodwin, 1661).
Involutes of human sensibility, De Quincey’s experiential units of feelings and thoughts imprinted into memory, rely on the geometric involute’s dimensional relations and structural properties. The mathematic rolling inwards extends to the sense of “nearly or wholly concealing” the axis of the spiral; when specifically concerning edges, the term appears in botanical descriptions,\footnote{169 \textit{OED}, s. v. “involute,” A.3. (adj.)} then extends toward anything “involved; entangled” or “hidden, obscure,” in the first adjectival listing dating back to 1669.\footnote{170 \textit{OED}, s. v. “involute,” A.1. (adj.)} The adjectival form, \textit{involted}, appears in these physical descriptions, as well as literary and artistic contexts. Yet De Quincey’s involutes remain tethered to real world objects even when separated from their original connections. He applies the abstracted senses of indirectness and entangling (“far more […] through […] compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us directly”) toward items he feels are equivalent phenomena: thoughts and feelings. Not abstractions nor “abstract shapes” for De Quincey, these intangibles are “compound,” “perplexed combinations,” and “\textit{concrete} objects,” which merge the mathematic figural relations with the wider descriptive range, from the narrowly literal to the broadly figurative.

De Quincey’s appeal to the \textit{abstract} geometrical involute complicates the abductive or abstractive procedure, returning thoughts and feelings into the state of \textit{concrete} objects. Direct application of involute calculations for proper and efficient cog-wheel functioning returns to the prevalence of technology on De Quincey’s thoughts and in the opening of \textit{Suspiria de Profundis}. Mechanized, interconnecting cogs are not involutes themselves; involutes determine the shape and spaces for cog-gear interlacing. The “involute figure or curve,” applicable “of a tooth in a cog-wheel,” predates the noun use that arrives amid differential equations with constant
coefficients (Leonard Euler 1734-9), Lagrange’s divergence theorem (1762), and Juriji Vega’s *Thesaurus Logarithmorum Completus* (1794). These principles relate to involute spirals—in many ways a two-dimensional representation resembling the three-dimensional caduceus.

The mathematics concerning such spirals branch into disciplinary areas vital to understandings of matter and space in addition to time, the progression marked by instruments with such mechanized clockworks as involute cogs. Involute spirals share a visual similarity but mathematic distinction from logarithm spirals. John Napier’s use of logarithms to simple calculations (17th century) brought about Leonhard Euler’s linking to the exponential function (18th century), and the computations for modern computer science. While not a perfect comparison, similarities exist between memory (storage and retrieval) in computer systems (software and hardware) and the human brain. A logarithm is the inverse operation to exponentiation—and notably, logarithms, like constant coefficients, are functions of calculus, invented by Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Though involute spirals and logarithmic spirals are different, they share common interests in quantifying motion, progression—related features of both narrative and memory central to De Quincey. Calculus is the mathematical study of continuous change, infinite sequences and series (differentials, rates of changes and slopes of curves) and integrals of functions (accumulation of quantities and areas under/between curves). These calculus principles apply toward geometric calculus and differential geometry. While his work avoids formulae, De Quincey remains concerned with the general principles. Geometry questions shape, form, size, relative positions of figures, and properties of space, established by Euclid, then influenced by Descartes and de Fermat.

Differential geometry is key in studying motion and aspects of general relativity: Einstein’s replacement of Newtonian gravitation (1678), an explanation of fixed locations in space, accounted for matter and energy (rather than gravity between masses) having the ability to curve space (and light) from otherwise straight paths or trajectories. From there relativity and special relativity, addressing the relationship between space and time (and the space-time continuum, also of interest to Henri Bergson), examines motion from different frames of reference, rather similar to the corresponding processes of recollection and narration in *Suspiria*.

De Quincey’s selects the *involute*—not vague *spirals*—for its distinct pattern, shared more so by the vellum scroll and the caduceus than from conchology.

*Circle Involute*
A logarithmic spiral, unlike the Archimedean or arithmetic spiral, forms a geometric progression. An involute spiral, however, distinguishes itself as having turns with constant separation distance, a spiral measured along rays from the origin which crosses the curve at right angles. The appearance is one of maintaining a steady, even pacing around the central point. Geometry’s primary contribution to an analysis of De Quincey’s involutes is the contingency of form and behavior. A secondary aid, though perhaps even more important, the properties of advanced structural relationships, for physics as well as for De Quincey, strictly define relative positions of figures and their properties in and within space.

Notably, the 1843 usage by Edgar Allan Poe, an avid reader of De Quincey’s, in *Murders in the Rue Morgue* suggests, akin to De Quincey’s, that the mathematics of the period pervade their denotations: “The possible moves [in chess] being not only manifold but involute, the chances of such oversights are multiplied.”\(^{173}\) Poe’s more directly mathematical usage helps underscore a vital profoundness of De Quincey’s coinage. Involute, here, seemingly exceeds or further complicates manifoldness. Poe’s sense, similar to the Nautilus, reinforces the pattern of growth in nature celebrated by the mathematician Leonardo Fibonacci, whose pattern of numbers, each as the sum of the two previous, became recognized even in architecture, as “the golden spiral” (based off the ancient Golden Rectangle), a special type of logarithmic spiral at the juncture of science and art. Multiplication’s cognate *multiplicity* will become, decades after both Poe and De Quincey, a correlative term for manifoldness branching into philosophy and physics. The manifold sense of space and surfaces that Poe figuratively supposes as possibilities,

\(^{173}\) *OED*, s. v. “involute,” A.1. (adj.)
perhaps even group theory, which are “not only manifold but involute,” or entangled, suggests
the advent of non-Euclidean geometry’s acceptance in the nineteenth century.

The involute is both structure and behavior, organizational properties creating a matrix
for modern theory and ways of thinking in both time and space. Specialized areas of geometry, eventually complicate Euclidean geometry or parabolic geometry of surfaces and spaces: superseding Euclid’s parallel postulate is one of non-intersection with infinitely many lines, due to various curvatures in spatial properties. Bernard Riemann’s differential geometry enables modern physics and metaphysics, including Einstein’s general theory of relativity by permitting gravitational distortions, and, in turn, Henri Bergson’s theory of time and consciousness, duration or durée. Manifold space implicates manifold time. De Quincey is not developing a full philosophy of mathematics, as does Kant, with whom he takes a great interest; however, De Quincey’s involute suggests a vital interface between modern science and philosophy. Kant influences De Quincey, particularly in his preoccupation with synthesis, representation of phenomena, and the concept of a schema. Kant’s sense of the manifold in time and intuition establishes a unique approach to unities, especially those concerning consciousness, namely subjective, objective, and apperceptive unities. Something akin to embedding new data into preexisting contexts, or apperception, De Quincey’s involute offers a schema of the (mental/caducean/palimpsest) axial vortex surrounded by layers of systems and interplaying forces. De Quincey’s cyclical interface demonstrates the self as a radial zone of gyrating attraction and repulsion, of undercurrents surfacing and submerging.

174. Relevant areas include spherical geometry, elliptic geometry (curve toward), and hyperbolic geometry (curve away, also referred to as Lobachevsky-Bolyai-Gauss geometry); for additional material on the geometric forms, see: J. Stillwell, Sources of Hyperbolic Geometry. (Providence, RI: Amer. Math. Soc., 1996); and, J. W. Anderson, Hyperbolic Geometry. (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1999).
De Quincey’s coining of involutes is contingent upon involutes. The operation of language itself directs his preoccupation with the nomenclature of involutes. A Bahktinian appreciation of language points to its multivoicedness or polyvocality in re-appropriation of words, language, discourse. When Jacques Derrida explains Edmund Husserl, in *Introduction to the Origin of Geometry*, he anchors both their interests in the phenomenology of language, or, rather, the problem of language: there are degrees and levels in language that link back to the intentional act, “the sense of the constituting act can only be deciphered in the web of the constituted object” (64). Form and behavior are contingent; involutes entangle, obscure, involve. Parallels emerge between the linguistic and mathematic issues at stake for De Quincey’s term and concept. A geometric involute is not the inverse of exponentiation. A geometric involute appears similar but is not identical to an arithmetic spiral. Nor, as with hyperbolic spirals or the golden spiral, does an involute spiral grow outward like a shell. An involute combines a particular progression and spatial property for apprehending a distinct relationship between surfaces and vectors. In the mechanical age, geometric involutes are vital for interlocking, used twice on each tooth of almost every modern gear. Conic, helical, or spiraling, two-dimensional or more, involute forms are forms of reciprocity, of interweaving, of entangling.

Involutes are relational and corresponding, in motion, separate-yet-connected. De Quincey’s sense is far more complex than the Oxford English Dictionary entry. The application in relation to experience, thoughts and feelings, and the entangling of such abstract notions within a highly representational topography of memory is provocative and compelling as much for the subjects concerned as for its potential contributions to the disciplines that study them. De Quincey’s nomenclature offers insights into a moment and way of thinking precipitating multiplicity and manifolds, the behavior of light, energy, particles and matter, and a sense of
space and time beyond ordinary human experience. De Quincey’s conceptions and representations pattern the world and human minds into systematic processors of particulate, entangling objects.

Section 1: Coefficients, Coexistence, Combination and Concentrics; or, Formulating Involutes

Thomas De Quincey’s coins the term “involutes,” quite conscious of a singular usage—or process—he asserts on “involutes (if I may coin that word)” (104). De Quincey’s theory of memory resides at interstices of language, philosophy, mathematics, and technology. This conspicuous parenthetical aside in Suspiria de Profundis’s Part I is a vital component in explaining the organizations of memory and the process of experience—this is the philosophical discourse which I argue underlies and dictates the narrative of his essay.

The preexisting denotations and connotations of involutes and involution certainly influence De Quincey’s choice of the term. The resonance of involution for De Quincey’s collective works influences Margaret Russett’s seminal approach to studying De Quincey: she considers the approach as a “dispersion of focus [that] may qualify it as literary history, albeit a history that substitutes involuted analysis for extensive view . . . these [Russett’s selected] intertextual fragments constitute both more and less than a synecdoche of De Quincey’s achievement.” Though Russett does not use the term involuted to the full extent by which De Quincey’s invokes the idea, her investigation seems attuned to De Quincey’s philosophy.

Appealing to linguistic patterns solely is only one facet of involutes. Synecdochal relationships and intertextuality are, indeed, vital components of relational meaning. In addition, Russett asserts that, “the minor Romantic’s career represents a primal scene of criticism,” a site facilitated by the “porousness and internal fractures of the literary ‘institution.”176 Such porousness is symptomatic of most of the period’s intellectual institutions; it applies beyond literature more broadly to the spirit of the age, to which De Quincey seems aware, if only marginally rather than epistemologically. Yet, as Russett notes, “to study minority, then, is to study generation.”177 Porousness or internal fractures seem useful descriptions for the typography of the palimpsest—and more importantly for the concept of De Quincey’s involute. De Quincey’s largely scrutinized term and concept allow for tracing common elements emerging indirectly from him, among varied fractioning fields, interdisciplinarily, *elsewhere*.

Generation, with all its senses of contemporaneity, production, and succession, feature in the generative and reproductive faculties for which De Quincey derives the concept of involutes in *Suspiria de Profundis*—wherein the term *involutes* appears in only once. The housing of the concept focuses a somewhat kaleidoscopic lens178 onto the essay. Russett’s sampling analysis, explained through a relation of figurative interplay and porous rupturing, selects one surface of involute; Frederick Burwick examines a more metaphysical sense of sublime experience as an evocative power in “De Quincey’s Shakespearean Involutes.”179 Involutes, Burwick notes, shares

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178. De Quincey uses the term kaleidoscope, which I discuss later, in *Suspiria*: “to new evolutions as incalculable as the caprices of a kaleidoscope; and the glory of their motions” (162).
a kinship with Wordsworth’s spots of time, “undying impressions which connected themselves with the circumstances.”¹⁸⁰ De Quincey’s discussions of literary associations, primarily concerning Shakespeare, offer Burwick a specific category of compound experiences or involutes. The power in the “psychology of the reader’s response,” Burwick explains, “enables the reader ‘to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness,’ the ‘modes of feeling,’ which otherwise lie dormant ‘in every human mind for want of a poet to organize them.’”¹⁸¹ Literature or poetic power can access the obscured or hidden within involutes—even the powerful revelatory moments, or involutes, within literature.

Involutes are perplexed combinations, whereas literariness—its organization and order—offers a sense of transparency or readability. Burwick highlights De Quincey’s description: “he goes on to explain, ‘when these inert and sleeping forms are organized, when these possibilities are actualized’ as the ‘conscious and living possession’ of the mind,’” De Quincey compares the unconscious state of mind with hibernating involutes of experience, “once these revelatory moments of power are aroused and awakened with the consciousness, they become a part of personal experience and wield themselves as kindred experiences.”¹⁸² Linguistics and literariness provide different understandings of relational organization and patterning procedures. “Through these evocations of sublime power,” Burwick explains, “one involute may call forth another, and another.”¹⁸³ The chain of associations is an integral quality of De Quincey’s involutes. Involute entanglement is not only for unconscious associations, in which literature dredges up into


readable organization its own dense moments. Involute entanglement also connects these moments with associated personal experience obscured within one unconscious mind.

Experience and memory find comparison with literature, yet, more complicatedly, a revelatory literary moment also *becomes* a personal experience in the process of reading, recollection, and revelation. The compounding of involutes here invokes the infinite in De Quincey’s formulation of the concept.

De Quincey’s involutes define the recondite basis of experience and memory informed *by* and *through* linguistic principles, including the term’s network of meanings. Rather than abstract and isolated ideals, experience is fundamentally compound; human sensibility is a mixture of thoughts, feelings, and sensory intake. The process includes more than straightforward apperception. In the palimpsestic memory, new impressions compound with previous psychical involutes. De Quincey’s coining passage is the exemplar: the revelatory truth comes to him through the involute memory of the death of his sister Elizabeth. He simultaneously analyzes his experiences with language prior to and hence influencing the involute memory and the ways the remembrance, in turn, influence his later experiences.

The involute remembrance or axial shaft of *Suspiria de Profundis* includes the sequence surrounding Elizabeth’s death. De Quincey’s opium dreams dredge up these childhood experiences the most. The relationship between this recollection and opium’s influence in enhancing it establishes an associated link, one which manifests in his figurative description. His return to opium use and its impact on his dreaming faculty shares funerary imagery: “those towering gates of ingress which hitherto had always seemed to stand open, now at last barred against my retreat, and hung with funeral crape” (132). The slippage and blurring that might cursorily seem thematic demonstrates the involute properties of memory: palimpsestuous
discourse between entwined caducean tendrils. The imagery also replicates the “recess of the entrance [and] the funeral banner of the holy office,” seen by the fictional abbess on her nun’s door; identified as “in a modern novel,” that De Quincey “since remembered” the novel remains elusive to scholarship (132). Imagined or re-produced in recollection, the literary possibility reinforces effaced traces while psychically protecting direct exposure to the profundity of the involute memory.

The experience of realizing his inescapable dependency as a death (or a presence in absence) offers rich imagery that combines with previous, in fact, rendering figural network of involutes: “applicable to this tremendous situation (the situation of one escaping by some refluent current from the maelstrom roaring for him in the distance, who finds suddenly that this current is but an eddy, wheeling round upon the same maelstrom)” (132). De Quincey’s image set links to apprehending and coining involutes. The impasse collapses the sequence of Elizabeth’s death (and withholding during illness and after death) into memory that requires circuitous yet peripheral access of the center void, the axial vortex. These memories become the cyclical point that initiates the coinage or coining point.

_Suspiria de Profundis_ traces the “affliction, seemingly hushing itself to sleep, suddenly soars upwards, again upon combining with another mode of sorrow, namely, anxiety without definite limits,” aware of the compounding influences on already impactful experiences (162). De Quincey discovers the axial movement, here of his affliction, when sequential involutes become a maelstrom of palimpsestuous discourse: “Dream formed itself mysteriously within dream; within these Oxford dreams remoulded itself continually [. . .] And now in Oxford all

was bound up into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny glorifying haze” (170). Involutes issue from the central point, the involute moment becomes the center of maelstrom, and new experiences issue out from and eddy back toward it. The significance of De Quincey calling attention to his own “coining” of involutes suggests his new denotation unites existing ones, compounding them, in order to become new, something other than the combination of the main senses.

De Quincey invests in a juncture of several inquiries into language, including philosophical and metaphysical. Anchored in language, involutes parallel the role of the sign in signification, (theoretical work of Saussure and Derrida among others, and largely adopted by most post-modern literary theory). Housing both the sign and the signified, involutes as perplexed combinations are even a “dialectic” in sense of internal time-consciousness (and the phenomenological implications that invokes). The coining passage itself renders the influences of the various existing senses on his effort to establish a new denotation. A synecdochal reading, much as with De Quincey’s own analogies, serves to observe, in tandem, the palimpsestuous discourse between involute senses: such a philosophical-technical delineation of the term offers a richer appreciation of De Quincey’s coining and his essay. In direct relation to his coinage, De Quincey addresses a physicality for his abstractly concrete objects. He appeals to the figurative uses of involutes as introspective convolutions. The mathematical concept, requisite for commanding circular correlation, provides the recursive connections between related portions of text. Consequently, involutes inform his system of memory, structuring his sense of the human brain as an involute inscribed palimpsest, and therefore its own technical exteriorization of
memory, or hypomnemata, in narrative. The perplexed combinations defy any straightforward stratification. Foucault’s, as with Derrida’s, appreciation of the materialized or external representation of memory, based on Plato’s theory of anamnesis, includes the inscription of the note, the record, for further reflection. In the case of De Quincey’s archival mind, involutes make recollection an archaeological process within an entangled organization.

**Coexistence and Combination**

The passage in which Thomas De Quincey coins involutes outlines several important features of his concept with respect to his larger theory of experience and memory. Foremost, involutes continue his perception of the imagery and physicality of the archive mind. Moreover, the concrete (rather than the abstract) aspects of the preexisting term in conjunction with De Quincey’s new denotation delineates a deeply rooted relationship of meaning in his nomenclature of involutes—one which exemplifies the interconnectivity and significance of visual stimuli, specifically his childhood visual-linguistic experiences in shaping his semantic network (which Chapter Three studies in detail). Additionally, the entangling and manifold properties reinforce the archival aspects (discussed in Chapter One) while advancing the mathematical and philosophical underpinnings of his project, influenced by the applications of

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186. See too, Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge; and, The Discourse on Language*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith, (1972; repr., New York: Pantheon Books, 2010): “There was a time when archaeology, as a discipline devotes to silent monuments, inert traces, objects without context, and things left by the past, aspired to the condition of history, and attained meaning only through the restitution of a historical discourse; it might be said, to play on words a little, that in our time history aspires to the condition of archaeology, to the intrinsic description of the monument” (7).
involutes in the former field that relate to contingent concepts in the latter. Ultimately, the genesis of his notion, that merits the status of theory, derives from the process his narrative recreates and represents, of remembering a revolutionary experience that affects the germination of the concept and structure-process of involutes themselves.

De Quincey underscores the earthly or empirical condition of his childhood case study (the remembrance or involute memory within the coining-passage or recollection coinage), rather than the spiritual or internal sources for other experiences or remembrances. Through this abduction, he explains all experience as (typically) compound, perplexed combinations that are incapable of disentangling into their abstract or isolated shapes. Involutes are indirectly received, read or accessed, whether consciously or unconsciously, more so than ever directly reaching “us.” The distinction between conscious and unconscious processes (discussed previously in Chapter One) establishes a self-functioning of involutes that proceeds autonomously. Involutes objectively entwining even without the human subject, who only participates in further adding associations, even when following one course.

The final point is perhaps the most illuminating for appreciating De Quincey’s conceptualization of experience as movement on a trajectory, as passing, as passage, as process. “Thoughts and feelings”—the basic elements of experience—“pass to us” (he repeats the phrase) through oblique mediums that he names involutes. Involutes consist of “concrete objects”; concrete reinforces the sense of actual stimuli while stressing objects or actuals rather than abstractions. Involutes offer the added complication of being compound: “perplexed combinations” of concrete objects. Perplexed—uncertainty, involved, complex—derives from plexus—a network, intertwined, or a system of mathematical relations—to further reinforce the
idea that these entities are inextricably bound. These characteristics obscure the immediacy of thoughts and feelings that could reach “us” directly: “far more [. . .] pass to us [. . .] than ever reach us directly.” With numbers, concreteness applies to actual objects whereas abstract numbers are not connected to counting objects; similarly the thoughts and feelings we receive are concrete and attached to stimuli or combined with sensory objects, or the involutes of experience, as the sentence parses: “far more [. . .] pass to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects, pass to us as involutes [. . .] than [. . .] in their own abstract shapes.” In considering thoughts and feelings as elemental or particulate forms (as in individual particles), which when isolated might possess the role of the abstract, De Quincey instead posits that they entangle in and with experience—they are incapable, moreover, of being disentangled (entanglement as if on the quantum level). De Quincey sets his view apart from other views of sensation (Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the latter pointedly viewing sensation as “perfectly distinct” and “simple and unmixed”) through the sheer basis of involutes, reinforcing the impact of his concept. Experience is a complex medium—a conglomerate.

De Quincey’s concept of involutes may be part of a reciprocal cycle between bodily experience and language. Parsing the syntax of De Quincey’s coining sentence reinforces these points in interesting ways. The human receptacle—whatever the pronoun “us” may include, whether the self, the mind, memory, consciousness, the unconscious, or any or all—is, grammatically, the direct object that receives the action, the passing. Involutes, thoughts and

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feelings, are the agents of the action; both his concept and the term he selects define the structure and the processes/behavior of experience.

In De Quincey’s syntax, the agent of the action—to pass—is the subject: our thoughts and feelings (or, rather, “far more of” them) possess the agency to actively “pass”—the active voice with the verb, to pass, demonstrates the near paradoxical concepts De Quincey merges. The body clearly is, if nothing else, what anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss calls, “a conceptual tool with multiple possibilities for detotalizing or retotalizing any domain” (149).189 The human subject for De Quincey seems in line with Michel Foucault’s observations about the post-modern subject: “The researches of psychoanalysis, of linguistics, of ethnology have decentered the subject in relation to the laws of his desire, or forms of his language, the rules of his actions, or the games of his mythical or fabulous discourse, when it became clear that man himself, questioned as to what he was, could not account for […] his unconscious, the systematic forms of his language, or the regularities of his fictions.”190 In De Quincey’s sense the result is an involute realization. Foucault offers the sense of development with a similar recursive process: “the theme of a continuity of history has been reactivated once again; a history that would be not division, but development (devenir); not an interplay of relations, but an internal dynamic; not a system, but the hard work of freedom; not form, but the unceasing effort of a consciousness turned upon itself, trying to grasp itself in its deepest condition.”191 The decentered subject is not the source or center for explaining events; psychoanalysis points to the series of external systems


acting upon the subject, which the subject neither controls nor perhaps even understands. The mind receives experience. The mind records experience. But, De Quincey explains the lack of transparency of these procedures: these activities occur in the arena that he calls “the shadowy.”

Passing here repeats the passage of his thoughts in the descent via the dreaming apparatus to deep memory, (significantly, memory of the passing of his sister and his passage from idyllic childhood). The verb echoes a similar passivity or inevitability as the passing of his sister, the central subject and catalyst of his passage into knowledge of death, causing the injury to his psyche that drives a shaft into dreams’ dark depths.

As combined and concrete conduits of thoughts and feelings, De Quincey’s conceptual view of experience finds reality outside and entering the body. The “synthetical unity of the manifold in general,” a cognitive connection between concepts and intuitions, assists Immanuel Kant’s exploration of time, its internal experience, as well as signification—all are key components underlying De Quincey’s concerns for memory and narrative. When Kant addresses the relationship concepts and objects, in the Critique of Pure Reason, establishing the transcendental schema, he locates a medial representation of the mind that helps explain the process De Quincey’s involute undergoes: “the conception must contain that which is represented in the object to be subsumed under it.” The concept of the involute captures the representational qualities of the particles of experience. For Kant, the schema, circumventing an ontological gap between abstract universals and concrete particulars, provides the mediating representation in which understanding oscillates between the heterogenous general qualities

192. De Quincey, 130. Refer to my earlier discussion in Chapter One.

linking concepts and those that “represent the object in concreto.”¹⁹⁴ De Quincey aims to explain the manner in which memories correlating to his remembrance of Elizabeth’s death behave as sediment, encrusting it, while the underlying spirits or seeds also resurface and germinating into tendrils. To convey that both successive strata and substrates process the ability to impact future experiences, he appeals to and co-opt the varied, yet related, properties of involutes.

De Quincey’s resulting schema of involutes exceeds the initial involutes of human sensibility he offers. Involutes become a way for De Quincey to order his understanding of thought, language, and, ultimately, reality. De Quincey first appeals to a known concept, such as the palimpsest for the brain, and then allows bodily experience to redefine the concept; the palimpsest brain becomes the palimpsestuous archive of palimpsestic memories. His palimpsest discussion elaborates on the functions of memories, expanding his study of the fundamental unit, involutes. The body offers a material structure that De Quincey can overlay with the involute schema. In these ways De Quincey invests in the anthropomorphic metaphor without any strict adherence to innatism or realism—at least at first. There is an innatist impulse to define reality through the body. Bodily metaphors pervade history, often as a key instrument in what Lévi-Strauss calls “the science of the concrete,” in *The Savage Mind* (*La pensée sauvage*).¹⁹⁵ In his study, Lévi-Strauss compares the child and primitive linguistic attention to the body, one of the most pervasive metaphors in human history. More so, the innatist finds the body as the mind’s most basic image for shaping reality, as Marc Johnson argues, in *Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*.¹⁹⁶ The body is understood as the basis for other...

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forms of cognition, often pre-conceptual or non-propositional; Johnson’s objectivist approach suggests abstract mental images (or “image schema”) assist the mind make meaning from signs and language (29). De Quincey’s images, including the archive, caduceus, and maelstrom, shape his understanding of order and organization. He also applies images onto the body (palimpsest, apparatus, mechanism) in order to reinforce the direction of experience, as passing into the body/mind. Language offers the traceable cyclicality of De Quincey’s cognition, intaking from external reality experiences that determine meaning and signification for future encounters.

De Quincey places the body as a domain for understanding the world, but he does so with a sense that demonstrates the impact he suffered at a crucial stage of his childhood psychical development. Some concepts of modern child psychology support De Quincey’s self-assessment. Recent scholarship on De Quincey, focusing on Suspiria de Profundis, locates his project within studies of trauma, particularly through psychoanalytical approaches, as does Rei Terada.

“ Depths of awareness,” is Terada’s phrase for “the obverse of trauma as the not fully known,” which he examines through a primarily Freudian reading of Suspiria de Profundis. De Quincey’s repeated recollections point to his need to continually process understanding of deep memory. Terada, in noting an analysist’s limitations (similar issues of mediation, much like

organizing our experience and comprehension”: “A schema consists of a small number of parts and relations, by virtue of which it can structure indefinitely many perceptions, images, and events. Image schemata operate at a level of mental organization that falls between abstract propositional structures, on the one side, and particular concrete images on the other.”


observer-shaped reality), cites D. W. Winnicott’s comments on his field. Winnicott found trauma occurring as early as the infant stage, causing developmental unity to fragment, becoming potentially “one of fragmentation of the line of continuity of being,” offering another expression of the foliation of involute memory in repeated recollection. De Quincey locates his childhood trauma, the sequence of Elizabeth’s death within a broader set of his nursery afflictions and remembrances, underlying substrates and traces. Her death is Suspiria’s subject for its memory study. Though certainly an exemplary involute memory, it remains, in De Quincey’s opinion (even for his exceptional memory), an applicable case study for a general memory dream study. In effect De Quincey suggests that the noteworthiness of remembrances is in their intensity rather than quality or class. De Quincey redirects focus to surrounding experiences for relational


201. Winnicott, Maturational (1965), 59-60. In the same collection, Winnicott addresses the fullness of emotional growth in “The Capacity to be Alone,” a concept he considers “one of the most important signs of maturity in emotional development” (1958, 29-36; 29). De Quincey expresses a similar stress for the importance of solitude in the Introductory Notice of Suspiria de Profundis; the faculty of dreaming “suffers from the decay of solitude” (130). When De Quincey returns to the idea of solitude (149-151), connecting “profound grief” and “profound philosophy” with divine communications “in dreams, and by the oracles that lurk in darkness,” it concern the child: “Even a little child has a dread, whispering consciousness, that if he should be summoned to travel in God’s presence, no gentle nurse will be allowed to lead him by the hand, nor mother to carry him in her arms, nor little sister to share his trepidations. King and priest, warrior and maiden, philosopher and child, all must walk those mighty galleries along. The solitude, therefore, which in this world appals or fascinates a child’s heart, is but the echo of a far deeper solitude through which already he has passed, and of another solitude deeper still, through which he has to pass: reflex of one solitude – prefiguration of another” (150-151).

202. Hereafter the sequence of Elizabeth’s death may also be referred to as the involute memory of Suspiria de Profundis.
signification, uncovering a network of his pre-established visio-linguistic semantics and cognitive processing. Related memories entwine and redefine association. Focusing on the way a child creates a mental model of the world through experience and language, or what he terms genetic epistemology, Jean Piaget foregrounded the work of cognitive theory within clinical psychology. Piaget recognizes, in *The Child’s Conception of the World*, between stage 1 (typically the age of six) to stage 2 (the age of eight), children shift in awareness of their independence from the outside world. 203 The death of Elizabeth occurs when De Quincey is six, precisely between those stages.

Piaget’s assessment would confirm De Quincey’s own claims of the profound impact of Elizabeth’s death and the successive force of the surrounding imagery on other events. By focusing on the origins of a child’s basic categories of thinking, Piaget developed an appreciation for periodic and drastic reassessments or systematic reorganization of knowledge. Piaget notes that for a child, reciprocally, words are “bound up with things and to speak would mean to act directly on these things.” 204 Furthermore, “external things would be less material,” notes Piaget, “and would be endowed with intentions and will.” 205 In the earlier state, children are less aware of their thinking self, making even dreams appear “as a disturbance breaking in from without.” 206 The description sounds strikingly similar to the passing of external abstract entities into De Quincey’s human self. To complicate these issues, the adult De Quincey reflects on the

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formative traumas he suffers, resultantly blurring external with internal and material with immaterial. Instead, De Quincey’s co-option of an interlocking concept, that operates both tangentially and concentrically, redirects him to explore the relational spaces of intersection of his selves rather than attempt to disentangle the relationship(s).

De Quincey demonstrates what Piaget would call assimilation and accommodation of schemata. Kant’s schema—a procedure linking a non-empirical concept with a sense impression—becomes a shared term, from its classical roots in rhetoric, among disciplines studying cognitive and behavioral patterning: schemata, their mechanisms, their networks of relations, demonstrate conceptual patterns based on conventional human scenes or conceptual pairings with abstract sets applicable to specifics or further abstract meanings. Piaget employs the schema as the basic unit of knowledge, defining it as, “a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning.” The key processes of the schema resemble De Quincey’s involutes (whether the basic unit or a memory sequence): a repeatable memory experience comprised of entangled components with a core meaning. New circumstances require the mind to access pre-existing schemata for apprehending the new. The result is either accommodation, wherein the existing knowledge-base or schema does not apply or, assimilation, wherein an existing schema does apply to the new circumstance. De Quincey models this assessment-processing system through his adoption and adaptation or co-option of involutes. He assesses new data against previous denotation, then processes relationality, associating (categorically cataloguing) and archiving

207. De Quincey avoids the total materiality of the body/mind, as does Thomas Hobbes, appearing to sidestep Cartesian issues of matter and of mind (and their relation), as in John Locke’s empiricism.


among other experiences (files, diplomata); yet, while connected they remain fairly distinct. Accommodation aids De Quincey’s reassessment of the palimpsest-brain into an palimpsestic archive-mind. De Quincey’s appeal to mathematic involutes suggests assimilation to apprehend internal/external experience, just as the caduceus assists his understanding of a narrative order that can represent memory experiences. Moreover, De Quincey’s understanding of the archive-mind and caduceus-narrative influence his involute. Distinct from the schema, De Quincey’s involute as a basic unit creates relational, tangential and cyclical/spherical, chains within or along itself as a manifold space. Rather than sequential chains between other involutes, layers, and tendrils, involutes embed, encrust themselves. The involute is the point and the space of intersection.

The involute is the interface of representational exchange. Involute experience is relational, tangential and concentric; it contains knowledge even along its correlative spaces and vectors, making it akin to (yet more structurally complex than) paired schemata. De Quincey’s involute experiences also consist of memory and the processes within assimilation and accommodation, of comparison and application from existing or underlying substrates to the new data or strata. The similarity of De Quincey’s involutes, themselves, to Piaget’s schemata is intriguing. One involute entangles others, implicates others in relational meaning. The cohesive and replicable sequences that offer meaning, however, are not abstractly or directly received: involutes remain perplexed combinations. Cognitive psychology since Piaget attempts to address environmental factors (social and cultural) in equilibration, or the process of mastering new information and circumstances. In some ways, De Quincey attempts to draw upon environmental factors, particularly language and contextual circumstances.
The contexts of involutes are as multiple as the units’ contents. The point or site of recollection re-inscribes the memory point. De Quincey envisions the reader-archivist role as a dark or obscured chronicling interpreter. At some level an active or conscious re-collector, the mind operates amid an archived collection of palimpsestuous memory texts. De Quincey discovers each memory itself—each experience, each layered inscription of experience—is also palimpsestic. The recollection is a type of reading of the recorded experience, yet, a palimpsestuous reading with coexisting textual discourse and manuscript contexts. Recollection is, itself, an involute experience. And that experience is an entangled combination, one entwined or enwreathing to an extent in which separation or disentangling is futile. Involutes consist as a system of all these sub-processes. De Quincey is “struck” by the truth of involutes through the repeated return to the central remembrance, the experience at the core of Suspiria de Profundis and the Afflictions of Childhood, by “recollecting it, often.” Experience, as with his rendering of it, is as much the abstract elements as the medium through which they travel.

Involutes, as De Quincey’s conceptual domain for experience within human sensibility, establishes organizational principles that in turn shape the properties of the mind and reality. The interrelationship of De Quincey’s written medium and the subjects of Suspiria de Profundis revolve around his involutes and exceed any limiting view of his work as simply, or dismissively, involuted (one cognate). There is a vast scope and depth that he requires of the term, “involute.” Involute derives from the Latin involūtus, involūtum, the past participle of involvēre: “to roll in or up, into or upon, to wrap up, envelop, surround, entangle, make obscure.”¹¹⁰ Immediately this appeals to his palimpsestic vellum parchment, his caducean narrative, and the entangling relationship of experience and memory he discovers through a

¹¹⁰ OED, s. v. “involute, adj. and n.”
revolutionary remembrance (another cognate). De Quincey, however, does not use the verb or the cognate noun, *involution*, which invokes retrograde motion either in medical sciences, to suggest organ/tissue retrograde or bodily decline,\(^{211}\) or in astronomy, concerning the orbiting heavenly bodies. De Quincey’s involutes move recursively while also progressing and reproducing. The Oxford English Dictionary catalogues the related descriptive usages, typically of structural patterning: any intricate spiraling or whorls, but typically those wound closely round the axis, nearly or wholly concealing it. The image evokes De Quincey’s revised and reproduced caduceus, the description of his narrative structure. The term *involute* applies to anything from circling shapes in botany to convoluted obscurity in language or literature: as likely for a plant’s leaf as the progression of a play’s plot.\(^{212}\) De Quincey’s has more complexity and compounds in mind for involutes than otherwise commonplace, descriptive usages. After all, he has in mind the *involved* parchment scroll for the palimpsestic brain: as he parses involutes, De Quincey is interested in both *concrete objects* and *abstract shapes*.

De Quincey’s nomenclature of involutes implicates the abstract qualities of conceptual structures *and* actual spatial relationships found in differential geometry or practical application in architecture and engineering. Both architecture and engineering present themselves as important fields for De Quincey, practically and comparatively. In order to explain his narrative caduceus, De Quincey appeals to an “analogy” in the concrete objects his readers might recognize and be able to visualize: “Just as in Cheapside, if you look right and left, the streets so

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\(^{211}\) Such retrogressive evolution is also called, *catagenesis*. A link between *volution* and *genesis* seems intriguing, considering particularly “synthesis” and building “basic elements into complex ones” (3.a.) and “the process of obtaining a given power of a number” (3.b. *Math.*); see related denoted entries: “genesis, n.” in *OED Online*.\(^{212}\) These uses are frequent in periodicals of the time, including newspaper reviews of performances. Also important is the etymology of involution, Latin *involuōn-em*, is the noun of action from *involvĕre* to involve v.. (“involution, n.” *OED Online*). For “involution” as “management of plot,” see one example in Theatre Royal, Drury Lane review of *The Land We Live In*, in *The Morning Post*, London, England. Friday, December 31, 1804, Issue 11307.
narrow, that lead off at right angles, seem quarried and blasted out of some Babylonian brick–kiln; bored, not raised artificially by the builder's hand” (135). He anchors his sublime image of Cheapside’s streets through a geometrical, engineering eye that is equally interested (as with the palimpsest and caduceus) in fostering a nostalgia for arcane craftsmanship.

Imagining the streets excavated out of or carved into the buildings, De Quincey nevertheless locates these effects in some natural process rather than done “artificially by the builder’s hand” (135). He purses the implausible further with a supposition, a complication: “But, if you inquire of the worthy men who live in that neighborhood, you will find it unanimously deposed that not the streets were quarried out of the bricks, but, on the contrary (most ridiculous as it seems), that the bricks have supervened upon the streets” (135). At first the “ridiculous” premise seems ridiculous for the narrative voice’s dismissal of the seemingly apparent truth that the bricks indeed are superimposed onto the streets. Contrarily he imagines a process has occurred by which streets were drilled into the world, rather than buildings erected around the streets; he fancies the streets a paradox, both naturally cut as a river bed, while having erupted out of a pre-existing structure that is, too, both quarry and chamber, an ancient brick-kiln. His ordering too seems obviously and amusingly anachronistic. And yet, he’s attempting to offer a keen point about the abstract concept and the concrete object. To do so he juxtaposes his observation with the “most ridiculous as it seems” insights of the supposed residents, who testify that, “The streets did not intrude amongst the bricks, but those cursed bricks came to imprison the streets” (135). Imprisonment in brick, in actual and concrete objects, the concept or abstract form of the “street” cements and takes shape.

The concrete object that incarcerates the abstract concept is the process De Quincey equates with his caduceus narrative: “So, also, the ugly pole – hop pole, vine pole, espalier, no
matter what – is there only for support” (135). “Not the flowers are for the pole, but the pole is for the flowers,” De Quincey elaborates of his generative digressions, his narrative tendrils:

“Upon the same analogy, view me as one (in the words of a true and most impassioned poet)

“viridantem floribus hastas” making verdant, and gay with the life of flowers, murderous spears and halberts things that express death in their origin (being made from dead substances that once had lived in forests), things that express ruin in their use” (135). He again reinforces the contrast between the supports and the subjects circling it, of death and life, of murderous cores that have generative embellishments. Beyond the obvious, his comparative analogy offers a connection between what he suggests as abstract forms and figurative images. He narrative’s subjects stem from death yet become a celebration of verdant life. In this connection the streets of the brick-kiln suggest structure that is imposed upon the layer beneath as much as it is predetermined by the construct below. Much like the inscription of the palimpsest, the past has presence in the present: the present is shaped by the past just as the past is viewed through the present.

Cheapside becomes a dimensional layer of the inscriptions on the palimpsest. Just as vividly, the pair of images extends to neural pathways, to archive in the mind.

The reciprocity of the images he invokes informs the images and narrative that follows—and even the concept of involutes. Involutes move outward but also circle backward, curling in both directions and rely upon interconnecting curves, angles, tangents, or entangling associated memories.

**Coefficients and Concentrics**

As sometimes, upon the English lakes, water−fowl that have careered in the air until the eye is wearied with the eternal wheelings of their inimitable flight, Grecian simplicities of motion, amidst a labyrinthine infinity of curves that would
baffle the geometry of Apollonius seek the water at last, as if with some settled purpose (you imagine) of reposing.

Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*, 162

De Quincey calls further attention to his mathematic interests, combined with motion or velocity in space and time, when describing his childhood affliction: his infant trauma over his sister’s death. The “labyrinthine infinity of curves” evoke both the palimpsest archive and the foundational unit: the involute. “The geometry of Apollonius” returns to involutes, employed in his theories on conic sections (again, the mathematics of a curve or the spiraling rotation of a point). But *coining* involutes extends beyond simply the use of jargon as fresh metaphors for perception and memory. The description De Quincey offers of the water-fowl on the English lakes demonstrates his interest in the mathematics of space, motion, and time. He raises the comparison to explain the impact on “the infant”—himself—in respect to geometry, infinities, and physics.

De Quincey couples the natural form of the “inimitable flight” with “eternal wheelings”—evoking his caducean multiplicity of narrative but also the calculation required in the *wheeling* of gear mechanics (vital in time pieces, but also the flourishing technologies of the 19th Century: locomotives, paper manufacture and printing, and even involute motion for writing logograms in phonography). These involutes interconnect and reinforce the mechanized

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213. Comparison with Wordsworth’s “Home at Grasmere” (*The Recluse*, Part First), particularly the phenomenon of revivified memories and remembrances seems most apt in lines 754-860, which encapsulate: “musing in solitude, I oft perceive / Fair trains of imagery before me rise, / Accompanied by feelings of delight / Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed; / And I am conscious of affecting thoughts / And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes / Or elevates the Mind” (755-761); “For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink / Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds. To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil” (780-783); and, “How exquisitely the individual Mind / (And the progressive powers perhaps no less / Of the whole species) to the external World / Is fitted:--and how exquisitely, too-- / Theme this but little heard of among men-- / The external World is fitted to the Mind; / And the creation (by no lower name / Can it be called) which they with blended might / Accomplish:--this is our high argument” (816-824).

214. Time preoccupies De Quincey as do locomotives. “The English Mail-Coach” engage both in highly significant ways which merit in depth analysis in Part II, in terms of the narrative of on its own and as a section of *Suspiria de*
apparatus of memory. For the modern era, technology impacts interdisciplinary philosopher and theorist historians including Lewis Mumford, Thomas Kuhn, and Pierre Duhem, who each emphasize in one form or another the role of the mechanistic as a basic metaphor.\textsuperscript{215} In fact, in the development of modernity, Mumford stresses that “men had become mechanical before they perfected complicated machines”; “‘machine’ is an expression of the ‘mechanical mind’ […] for the organic has become visible again even within the mechanical complex.”\textsuperscript{216} While, the body metaphor serves to map knowledge, to bring disparate pieces together in ways that would otherwise be unthinkable, De Quincey joins the geometric and engineering senses to implicate a purposeful system (or systems) operating even where there appears to be “eternal wheelings,” “inimitable flight,” “labyrinthine infinity of curves,” or compositional sublime disarray.

De Quincey’s mechanized dreaming apparatus shares with involutes his investment in his cultural moment. The role of language in shaping reality has a basis in several fields, including cognitive science. Cultural and social sciences as well as psychology recognize the importance of naming objects. In \textit{Embodied Mind}, Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, base their interdisciplinary approach primarily on cognitive science’s exploration of semantics.\textsuperscript{217} They suggest an idea of an \textit{embodied cognition} that attributes cognition shaping to other bodily aspects, including orientation and spatial understandings. As with De Quincey’s concept, the

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nomenclature may influence the relational structure of self to internalized concrete abstractions, such as thoughts and feelings. Embodied cognition’s combination of cognitive science and continental philosophy also reflects the interests in body metaphors intersecting the anthropology and philosophy of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Undoubtedly De Quincey invokes even the specialized denotations of his day and yet he realizes—as immediately as he proposes it—his involute is something else entirely, surpassing the interconnectivity of all these meanings.

The term involute is appropriate for describing the important truth issuing from “so affecting and revolutionary” a remembrance; the recollection of it initiates a digressive involute narrative, multiple with lines of movement, pro/re-gression, action and reaction (142). The application of concentric spiraling in gearing reinforces the juncture of contact along a common tangent, an external tangent to the base circles, or in engineering terms: the Line of Action. Trajectories, or the lines of action, expose the uniqueness of De Quincey’s involute. Contact and commonality underlie the relational components of involutes. The typical visualization requires an imagined process of placing a string to a point on a curve and envisioning a string attached to one point, revolving or unwinding upon itself. The mathematic sense links well with Michel Foucault’s sense of the post-modern subject, decentered. Specifically, an involute is a curve, formulated from a point on another given curve. The decentered human subject is formed by influencing forces, which in De Quincey’s case might be explained as external forces combined with thoughts and feelings, jumbled and transmitted into involutes as much as combinations reciprocally issuing out from them. Involutes are a kind of roulette or revolving curve on a fixed plane, something akin to the approximate path of a tethered object or maypole ribbon to a pole.

The human subject is no longer the center or agent of actions, rather a participant in complex processes that organizes events or the meaning in narrative.

The systems and forces act upon the produced subject, which in the case of De Quincey’s involutes are entangled combinations that in turn form intersecting memories. The decentering that underlies involutes is clear in De Quincey’s description surrounding the revolutionary remembrance. Elizabeth’s death cements his abstract understanding of the concept of death. The sighs from the depths, simplified to the theme of death, is the pole of the caduceus, anchoring the subject(s) of his narrative. The variations upon the theme, the narrative digressions, each circle back and wind round the central point, operating much the same as the mathematical involute.

The place and role of language—even in defining involutes—becomes a foundation for the metaphysical and phenomenological aspects of De Quincey’s involutes. The relationship between the experiencing self and the experience becomes a matrix, a marriage, the type of contingency Maurice Merleau-Ponty identifies between the flesh and the chiasm, a reversibility in “the intertwining” (The Visible and the Invisible).219 The chiasm shares elements of the rupture and fracture of post-modern literary theory, but also the discourse between spaces of inscription for the palimpsest and spaces of interlacing objects for the involute-gear. Merleau-Ponty’s chiasm focuses on the body and body metaphors—relevant to the shaft De Quincey feels did strike through his memory faculty during the nurse’s pronouncement of Elizabeth’s immanent passing. The body emerges from experience, and perhaps, experience emerges from language.

The affecting moment of visiting his deceased sister is the moment he finds most revolutionary, which for the purposes of this discussion shall be the core involute (vastly more

complicated than schemata). The “eternal wheelings” of cognitive and mnemonic processes exceed “Grecian simplicities of motion,” creating a structure resembling “a labyrinthine infinity of curves.” As with the center of the maelstrom or the shaft of the caduceus, the core involute is his central-memory issuing lines of remembrance, eddies that return to the core. Recollection of the central memory point, De Quincey’s often recursion to the remembrance, establishes the coining remembrance-point: with its distinct lines of repeated reflection, the coining point adds depth or manifold foliation to the central memory point. “Often I have been struck with the important truth,” claims De Quincey, of involutes: often struck when “recollecting it,” the remembrance now made multiple at the point of intersection from which derives the interlaced variations of all successive recollections.

“The eye is wearied” by the water-fowl’s motions; the sublime mathematic description underscores images and vision as crucial for De Quincey. De Quincey constructs the involute to provide a co-opted visual structure for his abstractions. The visual image is what distinguishes the announcement of Elizabeth’s impending death with his visitation of her body—the full sequence yields infinite possible image-sets for later experiences (such as funerary imagery with opium use). The flight of the water-fowls even echoes the “flight” he experiences while viewing her body. Unlike the similar yet distal relationship between flight and ascending and descending at will through the scarring shaft into the depths of “death and darkness,” De Quincey recalls the “wandering or suspension of [his] perfect mind” as a trance, involving his “flight and pursuit” through an opening in the heavenly vault, revealing “a shaft which ran up forever” (134). The core involute—the juncture of the central memory-remembrance and the coining-remembrance—shares its linguistic and conceptual framework with his description of the key event (recollection of the remembrance) and his reflections on their lasting psychical effects
(recollection of the coining truth). The core involute defines De Quincey’s reality as much as it is defined by it. Elizabeth’s death causes “convulsions,” “agitations” and a “tumult” (133, 130). He recalls prior encounters with the concept of death, including the earlier death of his other sister, which he did not yet fully apprehend. De Quincey is old enough, at Elizabeth’s death, to comprehend and be affected by death’s finality. “Utter, utter misery,” De Quincey proclaims of the “revelation” that his idolized sister is about to die, “itself, as a remarkable thing, is swallowed up in its own chaos” (141). The revelation concerning her impending death, thwarts his expectation of her recovery from a minor illness and is the pure trauma: “O! moment of darkness and delirium, when a nurse awakened me from that delusion, and launched God’s thunderbolt at my heart in the assurance that my sister must die” (141). The thunderbolt is certainly echoed in the piercing nature of involute truth, De Quincey having “been struck” with both. Conversely, the sublimity of seeing her body—the core memory—is one of generation: remembrances, an important truth, a philosophy, and his caducean narrative’s flowering tendrils.

The most crucial moment before seeing her body is the announcement and “assurance” of her impending death. The impactful experience shapes the foundations of what he experiences when he sees her body. De Quincey, hearing his sick sister’s agony through the walls, can imagine her existing in both states alive and dead, (a sort of Schrodinger’s cat). Unlike the core memory he often revisits for involute revelation, he admits to his readers that this preceding “revelation” he would wish to avoid: “I wish not to recall the circumstances of that time, when my agony was at its height, and hers in another sense was approaching” (141). The vertical reference recalls the caduceus: “Enough to say, that all was soon over; and the morning of that day had at last arrived which looked down upon her innocent face, sleeping the sleep from which there was no awaking, and upon me sorrowing the sorrow for which there is no consolation”
Caducean imagery converges central aspects of *Suspiria de Profundis*: death, memory and dreams. While tangential digressions entwine around and encircle the subject of his childhood affliction, Mercury’s axial rod aligns with the revelatory dreams and memories of Elizabeth’s death as a means and instrument for traversing the boundary of conscious recollection and life into the depths of death and unconscious memory. The network of meaning surrounding his knowledge of the caduceus seems to underlie his description of the experience of her death and his sense of dreams accessing the shadowy depths of memory or unconscious mind, much as the street is imprisoned under the bricks. The caducean image appeals as an image of composition. Composition both provides and *is* an analogy for remembering.

If the portions of text preceding De Quincey’s coining and the narrative’s approaching the corresponding memory reflects the period of anticipation over his sister’s impending death, the succeeding sections, subjects, and the form of *Suspiria* as a serial essay reflects well the remembrances of his memory over the course of years and dreams. The object or the law of the work—to display the coefficient of the opium on dreams—dictates the form, the reproductive faculty of dreams and narrative become indistinguishable:

The nursery experience had been the ally and the natural coefficient of the opium. For that reason it was that the nursery experience has been narrated. Logically it bears the very same relation to the convulsions of the dreaming faculty as the opium. The idealizing tendency existed in the dream—theatre of my childhood; but the preternatural strength of its action and coloring was first developed after the confluence of the two causes. (169)

Much as confluence reinforces *combination*, coefficients suggest a specific relation or combination of the two factors. Coefficients, another mathematic term, is a constant (in his case, the nursery experience) by which a variable (the opium) is multiplied. When applied in engineering and physics, a coefficient expresses a quantitative phenomenon or specific property
of matter—in this case, De Quincey appeals to the ideal of a formulaic expression of convulsions upon his dreaming faculty. His nursery afflictions are the first memories his opium-dreams dredge from the depths of memory. Through suspended and resumed use of opium, “[d]uring this third prostration before the dark idol, and after some years,” De Quincey finds that “new and monstrous phenomena began slowly to arise” (132). With a sense of increase similar to an algebraic expression of exponential coefficients, De Quincey explains his dilemma: “when I could no longer conceal from myself that these dreadful symptoms were moving forward forever, by a pace steadily, solemnly, and equably increasing, I endeavored, with some feeling of panic, for a third time to retrace my steps” (132). His retrograde efforts fail: “But I had not reversed my motions for many weeks, before I became profoundly aware that this was impossible” (132). The revelation is that “[a]ll is lost”: his is utter grief over his dependency on opium and discovering its continuing effects on his dreams (132). The comparison to his nursery grief is clear: “The sentiment which attends the sudden revelation that all is lost silently is gathered up into the heart; it is too deep for gestures or for words; and no part of it passes to the outside” (132). “Passes,” here, “as for a death already passed,” expresses a type of communication or manifestation, a similar concretization as in confronting his apprehension of death:

I, at least, upon seeing those awful gates closed and hung with draperies of woe, as for a death already past, spoke not, nor started, nor groaned. One profound sigh ascended from my heart, and I was silent for days. (133)

The imagery he employs, of the “gates closed and hung with draperies of woe,” along with the antagonism of hearing but not seeing, anticipate (in narrative) a sequence of imagery surrounding

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220. De Quincey expresses his anxiety as temporal motion quite in line with the subject matter of “The English Mail-Coach” I discuss in Chapter Four.
viewing her body, a body not living. De Quincey outlines his adult addiction in the preface before even “approaching” the effecting remembrance. As he renders in narrative the involute phenomenon, the narrative echoes generate the concentric rings of the sighs emanating from the depths of his afflictions. The funerary imagery invokes the core memory as the schema he applies to new situations as dire to injuring the core of his psyche: “The voice perishes; the gestures are frozen; and the spirit of man flies back upon its own centre” (133). As an archival trace, the core involute discursively shapes and engages his later experiences and its imagery pervades his narrative. More poignantly, he expresses the experience as his own death, a death of innocence and peace. His grief, furthermore, invokes involute imagery in his expression of his own decentered subject. The profound sigh ascending from his heart is the concentric involution of his memory, the involute generating his Suspiria de Profundis.

De Quincey’s language establishes the key images that recur in his narrative’s recollection of the revolutionary experience—as if the visitation of these memories on his dreaming and waking mind were influenced by the trauma of knowing, of discovery, of revelation. “Mere anarchy and confusion fell upon me,” De Quincey says, further delineating the convulsions and agitations as sensory: “Deaf and blind I was, as I reeled under the revelation” (141). De Quincey claims he wishes not to recall the moment, but also admits—somewhat contradictory to this immemorial archive memory—that, “Rightly it is said of utter, utter misery, that it ‘cannot be remembered.’” Utter misery is confusion and a chaotic chasm, a void, an abyss. Corresponding involutes, schemata, or relational imagery during the event of seeing her

221. Qtd. in De Quincey’s reference note: ”I stood in unimaginable trance / And agony, which cannot be remember’d.’” — Speech of Alhadra in Coleridge’s Rimorse. [28 Alhadra, on her agony upon seeing the body of her murdered husband; Coleridge, Remorse (1813), IVii.76. De Quincey may also have known the original version of the play, Osorio (written in 1797, but not published until Richard Hearn Shepherd prepared an edition in 1873)]” (141).
body fills the void. Viewing her body offers some equilibrium, a new schema or knowledge base to apply or re-write the true trauma, the trace and substrate, of facing her loss.

De Quincey wishes not to recall the circumstances of assurance over Elizabeth’s death, while expressing the possibility that they cannot be remembered. Yet, he conveys a strong sense of the moments, through repeated memories which supplant them. Seeing her body is the first memory to fill the traumatic void. Suspiria de Profundis’s scheme renders the involute fragmentation of memory and narrative. His title, key subjects, memory episodes, and literary allusions suggest his preoccupation with semantic and cognitive associations within both memory and narrative. The sections ‘echo’ a network of signification surrounding viewing Elizabeth body after death and before burial: briefly this includes the moments of approaching and entering her room, ascent of the staircase, the doorway, the bed, her face in the noon sunlight with a morning breeze upon his—and experiencing a long interval of time contracting into a minute. During this sequence, vital sets of visual echoes emerge: first the sunlight through the window, then the locked door to Elizabeth’s chamber (when he attempts a second viewing, triggering his first remembrance of the initial moment), and finally the coffin descending into the grave.

De Quincey’s narrative strives to manifest the dreaming faculty. He directly echoes the monumental trauma of Elizabeth’s death in his conception of the dreaming structure—in many ways shaping it. The “shaft” of the caduceus-narrative and the “pall” of Elizabeth’s coffin merge when he employs both “shaft” and “pall” for the structure of the mental faculty. The dreaming “apparatus” or, “the machinery for dreaming in the human brain,” accesses memory’s depths (a sort of ur-unconscious): a “great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy” (131). As memories constitute most of his dream, even opium-enhanced ones, dreaming is a
primary component of memory for De Quincey. Opium dreams exaggerate memories, dreams revivify memories, the narrative embodies relived memories, like variations upon a theme—but what the palimpsest-archive, caduceus-narrative, and his involutes suggest is that experience inherently entangles the future into associations already set in the mind.

De Quincey’s memory, his stress on recollection of a remembrance, in many ways prefigures the post-modern subject; this decentering carries to the reminiscing, recollecting, and remembering subject the sense of the post-modern body that Barbara Stafford, an art scholar, notes of the body metaphor and its history of perception in Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine, Stafford argues that the body, as it appears in twentieth-century art, represents chaos and fragmentation rather than wholeness and coherence.222 The involute of his coining is a complex, yet fragmented, dimensional entity. He reflects on his earlier confessions as a caduceus, offers the palimpsest and archive as a vessel for his subjects, but arrives at involutes as the defining concept for the philosophy he explores in Suspiria. All his other images reinforce the vital aspects and characteristics for which he employs involutes. Involutes become the conceptual domain for his philosophy.

Section 2: Geometric Co-option and Coining Involutes

Suddenly starts off the infant, suddenly ascend the birds, to new evolutions as incalculable as the caprices of a kaleidoscope; and the glory of their motions, from the mixed immortalities of beauty and inexhaustible variety, becomes at least pathetic to survey. So also, and with such life of variation, do the primary convulsions of nature such, perhaps, as only primary formations in the human system can experience come round again and again by reverberating shocks.

Thomas De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis , 162-163

In Thomas De Quincey’s lengthy comparison of psychical trauma on “the infant”—for which his childhood serves as case study—to the movement of waterfowls, he pursues a mathematical lexicon. He cites the “Grecian simplicities of motion,” to suggest his sense of contemporary advances “amidst a labyrinthine infinity of curves that would baffle the geometry of Apollonius” (162). Notably Apollonius, in addition to writing on conic sections, offered the hypothesis of eccentric orbits, also involving involutes. Orbital eccentricity examines the deviations of one orbiting object from the path of perfect circles around another, a factor preceding gravitational impacts on matter. The “new evolutions as incalculable as the caprices of a kaleidoscope” provide a sublimity and ineffability that transcends the calculable, the quantifiable characteristics of the very field to which his use of jargon appeals. The eye-wearying “glory of their motions,” initiate a near divine and unknowability to both subjects: “the mixed immortalities of beauty and inexhaustible variety, becomes at least pathetic to survey.” He might as easily be describing a caducean composition, a palimpsestic memory, or a lifetime of recollecting the coining remembrance-point. He is, however, directly addressing the similarities between “primary convulsions of nature” and “primary formations in the human system.” The cyclicality of nature provides the visual model for “experience” operating in human memory, wherein it can “come round again and again by reverberating shocks.” “Grief” is the central memory, “utter misery” in grief issues endless recollection, and grief reverberates through the human system: when the water-fowl “seek the water at last, as if with some settled purpose (you

223. Astronomer and geometer, Apollonius of Perga, of the late third to early second centuries BCE. Among the vast contributions, Apollonius’s work includes eccentric orbits, the motion and speeds of planetary movement, such as epicycles. Apollonius also coined the terms ellipse, parabola, and hyperbola for the familiar concepts applied in fields today.
imagine) of reposing,” they again take flight, “suddenly ascend the birds,” “suddenly starts off
the infant,” endlessly arise sighs from the depths.224

Thomas De Quincey’s analogy for destabilized, reverberating memories is the flight of
water-fowls, a pattern and motion beyond the grasp of fundamental mathematics. De Quincey
scrutinizes his memories as they expose these otherwise concealed processes. His description of
the human memory system offers a sketch of involutes in action.

Involutes, influenced by the caduceus, the palimpsest, the archive, have comparative
qualities yet becomes their own distinct conceptual domain or metaphor. It is important to note,
for further exploration of involutes, the mathematic usage of “abstract” and “concrete”
concerning numbers: an abstract number designates its singular entity without application to
things, whereas a concrete number is associated to things and their quantities counted. To explain
the experiences of repeated shocks that issue from childhood trauma, he anchors abstractions
(“incalculable,” “immortalities,” “inexhaustible”) in concrete images (“fowls”, “kaleidoscope”),
which render as poetic figures (usually metaphors) or mediums of representation. Much of his
discussion touches on philosophical terms or concepts, directly or indirectly. Several vital
discussions within scholarship engage De Quincey’s philosophical interests in Immanuel Kant,
the most prominent figure De Quincey addresses throughout his writings. De Quincey’s
endeavor with involutes, while not explicitly stating a philosophy, positions itself within a rich
philosophical vista. The aim of Suspiria is to concretize one involute moment’s infinitely

224. Wordsworth lines, again from “Home at Grasmere,” seem appropriate (277-320): “Ah no, the stream / Is
flowing, and will never cease to flow, / And I shall float upon that stream again. / By such forgetfulness the soul
becomes, / Words cannot say how beautiful” (293-296); “Shout after should—reiterated whoop, / In manner of a
bird that takes delight / In answering to itself” (321-323); “and, by words /Which speak of nothing more than what
we are” (811-812); “that my Song / With star-like virtue in its place may shine, / Shedding benignant influence, and
secure / Itself from all malevolent effect / Of those mutations that extend their sway / Throughout the nether sphere!-
And if with this / I mix more lowly matter; with the thing / Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man /
Contemplating; and who, and what he was-- / The transitory Being that beheld / This Vision;--when and where, and
how he lived; / Be not this labour useless” (841-851).
abstract proliferation into concrete instances of embodiment. The two systems, mind and narrative, inform the processes of each other demonstrating concretization in a remembrance, through recollections, and for memory’s involute system.

**Involutes as a Conceptual Domain**

A metaphoric sense of involutes develops into a concretized combined and *new or other* denotation. The progression suggests De Quincey’s frame of reference as a recollecting adult studying his own metaphoric language of as child. The core memory or involute remembrance informs his experiences later in life. The nursery experiences, particularly “the lowest depths in [his] nursery afflictions,” become the first memories De Quincey’s opium use vivifies in his dreams: a “phase of revolving affection” in which “the affliction, seemingly hushing itself to sleep, suddenly soars upwards, again upon combining with another mode of sorrow, namely, anxiety without definite limits, and the trouble of a reproaching conscience” (162). The soaring-flight or surfacing of painful memories seems oddly paired with the “glory” of the water-fowl without recognizing the awe De Quincey finds in involutes. De Quincey transmutes the mechanical involute into a means of recognizing sub-routines in the mind but in an organic or non-ordered system—at least one consisting of never fully traceable gradations caused by unpredictable modulations. The involute system becomes a merger of mechanical general patterns with variability in particulars.

The involute as a conceptual domain influences the operations of the body and the world. As Lévi-Strauss recognized, the body serves as a “three-dimensional matrix, a genuine system by
means of a creature” that “constitutes the object of thought and furnishes the conceptual tool.”225 Through the body, which for De Quincey is an involute-archive mind, all kinds of not-yet-structured phenomena find organization and order projected out of the sense of bodily principles and behavior. He credits a “strength of lunacy” to human dreams, “the fearful caprice of lunacy, and the malice of lunacy, whilst the victim of those dreams may be all the more certainly removed from lunacy” (169). His own faculty suffers “convulsions” due to the “confluence” and “coefficient” of opium with his grave psychical injury: “the idealizing tendency existed in the dream-theatre of my childhood; but the preternatural strength of its action and coloring was first developed after the confluence of the two causes” (169). Yet, he finds fruitful contemplation in the glory of involute moments opening into new experiences, of discovering the complexity of the indirectly communicated abstract forms within the concrete object.

De Quincey’s development of involutes shapes his other descriptions as much as it shapes his reality. Lévi-Strauss, concerned too with language in a social domain, compares primitive man’s linguistic operations with a child’s cognition in a similar fashion to other philosophers interested in metaphorical language and cognition in our perceptions of the world.226 Comparing metaphor to a miniature fable or “fable in brief,” Giambattista Vico in New Science (Prinicipi di Scienza Nuova), first published in 1725, suggests literal language followed the original language of metaphor.227 As a conceptual domain, the involute as a basic formulation shapes De Quincey’s philosophical inquiry. Involutes place him at the crossroads of several


226. Aside from Hobbes and Locke, Giambattista Vico and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (among several others) address these similar concerns of language.

fields which pursue overlapping inquiries into language’s powers of shaping reality or our thoughts about reality, whether in the form of schema, metaphors, domains, or models. “In scientific language, a model is essentially a heuristic procedure,” Paul Ricoeur explains in *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and Surplus of Meaning*, “that serves to overthrow an inadequate interpretation and to open the way to a new and more adequate one.”228 Such a heuristic revision, or perhaps paradigm shift, seems appropriate to what Deleuze qualifies as new ways of thinking, the philosophical precursor to science and art.229 Ricoeur’s sense of such theoretical models as De Quincey’s involutes demonstrates “an epistemological point of view” becoming, “the real models and which consist of construing an imaginary object more accessible to description as a more complex domain of reality whose properties correspond to the properties of the object.”230 De Quincey’s involute model coopts the properties of involutes and applies them to his conception of the particles of reality, experience, and thought.

De Quincey and his child-self may both wish not to recall and possibly cannot recall the in-the-moment impact of certain moments on his mind; however, the repeated reflection as an adult and in the exaggeration of opium’s coefficient combination with his faculty of dreaming, De Quincey finds these closed moments opening and unfolding, unfurling and evolving as *involutes*. The human system is one in which “experience[s] come round again and again by reverberating shocks” (163). De Quincey inherits Kant’s united interests in cognition, language


and mathematic-philosophical attentions to space and time. In his discussion of the schema and images, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents the role of cognition and imagination.\(^{231}\) De Quincey’s descriptions of the infant and waterfowl seem to conform with Kant’s reasoning. A stress on the materiality of experiences, of thoughts and feelings as objects redirects De Quincey to understand the material existence of experience (rather than isolated phenomena) as units and entangling conglomerates, independent and distinct when signified, represented, and conceptualized. De Quincey builds upon Kant’s distinguishing of the internal sense of time and cognition’s conception as a signified representation of objects. The schema, “always a mere product of the imagination,” functions with “*transcendental synthesis,*” much as does the cognitive processes of metaphor, as Kant outlines it: “in truth, it is not images of objects, but schemata, which lie at the foundation of our pure sensuous conceptions.”\(^{232}\) The schema, “this thought,” Kant argues, “is rather the representation of a method of representing in an image […] this representation of a general procedure of the imagination to present its image to a conception, I call the schema of this conception.”\(^{233}\) The process is one of deducing categories and generalities of phenomena that can then be applied back, “extended to objects as things in themselves.”\(^{234}\) Beyond simply a schema, involutes formulate a guiding principle for De Quincey’s way of viewing the world and experience.

De Quincey’s *act* of coining, much as involutes themselves, relies upon a combination of concrete objects rather than direct denotation of the abstract form. “As Max Black puts it,”

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Ricoeur comments, “to describe a domain of reality in terms of an imaginary theoretical model is a way of seeing things differently by changing our language about the subject of our investigation.” De Quincey redefines a conception of reality the moment he coins involutes of experience. “This change of language,” Ricoeur explains, and which is applicable to describing De Quincey’s involutes, “proceeds from the construction of heuristic fiction and through the transposition of the characteristics of this heuristic fiction to reality itself.” As both metaphoric and his own literal involutes, the relational meaning works in tandem as a unit.

In order to define involutes De Quincey offers a series of analogies, metaphors, and comparisons. Max Black’s contributions to the study of Models and Metaphors, suggest that metaphor may generate new meaning. Black’s study “contend[s] that some metaphors enable us to see aspects of reality that the metaphor’s production helps to constitute.” To define involutes is to demonstrate them through comparison, metaphor, analogy. I. A. Richards, with Charles Ogden, in Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism (1923), explains metaphor as “the whole double unit” of “the original idea” and “the borrowed one” or the “tenor” and the “vehicle,” respectively. Ogden and Richards’ terms themselves are intriguing for their own figurative—even metaphoric—properties, which incidentally coincide with the language De Quincey employs in his discussion


236. Ricoeur, 1979, Interpretation, 67.


of palimpsests. Partially an explanation of their origin, arising through use-value, De Quincey utilizes terms strikingly similar to Richards’ for the medium and the message of the palimpsest: “relation between the vehicle and its freight has gradually been undermined” (172). The “vehicle” is the vellum and the freight is human thought: “Once it had been the impress of a human mind which stamped its value upon the vellum; the vellum, though costly, had contributed but a secondary element of value to the total result” (172). Translated into different theoretical terms, the medium transfers a secondary value or quality to the prized message, or, the sign-signifier dually impacts the signified. Presumably addressing the vellum palimpsest, he indirectly addresses his memory theory (impress of a human mind) within his metaphor: language entangles memory. He roots his own metaphor of the palimpsest brain in a tradition of the human mind’s external memory aids, hypomnemata, or record of memory. Yet, the tenable relationship is not something De Quincey points out. Either the connection evades his conscious statement in narrative, or, perhaps the linguistic-conceptual associations are so deeply rooted as to connect themselves logically.

De Quincey, much like the pervading trend in these metaphor theories, seems to recognize, “between the symbol and the referent there is no relevant relation other than the indirect one,” which is the observation Richards suggests of context and relational meaning, aligning the metaphor’s meaning to the subject that uses it.239 To advance this even further, De Quincey’s discussion of interrelationship of the concrete “vehicle” and the abstract “freight”—they both employ vehicle, yet Richards offers the alternate term, tenor rather than De Quincey’s consistently material freight—of the vellum offers a provocative story of the life of a metaphor. The dynamic shifts when, “the vellum, from having been the setting of the jewel, has risen at

length to be the jewel itself;” De Quincey complicates the life cycle with a transfer of value: “the burden of thought, from having given the chief value to the vellum, has now become the chief obstacle to its value; nay, has totally extinguished its value, unless it can be dissociated from the connection” (172). His metaphor is transcendent; he selects a metaphor for memory’s medium of the brain that, as media studies attests, is part of the history of memory. Moreover, in the process De Quincey’s metaphor also describes the history of the metaphoric medium as if explaining metaphoric operation itself.

Even as the diction and terminology connect together, De Quincey underscores the limitation of language. Language is contextual and temporal; its limits require reception and interpretation. The tandem operation of vehicle and freight, or tenor and freight, is cogently redirected by Max Black as a “system of relationships” between the primary and secondary subjects.\(^\text{240}\) Black’s terminology helps to direct the metaphor as a interlaced coupling, much as involutes themselves. Black outlines the metaphoric phenomena in language as a frame or the context of metaphorical term and its focus—bringing the sense of metaphor in line with the delineation of characteristics between the general and specific (similar to categorical generalities in Kant’s schema, or the replicable pattern of Piaget’s). For Black, the metaphoric subject becomes an “implicative complex.”\(^\text{241}\) De Quincey’s involute moves from the literal meaning of the metaphoric sense into a matrix he must define through other explorations of relative imagery, language, analogy, and figuration. Metaphor may be the most basic level of language—language


as a sign system is inherently metaphoric, in the sense that language (and metaphor) remained ever-yet-to-be-actualized.

De Quincey’s involutes acquire his additional meaning through the surplus of the metaphor, and also the additional figural work he offers to underscore the characteristics of the schema or newly established cognitive model. De Quincey offers discursive arbitrariness in the vellum palimpsest as a keen example of relational meaning through context: “Yet, if this unlinking can be effected, then, fast as the inscription upon the membrane is sinking into rubbish, the membrane itself is reviving in its separate importance; and, from bearing a ministerial value, the vellum has come at last to absorb the whole value” (172). Media principles apply to metaphor theory here. The brain as the vehicle for the freight of memory, the palimpsestic quality (endless re-inscription) transfers to the memory, and further reinforces the shared characteristics of involutes in memory.

Any dissociation of inscription from the vellum is an illusion, however, as the characteristics of the palimpsest demand. Memory, too, is an illusion of dissociation: memory is structured by and consisting of involutes. As much as De Quincey pursues one idea, the language of another related concept pervades his discussion. “Hence the importance for our ancestors that the separation should be effected,” De Quincey’s history of the palimpsest continues, arriving at the palimpsest itself: “Hence it arose in the middle ages, as a considerable object for chemistry, to discharge the writing from the roll, and thus to make it available for a new succession of thoughts” (173, 172). De Quincey’s diction and choice of imagery suggests the relational ties between his subjects. De Quincey appeals to a figurative comparison of the palimpsest, one akin to his imagery of the caduceus: “The soil, if cleansed from what once had been hot-house plants, but now were held to be weeds, would be ready to receive a fresh and more appropriate crop”
The allusive network De Quincey presents around his involutes suggests the need for interplay between figurative and literal meaning. He juxtaposes imaginary examples, analogous figures, or poetic descriptions to combine and expand the possible meanings of both. Yet, echoing images and the context of circumstances within his narrative suggest order or system beyond arbitrary interplay—interconnections to which he does not draw attention, but which draw attention to themselves.

De Quincey renders, in narrative, the exteriorization of his philosophical view of memory, of involutes. The aim or concrete object of involutes could be explained as a reversionary purpose.: “In that object,” here meaning purpose or aim in the genesis of the palimpsest:

the monkish chemist succeeded; but after a fashion which seems almost incredible, incredible not as regards the extent of their success, but as regards the delicacy of restraints under which it moved, so equally adjusted was their success to the immediate interests of that period, and to the reversionary interests of our own. (172-3)

Reversion seems to encompass revision and revivification, reproduction and reverberations. All resonate in the palimpsest: “They expelled the writing sufficiently to leave a field for the new manuscript, and yet not sufficiently to make the traces of the elder manuscript irrecoverable for us” (173). De Quincey then asks, “Could magic, could Hermes Trismegistus, have done more?” with a direct allusion to the wielder of the caduceus with all its powers concerning death and life (173). Through the connection he makes over the powers of resuscitation and passage into the afterlife, he establishes memory as reversion.

Reversion reinforces the material or physical motion of the vellum scroll. The exteriorization of the memory medium is recollection as much as it is reversion/involution of the scroll: “They did the thing; but not so radically as to prevent us, their posterity, from undoing it”
(173). But also, further linking the revelatory nursery experiences, the stakes are about life and death or the simultaneity of both states: “But really it is a problem not harder apparently than to bid a generation kill, but so that a subsequent generation may call back into life; bury, but so that posterity may command to rise again” (173). In this regard the past-De Quincey, the child afflicted, is much like the “monkish chemist.” The child’s trauma, having furled around itself, flying upon its center, suggests involute movement. “The rude chemistry of past ages” and “the more refined chemistry of our own” have different goals: “They did the thing proposed to them: they did it effectually, for they founded upon it all that was wanted: and yet ineffectually, since we unravelled their work; effacing all above which they had superscribed; restoring all below which they had effaced” (173). With the palimpsest, De Quincey remarks that the will of present circumstances alone determine its meaning: the present must destroy the supplanted layers in order to undo the past effacement. “Had they been better chemists, had we been worse,” De Quincey explains, “the mixed result” with pivotal imagery, “namely, that, dying for them, the flower should revive for us, could not have been effected” (173). Involute memory finds its process in successive supplanting and restoration. De Quincey’s involutes find their process in immortal impresses, one bringing forth the next, infinitely. All inscriptions are present, even when seemingly absent, while only some are visible or readable at any one time. While the present seeks to efface the previous, both remain; the past revives to supplant. Visibility equates to vivification, revolving or reverting to his coining memory. The metaphoric exchange (abstract/concrete) of language for cognition provides the vital underpinnings for analyzing De Quincey’s visual imagery in the philosophical domain, with all the implications of De Quincey’s involutes in the human system.
Reversion, Variation, Reverberation in the Involute Human System

He who has really read the preceding parts of these present Confessions will be aware that a stricter scrutiny of the past, such as was natural after the whole economy of the dreaming faculty had been convulsed beyond all precedents on record, led me to the conviction that not one agency, but two agencies, had cooperated to the tremendous result.

Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*, 169

The two agencies, his impacted dreaming faculty and excessive opium use, are just one example of the prevalence for interrelationship or cooperation in De Quincey’s philosophy. He establishes the inter-dependence of the past effecting the significances of the present, but also of present experience on the future. Literature and circumstances intertwine in experience, as do thoughts and feelings. The remembrance and its recollection also merge or blur in discourse. And the guiding concept for all of these behaviors, of involutes, builds its denotation from its own metaphoric sense as well as others, the palimpsest and the caduceus. Much as with the *shaft* and the *streets*—both void and object, structure and process—at the core meaning is both literal and figurative.

Through his epistemology of the palimpsest, De Quincey describes the situation through the material-medium and its communication through generations. Perception and memory resonate as dual aspects. The metaphysical tension between representation and matter not only recur in De Quincey’s metaphors and analogic relations, but suggest his prefiguring of Henri Bergson’s metaphysics. In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson dispels realism and materialism by affirming that matter is only images. Additionally, however—and all the more akin to De Quincey—Bergson also refutes idealism by refusing to reduce matter to our representations for it. 242 “Necessary poverty” is Bergson’s sense of the loss that occurs through perception: the

image of the material thing become a representation, a reductive “selection” in the process of “discernment in the etymological sense of the word.” While Bergson connects consciousness’s interest in preserving only bodily relevant data, the similarity to De Quincey’s relevant palimpsest layers is useful. Moreover, De Quincey extends the analogy to a hypothetic book of the reader’s, not unlike his own:

What would you think, fair reader, of a problem such as this, to write a book which should be sense for your own generation, nonsense for the next, should revive into sense for the next after that, but again become nonsense for the fourth; and so on by alternate successions, sinking into night or blazing into day, like the Sicilian river Arethusa, and the English river Mole; or like the undulating motions of a flattened stone which children cause to skim the breast of a river, now diving below the water, now grazing its surface, sinking heavily into darkness, rising buoyantly into light, through a long vista of alternations? (173)

This passage recalls imagery of the dreaming apparatus as well as contrasts that are central to his memory of realizing the concept he coins as involutes. The oscillations and motions of the flattened stone illustrate De Quincey’s connection between his psychical turmoil (convulsions, agitations, tumults) and perceivable images. De Quincey’s kaleidoscopic sense of motion aligns his interests, much as does Bergson’s, with spatial properties in consciousness’s relationship with reality’s time-space. For Bergson, consciousness connects “enormous periods in the internal history of things, quasi-instantaneous views [. . .] views this time pictorial, of which the most vivid colors condense an infinity of repetitions and elementary changes.” Without consciousness, “matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations,” explains Bergson, matter’s infinite vibrations are “all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each

244. Hereafter referred to as his coining memory.
other, and traveling in every direction like shivers.”246 The description resembles De Quincey’s involute as well as his description of his mental state when traumatic revelations strike his consciousness, the “suspension” of De Quincey’s “perfect mind” (145).

The similarities between De Quincey and Bergson are worth comparison as a way to reconcile De Quincey’s conceptual domain of involutes and the operations of his memory. Memory for Bergson consists of two cooperating types: habit-memory and pure-memory. Habit or automatic, repetitious behavior aligns with bodily perception whereas personal memories persist in a pure state or reference file. Together, behavioral and referential memory apply the past toward future experiences, much as it does for De Quincey. Memory, according to Bergson, is motion and movement. The conservation of the past occurs while a continuity of progress accommodates the difference of each new moment adding itself to all previous moments. Similarly, De Quincey’s encrusting layers or chaining involutes result from the processing of archived memory and perceptual repetition through invested imagery. Where De Quincey explains involutes entangling, Bergson offers moments stacking: their heterogeneity in memory remains a progressing unity. The conservation of the past is the movement of memory-matter into single images. Bergson relies on the image as a concept that underscores matter in order to circumvent the material valuing of the original over representations. Just as materially invested, De Quincey’s mind and narrative (as well as his memory and dreams) possess no hierarchy, rather the same value, only differing by degree (relevant further in Bergson’s sense of the virtual, of focus later).

De Quincey, however, imbues, the molecules of memory and experience with a textual materiality (based on the palimpsest and caduceus influences on his involute). De Quincey’s

involute provides for structural layers aware of the linguistical systems of medium, inscription, and interface. The impact of one concept, such as involutes, on De Quincey’s larger metaphysical view parallels Bergson’s concept of images, which influence Bergson’s understanding of the structure and processes available to memory. The unconscious precedes images, according to Bergson, which he explains with the example of a telescope and the operation of its lenses (suitable to his concept of the image). Rotation is the focusing in on singular images or instances of memory; contraction is the condensing of images into general knowledge. In other words, experience in pure memory (or the unconscious) offers preceding models for images and also singular instances transmute into generalities. The simultaneous actions and directions for memory, as well as the terms Bergson uses, underscore similar sense of motion, in mind and moment, for De Quincey.

The telescoping lenses of Bergson’s cone, oscillating as when the eye focuses, uncannily parallel De Quincey’s network for explaining involutes. Bergson’s two types of memory, moving from unity to multiplicity or interpenetration to fragmentation, clarify the successions and repetitions separated in perception with consciousness but also explains a complexity in De Quincey that schemata lack. Bergson’s concepts can apply to language (though he does not do so directly in Matter and Memory). In De Quincey’s reliance on or appeal to linguistic elements in his ordering of experience and the world, his memory and narrative to render it, functions in a similar way. Specific instances emerge from associated terms and descriptions (characteristics conveyed through figural images) and the specifics of particular moments transfer to others (general qualities and figural images transfer onto others). This oscillation of the telescope lenses is akin to Black’s frame and focus or manipulation of the involution of the cone. Uniting these

models offers a sense of understanding memory as a negotiation between matter and consciousness but also as a negotiation between the linguistic images forming a matrix around the matter, both in—to adapt the terms—habit and pure linguistics, or, lexical relations and experiential associations.

The mental leaps of both metaphor and analogy, in De Quincey, offer a sense of synecdochal or relational reasoning between, perhaps, two systems of memory. Behind the accidental and casual appearance of metaphor, there is always a system, as current research in literature and linguistics demonstrates. Metaphors permit “mental leaps” to use Paul Thagard’s phrase, studying analogy in human thinking through perspectives from cognitive science, or more recently, Keith J. Holyoak’s “Analogy and Relational Reasoning.” To fully appreciate the role of system, however, requires delineating the concept in Niklas Luhmann's sense. Luhmann, similar to De Quincey and Bergson, considers both interrelations and multiplicity. The similarities between these ideas suggest the type of self-proliferation in De Quincey’s involutes.

The central function for any system is the necessity for communication. Luhmann develops systems theory concerning social system(s); yet, a linguistic society is apparent in De Quincey’s cognitive network. Communication for Luhmann constitutes the unity of “utterance, information and understanding” and its ongoing self-reproducing or autopoeisis (Greek “self-creation” or


“self-making”). Self-reproducing or maintaining of self suggests an almost biological status quo of homeostasis, or, the type of signal integrity important to communication or informational systems. Luhmann suggests that systems seek to maintain self; yet, self-maintenance is not necessarily static stagnation. The involute engineers spiraling reproduction. For De Quincey’s involute system, involutes maintain themselves through repeated utterance, entangling new information with the substrata beneath while influencing understanding through variating reverberation.

De Quincey’s idiosyncratic study exhibits his childhood experiences, and in so doing offers within the remembrances subtle undercurrents that trace his semantic patterning. De Quincey’s narration of his nursery afflictions privilege key images that surround his portrait of grief, dreaming and memory, and, ultimately, involutes: life and death, light yet limited vision, obscuring objects, limits, and depths. “On the day after [his] sister’s death,” De Quincey “formed [his] own scheme for seeing her once more:

There were two staircases; and by one of these I knew that about noon, when all would be quiet, I could steal up into her chamber. I imagine that it was exactly high noon when I reached the chamber door; it was locked, but the key was not taken away. Entering, I closed the door so softly, that, although it opened upon a hall which ascended through all the stories, no echo ran along the silent walls. Then turning round, I sought my sister's face. But the bed had been moved, and the back was now turned. Nothing met my eyes but one large window wide open, through which the sun of midsummer at noonday was showering down torrents of splendor. The weather was dry, the sky was cloudless, the blue depths seemed the express types of infinity; and it was not possible for eye to behold or for heart to conceive any symbols more pathetic of life and the glory of life. (142)

When he turns to view her face, and after remarking briefly on her features, a “mournful” wind—“it is in this world the one solid audible symbol of eternity”—from the window forces the

juxtaposition of “the open window and a dead body on a summer day” (144). Any replication of the “torrents of splendor” from “the sun of midsummer at noonday” through the “large window wide open,” whether in part or whole, offers a resonant message, if not meaning, when it occurs in descriptions of other matter, particularly such “types of infinity” as he recognizes in “the blue depths” of the sky. This schema, in a Luhmann system, requires structural coupling and differentiation. Luhmann’s structural coupling, much like the relational structure of metaphor, implicates tandem and interlacing trajectories. The coupling of discourse, of system, of meaning-making, is clear in light of metaphoric relations, of frames and focus. The meaning of these “symbols,” none “more pathetic of life and the glory of life” in memory, are both habitual symbolism and personal symbolism. The perception to the singular moment and matter, in a Bergsonian sense, is then applicable to abductive reasoning or generalizing. Differentiation permits a system to fulfill complex structured unity, particularly with respect to autopoiesis, which requires a message from and to, a sender and receiver, the inter-systemic relationship (as opposed to communications outside the “closed” system). The images that De Quincey offers in this moment do not simply echo in the course of his narrative; rather, they differentiate into separate utterances or information.

De Quincey’s reverberation of experience manifests in narrative variation. The two staircases, the closed door, no echo, the back of the bed, the window, and the sky all resonate with prominent imagery throughout Suspiria. Bergson, in Creative Evolution, explains complexification, “forms ever more and more complex,” “the infinitely complex machine” with operations of “growing complexity.”252 Existence’s operations become a series of bifurcations

and differentiations, which for De Quincey generates in the involute system. De Quincey’s experiences and perceptions influence his mental conceptions and representations both in memory and language. Recollection and narrative, in turn, restructure De Quincey’s perceptions. Without a divisible nature, the compound expression of the literal and the metaphor are more than discursive. The impulse of these attitudes of perception and metaphor coincide with De Quincey’s aims, related to Bergon’s countering of realism and materialism.

Language, for De Quincey, holds a material quality. His attention aligns him with media studies but also the historical questions of language. In Contagious Metaphor, Petra Mitchell places Friedrich Nietzsche’s work on metaphor in a position that influences modern literary approaches, such as Deconstruction. “Nietzsche argued that all language is, at base, metaphorical,” Mitchell notes of “Über Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”: “written in 1873 but unpublished during his lifetime, Nietzsche provides one of history’s most incisive critiques of literal language [. . .] “an unproblemantic relationship between words and things does not and cannot exist.” By stressing that he coins involutes, De Quincey reinforces language as fundamentally metaphorical in the way that discourse in language could be called palimpsestuous. Nietzsche’s argument also points to the act of naming—an illusion of genesis or epistemology—as the root for the problematic relationship. “The process of naming is itself metaphorical, there can be no language prior to metaphor,” as Mitchell explains Nietzsche’s argument: “As a result, Nietzsche writes, ‘we possess nothing by metaphors for things – metaphors which correspond in

no way to the original entities.’”255 Perhaps it is accurate to suggest that De Quincey’s study of involutes of human sensibility suggests that all language is indeed *involute*.

By *coining*, De Quincey also stresses the *imprint* on an object as *other* than cosmetic and arbitrary. Perception is key. Its importance, with Bergsonian ties to consciousness, implicate specific roles for language and cognitive processes. Perception and language demonstrate a power to re-produce reality, just as De Quincey claims of dreams. De Quincey orders his perceptions and re-collections upon the characteristics of involutes. In the coining-recollection, De Quincey describes the scenario of the core involute as both a viewing of Elizabeth and an ethereal dream-vision: “a trance” (144). Whether a marriage or matrix, the metaphoric exchange or structural coupling of the two visions link De Quincey’s conscious and unconscious. He claims to hear a distinct mournful wind from outside that causes him to glance between the window and Elizabeth: “Instantly, when my ear caught this vast Eolian intonation, when my eye filled with the golden fullness of life, the pomps and glory of the heavens outside, and turning when it settled upon the frost which overspread my sister’s face, instantly a trance fell upon me” (144). The glance he must make to the window *and back* creates a sharp contrast of matter, perception, image, and representation. An after-image of the heavens settles upon her face, juxtaposing the contrast; while a “mode of antagonism” (De Quincey’s concept, addressed further in Chapter Three) seems apparent here, the figurative descriptions resonate the void and central point related to the geometric involute (143). While in this “trance,” De Quincey recollects the sleep-like experience as a near out of body daydream with imagery central to *Suspiria* and involutes:

> A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up forever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft forever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but that also ran before us and fled

255. Qtd. in Mitchell, Metaphor, 19: (p181: citing (Nietzsche, 1979, [1873], p. 82).
away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on for ever and ever. Frost, gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; I slept – for how long I cannot say: slowly I recovered my self-possession, and found myself standing, as before, close to my sister's bed. (144)

The structural images alongside the motions and spaces evoking mathematics merge, for De Quincey, with theological relevance. The dreaming apparatus and wound in his faculty follow the trajectory outlined in the trance. The futile pursuit ends in revolving back to the starting point of frost, now “to repel” him from the suspended state. His crisis and trauma find an unsteady repose:

O flight of the solitary child to the solitary God, flight from the ruined corpse to the throne that could not be ruined! how rich wert thou in truth for after years! Rupture of grief that, being too mighty for a child to sustain, foundest a happy oblivion in a heavenborn dream, and within that sleep didst conceal a dream, whose meaning, in after years, when slowly I deciphered, suddenly there flashed upon me new light; and even by the grief of a child, as I will show you, reader, hereafter, were confounded the falsehoods of philosophers. (144)

Once again, De Quincey’s repeated recollection provides him revelation of “meaning” that the experience possessed, which he “slowly [. . .] deciphers” later, “in after years” (144). He copes with the “rupture of grief” he cannot sustain while a child through its “oblivion in a heavenborn dream.” His trance and Elizabeth’s death, two different figures of sleep, combine: “within that sleep didst conceal a dream.” The slippage of meaning holds its own insights. Relational meaning, a coupling structure, entangles through language as much as within language. The role of vision, the visions, is pivotal for the scene, and also for ideas on language. Historically the questions of language include discussion of pre-linguistic and abstract thought deriving from visual stimuli including gestures. Rousseau’s contributions to the discussion correlate metaphor to physical gestures, translating visual mimetic units to representations in speech, ultimately
coupling the visual and audio-oral channels of the brain. Certain vestiges of the dialogue between these systems—the visual system and audio-oral system—are apparent in De Quincey’s description.

De Quincey draws attention to his subsequent process of re-viewing, re-presenting, or reading the past. The primacy of visual representations express that which is unknowable and ineffable at the time. The inter-systemic relationship Luhmann might locate in the perception-mimesis or representation’s structural coupling underlies both sensory systems. De Quincey is not simply caught in a circular progression that repeats the coining remembrance into later narrative. Nor, does his study only operate regressively, deriving meaning in later image patterning from only one more basic unit, in an infinite regress. De Quincey demonstrates a complex system, the by-product of his inquiry, examination, and coining. The system is part of his nascent theory that provides a progression vital to philosophy. Philosophy relies upon exploring and redefining the conceptual space of inquiry. The relational properties of De Quincey’s involute, appear quite apart from the diminishing finitude of such concepts as Leibniz’s monads, an indivisible unit; instead, De Quincey’s core remembrance operates with similar force or action while establishing a new understanding of unit(s). The involute unit is generative progression. Adult reflection, and furthermore, adult narration, provides the keys for decrypting the dream, the experience, the involute(s) of memory. By applying Luhmann’s system theory to metaphor/language theory, De Quincey’s (and the Suspiria’s) internal audio-

256. Marcel Danesi explores Rousseau’s ideas on visual mimesis and language. Influencing Nietzsche’s formulation of metaphor as the basis for language, Rousseau offers language-through-the-eye theory: “Rousseau proposed what certainly must have been a radical idea for his era—that metaphor was not a mere stylistic variant for a more basic literal most of express, but rather a cognitive remnant of a previous and hence more fundamental, stage in the evolution of the ration, or logical, mind” (Marcel Danesi, Vico, Metaphor, and the Origin of Language. [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993], 11).
oral and visual systems then constitute sub-systems within the system of perception integral to cognition and language.

De Quincey’s *Suspiria* aims to render the process of apprehension as a complex of systems and sub-processes—with an alertness to systems principles. De Quincey explains his aims to his readers by invoking the same key imagery of the coining remembrance:

> Here, at the point where I have called a halt, the reader has reached the lowest depths in my nursery afflictions. From that point, according to the principles of *art* which govern the movement of these Confessions, I had meant to launch him upwards through the whole arch of ascending visions which seemed requisite to balance the sweep downwards, so recently described in his course. (169)

The complex apparent in De Quincey’s system of imagery presents the multiplicity also at work within involutes. For Luhmann, systems comprise a multiplicity of *events* in communication; in the central remembrance point or the core involute of his essay, De Quincey renders the multiplicity of communicative events taking place. De Quincey means to re-represent in his “*art*” the movements he feels and felt, which in turn should render the same experiences in his reader. De Quincey refers to these movements “already sketched” as the “phases of revolving affection” for which the core involute of *Suspiria* is one “where the affliction, seemingly hushing itself to sleep, suddenly soars upwards, again upon combining with another mode of sorrow, namely, anxiety without definite limits, and the trouble of a reproaching conscience” (162). The childhood trauma, in another sleep-state, surfaces in his adulthood with opium’s influence. His narrative exhibits a motion of tendril digressions; his memory must read palimpsestuously through layers of recollection; his remembrances travel from eddy to eddy, in approaching the center of the maelstrom. Each suffers a *necessary poverty*, to apply Bergson’s term.257 Yet, the multiplicity extends even further for De Quincey’s philosophy. De Quincey creates a juncture for

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memory and language, which Bergson offers in his metaphysics of memory and matter. Each instance, being a multiplicity—an involute—can never be fully re-presented:

It is impossible, with respect to any memorable grief, that it can be adequately exhibited so as to indicate the enormity of the convulsion which really it caused, without viewing it under a variety of aspects,—a thing which is here almost necessary for the effect of proportion to what follows: 1st, for instance, in its immediate pressure, so stunning and confounding; 2dly, in its oscillations, as in its earlier agitations, frantic with tumults, that borrow the wings of the winds; or in its diseased impulses of sick languishing desire, through which sorrow transforms itself to a sunny angel, that beckons us to a sweet repose. (162)

It is only by “viewing it under a variety of aspects,” De Quincey suggests, that “memorable grief [. . .] can be adequately exhibited.” The concrete object of each moment consists of perplexed combination that require exploration, multiple and varied views for each recollection’s further interlocking and entwining. He lists the three modes “almost necessary for the effect of proportion” and “to indicate the enormity of the convulsion [. . .] caused.” “Immediate pressure” rightly corresponds, in the sense of printing and contraction, of the reception in memory. All successive associations compound the “oscillations, as in its earlier agitations”—which returns to imagery of the waterfowl movements. The transformation of “languishing desire” into “a sunny angel,” besides invoking the descriptions for Elizabeth, reiterates the central remembrance point issuing from the void of trauma. The hushed affliction “suddenly soars upwards,” De Quincey notes the third mode of exhibiting an involute: earlier agitation “combining with another,” with the latter impacting the former. Much as an involute can evolve outward, it can revolve inward.

The seemingly opposed motion of centrifugal and centripetal forces aids the multiplicity of an involute: involutes are manifold in structure and operation. Bergson’s sense of multiplicity creates a juncture leading to phenomenology and Bergsonism, primarily developed by Gilles Deleuze. While phenomenology assists in understanding De Quincey’s narratology, Deleuze’s attention to the physics and metaphysics of Bergson offer explanation for involutes, with the
sense of *proportion* and *intensity* at work in De Quincey: “I find my resource in a sort of ‘jury’ peroration, not sufficient in the way of a balance by its *proportions*, but sufficient to indicate the *quality* of the balance which I had contemplated” (169). These points seem particularly key due to the nature of the *revolutionary* remembrance: a singular moment in which he experiences time “contracted” during the “suspension” of his “perfect mind” (145). The geometric involute offers De Quincey a matrix for qualitative multiplicity in the concreteness of ‘thoughts and feelings’—con/sub-sequently recollection or reminiscence. De Quincey’s involute, as the aspects of philosophical anamnesis that Bernard Stiegler would call the embodied act of remembering, becomes its own experiential continuum, what Henri Bergson later calls *duration*: categorically differentiated from the quantitative dimension of time. Furthermore, the mathematics that involutes invokes, primarily differential geometry, links related philosophical inquiry into the qualities and quantities of time and space, and even perception.

*Suspiria de Profundis* exhibits his inherited philosophical exploration of memory phenomena as well as the re-production of remembrance as memoir. From that moment experiences infinitely entwine in memory, the interconnectivity of experience impacts the semantic network he renders in his narrative’s discursive system. Successive moments have their foundations in previous experience; however, accessing the preceding layers is only possible *through* the newer growths and fructifications. The same is true of new denotations, particularly for his *involute*.

**Section 3: The Virtual Philosophy in Involute Experience and Re-experiencing Involutes**

The mathematic interest pervading *Suspiria* extends De Quincey’s co-option from the spatial structure of involutes in geometry to the physics of time and motion in the behavior of
involutes. Involutes operate or consist in all stages or ontological modes from experience, memory, to recollection—and further, to De Quincey’s representations in narrative. Involutes are also virtual—in a particular sense of the word. Virtual appears widely as synonymous with various simulative or representative acts, but also, more recently, digital objects. The comparison is useful for its unusual sense of materiality; however, a metaphysical distinction must be made concerning De Quincey’s involutes.

Involute experience is multiple in components, manifold in medium, and to attempt approximating a representation of experience requires repeated, varied, and differentiated views. The virtual is in each involute layer, but also in the relationships between the layers. From a media studies standpoint, De Quincey’s concept of experience follows a tripartite model.258 De Quincey demonstrates the tripartite model in his mental and narrative representations, or his internal and narratological systems. On the physical level involutes form the fundamental signs of inscription (“on a medium”).259 On the logical level, involutes dictate the discursive procedures by which inscribed data is read (or “recognized and interpreted”).260 And, on the conceptual level, involutes determine the experiential, tangible, or consumable: “the object [. . .] deal[t] with in the real world.”261 A reader of Suspiria de Profundis encounters three levels of involutes, as does De Quincey in the act of recollection. The reader might be said to have a virtual or simulated experience of excavating De Quincey’s recollection, memory, even, his experience. Involute is manifold in structure and processes. Experiencing Suspiria de Profundis


re-presents, re-creates even, the same interconnection of memory. Conscious experience of the
text follows temporal sequence while maintaining, simultaneously, a unity with previous content.
The discursive continuity requires networking content, including poetic images, with a sense of
contextual associations as well as the linguistic sign-signifier-signified. The virtuality of
involutes includes their behavior for each level of experience: the inscriber, reader-archivist, re-
collector.

A sense of virtual experience in the discourse between literature and consciousness is a
sense of the term that aligns with phenomenological appreciations of literature. This more typical
sense of the virtual assists in understanding De Quincey’s involute as a marriage between the
two branches of thought from Bergson, phenomenology and Bergsonism. Contributing to the
former, Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, specifies that “a phenomenological inquiry on
poetry,” specifically, “aspires to go deep, because of methodological obligations.” The sense
of accessing depths, as well as what Bachelard refers to as the “doublet of resonances and
repercussions,” speak to De Quincey’s poetic images of the psychical apparatus (including the
dreaming organ) as well as the physics of motion in the mind. The sphere and its roundness is an
image Bachelard accepts for being, as others do, related and yet distinct from the particular
roundness of De Quincey’s involute. Bachelard’s phenomenological position avoids the
separation of image and being. Images for De Quincey seem more than poetic, yet somewhat
more aligned with Bergson’s sense of representation, with a necessary poverty requiring

Maria Jolas, and John R. Stilgoe. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), xxii. He also contributes toward reception of similar
temporal concerns in: Gaston Bachelard, *The Dialectic of Duration*, transl. Mary Mcalester Jones (Manchester:
Clinamen Press, 2000).

263. A vast discussion, concerning, but not limited to, Goethe, Baudelaire, Husserl, and Lukács. For the
requirements of this dissertation’s scope, I’ve streamlined discussions among any one field.
differentiation and repetition. When Bachelard pursues his inquiry into literature, he argues, “it must go beyond the sentimental resonances with which we receive (more or less richly—whether this richness be within ourselves or within the poem) a work of art.”\textsuperscript{264} There are, in effect, two intersecting spheres: that of the reader and of the text.

Phenomenological leanings are clear in De Quincey, though perhaps involutes offer a recursion that connects resonances and repercussions. The discursive reading experience, which blurs richness between text and reader, Bachelard recognizes as “phenomenological doublet of resonances and repercussions must be sensitized.”\textsuperscript{265} “The resonances are dispersed on different planes of our life in the world,” Bachelard elaborates, “while the repercussions invite us to give greater depth to our own existence.”\textsuperscript{266} De Quincey’s narrative seeks to recreate in his reader the tumults and elevations of his own experience. Rendering in narrative the inner workings of the mind is no small feat; rather, De Quincey elevates the literary endeavor, as Robert Ready explains in in his essay, “De Quincey’s Magnificent Apparatus.”\textsuperscript{267} Offering connections between the mechanic aspects of the dreaming faculty as a reproductive apparatus, Ready addresses De Quincey’s rhetorical mechanisms: “Reproduction is the most exigent force in life after sustenance.”\textsuperscript{268} Ready examines De Quincey’s outline of the mental apparatus and its functions, appealing to Freudian psychology to explain the transfer of narrative properties

\textsuperscript{264} Bachelard, 1996, \textit{Poetics}, xxii.

\textsuperscript{265} Bachelard, 1996, \textit{Poetics}, xxii.

\textsuperscript{266} Bachelard, 1996, \textit{Poetics}, xxii.


\textsuperscript{268} Ready, 1978, “Magnificent Apparatus,” 49.
(composition, inscription, textuality) onto the mind: “we need to remember Freud’s characterization of preconscious activity, especially that of dreaming: psychic economy binds stimulus by repeating it, mastering it in a kind of necessary dramatization of it, a reproduction.” The generative potential from preconscious to consciousness, as with the experience of a literary text, makes actual the virtual. And in this vein, the Bergsonism sense of virtuality becomes evident.

The planes of life, for Bachleard, invoke, as with De Quincey, time rather than space. Appealing to the transience of sound, Bachelard explains the relationship between text and reader: “in the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own.”

In other words, virtuality in literature operates through the co-option of utterance, the Bakhtinian polyvocality of language. Variations on a theme, the basis of the caduceus's tendrils, expresses this manifoldness for De Quincey, as does the palimpsest and as will the chorus during his dream-fugue (in “The English Mail-Coach”). Bachelard’s attention to vibrations, moreover, advances the interest of nineteenth century physics into a sense of multiplicity: “the multiplicity of resonances then issues from the reverberations’ unity of being.” To rephrase, reverberations have a unity of being that issues a multiplicity of resonances: a reverberation can resonate at different moments on the plane of our temporal existence (and possibly on planes of consciousness). De Quincey’s involute captures the same sense of this unity of being,


differentiated into a multiplicity of resonances, which disperse onto various temporal planes of consciousness.

De Quincey establishes vibrations as a communicative frequency, in the sense appealed to in the context of the information branch of systems theory. The vibrations communicate, exchange, discourse, translate. For Luhmann’s idea of system, systems are *closed*: they operate without exchange from the environment. In terms of the way De Quinncy employs *Suspiria de Profundis* for a model of memory, his internal and narratological systems might be viewed as one *system*: the psychical and narratological components operate as the structural couplings requisite for communication in systems. De Quincey’s narrative, external memory, and his internal memory are structurally coupled, paired as reciprocal transmitter-receivers. In recognizing this structure, the communicative processes internal to each can become more apparent, replicating the same models of exchange and discourse. Involutes depend upon *virtuality*. The doublet in Bachelard, the two structural couplings of De Quincey, are not the only discursive elements present: there is also time and space.

**Virtual Time: In Valuing the Immeasurable**

De Quincey presents a philosophical expression of experience in the mind that coincides with the innovations in physics of his day, while, in some ways initiating a line of thought closer to that of Henri Bergson, whose metaphysics, based on some qualification of Albert Einstein’s physics, requires first Bernard Riemann’s additions to understanding types of non-Euclidean space. These ontological distinctions for understanding the world and reality are vital for De
Quincey. The mathematics of involutes lays the foundation for De Quincey’s revelations about his perception and apprehension, his philosophy.

*Suspiria de Profundis* explores De Quincey’s philosophy—in the sense of a new conceptual position for inquiry—in the very act of rendering it. De Quincey is not concerned with epistemology, though indebted to its history, rather, he utilizes the general and particular of his own case to expose relational meaning central to linguistic discussions into areas experience that share the characteristics of reading. Lakoff and Johnson point out that metaphors divide “our world up into clusters, so we can deal with clusters instead of elements.”

Indeed, the “ready-made” schemas Lakoff and Johnson discuss, sound structurally similar to an involute: an advanced mode from more “basic” metaphors, epiphrastic objects” represent a paradigm, or coherent system of reasoning, in a condensed form. With the revelation of involutes, the diluting dreams of a contracted moment, De Quincey’s way of viewing the world, apprehending experience, and of thinking about thinking redefines itself.

Comparison, again, with his previous confession offers insight into his project and process. “As a text, the *Confessions* is a calculated literary product,” observes Robert Ready, explaining that it, “meant to set going the reader’s divisive experience of vision and of analysis.”

Ready further explains the relationship De Quincey sees his narrative take on: “the book illustrates what De Quincey characterized in 1828 as the action of true rhetoric, ‘an exhibition

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274. Lakoff and Johnson, 186-205. More on the neural theory of metaphor: “The motor cortex is said to contain a map of the body. Neuronal clusters throughout the body ‘project’ (that is, are connected) to neuronal clusters in the motor cortex, with neuronal clusters adjacent or nearby on the body projecting to neuronal clusters in the motor cortex. Maps of such types are common in the brain” (Lakoff and Johnson, 256).

which presupposes a state of tense exertion on the part both of auditor and performer.” 276 A text, narrative, must anticipate a space of communication. *Suspiria de Profundis* is arguably as calculated as De Quincey’s *Confessions*, though affecting an experience of recursive, digressive reproduction within the mind-text. De Quincey captures both the Romantic imagination and the poetic imagination’s resonance and reverberation that Bachelard locates in literature: “Needless to say, the reverberation, in spite of its derivative name, has a simple phenomenological nature in the domain of poetic imagination.” 277 Bachelard continues, in effect advancing Bergson’s image into the realm of linguistics: “The image offered us by reading . . . becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being.” 278 Bachelard’s *becomes* and *becoming* suggests translation or transmission of the image into the reader’s being to the point of near transmutation. De Quincey’s focus for memory, however, is on *internal* readings conducted during recollection, by selves along an involute continuity. Bachelard assists to merge metaphysics with the postulates of linguistics and communication sciences operating within De Quincey’s rhetorical site, the exhibition: the text that presupposes an interface of expression and reception can extend from narrative’s reproduction into the reproduction of the mental faculty. The continuity Bergson offers (expanded in Deleuze’s additions, his Bergson-*ism*) offers a distinct view of unity more useful for De Quincey than being and becoming. The *virtual* lends the required unified plurality to the various reading selves within memory: *actualization* renders the multiplicity of the *virtual*. Virtual, in fact, is one term De Quincey employs in *Suspiria de Profundis*, to describe time with

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still more remarkable similarities to Bergson. The involute(s) of each level of the narrative and the experience are virtual and exhibit this multiplicity.

De Quincey’s childhood trance holds additional, though nevertheless related, epistemological value for his philosophy of involutes. The singularity of his trauma and then his trance creates the singular conditions for an “inverse phenomenon” in his experience of time:

In the Opium Confessions I touched a little upon the extraordinary power connected with opium (after long use) of amplifying the dimensions of time. Space, also, it amplifies by degrees that are sometimes terrific. But time it is upon which the exalting and multiplying power of opium chiefly spends its operation. Time becomes infinitely elastic, stretching out to such immeasurable and vanishing termini, that it seems ridiculous to compute the sense of it, on waking, by expressions commensurate to human life. As in starry fields one computes by diameters of the earth's orbit, or of Jupiter's, so, in valuing the virtual time lived during some dreams, the measurement by generations is ridiculous by millenia is ridiculous; by eons, I should say, if eons were more determinate, would be also, ridiculous. On this single occasion, however, in my life, the very inverse phenomenon occurred. But why speak of it in connection with opium? Could a child of six years old have been under that influence? No. but simply because it so exactly reversed the operation of opium. Instead of a short interval expanding into a vast one, upon this occasion a long one had contracted into a minute. (144-145)

While discussing his previous Confessions in Suspiria, De Quincey contrasts his subjects. In Confessions he explored the relative nature of time experienced under opium’s influence “amplifying the dimensions of time. Space, also, it amplifies by degrees that are sometimes terrific”—now, in Suspiria he recognizes a nascent sense of duration in subjectivity and experience. At his sister’s bedside he experiences a moment in which, “instead of a short interval expanding into a vast one, upon this occasion a long one had contracted into a minute.” De Quincey’s “deepest thoughts and feelings” in this contracted moment are more profoundly dense

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and inextricable than ordinarily: “I have reason to believe that a very long one [interval] had elapsed during this wandering or suspension of my perfect mind” (145). Contraction in time alters in varying ways, much as with frequencies in sound (relevant to signals in communications), including pitch or intensity. Over the course of Suspiria, a memoir of recollection, De Quincey showcases the depth of the trance: the bedside scene structurally coupled with the heaven-born vision. The unity of this contracted moment in consciousness and the indeterminately long interval of the event exemplify the reverberations that cause resonances throughout his life, but also involute experience and memory as entangling multiplicity: Bergsonism’s virtuality depends upon duration or virtual time.

De Quincey’s expression of “virtual time” is strikingly similar to Bergson’s duration. Duration or durée is the term Henri Bergson uses to respond to Einstein’s relativity of space-time. Bergson in Time and Free Will proposes the need to separate time and space, the latter depending or predicated upon quantitative data, while the former is qualitative and linked to the “freedom” of the immediate data of consciousness. Bergson’s differentiation between spatial and temporal events or experience, allows distinction that helps him define multiplicity, which in turn establishes the sense of virtuality already captured by De Quincey. De Quincey might indeed be worth crediting with another coining: “in valuing the virtual time lived during some dreams.” Predating the physics of relativity, instead De Quincey attends to the influencing mathematics of motion and time. Valuing, rather than quantifying, is De Quincey’s approximation for experiences incommensurate to human life, intense temporal effects immeasurable by human computations.

De Quincey appeals often to motion or velocity for a sense of the relation between time and space. De Quincey is part of what Richard Sha argues is a Romantic investment in metaphysics. In “The Motion Behind Romantic Emotion,” Sha outlines several examples among De Quincey’s contemporaries.281 Sha points to Shelley’s “Speculations on Metaphysics,” in which, Shelley “essentializes differences between ‘thoughts, or ideas, or notions’ in terms of ‘Force,’ and thus the term bridges mind and body, thoughts and emotion.”282 Sha argues that force “provides to the emotions the aura of effectivity and materiality, because emotions are rendered into dispositions for automatic action without clear actors,” suggesting force as a “moving conceptual place-holder” for emotion studies.283 Shelley’s force coincides with several of De Quincey’s images for experience, though De Quincey often stresses immeasurability, such as intensity or quality. Force is also a concept in physics, in Newton’s classical mechanics, and further applies to work involving both power and energy, two terms related to the work-energy principle of physics. Again, this returns to the application of involutes in mechanics. De Quincey is not alone utilizing mechanic applications for his philosophical interests. As Sha notes, both “‘motion’ and ‘action’ are the basis of Darwin’s ideas about the nervous system,” but more extensively, the metaphors of mechanics permitted analogies of man and machine or electricity with the spirit.284 “Both physics and chemistry, of course, had a huge impact on Romantic physiology,” explains Sha, “largely through John Brown’s theories of excitability, which listed

the emotions and passions as internal exiting powers.” Brown’s contribution includes Brownian motion, which, like Dalton’s atomic theory, already cemented, suggests a material compounding of particles in undetectable relationships—the foundations of current entanglement theories. Two aspects of Brownian motion, diffusion and resonances, address issues of integrability, even entropy (to be discussed in Part II, mainly in Chapter Four), that mark De Quincey’s involutes on the progression to later issues of chaos and dynamic systems. Brown’s random trajectories offer a sense of De Quincey’s own seemingly unpredictable digressions and recursions. De Quincey’s perplexed combinations, incapable of being disentangled, derive from shared interests between the mechanical-organic self-maintaining system.

De Quincey’s personal case study has already yielded the coefficient forces at work in his system—it is in the effects his sense of physics resides. Michael Faraday, as Sha points out, “built upon a British tradition of force atoms, which the atomic center as being surrounded by spheres of attraction.” (35). De Quincey’s childhood affliction’s agitations, the cycling of the maelstrom, the wheeling of the waterfowls’ flight, the undulation of the skipping stone, among his other images of emotional motion, seem invested similarly. Sha offers Faraday’s 1818 lecture

286. Pedesis, leaping in Greek, becomes the physics term for the random motion of particles, known as particle theory or Brownian motion; Robert Brown (1773-1858) studied the movement of pollen suspended in water, molecules in contact, a teleport phenomenon, in 1827, which Einstein will utilize later.
287. John Dalton (1776-1844) develops his ideas from studying the pressure of steam and the expansion of gases, and as a result clarified Joseph Louis Gay-Lussac’s law; all of use for atomic theory in chemistry.
288. The phenomenon of quantum entanglement occurs when particles interact and can no longer be measured or described independently; famously ‘spooky’ to Einstein, the phenomenon includes the ‘hidden variables theory’ and application of special relativity to attempt to explain contested aspects of entangled states.
on “Observations on the Inertial of the Mind” as an example of the Romantic connections between physics and emotions; Faraday has “implicit faith in the unity of disparate forces.”

Sha excerpts Faraday’s elaboration: ‘The centripetal force, the centrifugal force, the force resulting from chemical action and that which originates in muscular exertion are at all times active in changing and varying the states induced by inertia [. . .] These are represented among intellectual beings by the sensations, perceptions, passions, and other mental influences which interfere . . . in the dictates of our reason.’

“This unity,” Sha suggests, “founders upon both the ability to impute causality and the problem of representation.”

De Quincey’s involute, however, posits a conceptual framework that is more than simple co-option. De Quincey’s involute, when informed by his sense of virtual time, divests interest, as does Bergson, in mechanistic causality or the juxtaposition of events in space. As with Bergson’s sense of duration, the motions De Quincey investigates or analogizes are temporal motions, motions between conscious states.

While in his trance, time and space separate for De Quincey. The separation is not unusual, whereas the effect on experienced or internal time is. De Quincey acknowledges that space “also” can be amplified along with time—he credits opium with amplifying the dimensions of both, though, apparently, the effects are separate as are the two. Unlike opium’s effect that expands time, during his trance, “on this single occasion [. . .] the very inverse phenomenon occurred.” De Quincey claims that the vision of the “heavenborn dream”—the sky-vault, the forever-shaft—contracts into a minute for his consciousness: “I have reason to believe


292. Sha, 2014, “Motion,” 36;
that a very long [interval of time] had elapsed during this wandering or suspension of my perfect mind” (145). De Quincey reconstructs the discrepancy between his lived consciousness as a minute and the time of the event far longer. He employs “perfect mind” for consciousness, though it seems useful for implicating the structural coupling of the conscious/unconscious in both the mind and narrative. His trance, a “wandering or suspension,” elides directly philosophical or Kantian issues of freedom and consciousness. Instead, perhaps not as directly as Bergson, De Quincey offers an alternative focus, an inquiry into the relationships of consciousness in time and space.

The freed conscious self of De Quincey in his trance exhibits what Bergson would call duration. Duration expresses time’s ability to contract, dilate and expand—without respect to space. Spatial multiplicity is homogeneous space, quantitative and enumerable; unlike temporal heterogeneity. De Quincey’s attempt to explain his conscious wandering in the vision of the sky and shaft is through describing both images not spatially but through temporality, the immeasurable temporality of “forever”: “a shaft which ran up forever.” De Quincey states: “I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft forever” (144). “The billows seemed to pursue the throne of God”—an infinite image—that “fled away continually,” De Quincey adds, offering another temporal description before reiterating that “the flight and the pursuit seemed to go on for ever and ever” (144). De Quincey grapples with showcasing the sense of time as difficult to understand as Bergson’s heterogeneous multiplicity of time. Conversely, the homogeneous and spatial, the quantitative multiplicities are easily numerically discerned or represented, enumerated. Therefore, Bergson describes time-consciousness as, “several conscious states,” a conglomerate, “organized into a whole,” and without spatiality, time allows these conscious states to “permeate one another”; the end result of this permeation of
consciousness within duration, is the whole “gradually gain[s] a richer content.” De Quincey’s dual sense of time, somehow alert to a long interval of (real) time passing though he perceives it “contracted into a minute,” offers two obvious states of consciousness—within the trance are continual states, innumerable states that permeate one another.

Involutes offer De Quincey the possibility for apprehending the permeation of conscious states. Involutes are the basis for encoding and accessing memory (the three stages: inscription, reading, and experiencing) and are involved, palimpsestuous, interlocking. In explaining the impact of the wind’s juxtaposing of the window and Elizabeth’s body, De Quincey demonstrates the characteristic linking between memories:

Many times since, upon a summer day, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, solemn, Memnonian, but saintly swell: it is in this world the one sole audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life I have happened to hear the same sound in the same circumstances, namely, when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day. (144)

Successive instances of similar images can recall to mind past ones. The temporal collapse memory allows offers a related example of several conscious states organizing into a whole composing something other and richer in content than when isolated. Memnonia, the name used during the time of the Ramesseum’s excavations (roughly 1750-1850), the Egyptian ruins of Ramesses II’s monument was one of several archeological sites that helped inspire antiquarianism among Romantics. Memnonia offers De Quincey a historical “symbol of eternity” in the utterance of the wind. The sustaining of two presents, a present and a past present, demonstrates not only the functions of memory, but that memory operates in relation to


294. For a useful engagement of this topic, see: Andrew Warren, _The Orient and the Young Romantics_. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014).
time or duration. Couching eternity in a physical allusion draws upon the multitude of states existing almost in defiance of space. Ancient history can co-exist with the present. Joining the past, the ruin, with the successive circumstances, palimpsestic involute layers, recalling the trance’s freedom of the conscious state.

De Quincey’s explanation of time dilation in his opium dreams, a more typical expansion of time, impact the role of involutes of memory further; however, the virtual of time consciousness requires further clarification as it applies for Bergsonism. Gilles Deleuze, the major contributor to Bergsonism, suggests: “Everything happens as if the universe were a tremendous Memory.”295 Deleuze elaborates on duration to include multiple durations, different durations, within itself: personal duration, matter’s duration, all durations within one time. In fact, duration must be so in order for memory to operate as it does. “There is, on one hand, a multiplicity of successive states of consciousness and, on the other hand, a unity which binds them together,” Deleuze suggests, and, “duration will be the synthesis of this unity and multiplicity.”296 Duration that is multiple and in effect a multiplicity is ultimately virtual. Virtual, in Bergsonism, offers a counter-premise from the real/ideal:

While the real is in the image and likeness of the possible that it realizes, the actual, on the other hand does not resemble the virtuality that it embodies. It is the difference that is primary in the process of actualization — the difference between the virtual from which we begin and the actuals at which we arrive, and also the difference between the complementary lines according to which actualization takes place. In short, the characteristic of virtuality is to exist in such a way that it is actualized by being differentiated and is forced to differentiate itself, to create its lines of differentiation in order to be actualized.297


297. Deleuze, 1988, Bergsonism, 97.
De Quincey employs the terms “contracted” and “dilated” for the virtual time of lived, conscious, or involute experience. One of Bergson’s famous images is of time as an elastic band, stretching and contracting, much the same way De Quincey describes it: “time becomes infinitely elastic, stretching out to such immeasurable and vanishing termini, that it seems ridiculous to compute the sense of it, on waking, by expressions commensurate to human life” (144). The virtual must be actualized; all actuals derived in the process of actualization are in the virtual. The actuals, the complementary lines, are different, differentiated from each other, issuing from the virtual. De Quincey’s involute provides a useful image for this: the involute spirals, parallel yet distinct, emanating from a central point. Different, successive recollections, actualize the virtual remembrance. In this way, memory is the process of actualization of a virtual experience. The elasticity of time and consciousness in De Quincey is distinctly Bergsonism in its details.

Involute experience in memory, for De Quincey, operates through actualized recollection; dreams function through similar (yet distinct) processes. Memory enacts a form of repetition, a repetition that includes active synthesis of these two presents, different in actualizing the virtual. Memory, for Deleuze, utilizing the metaphysics of Bergson, is both recollection and perception, recalling a now past present into the present and perceiving both simultaneously. De Quincey, when addressing the narrative rendering of the whole of these experiences, explains the role of dreaming as an extension of memory:


299. Deleuze, 1988, Bergsonism, 85.
The reader must suppose me at Oxford; twelve years and a half are gone by; I am in the glory of youthful happiness: but I have now first tampered with opium; and now first the agitations of my childhood reopened in strength, now first they swept in upon the brain with power, and the grandeur of recovered life, under the separate and the concurring inspirations of opium. (169)

In dreams he can experience an actualization of the virtual agitations of childhood, “reopened in strength, now first they swept in upon the brain with power.” The movement aligns with the collapse in time, as the two consciousness—the present and the past-present—merge. The sustaining of both is only possible through a recollection of the past, a re-presentation of the experience in memory.

The Virtual as Language, Dreams, and Involute Philosophy

I became profoundly aware [. . .] in the imagery of my dreams, which translated everything into their own language.

Thomas De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis, 132

De Quincey’s dreams actualize, repeatedly, the multiplicity of each virtual experience or remembrance. Profound reverberations resonate incalculably. De Quincey explains the phenomenon as “dream formed itself mysteriously within dream” (170). He further utilizes the imagery of the scene recalled for the re-experience of it: “within these Oxford dreams remoulded itself continually [. . .] And now in Oxford all was bound up into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny glorifying haze” (170). Ready comments on reproduction as interpretation: “In the Confessions, dreams reproduce ceaselessly interpretable phenomena of mental life like Wordsworth’s ‘spots of time’ and dramatize the uninterpretable power of individual being.”300 Ready recognizes the expansive proliferation De Quincey

expresses of the faculty: “De Quincey’s magnificent apparatus, his reproductive organ, serves the
dreamer’s life by engendering continual knowledge of just how far his experience extends his
sympathy with the infinite.” The continual remolding, echoes the pursuit of his consciousness,
“for ever and ever”: “Once again, after twelve years' interval, the nursery of my childhood
expanded before me” (169). But the scene and figures, while appearing “once again,” “now
dilated to colossal proportions”: “my sister was moaning in bed; I was beginning to be restless
with fears not intelligible to myself” (169). In his Oxford dreams, his first opium dreams, the
scene most impactful, the singularly contracted involute in the shaft of his psyche, expands to
amplified dimensions.

Dreams actualize virtual experience, (or perhaps remembrances—or, perhaps both
simultaneously), as do recollections. De Quincey experiences “once again,” creating a
simultaneity with his past self. “The Bergsonian theory of simultaneity,” explains Deleuze,
“tends to confirm the conception of duration as the virtual coexistence of all the degrees of a
single and identical time.” Note the similarity in a passage from Suspiria: “In a moment, in
the twinkling of an eye, every act, every design of [. . .] past life, lived again, arraying
themselves not as a succession, but as parts of a coexistence [. . .] the simultaneity of
arrangement under which the past events of life, though in fact successive, had formed their
dread line of revelation” (176). The uncanny parallels demonstrate clearly De Quincey’s
divergent interests as offering something new. De Quincey explains the successive sequence
thought of as time as plastic depending on perspective. Time is virtual with all points on the line

302. Deleuze, 1988, Bergsonism, 60.
as coexisting. Simultaneity simply exposes the correspondence of different experiences. “In reality, duration divides up and does so constantly,” explains Deleuze, adding: “That is why it is a multiplicity [. . .] In other words, the subjective, or duration, is the virtual [. . .] actualization comes about through differentiation.” Luhmann’s sense of communicative difference for maintaining a system’s processes approaches the concepts of difference in a similarly positive sense as Deleuze’s repetitious replication. To merge the ideas, the system and its operations might indeed be virtual, actualized in each replication, differentiated for unity. The underlying discourse of the involutes of experience is multiplicity and the virtual, in a highly Deleuzian sense of these terms, particularly in his sense of difference and repetition. The involute, for De Quincey, encapsulates the metaphoric clustering of meaning that establishes both the virtual and manifold nature of experience.

Here Deleuze’s discussion of grounding seems evocative of De Quincey’s reproductive faculty as poetic imagination in his narrative: “To ground [. . .] is to represent the present — in other words, to make the present arrive and pass within representation (finite or infinite).” “In fact to ground is always to bend, to curve and recurve — to organize the order of the seasons, the days and years,” Deleuze continues. When compared to De Quincey’s involute, “the object of the claim (the quality, difference),” that Deleuze grounds, “finds itself placed in a circle; the arcs of the circle are distinguished to the extent that the ground establishes moments of stasis within qualitative becomings, stoppages in between the two extremes of more and less.”

303. Deleuze, 1988, Bergsonism, 43.
306. Deleuze, 1994, D&R, 343
Quincey’s involutes spiral and operate between Bergson’s virtuality and Deleuzian memory, the ideas of multiplicity, as well as repetition and difference, and the virtual—all invoked directly or indirectly by De Quincey. De Quincey places his sense of consciousness as always within a temporal motion. Following the phenomenological vein, Sha points to other Romantic senses of motion: “Because physics then increasingly emphasized the dynamism of matter, physicists thus are hardly necessarily engaged in the process of freezing being, as Merleau-Ponty charged.”

Consciousness is a matrix of experience and recollection, of recalling past presents into the present for correlation. Consciousness is palimpsestuous as well as involuted. His ideas place him not only in relation to Deleuze building off Bergson, but among other post-modernist metaphysics, including Derrida’s conceptions of Husserl’s dialectic of internal time-consciousness. The dialectic is one of protention and retention within the living present—as Derrida explains, “what seems the utmost importance to Husserl is as much an operation (reactivation itself as the ability to open a hidden historical field) as the nature of the field itself (as the possibility of something like reactivation).”

De Quincey’s use of narrative to represent the reproductive processes of recollection manipulates narratological time in order to permit simultaneity rather than strict succession. The hidden historical field, or the virtual event, draws attempts to actualize it, dually excavate it. Derrida, whose concerns advance a more language-based exploration, speaks to De Quincey’s dual systems of his memory and his narrative.

Even the perplexed combinations of thoughts and feelings present in involutes are located in language. As Bachelard states the interdisciplinary idea of language’s primacy: “As a general

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thesis I believe that everything specifically human in man is logos.”

Bachelard echoes Bergson’s sense of creation, but also of sublimation: “One would not be able to mediate in a zone that preceded language.”

Ready points to a similar effect in De Quincey, when “the reproductive faculty shows itself again as power—personal, definitively indefinite.”

Ready locates the primary process in De Quincey’s image-language, “which consciousness of one’s own life reads without discursive understanding.”

Discursive understanding, a dialectic between different stages or selves, provides the same trajectory, as Bergson, positioning memory before image. For De Quincey’s memory-text of the mind, language, the word, is foremost; the mind’s re-production of experience must actualize the virtuality in language. This preconscious state, whether pre-logos or pre-apprehension, underscores the contingency of involutes—thoughts and feelings—upon language. In other words, or rather Bachelard’s, the “poetic image, which stems from the logos,” directs the involute, back to a linguistically—rhetorically and discursively—predetermined structure and behavior, or involute networks of associations.

The sense of communication, like experience, as an experience or event, to use Luhmann’s systems terminology, parallels the relationship of the virtual and the actual in De Quincey’s involutes. “Without the ultimate objectification that writing permits,” Derrida explains of discourse and dialogue, “all language would as yet remain captive of the de facto and actual intentionality of the speaking subject or community of speaking subjects.”

translate “Husserl’s exacting effort to catch the ideality of thematic sense and of words [mots] in their relations with the linguistic event.”316 “By absolutely virtualizing dialogue,” Derrida continues, “writing creates a kind of autonomous transcendental field from which every present subject can be absent.”317 The reading experience of writing, then, actualizes the virtual. “This ‘being of the book,’ this ‘instance of printed thought’ whose ‘language is not natural,’ Gaston Bachelard calls a ‘bibliomenon.’” (Derrida, 91).318 The reproducibility and representation depend upon both difference and differance.

Actualization is différance—to both differ and defer. Involutes in the concrete layered palimpsest embody the cyclicality of narrative signification actualized from the virtual compound/concrete memory. To add to the work on palimpsests and De Quincey’s palimpsestic brain, Derrida’s différance permeates the palimpsestic layers of psychological imprints of repeated memory, a proliferation of meaning and iterations or inscriptions of recollection.

Derrida’s inscribed exergue resembles De Quincey’s palimpsest in several ways. The two-fold relevance of archive theory (proliferating layers of re-inscription (of Derrida) as well as a ‘system of discursivity’ (Foucault’s archive) resonates with both the structure of the palimpsest and the behavior of inscription as well as the convulsion of wheeling destabilized movement and meaning. When Jacques Derrida explores a psychoanalytical 'impression' of archives (in Archive Fever), his discussions of inscriptions and imprints echo De Quincey. In following Hanold's interest in Pompeii and “the possibility of the archiving trace,” Derrida expresses the complexity

316. Derrida, 1989, Husserl's, 89.
of “[s]eparating the impression from the imprint.” The palimpsest suggests “correlative spaces” rather than “unbroken linearity,” concepts Michel Foucault demonstrates in *The Archaeology of Knowledge.* The sections of De Quincey’s essay demonstrate the differences between recollections of one moment, and additionally, his associations manifest as narrative digressions which *defer* his ever fully excavating the entire memory in all its ‘perplexed’ complexity, combinations, or entangled concrete impressions.

Differentiation offers additional implications in the Derridian sense of differance. “In Derrida, the productive energy of repetition derives from negation, from the necessary impossibility of supplementing an absence. Deleuze recognizes the kind of repetition which concerns Derrida, but insists that there is another, primary from of repetition which is fully positive and affirmative: “differentiation is [. . .] a creation, and that difference is [. . .] essentially positive and creative.” “Ultimately, then, De Quincey is against interpretation,” argues Ready: “Rhetoric is a discursive mode, but the possibility yet inheres in it of signaling the intuition of infinity, power, dreams; but even that possibility of rhetorical movement towards intuition is overcome.” Ready argues that, “in another sense, the division in the Opium-Eater is between what De Quincey’s essay ‘Rhetoric’ calls ‘the discursive and the intuitive acts of the mind.’” In a way that recalls Russett’s idea of synecdochal readings of De Quincey, Ready


elaborates on De Quincey’s description of the subject as applicable to the essay itself: “In that
work discourse is carried on ‘discurrendo,’—by running about to the right and the left, laying the
separate notices together, and thence mediately deriving some third apprehension.”

Moreover, the collapse of sequence is clear when Ready elaborates on De Quincey’s sense of
temporality, “to be distinguished from the immediacy of intuition, such as that of God, for whom
all truth reaches, ‘simultaneously, first and last, without successive time or partition of acts.’”

The caducean shape De Quincey develops in *Suspiria*, while doubling for the sequel, points
toward the applicability of involutes and his underlying philosophy.

De Quincey’s concept is aligned with Deleuze’s Bergsonism: “an immemorial Memory
or pure past, a past which itself was never present but which causes the present to pass, and in
relation to which all the presents coexist in a circle.” Similar to simultaneity, Deleuze states
“compossibility itself is a circle of convergence on which are distributed all the *points of view*,
all the presents of which the world is composed.” Deleuze’s “mobile circle” sounds very
much akin to De Quincey’s involute. De Quincey already thwarted linearity in *Confessions*,
which, according to Ready, of “the final two dreams,” if “the use-quester attempts to see them as
emblems sufficiently prepared for by the previous linear narrative,” the dreams, in fact, “finish
nothing.” “Their mystery,” Ready argues, “is that of the redeeming non-sequitur, confusing
each attempt to view them solely from their determinants.” The mathematical involute even

bares relation to Gilles Deleuze’s ‘tangent’ curve, ‘curvilinear’ movement, and his idea of Leibniz’s infinity ‘fold,’ senses building toward the continual state of subjects as ever-becoming, to which De Quincey’s involutes seem even more akin. Relevant to Deleuze's assemblage, consisting of palimpsest sedimentation and consciousness cyclicality that produces both centrifugal and centripetal tensions. De Quincey's involutes of experience underscores "the image, the memorial, the record" (143-4) —invokes archival aspects of memory, with concern for time and durée, in tandem with Deleuze’s sense of a “mobile circle” of “becomings” wherein “all the presents coexist in a circle.” De Quincey understands memory as the intersection and coexistence of experience, of the mind, and of the act of remembering.

Narrative repetitions, similar to recollection processes, in effect embody a virtual memory, actualize the virtual through differentiation. An involute experience—compound and concrete—is virtual; each recollection actualizes fragments of a complete memory record. Analysis of the structure of De Quincey’s essay yields insights not only from his awareness of external theories (such as Piranesi’s architectonics explored by Curtis Perry) but De Quincey’s own attention to his narrative principles connected to his theory of involutes. De Quincey’s narrative may very well attempt to trace or recollect the involutes concentric to this one foci, of

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331. De Quincey’s description of the apparatus offers a correlation of textual to the physical: “And the dreaming organ, in connection with the heart, the eye and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind” (130).


his surreptitiously visiting his deceased sister’s body laid out in her bedchamber, with each section of his fragmented essay entangling and circling back upon it. His endeavor vastly exceeds the aims by offering the involute schema and model of experience as a type of reading, involute reading, a process necessary to recognize a narrative modeling involute experience.

De Quincey’s ability to think in involutes becomes a philosophy of involutes. By tracing common threads in Riemann’s multiplicity of points and surfaces, Deleuze’s Bergsonism, as well as interdisciplinary contributions by Foucault and Derrida, ideas of multiplicity toward narrative and discourse become more readily available to literary studies. The narratology of De Quincey’s essay demonstrates its discourse: the ‘sighs from the depths’ in the remembrance of a moment encrusted—or perhaps crystalized—by the strata of a palimpsestic memory. Through the behavior and structure of the dreaming faculty, De Quincey’s involute reveals his prescient sense of human existence within “counter forces of corresponding magnitude [. . .] that shall radiate centrifugally against the storm of life so perilously centripetal toward the vortex of the merely human” (130). Thomas De Quincey’s theory of memory operations, of involutes, anticipates, or even marks, a new episteme: thinking in and producing texts operating in layers, in archives, in cycles, in palimpsests, in systems, in non-linearity, in rhizomes, and invoking De Quincey’s language further, in involutes.
Part Two – Involute Media and Involute Methods

The second part of this dissertation moves toward a methodology for involute analysis. Part One establishes Thomas De Quincey's concept of involutes in relation to his own conceptual models and in the context of several fields. The resulting material and textual objects of experience, *involutes*, provide the structural operations of thought and narrative, of memory and remembrance, of consciousness and dreams. In Part Two, having explored De Quincey's recognition that dreams and memories are texts that require interpretation, I explore the process(es) he outlines involved in re-collating, re-producing, or *reading* memory.

Involute analysis is the formal method I propose for Thomas De Quincey’s involute reading practices. De Quincey reads his memory-text with the recursion of involutes. Applying this awareness toward the latter portions of *Suspiria de Profundis* (including "The English Mail-Coach") illuminates the patterns the serial essay captures. Rather than static images or cinematic frames, involutes are dimensionally compound and perplexingly entangling objects for ordering existence. They pattern themselves, as do fractals, into larger formations. From De Quincey’s
reading of his memory-text, all texts become viable objects for the same analytical method. As a medium, involutes impact their procedures and formulaic analysis of their functioning. Involutes operate the systems without and within the text and the reader.

Yet, even as De Quincey recognized memory and narrative intersecting at points of meaning, the systems of interaction are not always apparent. Associations and meaning may interplay through juxtaposition by elusive agencies, entangle with oscillating undercurrents, and recur elsewhere with algorithmic functioning. The structural implications of involute systems form the basic methodological level of involute analysis. The untraceable tethered properties De Quincey locates in his own readerly associations demonstrate the layered and dueling trajectories within any node of meaning or signification. De Quincey revises the typical literary figuring of antagonism as relations, contradictions even, that are not oppositional but complementary. The involute system accommodates multiple trajectories from interacting systems and sub-systems. The involute offers a unit for archiving as much of these processes of process as possible.
Chapter Three: Central Forces and Inextricably Entangled Systems of Involutes

The Oxford visions, of which some have been given, were but anticipations necessary to illustrate the glimpse opened of childhood (as being its reaction). In this Second part, returning from that anticipation, I retrace an abstract of my boyish and youthful days, so far as they furnished or exposed the germs of later experiences in worlds more shadowy.

Upon me, as upon others scattered thinly by tens and twenties over every thousand years, fell too powerfully and too early the vision of life. The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life; that grief, which one in a hundred has sensibility enough to gather from the sad retrospect of life in its closing stage, for me shed its dews as a prelibation upon the fountains of life whilst yet sparkling to the morning sun. I saw from afar and from before what I was to see from behind.

Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*, 188

Thomas De Quincey begins “Part II” by reflecting on the necessities of narrative that parallel the operations of experience and memory. De Quincey anticipates his audience and the requisite groundwork for their understanding—but in order to do so he must look both forward and backward, must excavate the strata as he lays the foundations. Correspondingly, experiences become “anticipations” of future events. For him, “the vision of life” is the revelation of “the horror of life mixed [...] with the heavenly sweetness of life,” a combination that “shed its dews as a prelibation upon the foundations of life whilst yet sparkling to the morning sun.” The combination becomes one of sublime loss and trauma of “that grief,” which, “fell too powerfully and too early,” on him. As a result, his narrative digresses in approaching his coining memory, then employs the remaining narrative as a retracing of it. The procedure appears to be observation from points of future effects upon the past causal events: “the glimpse opened of childhood (as being its reaction).” Recollection and narrative move to collapse the span of space and time between these interlinear points; yet, these trajectories and perspectives collide. Newton’s third law, of equal and opposite reactions, assists the dual trajectory of colliding
objects and forces, or relatedly, of De Quincey’s own recollections. Having inherited a world aware of these and other physical properties, De Quincey can focus on relational interaction while also concerning himself with the *interspaces* when arraying such lines, such as Leibniz’s arrangements of linear equations later referred to as a matrix (the term coined by James Sylvester in 1850). Matrices and operators, both concepts that De Quincey’s near contemporary, the mathematician Joseph Fourier develops, provide the means of solving complex equations and functions *through* intermediate functions, ideas which span algebra and geometric modeling and structuring of time. De Quincey spans diverse fields when he engages the concepts of reactive relations and intermedial communications.

De Quincey’s narrative extends a mnemonic matrix, simultaneously reproducing and compensating for his past trauma. Distinguishing De Quincey’s coining point (or *Cp*)—*Suspiria de Profundis*’ case study for all experiences—along the curve’s *line of remembrance* from the *line of experience* isolates a point of intersection, recursion, and curvature permitting one point to become several, of a course to be layered as manifold. The remembrance involute (or *Ri*), assists to isolate various recollection points (*Rp*), returning to the coining point (*Cp*), which crosscuts other points, vectors, and involutes juxtaposed in archival palimpsestuousness. These systems are possible in the involutive structures of the mind and narrative, both involute texts, each with the involutive processes of the participatory, archival recorder and the observing-re-experiencer.

Einsteinian physics, pivoting on the concept of relativity, recognizes the relative position of the observer and that which is observed—De Quincey struggles with the same positional roles in the

process of recollection and narration. De Quincey’s schematic of involute moments permits the gravitation of past and future experiences toward nodes of signification. In a similar fashion, involution plays a role in the differential equations crucial to Einstein’s spacetime-bending gravity. Modern physics grapples with the condensing of dimensions, data, and spaces into compact or reduced, yet, further complicated planes. De Quincey’s ontology, embedded rather than explicitly stated, invests in mathematic concepts and principles related to involutes that remain relevant for contemporary scientific and philosophical understandings of the world.

De Quincey’s involute memory is consonant with the involutive properties found in differential equations and topology, spacetime, and calculus on manifolds—advancements from the energy-matter relationship in physics which both applies the term *involute* to describe when mass reaches zero at the velocity of light and also when raising a number to any power, in other words, to approach an unreachable infinity. De Quincey conceives them, permits those parallel contradictions including complete record and inaccessibility, of separation yet entanglement, and his involute system relies on language to explore these paradoxes. Language captures experience, facilitating the palimpsest of memory; yet, the involute system that utilizes language also operates within language. And due to that relationship, language provides a model for understanding involute properties. De Quincey’s interest in language certainly informs his nomenclature of involutes. In fact, the aspects De Quincey distinguishes in *his* involutes directly reflect his linguistic concerns, which are the primary influences for the operation and concepts of involutes beyond their mathematic cooption at the time of his coining.

De Quincey’s philological leanings and aptitude apply commensurate manifoldness from language and discourse to his understanding of the world. De Quincey’s involutes are part of his

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latent lingual investigations, his efforts to parameterize language in order to describe memory, functions within memory, and correlate functions in the variables of the involute system. De Quincey positions his concept at a juncture of seemingly disparate areas, the sciences and humanities. His key terminology holds a liminal position from involution’s role in logic: nonclassical logic applies the term involute to a negation that satisfies the law of double negation, which Boolean algebra extends to the operation of complement (as found in Augustus De Morgan’s laws of modern formal logic, the applications of which include set theory, electoral and computer engineering, and even text searching).336 The ubiquitous use of language for systemic functions, and vice versa, demonstrates a disciplinary intersection De Quincey furthers with involutes. Involutory functions, from circles to cyphers to group theory, return to the starting point when the function is applied twice,337 demonstrating further relational properties De Quincey explores in language. De Quincey, in effect, merges or reunites these two distinct areas of inquiry—language and mathematics. De Quincey broadly applies mathematic conceptual modeling to language. When he applies linguistic phenomena to mathematics, his memory theory approaches metaphysical explanations of the memory and reality. De Quincey’s philosophical leanings align him with similarly cross-disciplinary philosophies, particularly those of Deleuze, Foucault, and Ricoeur, each of whom ground their work in language and science.


De Quincey’s involute offers a view of memory and language that demonstrates both through contemporary sciences with aspects that resemble those in his metaphysics. As a byproduct, involutes provide a means of appreciating contemporary science as an extension of linguistic (and mnemonic) properties. De Quincey’s encodes the circumstances of Elizabeth’s death with deeper signification due to previous shared elements, a pattern to which it adds and further involutes. By appreciating the textual medium of the mind as manifold, De Quincey transfers the mathematic topological properties of foliation, the geometric tool for understanding manifold equivalence relation or one-to-one correspondence as continuous transformation (or homeomorphism) and maintained distances (or isometry), to language. De Quincey’s palimpsestuous memory-narrative permits local analytic solutions based upon relational context. Memory is predisposed by prior experiences. De Quincey does more than invoke involutes with a prescience of their place in modern physics, geometry, and related specialized mathematics. Eigenvectors, for instance, reply upon the same diminishing field as textual-discursive context offers meaning in communication systems, in language. More specific to De Quincey’s terminology, continuities of involution assist in correlating and distributing foliated vector spaces, making manifoldness more readily understood.\textsuperscript{338} Involutive distributions are the tangent spaces to foliations, the groupings that break manifolds into simply interacting, parallel submanifolds or tangent bundles.\textsuperscript{339} More significant tangent bundles issuing from De Quincey’s RI (remembrance involute) render in Suspiria’s narrative through recursive imagery. Of those discussed thus far, the example of the shaft (caduceus, burial, psychical injury) and passage (textual extract, death, transition) demonstrate a semiosis pairing of tangent bundles: the

\textsuperscript{338} See most recently: Detlef Gromoll and Gerard Walschap, \textit{Metric Foliations and Curvature}. (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2009).

shaft and passage share synonymity. Their layered meaning along the lines of remembrance and experience demonstrates distinct but related meaning from the context of the CP or coining memory and various Rp returning to it. De Quincey transmutes these properties in light of the operations of language in capturing, coding, and expressing relational meaning between layers or foliations of experience. For this chapter, the flight of the waterfowl points out another parallel submanifold, as do sight, sighs, and depths, each offering a narrow vector of meaning as a distinct bundle while also intersecting the broader encompassing foliations of the entire RI and essay.

*Suspiria de Profundis*’ analysis of the coefficients (opium on dreams and his childhood afflicted faculty of memory), necessitates De Quincey reviewing the cognitive framework that exacerbates the impact of Elizabeth’s death on him then and afterwards. The “worlds more shadowy” resemble the “fearful realities” of preternatural dreaming: “power [. . .] not merely for exalting the colors of dream-scenery, but for deepening its shadows; and, above all, for strengthening the sense of its fearful realities” (131). Deepened shadows in dreams serve to reinforce the impressions of impactful experience on the future. Plural realities, a sense of the multiplicity that one involute provides, recalls the simultaneity operating in the human system when even retrospect and foresight become a unity.

Yet, De Quincey’s reversionary motions thwart any straight linear trajectory: “I saw from afar and from before what I was to see from behind.” He finds a stabilizing continuity in foresight and hindsight that reaffirms both rather than conflating them. In fact, what seems an opposition is apposition: “the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtle concords” (188). De Quincey explains the relations, “not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act, which is the feeble conception of many, but by union” (188). He elaborates
that, “they are the sexual forces in music: ‘male and female created he them;’ and these mighty antagonists do not put forth their hostilities by repulsion, but by deepest attraction” (188). There is an interlocking, relational necessity between what might otherwise seem antagonistic binaries.

His own case provides rare extremes of the human system. The first part of Suspiria lays the foundations of the second part: “returning from that anticipation, I retrace an abstract of my boyish and youthful days, so far as they furnished or exposed the germs of later experiences in worlds more shadowy.” Involutes pervade Thomas De Quincey’s nascent theoretical method for self-analysis of memory and dreams—and now narrative:

As ‘in to-day already walks to-morrow,’ so in the past experience of a youthful life may be seen dimly the future. The collisions with alien interests or hostile views, of a child, boy, or very young man, so insulated as each of these is sure to be, those aspects of opposition which such a person can occupy, are limited by the exceedingly few and trivial lines of connection along which he is able to radiate any essential influence whatever upon the fortunes or happiness of others. Circumstances may magnify his importance for the moment; but, after all, any cable which he carries out upon other vessels is easily slipped upon a feud arising. Far otherwise is the state of relations connecting an adult or responsible man with the circles around him, as life advances. The network of these relations is a thousand times more intricate, the jarring of these intricate relations a thousand times more frequent, and the vibrations a thousand times harsher which these jarrings diffuse. This truth is felt beforehand misgivingly and in troubled vision, by a young man who stands upon the threshold of manhood. (188-189)

The human system operates within an environment: “the state of relations connecting an adult or responsible man with the circles around him.” Again the involute informs the concentric image De Quincey offers of self. As a result of an individual’s concentricity, “collisions with alien interests” on the child “so insulated” can create “aspects of opposition.” “The network of these relations […] a thousand times more intricate,” signals that the system operates and consists of involutes. The social relationship offers exchange with the system and its environment that “are limited by the exceedingly few and trivial lines of connection along which he is able to radiate
any essential influence.” The social-individual relationship is a primary application of system theory, though the sense of self as plural, as selves, operates in a similar part-whole sense of system.

De Quincey’s own difficulties during his years of education are the subtext in his otherwise general description of the maturing self (“upon the threshold of manhood” and the epiphanies of such an initiation) within a social network (188). This sense of the “intricate relations” and “vibrations” diffused by jarrings on any “cable which he carries out upon other vessels” connecting him to the world, offers an image that resonates with the digital age but exposes the roots of network (from the Anglo-Saxon, both parts being both noun and verb, suggesting the process and action, of ensnaring with mesh of cords or threads)\(^\text{340}\) and the vestigial characteristics and linguistic lineages ever at work—of which De Quincey makes note.

De Quincey’s attention turns to language: the language of dreams, based upon the language of the mind or how the mind creates or networks, associations that organize experience and understanding. Translation is the procedure De Quincey likens to dream reproduction of imagery. By moving away from a strictly psychoanalytical sense of condensation in dreams, and by redirecting analysis to De Quincey’s linguistic concerns, the stakes of semiotics underscore language as the system De Quincey models for memory. Memory and dreams are like languages, function as language does, and the system(s) within which these two languages coexist must translate in ways resembling communication models. The properties De Quincey accepts for active mental languages shares concerns but quite different approaches to language, particularly when in conversation between the layers of sedimented memory and dreams. What De Quincey might invoke as an ordered system of language can also behave as unpredictably as language.

\(^{340}\) OED, s.v. “network, n. and adj.”.
systems often do, and which he demonstrates in the behavior of his streams of consciousness in narrative digressions. Metaphor theory investigates language aspects that hold the unexpected generative properties of colliding meaning, of entangling involutes, in ways that appreciate the manifold—speaking to the calculus and geometry of manifolds—or structure of memory, thought, and narrative.

De Quincey draws upon preconceived notions of language. He also develops a working appreciation of language operations through his study of involutes of memory. The semiotic work of Umberto Eco and Paul Ricoeur, isolating issues of interpretation, guides Section I which addresses Thomas De Quincey’s interest in translation. Semiotics and translation theory provide a framework for De Quincey’s view of language as a model for memory systems, and, secondarily, returns the issues of De Quincey’s involute back to differential topography or issues of parameterizing sub-routines. A different approach, linking metaphor theory and systems principles, to questions of language assists to expose further involute operations in De Quincey. Section 2 approaches the unconscious juxtapositions, palimpsestuous or archival interactions through the relational operations of metaphor and its related theories. Section 3 shifts the focus further to De Quincey’s linguistic interests in narrative, including internal narrative, with some parallels to operator theory (specifically linked to matrices, including the work of Leibniz, Sylvester and Fourier) in mathematics. The tensions of consciousness here, in conjunction with De Quincey’s involute, help to explain approaches to understanding differential implications beyond mathematics and spacetime, beyond science. The result in De Quincey is an appreciation of varied linguistic operations, functions, and procedures operating simultaneously and interrelatedly.
Section 1: Translation and Visual-Linguistic Networks

The principle of interpretation says that “a sign is something by knowing we know something more” (Peirce). The Peircean idea of semiosis is the idea of an infinite process of interpretation. It seems that the symbolic mode is the paramount example of this possibility… The Peircean notion of semiosis … provides a theoretical tool for identifying, according to different semiosis processes, a continuum of intermediate positions …

Umberto Eco, Kant and the Platypus (1997), 3

The approaches to language operations found in semiotics demonstrates some key features De Quincey presumes language to have in order to use it as a model for systematic functioning. In devising involutes as the principle units of his philosophy, the linguistic (and visual) signs and images De Quincey discusses, attending to language patterns, become analogous to each other: sensory-experiential data mingles with synonymous motifs (whether personal/idiosyncratic or literary/traditional). Moreover, his focus shifts visual-linguistic relations to the forefront, identifying the human system (experience, memory, recollection, narration) as comprised of relational subsystems operating at different levels within the network. De Quincey’s involute is still the basic unit within the visual-linguistic network, only now visual and linguistic involutes layer to manifest in narrative the subsystems of human experience.

De Quincey philologically anchors his discussion throughout Suspiria de Profundis, most strikingly in his etymological analysis from the portion entitled, “Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow.” The ancient Roman figure of Levana underscores a link between definitive associations he has categorized with his sister Elizabeth. In the image of Levana, the seemingly tangential elements for his recollection involute (issuing the coining memory, culminating in his trance while viewing Elizabeth’s dead body) De Quincey provides contextual associations with education and grief. A figure “oftentimes” in his Oxford dreams, known to him “by her Roman symbols,” “ennobling” of new-born infants “that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere;”
“as proxy for the goddess Levana [...] raised it upright [...] and presented its forehead to the world” (177). “This symbolic act,” De Quincey explains, much like the figure herself, “that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) levare, to raise aloft” (177). Not only does De Quincey recognize an element of his scholastic retelling that “might bear different interpretations,” he links the etymological and linguistic connotations: “hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery” (177). In the introduction of the figure he evokes several key images, yet just as significantly, he demonstrates the operations of language in naming and building networks of cognates and broader connotations (cultural or individual):

She therefore watches over human education. Now, the word educo, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word educo, with the penultimate long. Whatsoever educes, or develops, educates. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant, not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but by that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works forever upon children, resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering forever as they revolve. (177-8)

De Quincey adds a note, crediting the image of glimmering spokes to Wordsworth, clarifying that, “less would it become a philosopher to covet other people’s images” (178). As a philosopher, De Quincey may indeed suggest the evocative nature of images and language in his philosophical foundations. The concentric image of the wheel and the net of spokes issuing out

341. See, for comparison, Wordsworth’s “A Night’s Piece” (Complete Poetical Works, 1888), lines 13-26: “The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens. / There, in a black-blue vault she sails along, / Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small / And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss / Drive as she drives: how fast they wheel away, Yet vanish not!—the wind is in the tree, / But they are silent;—still they roll along / Immeasurably distant; and the vault, / Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds, / Still deepens its unfathomable depth. / At length the Vision closes; and the mind, / Not undisturbed by the delight it feels, / Which slowly settles into peaceful calm, / Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.”
“restless,” once again reinforces the involute as the principle in the “mighty system of central forces” (177). Involute structure dictates operations, which far exceed the “poor machinery” of dictionaries or grammars. The “mighty system of central forces” operates on involutes, “not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars,” but the complexity of language. In fact, the system, “resting not,” consists of activity “day or night,” thereby implicating the languages of various states of mind, including dreams (177). “A process often exemplified in the crystallization of language,” is De Quincey’s articulation of living languages growing, in the sense of concretizing cognates, extending or actualizing virtual meaning contained in one word into new related forms (177). De Quincey’s nascent semiotics in Suspiria de Profundis recognizes semantic systems and their interaction in his memory processes. De Quincey, when introducing Levana, includes this footnote:

This it may be said, requires a corresponding duration of experience; but as an argument for this mysterious power lurking in our nature, I may remind the reader of one phenomenon open to the notice of every body, viz. the tendency of very aged persons to throw back and concentrate the light of their memory upon scenes from early childhood, as to which they recall many traces had faded even to themselves in middle life, whilst they often forget altogether the whole intermediate stages of their experience. This shows that naturally, and without violent agencies, the human brain is by tendency a palimpsest. (177)

“Duration of experience,” can operate “without violent agencies,” as in his case, and “naturally” as “mysterious power lurking in our nature”: “by passion, by strife . . . by the energies of resistance,” the human system moves and operates, as do the traces on the palimpsest: “moments, like restless spokes are glimmering forever as they revolve.” Suspiria de Profundis patterns these. His adult apprehension, derived from the matrix of childhood afflictions and opium effects, includes an attention to language along similar frameworks to those offered by Umberto Eco and Paul Ricoeur for the philosophy of language. Their language inquiries, each building on semiotics, arrives at narrative, a subdivision of linguistic study. Narrative, however,
uses language for its signage within its own grammar, syntax, and generic routines. A study of a system run on (or structured by) language lends analysis crucial to the mental systems within De Quincey—obviously vital for his narrative, *Suspiria*, but also the ways he uses narrative to reciprocally investigate the concepts it renders. Connecting narrative and hermeneutics, as Eco and Ricoeur do in their distinct ways, De Quincey exposes his memory systems as operating on entangling lines of remembrance and lines of experience. Mental system(s) and narrative system(s) duly operate on language, now appreciated by De Quincey as involute. Involute language impacts all systems and media participating in its operations. Couching De Quincey’s concept in new media’s sense of the text (predominantly digital), to which it rightly belongs, the text or textual system consists of the layers or subsystems beneath the immediate interface.

In *Suspiria de Profundis*, De Quincey pauses in approaching his coining memory to explain his visual-linguistic predispositions that impact the signification of the experience. Eco’s locus of semiotics, cognition, and metaphysics is the *sign*; De Quincey’s is the involute—nonetheless, a distinct semiotic unit (or *sign*) for specific intricate interrelations. De Quincey’s linguistic interests, while not extensively semantics, or a study of signs and what they stand for, is invested in both the syntactics or syntax between signs, which for De Quincey are involutes in structure and behavior. Involutes may transfer between discourse, language, and thought, though involutes then operate uniquely in each area, or each textual system. Following his interests in media, he examines the medium of thought (the involute) in relation to the units of language and discourse. De Quincey already established the organizing principles of his narrative as contingent on the law or purpose of a work. Language provides an organizational comparison while also functioning as a system within thought. De Quincey’s underlying philosophy of involutes extends to his understanding of language as a semantic model and a system within
thought and by extension the stages of involute sensibility: experience, memory, recollection, narrative.

The structural relations within involutes (perplexed combinations) and between involutes (compound, entangling) allow De Quincey access to a type of pragmatics of memory: De Quincey examines the relation of memories to interpreters or his various selves engaged in the processes of memory. Reading memory requires De Quincey’s reading of his own languages and systems of signs. Over the course of Eco’s work concerning the sign, he co-opts Charles Sanders Peirce’s contributions to logic (bridging his philosophy and mathematics): the Peircean semeiotic or general theory of signs, for the study of language and communication. Eco’s “Peircean notion of semiosis” adapts with greater focus on language Peirce’s more mathematic interests. This interdisciplinary refocusing suits De Quincey’s much earlier co-option of mathematic principles and similar interests in representations. Semiosis is the chain of sign relations issuing when the interpreter/-tant of a sign establishes a new starting point for additional sign relations. When Eco addresses the Peircean schema, recognizing that “schematism [is] right in the middle of the debate on cognitive processes,” Eco invokes the continuum of “intermediate moments” or positions for the reader in semiosis processes which develop out of Peirce’s arguing for the existences of infinite collections and infinitesimals (or multitudes foundational for differential and integral calculus), and even his manifoldness of points. Avoiding sophisticated


mathematics, as does De Quincey, Eco’s interdisciplinary focus follows, too, what he views as “the task of a philosophical discourse … to take another look at Kant’s point of departure and to see what group of problems he had been wrestling with, because his experience teaches us something too.” De Quincey’s philosophical departure, his crystalline involute as the basis of thought and language (possibly everything), pivots upon his own experiences and his processes for apprehending them. The mathematic and mechanical involute provide De Quincey a model he adapts to accommodate complex (and perhaps unpredictable yet predictive) interconnections. De Quincey struggles with a distinct set of problems concerning experience, memory, dreams, and narrative: the implications and contingencies each has for the other aspect.

Interconnections and interrelations are key for involutes. De Quincey’s narrative caduceus suggests the non-linear topography he develops within the involute. His archive palimpsest offers the involute discursive unpredictability through context as well as connotative and semantic associations. The inability to isolate or disentangle systems—memory, dreams, remembrance, narrative—for individual study underscores the constant relation between them.

The human system is not simple; rather, the complexity of the system and subsystems operates as a network. The principles of network most evident within De Quincey’s study operate in the exchange between visual and linguistic systems: the visual-linguistic environmental factors that establish a sign-based semantics and the visual-linguistic expressions or significations of his material experiences. If the opium dreams of the sequence of Elizabeth’s death (from illness through funeral) is the text, he attempts to trace the semantics of his experiences prior to it: these provide the signs of discourse before he can understand the

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translation between conscious and dream languages. Dream syntactic distortions focus his sense of memory grammar. Yet, in order to interpret the meaning of signs and un/conscious utterances in memory (specifically that memory sequence), De Quincey’s narrative includes the events after the dreams, impacted by the significations of the systems and his larger network of existence.

Without invoking being or becoming, the phenomenological concerns his metaphysics skirts, De Quincey isolates the infinite in the involute—its structure, functioning, processes—much as Paul Ricoeur argues that the meaning of Being is always mediated. For Ricoeur, human existence (Dasien) apprehends self though its own possibilities located outside and other than the self. Such a sentiment is applicable for De Quincey, who does not directly argue a philosophy, but, perhaps hermeneutics, in Ricoeur’s sense of an “art of deciphering indirect meaning.” De Quincey’s attention to signs and symbols as well as texts and narratives pinpoints a similar mediation to that which Ricoeur argues for in the access to self and human identity.

_Suspiria de Profundis_ allows for De Quincey performing as both author and reader of his various selves and memory texts. The same dual role of narrative identity is Ricoeur’s point of the plurality of self, other, and language, building off Heidegger’s linguistic aims. From his coining of involutes (which “pass to us”), to his study of the Oxford-opium dreams encrypting the significances of his coining memory, De Quincey elides the verb and even the self as

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346. Qtd. in Richard Kearney’s “Introduction: Ricoeur’s Philosophy of Translation” (in Paul Ricoeur, _On Translation_. trans. Eileen Brennan [London: Routledge, 2006], x.). Furthermore, in _On Translation_, Ricoeur expands the idea with the merger of phenomenology and hermeneutics: “That consciousness is outside itself, that it is towards meaning before meaning is for it an, above all, before consciousness is for itself: is this not what the central discovery of phenomenology implies [. . .] For all consciousness of meaning involves a moment of distanciation, a distancing from ‘lived experience’ as purely and simply adhered to. Phenomenology begins when, not content to ‘live’ or ‘relive’, we interrupt lived experience in order to signify it. Thus the _epoché_ and the meaning-intention [visée de sens] are closely linked” (76).
subject—even when defining the human experience, thoughts and feelings pass to the human receptor through the involute medium. Heidegger, investigating language phenomenologically, remains intrigued by the reflection it holds of Being, “its meaning a vapor.”347 “The absence of the verb ‘to be,’ the absence of this single lexeme, is absence itself,” counters Derrida in “The Supplement of Copula,” which he then expands in his discussion of the presence/absence concerning the archival trance.348 Indeed, De Quincey diverts being and its lexical relative to be (Dasein) from his focus. The vaporous trace seems appropriate for De Quincey’s sighs from the depths and the interlacing spaces of involute gears. De Quincey locates presence in absence, as does Derrida, while recognizing the mediations of presence incapable of direct access.

The idea of presence does not concern solely De Quincey’s profound trauma over his sister but his encrypted self. In An Introduction to Metaphysics, Heidegger entitles one section, “The Grammar and Etymology of ‘Being,’” offering Being “three initial and vividly definite meanings: living, emerging, abiding,” whose “meaning have died out, that only an abstract meaning, ‘to be,’ has survived.”349 The concrete or “root meanings” that Heidegger identifies in the “inner history of precisely this word sein,” redirect the question of language’s arbitrariness, suggesting—in his argument—“in their addressing and naming and saying, do not [they] unveil arbitrary details in the sphere of the sayable?”350 Of the sayable, or narrating identity, Ricoeur

347. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time. trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. (1962; repr., Malden: Blackwell, 2013), 38: “Ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns.”


isolates the very linguistic process that De Quincey does: the paradigm of translation (as interpretation and transference). For Ricoeur translation becomes (a) philosophy: “To think, to speak is always to translate, even when one speaks to oneself, when one discovers the traces (and one cannot subsist without them) of the Other in oneself.”  

In the entangling of involutes, the web of self, De Quincey suggests expanding, intricate lines within the networks of meaning that are incapable of being disentangled.

Yet, De Quincey’s appeal to the inexhaustible multiplicity of what might be actualized from the virtual provides a distinct attitude toward the interwoven and ever-entwining actuality of self as well as language. Ricoeur provides an understanding of self-founding and self-knowing an outside or others that assists in appreciating De Quincey’s retrospection. De Quincey excavates underlying external languages and reversion to entangling internal languages. The involute (its processes and its analysis) demonstrates the multitude of selves at each stage of memory.

In narratologically modeling the dreaming faculty, for a study of memory in dreams that recognizes memory as contingent upon the very experience of encoding into memory, De Quincey cannot escape, even as he recognizes, the interconnections and contingencies of each level of reproduction. Each level simultaneously coexists with the previous stage. This interlocking involute structure (the mechanical involute) blurs the parameters, entangles the sub-systems. Furthermore, the mathematic involute reinforces the spiraling from each point, the new cycle of processes commencing with (re-)experiencing. De Quincey’s involute appeals to mathematic models and linguistic/narratological reproduction for the infinite actualization of the

virtual in all experience. Involutes of experience, the medium of human sensibility, combine to form the assemblage otherwise recognized as a text—an involute text. This occurs at each stage. In semiotic analysis a text is any message that constructs and is interpreted through conventions of a communicative medium. The involute, for De Quincey, is the basic unit. The interpretive continuum of actualization in involute (re-)experience does not alter the original, virtual object, or suggest the ever-presence of becoming, but differentiates the manifold and involves networks of multiplicities, actual and interpretive.

The involute structure, functioning and processes bring De Quincey’s conception of the experience-memory-text in approximate range of the semiotic sign. Eco’s semiotics, in the theoretical genealogy of Saussure’s semiology, establishes the sign through the “co-operative [. . .] semiotic relevance” concerning code in “both linguistics and information theory;”352 the sign, influenced by the communication model, transmits information or communicates a message, saying or indicating a thing that the communicator knows and wants others to know as well. The inherent arbitrariness of sign-signifier-signified rests on agreed upon meaning or a common code between transmitter and the receiver. Eco appeals, in the wake of Jacobson and Luhmann, to communication models. An interdisciplinary scope similar to Eco’s is present in De Quincey, though his appeals to available terminology helps define his conceptual model.

De Quincey’s mechanical and geometric involute offers preliminary concepts: interlocking gears’ cyclicality offer a perpetual (and leveling) state of transmission between transmitter and receiver, whereas, the geometric implicates the issues of signal integrity (feedback loops in informational aspects of communication models). De Quincey’s coinage, however, implicates the more philological and linguistic facets of involute, particularly concerns

about interpretive manifolds and infinities. Language’s system of signification, to borrow the term *code*, requires conventions and agreed meaning within a common code. Yet, the conventions of language underscore its limitations, its potential failure in communicating intelligible messages or indicating accurately through mediating codes, or, more basically, signs.

   Signs are *representations* of meaning—already this aligns with De Quincey’s sense of the *reproductive* aspect of the dreaming faculty. Language in its most basic sense is a system of communication that assigns agreed upon meaning to signs. In much the same way involution in the manifolds and foliations of circles and curves strive to identify groups of homeomorphisms, in other words, the accessible patterning for meaning-making in geometrical terms. For the various codes at work within it, language requires participation between the interlocking gears, which relies upon the reduction of space and vectoring through or limiting of available meaning. Involutes expose multiplicity but not at the expense of actual, stabilized readings—readings simply become infinite.

**Language as Involute: Translating Memory, Dream Imagery and Dream Language**

   De Quincey employs language as the key model for the system of the mind, including subsystems (memory, dreams, thought) with separate but related languages, embedded codes, or

   353. In addition to mutual agreement, Eco suggests both would have to recognize the code as a code, or the sign as a sign: “I would like to accept the definition proposed by Morris (1938) according to which ‘something is a sign only because it is interpreted as a sign of something by some interpreter’ […] The only modification I would introduce into Morris’s definition is that the interpretation by an interpreter, which would seem to characterize a sign, must be understood as the possible interpretation by a possible interpreter” (1976, *Theory of Semiotics*, 16).

   354. For recent mathematic work on these, rather than the linguistic application, see: Danny Calegari and Nathan M. Dunfield. "Laminations and Groups of Homeomorphisms of the Circle." *Inventiones Mathematicae* 152, no. 1 (2003): 149-204.
subroutines. Just as language crystalizes, the processing of involute units or virtual experience/memory actualizes. The involute as a basic unit of experience assists De Quincey’s theory of memory. Just as aptly as appealing to the caduceus or palimpsest as a metaphor for form, consequently also subject and purpose, De Quincey conceives his involute as the vehicle that combines thoughts and feelings.

De Quincey offers an organizing principle to the faculty of dreaming: “in the imagery of my dreams, which translated everything into their own language” (132). When delineating the three ladies of Sorrow—including one of sighs—who accompany Levana, he applies the medial template to parallel dreams and memory: “For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark back-ground of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters” (178). The relief, much as does an impression, offers a projection of influences he figures; he draws attention to his personifications, or “impersonations” he explains as “abstractions presented […] as clothed with human attributes of life” (179). Materiality underscores the power of images for De Quincey. These ladies are further examples of his impulse to concretize “individual sorrow” into something else, “The Sorrows”: “I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man’s heart” (179). He is not aiming for generalities or universals; the sorrows still speak to his idiosyncratic specifics but through a virtual quintessence. Here De Quincey signals his interest in language, memory, and narrative move into metaphysical areas. His aim is to concretize, actualize or crystalize in language, the abstract, the virtual. Imagery, the collective set of images, in his dreams equates with a language with its own signification, though the laws may correlate or translate.

The language of dreams shares a common grammar with the language of memory. As such, a “specific semiotics,” in Eco’s terms, of De Quincey could be possible, but only in light of
involutes. Eco suggests that “every specific semiotics (as every science) is concerned with
genral epistemological problems.”355 The involute is the unit for the medium, the principle for
the laws governing behavior and signification in the system. “A specific semiotics is, or aims to
being,” according to Eco, “the ‘grammar’ of a particular sign system, and proves to be successful
insofar as it describes a given field of communicative phenomena as ruled by a system of
signification.”356 The grammar in De Quincey is the infinite of actualization, frequency and
repetition, in which differentiation expands out from the virtual. Suspiria de Profundis re-
produces in extensio the re-moulded dreams of his childhood experiences. Because experiences
can never be disentangled from their combinations of thoughts and feelings, of sensory
environment and previous experiences, or even of language, their constituent parts infinitely
recombine. The virtual can never fully, finally or finitely be actualized. De Quincey’s endeavor
in and through Suspiria de Profundis is documenting the degree of intensity, exemplified in the
singularity of contracted time. The quality of the involute experience manifests itself.
Actualization becomes infinite, recursive and expansive. Translation, as De Quincey invokes the
idea, adheres to a dual trajectory for internal and external, (much as Ricoeur suggests) a unifying
property within plurality.

Imbuing dream imagery with the qualities of a language complicates rather than
demystifies dreams and the subconscious of the dreaming state. The language of dreams dilates
his core remembrance point of contracted time to the expanded proportions of his Oxford opium
dreams. Dreams open up, interpret, and actualize the virtual memory. In Suspiria de Profundis

356. Eco, 2000a, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 5.
the narrative echoes the recursion/reversion or differentiation within dreams that De Quincey’s dreams actualize of virtual memory. In explaining dream language, De Quincey also provides his ideas on language, its system and properties. That dreams translate memories also requires examining De Quincey’s ideas on translation. Ultimately, the narrative project in his series of essays corresponds to the procedures he outlines within memory. The parallel systems of memory and narrative operate under similar principles of language or communication.

De Quincey’s sense of translation and involute language also feature as tenets of communication theory. In the standard, yet simplified, model of communication, transmission follows the transferring of information or sending and receiving of a message via a channel-medium-conduit; the source can be one-sided, making the model linear rather than interactive, these being two different conceptual models of communication processes.\(^{357}\) In information models, data must be encoded and decoded by the transmitter and receiver, respectively; and, issues of successful transmission involve technical effectiveness but also semantic conveyance of the code, or any symbolic system of agreed upon meaning.\(^{358}\) As the dreamer, even before he narrates and composes, De Quincey participates as both the role of receiver and transmitter; his dream language codes his memory through the dreaming channel or faculty. De Quincey, however, implicates himself in both languages, either pre-consciously or sub-consciously. He attempts to read and interpret both, by relying on partial ciphers, or correlative code in the conventions of shared grammar, namely repeated imagery and language associations. The language of the conscious mind and unconscious mind share a grammar and aspects of code

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\(^{358}\) In Jakobson’s communication model, code designates all conventions that make messages intelligible; the code in an act of communication may be a language, kinesics, etc., that enable the sender’s information to be understood by the receiver
translated into proportional stature, velocity and duration, expanding and dilating the figures and scenes within the contracted time.

De Quincey’s semiotic study of his visual-linguistic connections during contracted time translated into his dream language (commensurate to the impact on his psyche), demonstrates representation (in narrative) and reproduction (in memory/dreams) as a type of translation. Translation fascinates De Quincey as do languages. Translation is an art distinct from writing, a notion he well knows, to which his inclusion of untranslated phrases also attests. In Suspiria, De Quincey references learning both Greek and Latin, the latter of which includes a vital catalytic “incident” at “less than eleven years of age” (165). When asked by a bookseller (his debts to whom brought heightened anxiety) to translate from “Beza's Latin Testament […] the great chapter of St. Paul on the grave and resurrection,” De Quincey does not translate, in the strictest sense, but rather recites from memory the admired English passage that he “had read again and again with so passionate a sense of its grandeur” (165). Not exactly a charade of translation, (excepting perhaps in “fluency and effect”), his description of the process underscores the link between memory and writing, with remembrance as a type of reading:

I was struck by perceiving that it was the great chapter of St. Paul on the grave and resurrection. I had never seen a Latin version; yet, from the simplicity of the scriptural style in any translation (though Beza's is far from good), I could not well have failed in construing. But, as it happened to be this particular chapter, which in English I had read again and again with so passionate a sense of its grandeur, I read it off with a fluency and effect like some great opera singer uttering a rapturous bravura . . . And it is remarkable, that from this moment, when the deep memory of the English words had forced me into seeing the precise correspondence of the two concurrent streams, (Latin and English,) never again did any difficulty arise to check the velocity of my progress in this particular language. (165)

359. In addition to his infusing classical phrases, untranslated to English, De Quincey appropriates classical themes, devices, and imagery into Suspiria de Profundis; for a fascinating examination see: Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, Revisionary Gleam: De Quincey, Coleridge, and the High Romantic Argument. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).
De Quincey’s own sense of translation delineates the cognitive relationships and semantic processes he recognizes as involved in the process. The similarity of imagery and terminology to his description of narrative is striking. This monumental act of “translation” utilizes the imagery of streams (as also in the “confluence” of opium and childhood afflictions, the causes for his dreaming “splendidly” or “almost preternaturally”) with the interaction or concurrency in his mind of his native language and his new study. De Quincey’s logocentrism is matched only by his visio-centrism, “seeing the precise correspondence” (rather than phonocentric, though he includes the auditory image for effect). The two languages or sign systems run or course simultaneously to assist him in apprehending the passage. The past-present and present texts coexist, visually, for correspondence. De Quincey identifies the process in stages: first, “perceiving” (or reading), then, “construing” (through the aid of stylistic cues, the “simplicity of the scriptural style”), and finally, accessing a “deep memory” that “forced [him] into seeing the precise correspondence.” His recognition process includes parallel equivalence—synonymous with “correspondence”—but also mental negotiation or cognitive communication, even discourse, between the two languages.

Translation, De Quincey aptly suggests, is not literal nor exact: translation is memory work. Work, here, like Freud’s “dream work,” requires mixed conceptualization, as noted in approaches to the mechanical procedures in linguistic processes (such as displacements, condensation or distortion of images either as metaphor or symbol). Rather than a lack of autonomy, that might be intra-lingual, De Quincey actively becomes the place of inter-lingual dialogue, the space of discourse. As De Quincey even suggests, “my path lies on the interspace between religion and philosophy, that connects them both,” suggesting the space between fields
as also a *place* of connection (162). The interspace of translation is the place of semantic discourse.

De Quincey points to the memory aid of linguistic conventions in his act of translation. The simple scriptural style, he remarks, makes it unmistakable. Analytical reasoning relies on commonalities—semantic competence—between two systems to derive a further existing similarity. Cognitive discourse analysis recognizes various procedural steps similar to the active reading and psychological mechanisms De Quincey describes in this act of *translation*. Ricoeur’s philosophy of translation offers two key trajectories that explain De Quincey’s similar focus: for Ricoeur translation suggest a *linguistic paradigm* that attends to how words relate to meanings in contexts (both within language or between languages), and the *ontological paradigm* for interpersonal translation that occurs between one human and another.  

Several instances of translation occur simultaneously for De Quincey. He construes the meaning of the Latin scriptural translation (linguistic) while concurrently communicating with his deep memory (ontological) of the English scriptural passage (further linguistic). The steps De Quincey outlines are required for the work of translation with any memory text, meaning they must also occur when he assumes the role of reader-remember-er among his various narrating identities.

More than just concurrent and corresponding semes or semantic properties are at work in the translation of the passage in two languages: past and present moments align in “precise correspondence” in order for the mind to correlate the passages—a unity of duration, a simultaneity of time. It is worth noting that correspondence holds varied mathematic senses, beyond straightforward binary mirroring. Much as De Quincey suggests the correspondence of two distinct versions of the passage, most notably, the algebraic geometry usage can extend to


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asymmetrical correspondence, in which correspondence can be from two lines as well as between two lines. The two passages—representative of their languages—are distinct in his personal use and scale, but also in terms of location (time/place) and textuality. *Deep memory* is certainly one specter of *Suspiria de Profundis*. In this instance, deep memory results from repetition. Rereading the English scripture layers and deepens the memory of the words. The depth of the impression from repeated imprinting does not *bury* the memory so much as deepen the imprint. *Deep* implies intensity: the depth and repetition “forced [De Quincey] into seeing the precise correspondence.” Deep memory also concerns the often recollected and accessed (perhaps, the neural *pathway*) and the noteworthy experiences that impact what De Quincey remembers from that point onward—the profound memories that either cultivate or *prune*, or in any way dictate the development and growth of the psyche/mind/brain. Deep memory has as much to do with the deep-seated and ingrained (by rote, here, typical for classical language drills) as with the obscured and buried: these are figurative for certain memory content, yet literal in the sense of memories containing the imagery so significant among his experiences.

“*Deep Memory*” and “*Confluence*”: Crystalizing “separate but concurring inspirations”

Beyond parsing, translation requires *construing*, analyzing the arrangement and connection, from the same Latin origin as *constructing*. The close connection or correspondence becomes *concurrent readings*. De Quincey’s act of translation is decoding and


362. Interestingly, in social psychology, Construal-Level Theory (CLT) of Psychological Distance explains psychological distance as influencing behavior, including thought as either abstract or concrete; see: Caritas Paradis,
encoding, a suspending of “two concurrent streams”: De Quincey construes by aligning concurrent passages, one concrete and actual the other virtual in memory. Active and deep memory erect a joint space of discourse. In deconstructing meaning through syntax and recollecting from memory, De Quincey also infers. As Eco informs, “the sēmeion was not considered as an equivalent but as an inference.”

“The phenomenology of our experience with mirror images represents the experimentum crucis for testing the role played by two fundamental characteristics of any semiosic experience,” which, according to Eco, are: “a sign is an \(x\) standing for a \(y\) which is absent, and the process which leads the interpreter from \(x\) to \(y\) is of an inferential nature.”

The process here, as for translating memory in De Quincey, occurs, as Eco identifies it, on “threshold between semiotic and presemiotic phenomenon.” De Quincey recognizes the pragmatics of his various memory texts that may be evident only in effect.

De Quincey applies translation to dreams, tracing the pragmatics of the process. Dreams interpret experiences to varied effect, though De Quincey’s Suspiria focuses on “the grandeur which belongs potentially to human dreams” (129). He reads the code within his dream-scenery, grasping the syntax of the dream-language: when “the agitations of [his] childhood reopened in strength [. . .] swept in upon the brain with power, and the grandeur of recovered life,” De Quincey notes figures (as well the duration of the events) are now “dilated to colossal proportions” in his dreams:

The reader must suppose me at Oxford; twelve years and a half are gone by; I am in the glory of youthful happiness: but I have now first tampered with opium; and now first the agitations of my childhood reopened in strength, now first they


363. Eco, 2000a, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 2.
364. Eco, 2000a, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 2.
365. Eco, 2000a, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language, 2.
swept in upon the brain with power, and the grandeur of recovered life, under the separate and the concurring inspirations of opium. Once again, after twelve years' interval, the nursery of my childhood expanded before me: my sister was moaning in bed; I was beginning to be restless with fears not intelligible to myself. Once again the nurse, but now dilated to colossal proportions, stood as upon some Grecian stage with her uplifted hand, and, like the superb Medea standing alone with her children in the nursery at Corinth, smote me senseless to the ground. Again I was in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomps of life rose up in silence, the glory of summer, the frost of death. Dream formed itself mysteriously within dream; within these Oxford dreams remoulded itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber, the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of "Him that sate thereon;" the flight, the pursuit, the irrecoverable steps of my return to earth. Once more the funeral procession gathered; the priest in his white surplice stood waiting with a book in his hand by the side of an open grave, the sacristan with his shovel; the coffin sank; the dust to dust descended. Again I was in the church on a heavenly Sunday morning. (169-170)

In his condensed summation or abstract of the sequence of childhood affliction, De Quincey underscores the significant images and imagery that recurs in his narrative. The disputed reader that De Quincey criticizes might think that, “it would have been sufficient to state the fact, without rehearsing in extenso the particulars of that case in childhood” (134). This reaction would be to miss the object of his entire project, in extenso. Just as the “nursery of [his] childhood expanded,” so too do the significant images. Narrative must in turn reflect the pattern, the syntax, the experiences. “Dream formed itself mysteriously within dream,” De Quincey claims, creating a concentric image of discourse resembling the human-social self. He also, displaces the action and force onto the experiences and memories rather than the dreams or dreaming faculty: “Within these Oxford dreams remoulded itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber, the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight).” The trance, heavenly vault, billows and throne, thought-but-not-sight are De Quincey’s select abbreviations of the significant images from the sequence. It, rather than they or these, “remoulded itself continually” within dreams: it refers back to “dream”
(rather than imagery) in the previous clause (“dream formed itself mysteriously within dream”). The statement underscores the reproductive faculty, stressing the repetition, *rehearsing*, “continually,” on the agency of the dream. *Remold* differs from *translate*. Memory apprehends the intensity, dreams translate the scale of memory, and dreams remolds themselves. Moreover, the dreams become vehicles for the quality of the experiences.

Dreams establish, rather *involute*-ly, a chain of signs and signification: De Quincey attempts to render this semiosis in narrative. A dream, as with the “process exemplified by the crystallization of language,” re-molds and actualizes. The choices of images recur elsewhere in *Suspiria*, as outward reverberations through concentric layers. “Rehearsing *in extenso*” recognizes dreams *remoulding* dreams as well as memories re-collected, *translated* between languages. Experience and re-experience germinate and mutate into growths and fruitifications for dream-scenery. De Quincey’s process of translation, of reading, explains his understanding of dreams “translating” memory into “images”: the signification of dream language. Translation is a rhetorical process of interpretation. The message, a text, requires interpretation, which is always multiple. “If texts can be produced and interpreted as I suggested in *The Role of the Reader* (Eco 1979),” Eco explains, “it is because the universe of semiosis can be postulated in the format of a labyrinth.” 366 Eco’s labyrinth develops much the way De Quincey constructs his involute. The labyrinth connects two points in a unicursal, non-branching path, the most approximate model Eco decides upon 367 after rejecting first the tree of knowledge, then the dictionary, for their ordering of knowledge by hierarchy. In a similar fashion, De Quincey co-opted and revised the

caduceus to operate to redistribute importance from subject to digressions. Rather than the rigidity of the tree or dictionary, flawed models for Eco, he select the encyclopedia, with its interlinked or hypertextual relationships, as the organizational scheme present in the labyrinth. Eco’s impulses resemble De Quincey’s in translating the properties of the palimpsest into the archival mind. Both the encyclopedia and palimpsest share leveling and intertextual relationships. De Quincey’s palimpsest archive mind aspires to operate through organization permitted by its structure. The semiosic labyrinth suggests the singular path yet the unlimited of interpretation, even when restricting the competence or the conventions of meaning. The archive of palimpsestuous rolled vellum, however, is a dimensional complex of inter-discourse.

As more than a conceptual model for memory, the involute that merges the caduceus and palimpsest engenders polyvocality in terms of the virtual and actual; the semantics of language, of translating memories into dreams, of cognition through pre-thought to recollection. De Quincey’s involute requires the interworking of these various systems. De Quincey must partially reconstruct the involute to accommodate the complexity he requires of it. Eco’s model, a one-dimensional and linear construct, is worth following to appreciate the complexity with which De Quincey grapples. Eco’s encyclopedia, more so than a dictionary, “permits us to understand the mechanism of the synecdoche, but not that of the metaphor.”368 In synecdoche, transference “by similarity between two semes or semantic properties,” for instance, Eco traces the system of content offered by the interpretant.369 By structuring the semiosic universe “as a labyrinth,” Eco posits that the structure “governs the approach to other classical issues such as metaphor, symbol, and code.”370 De Quincey’s structure is the involute, a “labyrinthine infinity


of curves,” concrete, perplexed combinations, infinitely compounding and incapable of being disentangled. Similar, yet ever more complex and fully dimensional, the involute provides palimpsestuous-ness to the labyrinth that transforms the process of textual interpretation to one of actualization. De Quincey permits texts as consisting of multiplicities: the text is virtual.

Translation, for De Quincey is a combination of interpretation and transference. Ricoeur, addressing psychoanalysis’s paradigm for dreams as “substituted and disguised representation,” notes the “interplay of forces [that] can be read in the text of the dream account [are] understood as a kind of palimpsest, riddle, or hieroglyph,”371 analogies which are all applicable for De Quincey. Ultimately, psychoanalysis provides only a limited form of investigation concerning symbols in experience, all the more evident when it comes to De Quincey. Ricoeur includes the poetic and sacred as spheres of bound symbols that distinguish our sense of symbol from metaphor: “the latter is free of invention of discourse; the former is bound to the cosmos.”372 De Quincey recognizes that the dream-scenery is one of “dilated” language, with a convention of syntax like hyperbole in the “grandeur of recovered life” memories “dilated to colossal proportions,” including classical and scriptural allusions. “The relation between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning,” according to Ricoeur, can be found in the “metaphorical utterance”373 produced in De Quincey’s dream-scenery. The relation “provides an appropriate guideline,” Ricoeur outlines “to identify the properly semantic traits of a symbol,” requiring inter-signification between primary and secondary signification “in effect, as the meaning of


meaning.” The most vital images or semes in De Quincey’s dilated coining memory adopt the mode of the symbol in *Suspiria de Profundis*’s narratology, the model for involutes in cognition and involutes in discourse.

Semiotics’ exploration delineates De Quincey’s sense of translation as the process of communication between separate but related languages, systems of meaning, though operated on either different scales or concentrations. The figural undercurrents—in the texts of the mind and his essay—are more than thematic: the codes-signs-semes pattern as sub-routines that operate in the background of thought and, by extension, of narrative. The layered topography can bind seemingly surface or arbitrary lexical networks through imbedded, corresponding, as-of-yet un-actualized meaning.

**Section 2: Difference and Digressive Mapping in Mind and Narrative**

Metaphorical functioning would be completely inadequate as a way of expressing the different temporality of symbols, what we might call their insistence, if metaphors did not save themselves from complete evanescence by means of a whole array of intersignifications. One metaphor, in effect, calls for another and each one stays alive by conserving its power to evoke the whole network.[ . . ] The network engenders what we can call root metaphors, metaphors which, on the one hand, have the power to bring together the partial metaphors borrowed from the diverse fields of our experience and thereby to assure them of a kind of equilibrium. On the other hand, they have the ability to engender a conceptual diversity [ . . . ] an unlimited number of potential interpretations at a conceptual level. Root metaphors assemble and scatter. They assemble subordinate images together, and they scatter concepts at a higher level. They are dominant metaphors capable of both engendering and organizing a network that serves as a junction between the symbolic level with its slow evolution and the volatile metaphoric level.

Paul Ricoeur, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 64

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Thomas De Quincey’s exploration of his *involute* provides a study conforming to the primary inquiry of metaphor theory. The conceptual model of the involute for De Quincey exemplifies the functioning of language Paul Ricoeur delineates in the meaning-making operations of metaphor and symbol. Symbolic importance crystalizes De Quincey’s memories surrounding Elizabeth’s death. In the summary of the nursery sequence, De Quincey selects the most important aspects. His sister’s paradoxical state of presence/absence initiates with his separation from her during her illness, the prognostication from the nurse, then his visit with the body, and, finally the burial. The theological paradox of life-in-death operates within the subtext of the “passage”—invoking all senses of the word—as De Quincey positions the central involute of *Suspiria de Profundis* to generate his narrative, as it generated the images for his dreams, while, just as importantly, establishing his conception of memory. De Quincey also acknowledges the precedents that Ricoeur would call *root metaphors*. Not only does Ricoeur’s sense of chaining metaphors seems rather akin to De Quincey’s concept of involute behavior in memory’s structure, but De Quincey suggests the same pattern by which images or signs, visual-linguistic couplings, engender and organize a juncture between symbolic and metaphoric levels.

De Quincey conducts a study, along the lines of a general semiotic analysis, in order to establish the visual-linguistic grammar of his cognition. “The notion of interpretation can explain both in which sense a given text displays two and no more possibilities of disambiguation,” argues Eco, “and why an instance of the symbolic mode requests an indefinite series of alternative or complementary interpretations.”

De Quincey’s dream-scenery is dilated signification and, significantly, visual. Even the auditory image is supplanted with visual images: “in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomp of life rose up in silence, the glory of

summer, the frost of death” (170). Perhaps as significant for De Quincey’s visual-linguistic patterning are images of the absence of sight: the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of "Him that sate thereon." The “unlimited number of potential interpretations,” Ricoeur acknowledges occurring “at the conceptual level” of root metaphors are the involute combinations: the dew and germs “furnished and exposed” of “later experiences,” that De Quincey repeatedly acknowledges.

Involutes function as root metaphors, caducean and palimpsestuous. Ricoeur explains that root metaphors, “assemble subordinante images together, and they scatter concepts at a higher level.” De Quincey illustrates this through the digressions he feels are necessary to understand gathering together in the coining sequence, then, after to demonstrate its extensive effects and scattering or diffusing through later experiences. “The notion of symbolic mode,” to which metaphor belongs, according to Eco, “accounts for all these cases of textual production that do not rely on a preestablished portion of encyclopedia but invent and propose for the first time a new interpretive connection.”

This impulse for invention and new interpretive connections describes both the reproductive power of the dreaming faculty and the type of actualization De Quincey seeks in rehearsing the episode in extension, in infinite semiosis, in a continuum of virtual time. For Ricoeur, this new-ness takes the form of a “surplus of meaning,” generated as “the symbol assimilated rather than apprehend[ed] a resemblance.”

“Moreover, in assimilating something to others it assimilates us to what is thereby signified,” Ricoeur argues: “All the boundaries are blurred—between things as well as between the things and ourselves.”

Permeated parameters are characteristic of involutes. De Quincey as dreamer and reader/re-collector assimilates meaning into the dream-scenery of his memory, perhaps, most poignantly in the figure of the nurse. In his concise expression of the remoulded Oxford opium-dreams, the dream-image translates her role as the figure that foretells the death of Elizabeth, interpreting her afterwards as the agent that prefigures her death. As “the superb Medea” in his dream-language (as much as in De Quincey’s narration), the secondary signification of the nurse offers the surplus of meaning in the murderous maternal figure, exaggerated in quality and proportions relative to the severity of the event.

Translation requires interpretive processes—resembling the analogical problem solving of metaphor. “Metaphors can be read according to multiple interpretations,” Eco explains, “yet these interpretations can be more or less legitimate on the grounds of underlying encyclopedic competence.” Metaphor operates by non-similarity whereas perceptual similarities do explain the substitution in metonymy—and these semantics and pragmatics are interests that underlie the surfaces of *Suspiria De Profundis*. As De Quincey demonstrates, the correspondence need not be similar or symmetrical, but rather concurrent. In computer science programming, concurrency simply means partially ordered components or units to order events when two tasks overlap. In *remolded* or reproduced signification, De Quincey’s layout for a surplus of meaning appreciates a unique manifoldness of language. Language’s involutions, commensurate to geometry’s topological manifolds and differential structures, directly impacts the manifoldness of thought, memory and narrative.

Permeated Parameters: “Palm to palm” and “Again the pomps of life rose up”

Perhaps just as remarkable as De Quincey’s pragmatics is the attention he draws to his own process of recollection, a shift between the role of reader and speaker, which he must construct a representation of himself, in a Derridian sense of self-representation:

Let me pause for one instant in approaching a remembrance so affecting and revolutionary for my own mind, and one which (if any earthly remembrance) will survive for me in the hour of death, to remind some readers, and to inform others, that in the original Opium Confessions I endeavored to explain the reason why death, caeteris paribus, is more profoundly affecting in summer than in other parts of the year; so far, at least, as it is liable to any modification at all from accidents of scenery or season. The reason, as I there suggested, lies in the antagonism between the tropical redundancy of life in summer and the dark sterilities of the grave. The summer we see, the grave we haunt with our thoughts; the glory is around us, the darkness is within us. And the two coming into collision, each exalts the other into stronger relief. But in my case there was even a subtler reason why the summer had this intense power of vivifying the spectacle or the thoughts of death. (142)

The images that impact De Quincey possess personal significance as well as broader signification. “It appears as though certain fundamental human experiences make up an immediate symbolism that presides over the most primitive metaphoric order,” analyzes Ricoeur, noting further, “everything indicates that symbolic systems constitute a reservoir of meaning whose metaphoric potential is yet to be spoken.”381 De Quincey first contrasts his traumatic awareness of Elizabeth’s passing with the earlier death of his sister Jane, aligning seasonal associations with life cycles: “I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?” (139). But even deeper (in the full force of the term) is the cyclicality of life, death, and rebirth symbolized in the seasonal associations he derives from the illustrated bible of his nursery.

De Quincey argues that instances of his own experience that add layers of signification to summer, death, and the combination or relational meaning of death in summer:

“Summer, therefore, had connected itself with death, not merely as a mode of antagonism, but also through intricate relations to scriptural scenery and events” (143). Previously, in his first *Confessions*, De Quincey focuses on the mode of antagonism of death in summer; now, he traces the impact to the readings (and images) of scripture, arguing for a greater complex of associations that are less readily identifiable as *antagonism*:

It had happened that amongst our nursery collection of books was the Bible illustrated with many pictures. And in long dark evenings, as my three sisters with myself sate by the firelight round the guard of our nursery, no book was so much in request amongst us. It ruled us and swayed us as mysteriously as music. One young nurse, whom we all loved, before any candle was lighted, would often strain her eye to read it for us; and, sometimes, according to her simple powers, would endeavor to explain what we found obscure. (142-3)

Certainly, opposing aspects are evident, including dark/light and obscure/explain. De Quincey draw the connections for the scene: “we, the children, were all constitutionally touched with pensiveness; the fitful gloom and sudden lambencies of the room by firelight suited our evening state of feelings; and they suited, also, the divine revelations of power and mysterious beauty which awed us” (143). More is at work, including the sense of prominence for the nurse as guard rather than a Medea, and the accompanying three sisters: the figures of Levana and the three Sorrows germinate from these deep memories. Even when figurative semes, (“exteroceptive”) which refer to sensible qualities, create a matrix with the abstract semes, (“interceptive”) which categorize the world,382 Eco notes that some mediation must occur. “That mediation that Kant entrusted to the schemata, intermediaries between the abstraction of the categorical apparatus

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and the concreteness of the manifold of the intuition,” provide the discourse within the structure. Ricoeur’s study of metaphoric functioning assists to offer terminology to the process De Quincey follows. Ricoeur notes the connotations both metaphor and symbol have:

Lacking any status in established language, a metaphor is in the strong sense of the word, an event of discourse. The result is that when a metaphor is taken up and accepted by a linguistic community it tends to become confused with an extension of the polysemy of words. It first becomes a trivial, then a dead metaphor. Symbols, in contrast, because they plunge their roots into the durable constellations of life, feeling, and the universe, and because they have such an incredible stability, lead us to think that a symbol never dies, it is only transformed.

The metaphoric, poetic figures of light and knowledge are unquestionable. Presumably the depth in memory, the impresses of the experience, root the scene and circumstances for future fruitification. As metaphor theory suggests, metaphoric operations underlie all language. “The relation between the literal meaning and the figurative meaning of a metaphorical utterance provides an appropriate guideline,” Ricoeur argues, “which will allow us to identify the properly semantic traits of a symbol.” Ricoeur distinguishes metaphor and symbol through their relational structures and conceptual synthesis. De Quincey’s pragmatics derive a similar sense of the metaphoric operations underlying his cognition. “The most insistent metaphors,” Ricoeur clarifies, “hold fast to the intertwining of the symbolic infrastructure and metaphoric superstructure.” Through his mental excavations, De Quincey traces the network of

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intersignifications, assembled subordinate images and scattered concepts. Appropriate \textit{collisions} of meaning and inter-signification replace over-simplified antagonism.

The children “constitutionally touched with pensiveness” are suited to the “fitful gloom and sudden lambencies of the room,” though it is De Quincey’s exchange of meaning that makes the metaphoric work clear: the collision of light and dark with clarity and obscurity “suited our evening state of feelings.” The “divine revelations of power and mysterious beauty” also collapses the circumstances of the nurse’s “simple powers” and the bible’s that “ruled” and “swayed [. . .] as mysteriously as music.” The conduits, both the bible and the educating nurse, merge in or, perhaps more accurately are subsumed by, the description surrounding the signification communicated through their united power. The symbolic intensity in the elements of the scene that de Quincey describes resembles Ricoeur’s explanation of the metaphorical superstructure and symbolic infrastructure, “beyond its constituting a network, a set of metaphors presents an original hierarchical constitution.”\textsuperscript{388} “The preverbal character of such an experience elaborates Ricoeur, “is attested to by the very modulations of space and time as sacred space and sacred time, which result and which are inscribed beneath language at the aesthetic level of experience, in the Kantian sense of this expression.”\textsuperscript{389} The circumstances of the nursery bible revelations offer a pattern evident in \textit{Suspiria}. By describing the nurse(-ry)-evenings and illustrated bible readings as De Quincey does, he outlines what Johnson (concerning his work with Lakoff) addresses, in “Philosophy’s Debt to Metaphor,” as “the location event-structure metaphor,” which “comprises a vast complex system of several submappings, each of which is

\textsuperscript{388} Ricoeur, 1976, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 64: “as Philip Wheelwright has strongly emphasized in his works on metaphor, \textit{The Burning Fountain}, and, especially, \textit{Metaphor and Reality}” (64-5).

\textsuperscript{389} Ricoeur, 1976, “Metaphor and Symbol,” 61.
what Grady (1997) calls a ‘primary’ metaphor.\(^{390}\) Johnson explains that “the semantics of our terms for events is given by the detailed structure of the mapping” and submappings.\(^{391}\) Similar visual-linguistic relations magnify in intensity the circumstances of Elizabeth’s death in his memory and his dreams. But this only sets the stage, the dream-scenery, for the semiosic example De Quincey provides concerning Palm Sunday (the backdrop of her death) and his deferred apprehension of the associations and connotations surrounding it. When mapping manifolds, in differential geometry and topology, there are immersions and submersion—in fact, for Riemann models there is also mapping *between* surfaces. The embedded complex apparent in De Quincey appears primed for the interests in interspatial mapping both structurally in topography and procedurally in metaphor, appealing to commensurate analyses in both disciplines.

**Involute Communication and Mapping: Deferral and Digression**

De Quincey employs a *metalingual* function, to use linguist Roman Jakobson’s sense\(^{392}\) as structures for signification and processing communications. Yet, the referential and embeddedness of communication within contexts is due to *language* as the code of cognition: for De Quincey this relies on the interplay of the visual-linguistic network, the interconnection of language and visual images: “Out of this digression, which was almost necessary for the purpose

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of showing how inextricably my feelings and images of death were entangled with those of summer, I return to the bed–chamber of my sister” (143). The narrative combines the deferring/differing of digression with the “prelibation” of visual-linguistic impressions “upon the fountains of life” that resonate the visual-semes of central remembrance point as “vibrations” later. Elizabeth’s death in summer as well as the contrast between the window view and her face is not enough, De Quincey notes, on its own to make the trite discord (or antagonism) of death in summer/life: “Yet still even this explanation does not suffice; it was not merely by the peace and by the summer, by the deep sound of rest below all rest, and of ascending glory, that I had been haunted” (143). De Quincey realizes the signification lies deeper, a sub-script of further involutes: “It was also because Jerusalem stood near to those deep images both in time and in place” (143). The “omphalos (navel) of the earth”—with the visual reinforcement of circles, involutes, and the shaft—is, De Quincey notes, a “pretention [that] had once been made for Jerusalem, and once for Delphi; and both pretensions had become ridiculous, as the figure of the planet became known” implicates knowledge processes as on-going and reassessing (143). He explains the concentric point or interspace, is, “if not of the earth, for earth's tenant, Jerusalem was the omphalos of mortality”:

The nurse knew and explained to us the chief differences in oriental climates; and all these differences (as it happens) express themselves in the great varieties of summer. The cloudless sunlights of Syria those seemed to argue everlasting summer; the disciples plucking the ears of corn that must be summer; but, above all, the very name of Palm Sunday (a festival in the English church) troubled me like an anthem. "Sunday!" what was that? That was the day of peace which masked another peace deeper than the heart of man can comprehend. "Palms!" what were they? That was an equivocal word; palms, in the sense of trophies, expressed the pomps of life; palms, as a product of nature, expressed the pomps of summer. (143)

“Equivocal,” De Quincey’s term, stresses interpreting meaning from the unity within the term. Rather than the polyvocality or multiplicity of language De Quincey addresses the difference of
interpretation in actualizing the virtual. In this passage, he offers a recreation of his apprehension—interpretation and translation—of terms, notably visual images, that resonate later. Similarly the deep memory of the passage of St. Paul “troubled [him] like an anthem” (143). The network of each of these primary metaphors of “everlasting” and “summer” offer root metaphors for De Quincey. In metaphoric exchange that arranges associations much like a chiasmus, De Quincey links palms and pomps as life and summer. The images of an open, clear sky in the “cloudless sunlights” reinforces the stress on the day, Sunday, as much as the “ears of corn” play one the physical and bodily pun of the palms. Conscious of the recursion or not, De Quincey focuses his description of Elizabeth’s body on her face and her hands, her palms.

Moreover, the links to mortality offer all the reasons for the digression of Jerusalem and Palm Sunday, for “out of this digression, which was almost necessary for the purpose of showing how inextricably my feelings and images of death were entangled with those of summer, I return to the bed-chamber of my sister.” The intrusion, digression, or deferral resumes with the following visual-linguistic parallels:

From the gorgeous sunlight I turned round to the corpse. There lay the sweet childish figure; there the angel face; and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that no features had suffered any change. Had they not? The forehead, indeed, the serene and noble forehead, that might be the same; but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish, could these be mistaken for life? Had it been so, wherefore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses? But so it was not. I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me; and, whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow, the most mournful that ear ever heard. (143-4)

The bible discussion prior to, and in anticipation of, facing once again Elizabeth’s paradoxical corpse, prepares De Quincey and his readers for her features and “frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them.” Jerusalem, “there, on the contrary, it was, as we infants understood,” De Quincey explains, “that mortality had been trampled under foot […] for that
very reason, there it was that mortality had opened its very gloomiest crater” (143). The
description of Jerusalem, particularly set during Palm Sunday, reinforces the descriptions De
Quincey provides for Elizabeth, his trace, as well as the dreaming faculty: “there it was, indeed,
that the human had risen on wings from the grave; but, for that reason, there also it was that the
divine had been swallowed up by the abyss; the lesser star could not rise, before the greater
would submit to eclipse” (143). De Quincey is quite aware of the threshold of his childhood
development in circumstantial learning as well as in apprehending mortality.

The significance of the trace and contracted time embed with the underlying “intricate
relations to scriptural scenery and events,” not merely the mode of antagonism (143). In fact, if
conceptual is a structure for human understanding, the circumstances of the scriptural readings,
the nursery evening are just as vital. From Lakoff and Johnson’s study of causal metaphors in
*Philosophy in the Flesh* (1999), they demonstrate that conceptual metaphor has a central role in
abstract conceptualization. Johnson elaborates that:

> If conceptual metaphor is essential for abstract thought, then the
classic objectivist/literalist picture cannot be correct. Conceptual
metaphor is a structure of human understanding, and the source
domains of the metaphors come from our bodily, sensory-motor
experience, which becomes the basis for abstract conceptualization
and reasoning. From this perspective, truth is a matter of how our
body-based understanding of a sentence fits or fails to fit, our
body-based understanding of a situation… There is a form of
‘correspondence.’

The “correspondence” suggests a process similar to the *precise correspondence* of the concurrent
passages for De Quincey in *translation*. Translation, to continue with De Quincey’s terminology,
might align the source domain of the body’s sensory-motor experience with abstract

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393. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. *Philosophy in the Flesh: the Cognitive Unconscious and the Embodied
conceptualization: the children, “all constitutionally touched with pensiveness,” to associate “fitful gloom and sudden lambencies” with “the divine revelations of power and mysterious beauty.” De Quincey’s referential competence of summertime (as a child he “possesses the instructions with which to identify” 394 summer) and but only inferential competence of mortality (knows that death is not to be alive), he must appeal to the metaphor of life and light, death and darkness. By including this “almost necessary” digression, De Quincey showcases the “inextricable” connects of involutes, following metaphoric correspondence of the context (or referential). The digressions provide the underlying involutes that entangle the traumatic experience. They offer the requisite syntax organizing his conceptualizations or signal embedded code—occurring on the metalingual layer, to link semiotics and communication theory. The algorithmic or prescribed sequences of signification issue from involutes as if following linear systems—but only when tracing one teleology from one starting point.

De Quincey’s narrative is a commensurate model of the layering involutes of memory. Separately and together his narrative and his memory form matrices, which, when added and multiplied become something akin to abstract algebra, variational calculus and differential equations: the functions and formula require a distinct analysis offered by operator theory. Mathematics scholar Evans Harrell recently proposed that operationally “operators act like matrices,” 395 both of which mediate abstractly to provide condition for solution, or meaning making. Without delving too deeply into the actual mathematics of linearity, spaces of infinite dimension, and so forth, the value of recognizing that two concepts behave or operate in a similar

394. Eco, 2000b, Kant and the Platypus, 170-171.

fashion is the similar aim of comparing De Quincey’s linguistic investigations with counterparts in the field from which he coopts his most central term and concept. De Quincey’s involutes strive to understand germinating structures and entangling processes within contracted spaces. De Quincey, however, is less concerned with solutions—moving him away from mathematical aims—than he is with offering a method for analysis that is as open-ended as the infinite involute.

Section 3: Feedback Loops, Repeated and Remoulded Continually in Sequence and Simultaneity

The use of language or the employment of any code which implies a play of forms […] also presupposes […] a spacing and temporalizing, a play of traces. This play must be a sort of inscription prior to writing, a protowriting, without a present origin, without an archē.

Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 146

*Suspiria de Profundis*’s matrix of dream theory and memory semantics rest on the involute and involute cognition. Operating with elements of semantics, communication, discourse theory, De Quincey sense of the mental operations are structured by his visual-linguistic experiences: “the past events of life . . . formed their dread line of revelation” (176). Woven within this philosophical outlook on splendid dreaming are two components related to vision: communication in darkness--or with the obliqueness of not fully apprehended knowledge—and solitude or separation. These are two aspects underlying the sequence of Elizabeth’s death: her separation yet audible sufferings paired with the proclamation of her fate, his surreptitious viewing of her body followed by barred entry on his second visit, and lastly, her funeral service and the coffin’s decent into the earth. The parallel images in his theory of dream-

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memory phenomenon demonstrate the metaphoric superstructure for De Quincey’s symbolic infrastructure:

A pall, deep as oblivion, had been thrown by life over every trace of these experiences; and yet suddenly, at a silent command, at the signal of a blazing rocket sent up from the brain, the pall draws up, and the whole depths of the theatre are exposed. Here was the greater mystery: now this mystery is liable to no doubt; for it is repeated, and ten thousand times repeated, by opium, for those who are its martyrs. (176)

The repetition “ten thousand times repeated” exceeds the finite parameters of his essay, yet De Quincey attempts in the latter sections to demonstrate it. A particular type of repetition and remolding occurs in “The Apparition of the Brocken,” which De Quincey argues is vital for Suspiria. Indeed, the “play of forms,” using Derrida’s phrase, offers a sense of the deep inscription underlying De Quincey’s fascination with the Brocken “dream-legend.”397 “Savannah-La-Mar” provides a vision of “the whole depths of the theatre” of a sunken city “expose” in a fantasy inverting the paradoxes of sight and death. Part II as with “The English Mail-Coach” relate later life experiences, further influenced by memory and dreams (see Chapter Four). The study of discourse and language, despite varied inquiry and method, arrives at a similar acceptance of communication as unpredictable and unexpected—something quite distinct from the initial premises of communication theory but especially the mathematic solution.

397. De Quincey’s added footnote explains the othering of self in the “Spectre of the Brocken”: “This very striking phenomenon has been continually described by writers, both German and English, for the last fifty years. Many readers, however, will not have met with these descriptions: and on their account I add a few words in explanation; referring them for the best scientific comment on the case to Sir David Brewster’s ‘Natural Magic.’ The spectre takes the shape of a human figure, or, if the visitors are more than one, then the spectres multiply; they arrange themselves on the blue ground of the sky, or the dark ground of any clouds that may be in the right quarter, or perhaps they are strongly relieved against a curtain of rock, at a distance of some miles, and always exhibiting gigantic proportions. At first, from the distance and the colossal size, every spectator supposes the appearance to be quite independent of himself. But very soon he is surprised to observe his own motions and gestures mimicked; and wakens to the conviction that the phantom is but a dilated reflection of himself” (182).
De Quincey’s involute with its play of forms, proliferating structure, and interlacing operations conceives of a uniquely functioning world. In the decades after De Quincey, the mathematician Ferdinand Georg Frobenius develops a method (related to the Laurent Series for spaces between concentric circles) for infinite series solutions. De Quincey’s approach to language operates beyond the physical theories of classical mechanics and more in tandem with general relativity and differential geometry or differential systems integrability. Following Leibniz’s contributions, but contemporary with Joseph Fourier, whose theorems include differentiation, convolution, and infinite systems, De Quincey’s branching involutions of language, mind and text share the interests of distinct fields. Fourier in his *Théorie Analytique de la Chaleur* (1807-1822), provides the first explicit differential operator, an operator being a function whose domain is a set of functions (rather than real or complex numbers); as such the operator is a necessary product and function of the equation. Certainly modern physics accepts these complexities of the world. De Quincey’s involute, however, suggests a sublimity in unpredictable effects of otherwise recognizable systems, structures, and processes of interlocking and entangling co-existence.

Though advanced areas of modern mathematics include aspects of the involute and De Quincey’s *involutes*, the intricacies remain beyond the parameters of this study of De Quincey. The shared concerns are evident, nevertheless, in the philosophy operating in tandem to the


physics: the manifold is a central concept to both. Integrability of a manifold, in an
oversimplified explanation, is formulated through the geometric and algebraic structures of
differential forms, isolating the submanifold for compatibility with exterior derivatives. In
linguistic terms, the manifold structure of De Quincey involutes have substructures with
compatible external coefficients, replicas, reproductions. Such foliation is relational, in discourse
termology, relying upon tangents and compatibility with integral or embedded manifolds (or
further involutes). The sense of such shared terms as tangents and embedded manifolds are
useful, even if the specialized mathematics are too vast for development here. Distribution in
differential geometry concerns the parameters of differentiable manifolds, in which functions are
continuously differentiable when derivative functions are themselves continuous—or, simply
stated, the space of a function that has a derivative which is itself continuous or completely
defined without discontinuities or gaps. De Quincey’s study occupies a linguistic equivalent.

The repetition of the dreams that expose “every trace” of his nursery experiences,
shrouded in “a pall, deep as oblivion,” locate the correspondences between memories,
recollections, and the past selves that communicate and demonstrate the “deeper” dream-memory
“phenomenon”: “the resurrection itself, and the possibility of resurrection, for what had so long
slept in the dust” (176). Beyond actualizing these virtual sleeping memories or subscripts on the
palimpsest, the caduceus narrative operates to showcase is visual-linguistic semantic memory
structures:

The reader is likely to differ from me upon the question, moved by recurring to
such experiences of childhood, whether much value attaches to the perceptions
and intellectual glimpses of a child. Children, like men, range through a gamut
that is infinite, of temperaments and characters, ascending from the very dust
below our feet to highest heaven. (160)

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400. For more on the mathematics, see: Marco Abate and Francesca Tovena. Curves and Surfaces. (Milano: Springer, 2012).
The complications arise concerning duration and the transmission or interpretation of involute networks between his past-present selves. “The gamut that is infinite” through which each experiencing-self ranges impacts the combinations of involutes, the context of encoding and reading, of recollecting/interpreting. “Ascending from the very dust below,” and mirroring the dreaming apparatus and traumatic shaft, replicates his trance’s travel “to the highest heaven.” The trajectory is the same he aims to offer the readers of Suspiria:

Here pause, reader! Imagine yourself seated in some cloud-scaling swing, oscillating under the impulse of lunatic hands; for the strength of lunacy may belong to human dreams, the fearful caprice of lunacy, and the malice of lunacy, whilst the victim of those dreams may be all the more certainly removed from lunacy; even as a bridge gathers cohesion and strength from the increasing resistance into which it is forced by increasing pressure. Seated in such a swing, fast as you reach the lowest point of depression, may you rely on racing up to a starry altitude of corresponding ascent. Ups and downs you will see, heights and depths, in our fiery course together, such as will sometimes tempt you to look shyly and suspiciously at me, your guide, and the ruler of the oscillations. (169)

By the ascent and decent of the swing, the oscillations narrative can convey of the human system thusly afflicted as De Quincey become “corresponding.” “Ups and downs you will see,” De Quincey tells his reader, “heights and depths, in our fiery course together.” In this manner, for narrative, De Quincey is the “ruler of the oscillations” rather than the “victim of those dream.” Even more importantly, De Quincey suggests the variation he offers, first as preceding digressions, then the alternate dream-vision sections, rehearsing in extensio, offers “cohesion.” “Even as a bridge gathers cohesion and strength,” the significant aspects of his memories reinforce in differentiation within the “might system of central forces,” or the “increasing resistance into which it is forced by increasing pressure.” With each actualization, the relevant message becomes manifest.
De Quincey advises his reader, through the mask of reassuring himself or fortifying his narrative against the cynical or critical, that, “the reader of more kindness (for a surly reader is always a bad critic) will also have more discernment”:

He will perceive that it is not for the mere facts that the case is reported, but because these facts move through a wilderness of natural thoughts or feelings: some in the child who suffers; some in the man who reports; but all so far interesting as they relate to solemn objects. (134)

“Facts,” messages or data, move through a medium (or media) that requires navigation or interpretation. The “wilderness” of involutes (natural thoughts or feelings), whether the wreathed caducean ornaments of narrative or the palimpsestuous memory-archive, the chain of signs is an unwieldy, even infinite, interpretive journey. De Quincey distinguishes the dual roles and perspectives of the child experiencing and the adult reporting, albeit their positions in practice might blur. “Some” seems both vague and haphazard—betraying a sense that the two, though different, may occasionally be indistinguishable. Eric Kramer recently points toward the shift in thinking of humans as “empirical but rather projective,” that “human consciousness continually integrates memory with expectation and planning.”401 “Retention and pretension constantly integrate,” Kramer elaborates, implicating the role of vision and visionary quality to human’s projective consciousness.402 Experiences retain in memory due to expectations of significance as well as previous experiences—this much De Quincey traces himself.

De Quincey, however, offers only the preliminary cases in his potentially open model of involute systems of textual interpretation. “The classical models of the tree and the labyrinth,” Eco continues, rely, however, on recognizing that, “/Tree/ and /labyrinth/ are not metaphors,”


rather, “they are topological and logical models, and as such they were and are studied in their proper domain.” The labyrinth invokes the chain or continuum of interpretation, “as labels or emblems for the overall discussion,” Eco continues, “they can be taken as metaphors [yet] they stand for the nonmetaphoric Peircean notion of unlimited semiosis.” The branching tree, unlike the labyrinth, certainly invokes De Quincey’s caduceus, the aspects of which De Quincey transfers to his involute as well as translation.

De Quincey distinguishes the labyrinthine possibility in the palimpsest-archive of the mind; he further establishes the virtual-involute to the topological and logical model for the translation and interpretation occurring in actualization. Quincey acknowledges, that in his narratological efforts—“to clear away all doubts and scruples which can gather about the roots of such as malady,” as his (134). The “polydimensional network of properties” Eco sees in the infinite potentials of componential representation, resembles the contingency Mikhail Bakhtin makes concerning words and utterances. Both Eco and Bakhtin present a discursive model of relational meaning that suits De Quincey’s involute—both mechanically and geometrically co-opted. Bakhtin terms the similar purpose in the signal-relay semantic competence as the “Addressivity” or a type of anticipation of the intended audience’s shared code, but also stresses the “Answerability” or the potential and anticipated response, the answer of a transmitted utterance. Permeating modern physics is operator theory, particularly the self-adjoint operator of quantum mechanics, unbounded and capable of functioning in infinite-dimensional space—the


effect makes them continuous and observable of vector spaces that share similar traits to De Quincey’s sense of the matrices of memory, language, and narrative. By following the communication model, however, De Quincey’s sense of the role of his Dark Interpreter as an operator makes finite and apparent the role of communication feedback between him various temporal selves.

The Interpreter as Feedback

The reader, who wishes at all to understand the course of these Confessions, ought not to pass over this dream-legend. There is no great wonder that a vision, which occupied my waking thoughts in those years, should re-appear in my dreams. It was in fact a legend recurring in sleep, most of which I had myself silently written or sculptured in my daylight reveries.

Thomas De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis, 182

De Quincey’s footnote explaining the section of “The Apparition of the Brocken,” provides an example of his awareness of recollection’s interplay of reproduction. Whether dreams or “daylight reveries,” his “waking thoughts” reappear, “recurring in sleep” those thoughts he had “silently written or sculptured.” The discourse between layers operating by his semantics have intermediate stages of retention and protention, of integrating memory with projective significatio

The phenomenon at Brocken, an optical illusion created by the natural formation, offers visitors a reflection of themselves—and an appropriate analogy for De Quincey’s discursivity and recursively. As De Quincey explains the phenomenon, when the apparition appears, each action you perform it mirrors, such as veiling one’s head—yet his description spirals back to his own circumstances:

Immediately you see that the apparition of the Brocken veils his head, after the model of Judaea weeping under her palm−tree, as if he also had a human heart, and that he also, in childhood, having suffered an affliction which was ineffable,
wished by these mute symbols to breathe a sigh towards heaven in memory of that affliction, and by way of record, though many a year after, that it was indeed unutterable by words. (184)

The Broken apparition, to appear as his reflection, must be provided an interiority similar to De Quincey’s. The infrastructure and superstructure of the apparition correlates to the section’s function in Suspiria. The metaphoric figure offers a symbolic expression of the recollecting-self. The extra-semantic, emotive evocations woven together, are “unutterable by words,” expressive only as “a sigh” by a reflection. The palm-tree and weeping Judaea, which the apparition mimics is the interpretation only available when apprehending the vision as other rather than self; the return to the image of the palms reinforces the othering of the cognitive value during those nursery associations. Much as Ricoeur, “shifts the problem of the metaphor from the semantics of the word to the semantics of the sentence,” De Quincey’s dream-legend supplements as well as underscores significance. The silence of the symbolic reflection is relevant even as it “breathe[s] a sigh towards heaven in memory of that affliction.” The silence, similar yet distinct, in “Savannah-La-Mar” suggests the pristine virtual experience ever able to be revisited. The Brocken apparition serves to reinforce plurality of actualization but also the “equivocal” not just of a word, but now the series, sequence: the sentence, utterance, or memory.

To complicate the continuum or infinite is the sense of generating a new transmission, De Quincey suggests the Brocken figure has a dual parallel:

This trial is decisive. You are now satisfied that the apparition is but a reflex of yourself; and, in uttering your secret feelings to him, you make this phantom the dark symbolic mirror for reflection to the daylight what else must be hidden forever. Such a relation does the Dark Interpreter, whom immediately the reader will learn to know as an intruder into my dreams, bear to my own mind. He is originally a mere reflex of my inner nature. But as the apparition of the Brocken sometimes is disturbed by storms or by driving showers, so as to dissemble his

real origin, in like manner the Interpreter sometimes swerves out of my orbit, and mixes a little with alien natures. (184-5)

The Dark Interpreter, as “originally a mere reflex of [his] inner nature,” also “mixes a little with alien natures.” The interpreter may translate but also remold. The roles of memory’s two basic forms, offered by memory theorists such as James and Husserl, assume these personas for De Quincey: “the ‘primary’ or ‘retentional’ vs. ‘secondary’ or ‘reproductive’” types of memory are more complicated, as recently Edward Casey notes in Remembering: A Phenomenological Study, “there is an entire set of intermediate forms of remembering.”408 The “reproductive faculty of dreaming” is the early sense De Quincey offers in Suspiria de Profundis, to explain dreams translating and interpreting memory. Interconnected, interpenetrating, the forms or stages of memory are “intermediate between primary and secondary memory, as well as between mind and world,” Casey notes, also distinguishing recognition and reminiscing, as well as distinguishing what is remembered with what is imagined, “so polymorphic is remembering that no single set of intentional structures or eidetic features can capture the whole phenomenon.”409 De Quincey’s projections of self communicate with his self-presence in memory. “I do not always know him in these cases as my own parhelion,” De Quincey clarifies of his Interpreter: “What he says, generally, is but that which I have said in daylight, and in meditation deep enough to sculpture itself on my heart” (185). “But sometimes,” De Quincey confesses, “as his face alters, his words alter; and they do not always seem such as I have used, or could use” (185). De Quincey’s preferred term of recollection or recollecting a remembrance seems to betray a


409. Casey, 2000, Remembering, ix-x.
suspicion of his own monkish chemist, effacing as he re-writes—transfers, substitutes, 
*translates*—the key signs in memory.

The “phantom the dark symbolic mirror for reflection to the daylight what else must be
hidden forever,” becomes a manifest self to assist correcting the transmitted utterance in
memory, excavated by the dreaming apparatus (184). The modern communications model of
signal to receiver, adds to informational diagram of Claude Shannon and the linguistic functions
of Roman Jakobson, with a recursive loop that feeds back information to reduce corruption by
disruptive noise. Feedback “has one main function,” explains media scholar John Fiske; “it helps
the communicator adjust his or her message to the needs and responses of the receiver.”410 When
De Quincey claims the phantom interpreter “swerves out of my orbit,” the alien natures implicate
discursive concentric selves (memories, experiences) but also language (literature) requisite for
De Quincey to apprehend his own signification (and his readers “to understand the course of
these Confessions”). “The Greek chorus is perhaps not quite understood by critics, any more than
the Dark Interpreter by myself,” suggests De Quincey, “but the leading function of both must be
supposed this— not to tell you anything absolutely new,— that was done by the actors in the
drama” (185). The Interpreter-feedback loop assists the message and meaning:

To recall you to your own lurking thoughts, hidden for the moment
or imperfectly developed, and to place before you, in immediate
connection with groups vanishing too quickly for any effort of
meditation on your own part, such commentaries, prophetic or
looking back, pointing the moral or deciphering the mystery,
justifying Providence, or mitigating the fierceness of anguish, as
would or might have occurred to your own meditative heart, had
only time been allowed for its motions. (185, note 48)

The interdisciplinary communication-linguistic model assists in understanding De Quincey’s
narratological efforts to render inter-/intra-memory discourse. Both addressivity and

answerability require interpretation of context as well as text. Bakhtinian polyglossia, the hybridized and intertextual nature of language, places “primacy of context over text,” 411 by acknowledging the coexistence of uses or utterances in every sign or word, as if each term is a palimpsest of denotations and palimpsestuous connotations. Recognizing Eco’s polydimensionality, much as with Bakhtin’s relational or dialogic meaning, the contingent relation between words underscores their preexisting systems of meaning as well as the transference or transfer of properties between componential representation. In the Bakhtinian sense of discourse, a similar topical domain (work) can voice many utterances, each always a borrowed element from previous sources, traceable though scoured as in the palimpsest.

The wreathing of multiple experiences stemming from one involute conflate into the layered palimpsestic/palimpsestuous text of the mind and the essay. “Though feedback inserts a return look from the destination to the source, it does not destroy the linearity of the model,” Fiske notes 412 Though seeming to rupture the linearity of the narrative, rather, De Quincey’s conceptual models layer the sense of linearity with feedback built in; “it is there to make the process of transmitting messages more efficient.” 413 Multiplicity and the addressivity of the receiver help to reconcile the efficiency of maintaining the message and the generative forces of dreams. The involute, virtual and manifold, in each actualization differentiates the palimpsestous interplay of traces between memories. “The Interpreter is anchored and stationary in my dreams; but great storms and driving mists cause him to fluctuate uncertainly, or even to retire altogether, like his gloomy counterpart, the shy phantom of the Brocken,” De Quincey explains, and his

behavior aligns with the memory faculty, “to assume new features or strange features, as in
dreams always there is a power not contented with reproduction, but which absolutely creates or
transforms” (185). The transformative and reproductive power is most evident in the vision of
Savannah-La-Mar, the desire for recovering the past intact:

God smote Savannah−la−mar, and in one night, by earthquake, removed her, with
all her towers standing and population sleeping, from the steadfast foundations of
the shore to the coral floors of ocean. And God said, Pompeii did I bury and
conceal from men through seventeen centuries: this city I will bury, but not
conceal. She shall be a monument to men of my mysterious anger, set in azure
light through generations to come; for I will enshrine her in a crystal dome of my
tropic seas. (185-6)

The “enshrined” city exposes De Quincey’s deep anxiety over Elizabeth’s body, the metaphoric
pattern reappearing in a city he describes as “one ample cemetery, and has been for many a
year,” but “fascinates the eye with a Fata−Morgana revelation, as of human life still subsisting in
submarine asylums sacred from the storms that torment our upper air” (186). The vision of
Savannah-La-Mar, far from realistic, “sleeping in everlasting sanctity,” is one possible with the
aid of not actual memory but generative properties and the Interpreter: “oftentimes in dreams did
I and the Dark Interpreter cleave the watery veil that divided us from her streets” (186). Whereas
De Quincey cannot again see Elizabeth after his surreptitious trance-induced viewing, the
episode remolds into the idealized sleeping city within the “crystal dome.”

Applying the communication model, as Eco does, to the signs of language, Eco is quick
to point out, for the post-modern study, that “like every science, even a specific semiotics ought
to take into account a sort of ‘uncertainty principle’ (as anthropologists must be aware of the fact
that their presence as observers can disturb the normal course of the behavioral phenomena they
observe).”414 De Quincey seems aware of his projections of self—the experiencing child, the

dreaming student, the reporting adult—but also the movement of each through time, duration, and involute semiosis. De Quincey’s cursory semiotic study, the hermeneutical workings of his philosophy, is in many ways also an eidetic analysis. The illustrated bible, the referent context of the nursery experiences, provides De Quincey—whether reconstructed with greater significance in hindsight as a child or adult—a vital study (and digression) of his cognitive syntax codifying the system of signs vital in his central remembrance point.

The moments succeeding the childhood afflictions in De Quincey’s dreams and narratives exemplify syntactic operations as involute as the mental structures containing them. The medium of the mind, as with the medium of narrative, contains the tensions of manifold and serialized actualization, of durations suspended, dilated and contracted in memory. The course of his narrative, though digressive and fragmented is not fractured but concentric. The matrix of meaning, like the visual-linguistic network, interconnects the central forces in the mighty and dynamic human system, that, as De Quincey describes it, “gathers cohesion and strength from the increasing resistance into which it is forced by increasing pressure” (169). Centering his study through language, De Quincey can address mathematic principles while sparing any need for precise equations, formula or graphs. The point may be that involutes in his conception of them cannot be qualified or valued or even understood in that manner. Language provides a fluid, arbitrary and abstract structure with processes and operations suited to accommodate. Communication theory and systems theory assist to understand De Quincey’s endeavor through their interdisciplinary applications. Involutes may coopt a mathematic concept but De Quincey applies linguistic concerns onto the science and philosophy of understanding not only memory and narrative but even reality itself.
Chapter Four: Involute Texts and Involute Analysis: “The Vortex of the Merely Human”

For I was now seriously afraid of pointing attention to myself as one that, by having purchased some numbers, and obtained others on credit, had silently contracted an engagement to take all the rest, though they should stretch to the crack of doom. Certainly I had never heard of a work that extended to 15,000 volumes; but still there was no natural impossibility that it should; and, if in any case, in none so reasonably as one upon the inexhaustible sea. Besides, any slight mistake as to the letter of the number could not affect the horror of the final prospect. I saw by the imprint, and I heard, that this work emanated from London, a vast centre of mystery to me, and the more so, as a thing unseen at any time by my eyes, and nearly two hundred miles distant.

Thomas De Quincey, Suspiria de Profundis, 166

During the episode of translation at the bookseller’s, De Quincey presents a scene of uncertainty and limitlessness related to his understanding of spatial relations and textuality (specifically, serialized publication) that is in keeping with his sense of communicative connectivity and of underlying structures. De Quincey’s concerns for language, which bring him in company with post-modern theories, extend to the implications of text and medium. His thoughts—at least in narrative—move from an endless text (his fear of contract as consumer) that “should stretch to the crack of doom” or “as one upon the inexhaustible sea” to its publishing source, London, a “vast centre of mystery […] as a thing unseen […] and […] distant.” Reversionary as these images appear to earlier ones, chronological and narratological, such as a sleeping submarine city and Elizabeth’s seemingly slumbering corpse, they invoke a larger set of connoted semes and figurations. Any of these unutterable and unuttered associations may be tangentially relevant from any stage of the processes approaching composition.

When images or words manifest, either reproduced or remoulded, in Suspiria de Profundis they are never simply lexical echoes that operate as literary imagery. Were that the case, here, the doomsday thunderclap or crack might solely evoke the revelatory shaft’s strike, the mysterious vast centre might be himself, and so forth. To track these processes through the
layers of cognition and recollection would require excavation of intangible, inaccessible substrates. Partially the impediment is due to the tandem systems producing long-term memory. The language of Suspiria indeed renders memory in the confluence of syntactic layers and systems. The main issue is that any system operating in and through involutes has dynamic system qualities; in mathematics dynamic systems have a function that describes the time dependence of a point in geometrical spaces, which for systems models means a system with an internal dynamics or memory of past states. Such systems, related sets of processes and reservoirs, are characterized by continual change from the flow of material or energy.

De Quincey’s main models—the palimpsest, caduceus, involute—each appeal to a recursive pattern similar to feedback. N. Katherine Hayles captures the prevalence of feedback as she employs “the recurrent image” of a feedback loop, as a broad post-modern metaphor, in fact, “to explain the complex interactions of theory, technology, and culture.” A comparable yet distinct notion might be a heterogenous assemblage. Whereas the feedback cycle allows Hayles the discourse of “society itself” as “a complex system in a technical sense,” feedback between theory and culture “through the medium of technology,” demonstrates the focus on materiality in recent decades. Hayles’s approach anchors the textual (and narrative) focus that is crucial for De Quincey’s project. For De Quincey, memory and text are a set in the same


philosophical, and perhaps dynamic, system. Worth noting are some additions, or rather, “differenciation” or divergence, Manuel DeLanda offers to Deleuze in *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy*, a “line of argumentation [that] is, in fact, not Deleuze’s own, although it follows directly from his ontological analysis.”\(^{418}\) With “topological connectivity” DeLanda explains an assemblage possesses less rigid metric properties than would permit change through random collision as well as mutate and differentiate differences.\(^{419}\) De Quincey’s dynamic system includes topological connectivity between memory and text. The two structures are interconnected, as with involute gears, through an intermeshing dialectic matrix. Other elements of DeLanda’s mathematical philosophy address the continuum of virtual multiplicities by including Albert Lautman’s work on dis/symmetry and dialectical structure.\(^{420}\) DeLanda distinguishes extensive and intensive processes and qualities that coincide with communicative issues of memory for De Quincey and in his systems of memory. De Quincey’s involute—all levels within memory—is a concrete universal that can mesh with others into a continuum through relations and feedback loop, as DeLanda explains multiplicities: involutes consist of topological continua or “non-metric space.”\(^{421}\) More recent neuroscience models, demonstrating concerns for psychological and physiological interaction, account for a type of feedback as in communication-informational models. This complicates the distinctions of declarative or explicit memory (intentionally recollected) and undeclarative or implicit memory


(unconsciously acquired and accessed). Memory’s virtual multiplicities reinforce that the issue is not a simple binary of conscious and unconscious traces.

De Quincey’s involute is both the hardware and the software, the structure and the processes of several systems. Mathematic philosophy of the virtual provides a general sense of the structures of both text and memory, whereas the disciplines focused on the brain/mind operate with sole focus on those junctures. Neuroscience’s continuing illuminations of the brain’s interworkings are useful for considering the fragmenting of data among sub-systems; however, the transitions in memory process are of primary comparison to the involute model’s virtual functions. Recognizing the complexity of multiple parallel memory systems within involute memory provides an important distinction from the paradigm of rigid or predictable mechanical operations. In the fields of psychology the prominent working memory model undergoes continuing refinement, though its basic model consists of synthesis among fluid systems of temporary storage before converting information into more permanent storage among crystallised systems. Crystallization is De Quincey’s term when describing languages in their developed states for comparison with education, notably in an analogy that links language, textuality (and literature), mechanisms and the human system: rather than “the poor machinery that moves spelling-books,” a crystalized language resembles “that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life” that “works forever upon children” (as concerns his discussion of the figure of Levana).

De Quincey distinguishes a difference in layers of storage: “deep memory” occurs through repeated re-experience and recollection. Temporary memory remains fluid in the sense of requiring maintenance while being stored. The visuo-spatial sketch-pad suspends visual and spatial data, while the phonological loop must accommodate auditory transience and mnemonic decay through a secondary rehearsal aspect, the articulatory loop. This loop of repetition is similar to the feedback function in communication systems. Repetition is key for memory, as De Quincey notes, whether consciously repeated or not: childhood experience, “[rest] not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering forever as they revolve.” De Quincey recognizes that some operations occur in the background, processes for which fluid short term memory also accounts.

Together the two fluid systems (visual and auditory) co-operate with a third, a devised backup interface between working and long-term: the episodic buffer behaves as something akin to random-access memory (RAM) in computing. Instead of the main goal of efficiency, for computing this is housing readily accessible storage of files frequently needed, the episodic buffer may facilitate proper filing in long term memory.423 The complete sequence of Elizabeth’s death becomes all the more significant for potential short-term permeation in surrounding experiences. De Quincey’s environmental elements as well as past experiences (including literary readings) influence working memory’s fluidity. The repetition of short-term memory may explain the fluid entangling of moments in the involute sequence among themselves and with De Quincey’s past or long-term memories.

423. For more specialized discussion, see: David A. Redish, Beyond the Cognitive Map: From Place Cells to Episodic Memory. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999); and, Kourken Michaelian, Mental Time Travel: Episodic Memory and Our Knowledge of the Personal Past. (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2016).
Part of what De Quincey’s narrative imagery and digressions render is the complex that he retraces while narrating his recollection of the core involute of *Suspiria de Profundis*. The fluid systems sometimes compete in the process of embedding memory into long-term memory (LTM) storage. These *crystallised* systems consist of visual semantics that extracts general knowledge from experiences, language or individual lexicon (in the sense of Saussure’s *parole*, distinct from *langue*424), and episodic LTM (long-term memory) that imprints the unique individual experiences of events. The neuroscience of brain memory directs to the processes that construct memory as a heterogenous object not unlike the text De Quincey suggests, or a deconstructionist such as de Man might find irreducible, a network of moving parts, inseparable, in capable of being disentangled. De Man’s sense of undecidability within texts,425 sustains interconnected, and possibly incompatible, couplings occurring in systemic exchange. This complexity and interconnectivity, evident already in several models for De Quincey, agree with the involute as the structure and syntax for his memory. Connections certainly exist, though not as directly or determinately.

Selecting any one meaning or interpretation, therefore, even for literal or figurative usage, would be reductive. Even the typical mathematic function points to the equality of input and output. Multiplicity, however, arrives at considerations of the mathematic manifold or non-Euclidean plane that—like De Quincey’s involute—requires no higher or additional space for metrization (topology that can be rendered in metric space), instead housing a variable number of dimensions (which, like algebraic geometric, is non-metrizable space). When language’s


proliferation is a factor, the result is just as infinite. Involute multiplicity in the involute system operates in individual memory just as in language’s memory. De Quincey’s project and his philosophy embrace dynamism’s plurality. The imprint is a symbol, to suggest the full weight of the term, elsewhere in Suspiria of the manifoldness of textual materiality, the infrastructure of which combines with the superstructure of the memory-text, ultimately offering a cognitive model of the languages or transcoding systems of the brain. Yet, to read only these immediate (or elsewhere apparent) connotations into the imprint, here the publisher’s mark, might miss unspoken substrates connecting or collapsing the connection between the other elements in the passage, including, for instance, the two other topographies: the spatial distance (200 hundred miles geography) and the extensive textual volumes (fifteen thousand as a hyperbolic figure).

Derrida, advancing de Man’s sense of deconstruction, argues it is an act within texts: “texts deconstruct themselves by themselves.” De Quincey suggests that the connection is the infinite; “the inexhaustible sea” as perpetual motion and “stretch-ing” to judgement as being on the brink of infinity illumes De Quincey’s preoccupation with time’s motion and its material role over space. The fluidity or plasticity of memory and time found themselves upon his sense of the living and entangling involute, an organic mechanism.

Duration, for De Quincey, produces temporal discourse. Quincey’s mechanics of memory strike similar chords as Bergson’s, in which memory is “always bent upon action, seated in the present and looking only to the future […] In truth it no longer represents our pasts to us, it acts it; and if it still deserves the name of memory, it is not because it conserves bygone images, but

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because it prolongs their useful effect into the present moment.” Motion and habitual movements resonate similarly to the mechanical sense offered contemporaneously by Maine de Biran in 1804, distinguishing mechanical memory from sensitive memory and representative memory. Yet, the wheeling, eddying maelstrom-esque involute, and any systems or networks comprised of such elements, is a mechanism both unpredictable and in flux. In addition to grappling with incompleteness in the archeological record of memory, the recollector-archivist-reader’s perspective must view the past, concurrent streams from the confluence. De Quincey pursues the “vast centre of mystery” of London as a shadowy, secret network:

I felt the fatal truth, that here was a ghostly cobweb radiating into all the provinces from the mighty metropolis. I secretly had trodden upon the outer circumference had damaged or deranged the fine threads or links, concealment or reparation there could be none. Slowly perhaps, but surely, the vibration would travel back to London. The ancient spider that sat there at the centre would rush along the network through all longitudes and latitudes, until he found the responsible caitiff, author of so much mischief. (165)

The network De Quincey imagines is elusive and comprised of untraceable traces. The “ancient spider” provides the figure of forgotten code, a primeval firmware, permanent programming that is unalterable. In computing terms, it is read-only memory, not-rewritable, un-editable, and unceasing. The spider’s actions run automatically: a run-program, preset, prescribed, once activated by the proper prompt, a coded stimulus. In programming terms, actions and applications are encoded commands, executed when directed. In analysis terms, however, communication implies a level of reception and engagement. The observer views the meaning or trace it seeks; in modern physics the observer effect acknowledges that measurements of certain


systems cannot be made without affecting the systems. Ultimately the effect is uncertainty, that measurement requires participation of the observer as an object in the system. Indeterminate and complementary, extending the quantum mechanics sense (Bohr and Heisenberg’s Copenhagen Interpretation), pervades the object-subject dynamic when addressing any variables. The more precise or certain of one property, the less so of its complementary variable, its coefficient.

For De Quincey, the confluence of past and present, of experience and recollection, and other combined variables might be examined (such as position and momentum) but to focus on one is to lose sight of the other. Insights into quantum behavior, arising after the double-slit experiment, concerning duality of particle-wave and motion and mechanics, demands the sciences of the twenty-first century recognize the role of the no-longer objective observer. To assist considering De Quincey’s oscillating positions outside and within his memory, his own recourse to language and narrative brings him in conversation with Paul Ricoeur; the two also share metaphysical interests in time. In Ricoeur’s examination, “Time and Narrative,” he suggests the “Heideggerian analysis of within-time-ness [. . .] which makes the description of our temporality dependent on the description of the things of our concern,” thus making personal interests in events or circumstances a type of predication of them.429 In a similar manner, the access of long term memory to understand working memory, or even the process of applying a schema to new information, permits the observer to determine the past experiences with which to compare, inform, and define the present. In newer media terms, the echo chamber applies similar principles of information becoming amplified or reinforced by repetition within a closed system; in Ricoeur’s sense of, “what Heidegger calls this trait of concern ‘preoccupation’ or

‘circumspection,’” readerly concern has “other traits that are more deeply hidden, and because of these hidden, deep traits, it has fundamental temporal modes” from those “Heidegger calls […] das Vorhandene (‘subsisting things which our concern counts on’) and das Zuhandene (‘utensils offered to our manipulation’).”

“‘It is therefore language,’” Ricoeur argues, “with its storehouse of meanings, that keeps the description of concern, in the modality of preoccupation or circumspection, from slipping back into the description of the things of our concern and from remaining tied to the sphere of vorhanden [present-at-hand] and zuhanden [ready-at-hand].”

In this ordinary language philosophy Ricoeur finds narrative activity operates on both a linear representation of time and episodic chains of events. De Quincey suggests his preoccupation with hidden systems, comparable to language(s) in the mind, as a communication network that spans and scans (in ways that would make post-modernist such as Borges or Pynchon envious).

The “author of so much mischief” infringes on the unseen network—and De Quincey’s choice of terms reveals, as always, a nexus of several ideas at once. Commensurate to the observer-shaped reality, the wave function invites duality to particle behavior, or in De Quincey’s case, the remember-er and experien-er. Crystalline long-term memory accrues layers of new experiences, fluidly in process. The moment, De Quincey’s involute, is also a point of differentiation. De Quincey invokes the maelstrom and the “eternal wheelings” of waterfowl, to arrive at a sense quite similar to the moment of change, a complicated threshold of force and motion identified as lines of flight by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus. These lines of flight will be of use further on. Here, De Quincey utilizes the

extension of author to connote action as well as creation; moreover, the network compares to “any elaborate work”:

Even with less ignorance than mine, there was something to appall a child's imagination in the vast systematic machinery by which any elaborate work could disperse itself, could levy money, could put questions and get answers, all in profound silence, nay, even in darkness, searching every nook of every town and of every hamlet in so populous a kingdom. (166-167)

De Quincey’s sense of the network that encompasses discourses of economy and communications, originates in the text, its serial volumes, a self-proliferating work. He in effect links the codex to the properties of the computer and the digital-telecommunications age. “Searching every nook of every town and of every hamlet,” the network is inexhaustible and extensive, reaching all corners of the increasingly globalized empire or “kingdom.” The spider’s web merges underlying structure and embedded programming. Its seemingly autonomous and automatic operations reflect the shadowy of the unconscious, “in darkness.” The insight De Quincey adds to the “ghostly cobweb” upon which he “secretly” infringes is that it already operates “in profound silence, nay, even darkness.” De Quincey’s perspective on relational scope and interconnected communications permeates his imagined sense of external social and commercial or even economic systems, not solely “a child’s imagination.” The mail system, in “The English Mail-Coach” stresses this image further (discussed later in this chapter).

De Quincey’s “vast systematic machinery,” imaginable in structure and constituent parts, somehow remains mysterious and “unknown” or “absolutely inconceivable”:

I had some dim terrors, also, connected with the Stationers' Company. I had often observed them in popular works threatening unknown men with unknown chastisements, for offences equally unknown; nay, to myself, absolutely inconceivable. Could I be the mysterious criminal so long pointed out, as it were, in prophecy? I figured the stationers, doubtless all powerful men, pulling at one rope, and my unhappy self hanging at the other end. (167)
The “searching” action of this network, as he imagines it, to seek him out, resembles De Quincey’s memory of the magician’s geomancy in the tales of *Arabian Nights*. The rope from which he imagines himself hanging extends the image of the threads of the network, ensnaring him for his entanglement in it. De Quincey imagines himself “hanging at the other end,” as the spider reinforces the parallel, distorting through power relations the scale of his infraction (“the mysterious criminal […] in prophecy”). The nightmarish element of these unknowable systems offers the preoccupation De Quincey has while reading his own situation. At the end of this passage, he returns to the episode in the tales that “had particularly interested” him and his sister, concerning the magician tracking a porter by the ropes he left behind (a variation from the magician’s geomancy for locating Aladdin). This provides the parallel between the fantastical delivery he imagines for himself as the purchaser of the fifteen thousand volumes:

> Looking out, I should perceive a procession of carts and wagons, all advancing in measured movements; each in turn would present its rear, deliver its cargo of volumes, by shooting them, like a load of coals, on the lawn, and wheel off to the rear, by way of clearing the road for its successors. Then the impossibility of even asking the servants to cover with sheets, or counterpanes, or table-cloths, such a mountainous, such a “star-y-pointing” record of my past offences, lying in so conspicuous a situation! Men would not know my guilt merely, they would see it. (167)

The “measured movements” of the procession is a key image-set, particularly as each having dispatched their cargo, “wheel off to the rear, by way of clearing the road for its successor.” The successive layers and generations of the palimpsest seem to merge here with the Babylonian quarry of brick streets. De Quincey’s retelling of the tale of a “young porter, having his ropes about his person [who] finds a beautiful lady imprisoned” by a magician, from whom the porter flees, places the focus here on the porter’s forgotten ropes. Yet the magician, his role aligning with the ancient spider, tracks down the porter, akin to De Quincey: “Upon this story I used to

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433. See my earlier discussion as part of my introduction.
amuse my sister by ventriloquizing to the magician, from the lips of the trembling young man, ‘O, Mr. Magician, these ropes cannot be mine! They are far too good […] If you please, Mr. Magician, I never had money enough to buy so beautiful a set of ropes” (167). “But argument is thrown away upon a magician, and off he sets on his travels with the young porter,” De Quincey explains, “not forgetting to take the ropes along with him” (167). Any underlying theme concerning valuable possessions or the like appears incidental to the links of imprisonment, ropes/threads, and tacitly tethering obligations. “The reason why this form of consequences,” De Quincey envisions for himself, “so much more than any other, struck by [his] imagination was, that it connected itself with one of the Arabian Nights” (167). The connection is not one he makes; rather the consequences he imagines “connected itself” to his previous associated network of meaning. De Quincey does not trace the particular association that connects the two imagined stories (his imaged fate and the porter’s). The further entangling of parallel images—silence, the visible record, and tethering—reinforce the binding of the network, of the porter to magician, of thought to memory, of De Quincey to his memory texts.

Reappearance and recursion are a vital component to the metaphoric processes that occur during recollection, dreaming, or reveries. Each a new experience undergoes fluid systems processes prior to crystallization in long-term memory. De Quincey’s involute adheres to some extent to DeLanda’s (divergent) development of Deleuzian multiplicity, a further advancement of Bergsonism. As Deleuze replaces essences with multiplicities (a modal preference for virtual and actual rather than possible and real), he pursues multiplicities as concrete universals. Concreteness, rather than abstraction, is Hegel’s sense of the dialectical relations between categories.434 For Deleuze, the set of instances possesses qualities of both the universal and the

particular and provide the alternative philosophical system to remove any anxiety in the particular actualizing the virtual universal. Multiplicities and concrete universals both assist in understanding De Quincey. De Quincey’s pragmatics recognizes the circumstantial associations, both exteroceptive and interceptive, such as Arabian Nights, the educating lambency of the nursery bible readings or the lively palms/pomps of summer/Sunday. The relationship could be considered one of singularities and multiplicities, as “processes,” in the way DeLanda distinguishes spaces and attractors. Part of the fluid state of memory is metaphoric patterning to previous semantic layers, language visual-linguistic image-sets. These extensive properties permit processes that are intensive morphogenetic, with discrete and localized discursivity, as on the palimpsest. Yet, there is also the interaction, complexity or chaos of interconnected systems: the involute of language, De Quincey’s visual-linguistic cognition, memory and narrative. Memory is transcoding: converting messages between separate coded representations or languages, always differentiated in time. Translation in dreams expands in quantity those schemas of quality; narrative, according to Ricoeur, offers order between connections of external stimuli and internal abstract thought. In the trajectory of any reading, the observer-created reality actualizes and differentiates. With this awareness, involute reading paradigmatically links properties of chaos and order associated with the computer and the digital-telecommunications age back to the codex. In retracing media developments, involute reading and analysis comes to apply to any work or text.

Section 1: “Incalculable motions” and “Counter forces”: Centrifugal and Centripetal tensions

It is as though recollection inverted the so-called natural order of time. By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to read time.

itself backward, as the recapitulating of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. In this way, a plot establishes human action not only within time, as we said at the beginning of the section, but within memory. Memory, accordingly, repeats the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of time as ‘stretching along’ between a beginning and an end. 

Ricoeur, “Narrative and Time,” 180

For *Suspiria de Profundis* to be the study of dreams and memory that De Quincey desires, his narrative must follow the law or purpose of the work—yet, perhaps the relationship may be the inverse. Perhaps the law of the work is just as contingent on the form. Or, perhaps, they are mutually determined. *Narrative* and its key principle of time might provide a component view, if not a model, for involute memory. In the study “Narrative Time,” part of a larger philosophy of language developed into *Time and Narrative*, Ricoeur invokes the “well known metaphor of the arrow of time,” yet, complicates any straightforward sense of trajectory in narrative.\(^{436}\) With recollection, as Ricoeur notes, having inverted time, narrative plot “establishes human action not only within time” but also “within memory.” The two positions for De Quincey, within time and within memory, are evident tensions in the coursing of *Suspiria*: in its narrative progression and in his relating recollections within remembrances. Ricoeur explains this trajectory as dual: memory “repeats the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of time ‘stretching along’ between a beginning and an end.”\(^{437}\) The image is one of opposite movement along the same line. Similar attention to linearity and stretching time pervades *Suspiria de Profundis* and De Quincey’s duration, fundamental to his coining and conceptualization of involutes. *Suspiria*, however, weaves courses, through confluence and convergence, through *involutes* that are not linear but spherical. De Quincey sits as the ancient


spider in the center of the mysterious network, privy to vibrations along all longitudes and latitudes of his involute memories: “Concealment or reparation there could be none,” for any “damaged or deranged” effects on “the fine threads or links.” De Quincey stresses co-existence with his past iterations or author-selves encompassing the circumference of self. The stretching of narrative time, for De Quincey, is centrifugal and centripetal.

Time, its measurement and relative nature, is often the subject of key moments in Suspiria de Profundis, permitting De Quincey the means for narratologically examining time. De Quincey suggests he includes, particularly in Part II of Suspiria, “illustrations from [his] own experience” to demonstrate time in memory and narrative. He offers, in essence, life as a memory palace, with self-invested prompts (evoking preoccupation or circumspection) “confining our gaze to those, and no others, for whom personally we shall be interested”:

If life could throw open its long suites of chambers to our eyes from some station beforehand, if, from some secret stand, we could look by anticipation along its vast corridors, and aside into the recesses opening upon them from either hand, halls of tragedy or chambers of retribution, simply in that small wing and no more of the great caravanserai which we ourselves shall haunt, simply in that narrow tract of time, and no more, where we ourselves shall range, and confining our gaze to those, and no others, for whom personally we shall be interested, what a recoil we should suffer of horror in our estimate of life! (198)

Life, or rather time, has a conceptual space that resembles the archive of the mind. Mary Carruthers, in The Book of Memory, explains the importance of the memory palace in history, as a method of visualizations, of spatial loci of an individual’s environment assigned information as “living concordance” for efficient recall.438 Among the varied memory practices Carruthers catalogues, the rhetorical role of the memory palace is particularly apt for De Quincey. The mnemonic recall the palace facilitates allows for fluid recollection and organization to suit

debate and dialogue. The concordance resembles the correspondence De Quincey explained in the act of translation. The living aspects, of progressing, developing, reproducing, reinforces reviving the past into or alongside the present. In De Quincey’s visualized mindscape, as with duration, he becomes multiple: “ourselves shall haunt, simply in that narrow tract of time, and no more, where we ourselves shall range.” Time, in which existences “haunt,” resembles the narrative time, the availability of life to “throw open its long suits of chambers to our eyes from some station beforehand,” and of memory, “if, from some secret stand, we could look by anticipation along its vast corridors.” The chamber De Quincey envisions operates on involute structuring: “along its vast corridors, and aside into the recesses opening upon them from either hand, halls of tragedy or chambers of retribution.” “What a recoil we shall suffer of a horror in our estimate of life,” De Quincey cautions of the past “as a secret exhibition,” should “the past [be] viewed not as the past, but by a spectator who steps back ten years deeper into the rear, in order that he may regard it as a future” (199). De Quincey offers this commentary as part of his explanation for the criticisms his previous confessions suffered from his allusion to persons and places in London. However, the subject shifts to the experience of time in recollection: “the calamity of 1840 contemplated from the station of 1830, the doom that rang the knell of happiness viewed from a point of time when as yet it was neither feared nor would even have been intelligible [. . .] but which, if seen today, would draw forth an involuntary groan” (199). Whether “contemplated” or “viewed” from the previous “point of time” De Quincey suggests time (or life) is capable of displaying these perspectives of events without cognizance, lacking knowledge that would be, “neither feared nor would even have been intelligible.” Viewed through memory, hindsight offers no such luxury.
With a trajectory of time and perspective to explore, De Quincey addresses his reader, drawing attention to the parallel relationship. De Quincey externalizes his internal imagined reader, his “fair companion in this exploring voyage of inquest into hidden science, or forgotten scenes of human life” (201). He adds the metaphor of “direct[ing] our glasses upon” characters, as if seated with a friend at the theater (though implying a microscope is an intriguing alternative) (201). “Hidden science, or forgotten scenes of human life” offer a keen equation. Much like the spider-web’s covert technics, the neglected experiences of life are nevertheless operating in the background, the darkness, the shadowy. He reinforces this, whether consciously or not, in his description; after the episode of failed courtship, he pauses over the intruding images of two sisters, scriptural passages, summer evenings, and sunrays. The images reference his nursery years, *Suspiria’s* involute memory. The sunrays, “dying lights of love,” he admits triggered—as they contributed to his trance—his alluded recollections: his memory “went back in thought to this image” (201). He employs a vignette of several intervals of years which have “passed over” the girl, “the young lady in the boudoir,” to finally “a third generation” concealed by “cloud” and “draperies” (202). The generational timespan recalls the preliminary palimpsest De Quincey explained to readers as a text able to speak directly and pertinently to its succession of readers. Involute memory is the palimpsestic vision but also an optical illusion allowing perception to fluctuate selectively between simultaneous images. To resolve this episode, he invokes, again, the magic of narrative through an allusion to *Arabian Nights*: “Once more, ‘open sesame!’” he beckons the scenic curtains (202). The memory theater analogy he offers shares an associated syntax and grammar for images as does the dream-scenery of his dreaming theater.

There are temporal places and spaces in De Quincey’s travel episodes that distinguish narrative-time for a reader and memory-time for a rememberer. Ricoeur’s discussion of time in
narrative assists with appreciating the subjective and objective positions in relation to time. Ricoeur joins those exploring Bergsonian time while addressing the narratological focus of Vladimir Propp and Algirdas Greimas. Influenced by the common grounds of narrative theory and semiotics, Ricoeur builds on analyzable groupings of textual material (usually thematically linked), discourse and discursive actions and utterances. Greimas particularly provides the parallel levels available for meaning-making in a seemingly single homogenous discourse, what he calls isotopy. Ricoeur adds the element of time to the discussion of meaning set and layers, crucial to the relationship De Quincey establishes in the interrelated systems of memory and text. In “Narrative Time,” Ricoeur locates key issues in the temporal dialectic he feels others “hastily” misidentify (looking only at the level of manifestation, Greimas’ term, or interface in media terms). Ricoeur argues that finding “[n]arrative time and chronological time at the level of the surface grammar,” alone, “neglected a fundamental feature of a narrative’s temporal dialectic.” The temporal dialectic operates upon sublevels and describes De Quincey’s role as narrator but also as recollector and archiver. “Being in time is already something quite different from measuring intervals between limiting instances,” Ricoeur notes: “it is first of all to reckon with time and so to calculate.” De Quincey demonstrates reckoning with time, even prior to narrative, expanding Ricoeur’s temporal dialectic of narrative into the systems of language,


440. Actions and utterances have the properties of discursive, figurative and thematic systems.


thought and memory, all also evident in the language—if not the voices—of De Quincey when recollecting moments.

Reckoning with time adds an awareness of negotiating and measuring, of being aware of the process while participating in the process. The issue places De Quincey in an indeterminate position. The indeterminacy he feels transforms the ordered memory palace. The vision De Quincey offers when spanning the generations in his vignette becomes a scene of a verdant labyrinth:

How perfect is the verdure; how rich the blossoming shrubberies that screen with verdurous walls from the possibility of intrusion, whilst by their own wandering line of distribution they shape, and umbrageously embay, what one might call lawny saloons and vestibules, sylvan galleries and closets! Some of these recesses, which unlink themselves as fluently as snakes, and unexpectedly as the shyest nooks, watery cells, and crypts, amongst the shores of a forest–lake, being formed by the mere caprices and ramblings of the luxuriant shrubs, are so small and so quiet that one might fancy them meant for boudoirs. (202)

Memories and remembrances housed in recesses can “unlink themselves,” and, as this passage demonstrates can gather around centers of meaning. De Quincey returns to the objectivity of time in life’s memory palace (“verdurous walls,” saloons and vestibules, sylvan galleries and closets,” “recesses”) with the images of the network (“wandering line of distribution”). He adds the caduceus (“unlink themselves as fluently as snakes,” as entwined on the caduceus, and “formed by the mere caprices and ramblings of the luxuriant shrubs”), now tinged with the traumas of memory (“shyest nooks, watery cells, and crypts,” invoking Savannah-La-Mar as well). This clustering node reveals traces of the layers beneath (or before) narrative, remembrances “umbrageously embay[ed]” until loosed into the maelstrom. The temporal power De Quincey demonstrates collapses his images and metaphors as if remoulding his earlier portions of Suspiria.
The labyrinthine network reveals the involute’s impact on linearity. Though based on a line rather than an involute curve, Ricoeur’s sense of trajectory and oscillation for narrative dialectic provides some insights into dialectical, appositional progressions for De Quincey—De Quincey’s will additionally recourse, involve. Narrative’s temporal dialectic permits De Quincey’s merger of images and memory layers and selves. In “The Human Experience of Time and Narrative” Ricoeur first explained that, “[e]very narrative combines two dimensions in various proportions, one chronological and the other nonchronological.” In “Narrative Time” Ricoeur describes narrative’s two dimensions as “the episodic dimension, which characterizes the story as made out of events,” and, “the second is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events.” The network of “scattered events” seems an appropriate way to explain the clustered nodes rendered in the memory palace De Quincey describes and renders in the constituent parts of Suspiria. Ricoeur notes that he borrows “the notion of a configuration act” from Louis O. Mink, “which he [Mink] interprets as a ‘grasping together,’ or construing that Ricoeur recognizes as “the act of the plot, as eliciting a pattern from succession.” As De Quincey retraces events of his life, his narrative permits plot-like construing—De Quincey’s term for a stage of translation interpreting or decoding when suspending a past moment alongside the present. De Quincey’s digressions re-collect the significant elements for a sense of whole-ness. The obvious attention De Quincey draws to the intervals of time passing between drawing back the theatrical draperies suggests meaning in what is shown and what is revealed to have occurred between scenes. When links are not immediately


apparent, reflecting a plotting that is not entirely conscious, De Quincey provides recursive associations.

De Quincey’s succession of episodic portraits brings his description back to the core of *Suspiria*, the coining involute:

Here is one that in a less fickle climate would make the loveliest of studies for a writer of breathings from some solitary heart, or of *suspiria* from some impassioned memory! And, opening from one angle of this embowered study, issues a little narrow corridor, that, after almost wheeling back upon itself, in its playful mazes, finally widens into a little circular chamber; out of which there is no exit (except back again by the entrance), small or great; so that, adjacent to his study, the writer would command how sweet a bed-room, permitting him to lie the summer through, *gazing* all night long at the burning host of heaven. How silent *that* would be at the noon of summer nights, how grave-like in its quiet! And yet, need there be asked a stillness or a silence more profound than is felt at this present noon of day? (202-203)

De Quincey’s exercise in exploiting narrative time returns to his moment of contracted time and his inquest into the dreaming faculty’s temporal powers. The scene provides “the loveliest of studies for the writer of breathings from a solitary heart,” claims De Quincey, extending the imagery of revival or resuscitation from feelings to the memories themselves, “of *suspiria* from some impassioned memory.” De Quincey’s use of the titular subject is eye-catching but also relevant. Slippage from his process and studies to the physical structure, “opening from one angle of this embowered study, issues a little narrow corridor,” exemplifies the concrete and material structure De Quincey imbues to both his narrative and the memory texts it reproduces. The dialectical relationship becomes clear when, “adjacent to his study the writer would command how sweet a bed-room”—one not unlike Elizabeth’s of his memory, “permitting him to lie the summer through, *gazing* all night long at the burning host of heaven.” De Quincey,
perhaps more for his own benefit than for his imagined audience, assumes the role of reader observing his author-self.

In reading his memory as a text, De Quincey places particular emphasis on memory’s power to re-collect. What Ricoeur calls the “temporal dialectic,” provides a means to understand “the basic operation of eliciting a configuration from a succession.” The temporal dialectic for the reader allows for (re-)constructing a configuration of meaning out of the seeming linearity of narrative. De Quincey exposes this as he reads his memory-texts. While recollecting, the rememberer reconstructs meaning from chronological, episodic events. Ricoeur elaborates: “The configurational dimension, in turn, displays temporal features that may be opposed to these ‘features’ of episodic time […] the configurational arrangement makes the succession of events into significant wholes that are the correlate of the act of grouping together.” Ricoeur credits this process as a “reflective act—in the sense of Kant’s *Critique of Judgement,*” which permits that “the whole plot may be translated into one ‘thought.’” The “thought” or theme, mythos, point or so forth, for De Quincey or rather for *Suspiria de Profundis* is the group of successive events that anticipate beforehand *and influence after* the imagery of the coining involute. From the climate of Jerusalem to the profound silence of noon day, De Quincey crystalizes the trance in Elizabeth’s bedchamber. The wheeling of memories, the unicursal mazes or circular labyrinth is both that of the re-collector-reader and “the writer [who] would command” the contents of his memories, the sighs from the depths.

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By adapting the issues of narrative to include application to the textual mind, narratology provides vital underpinnings for addressing intersections (and involute interactions) in the human system. De Quincey’s concerns for narrative parallel his examination of memory—his efforts place him in company with philosophies of language and other interdisciplinary work impacted by semiotics and philosophy. The control De Quincey attempts for memory, he possesses in narrative: “How silent *that* would be at the noon of summer nights, how grave-like in its quiet!” De Quincey oscillates between both positions of the night and noon, the observer and participant in the coining remembrance, ultimately asking: “And yet, need there be asked a stillness or a silence more profound than is felt at this present noon of day?” De Quincey’s metaphysical involute resonates with the roles of interfaces and interaction, providing a unique model to inform current new media inquiry. The interdependence of language and materiality in *Suspiria*, resonate with new media and *informatics*, areas recognizing the embodied processes and contexts that information and communication require. N. Katherine Hayles’ contributions to scholarship range among cross-sections of science, literature and media, and philosophy in effect arguing the cultural connections between these areas; De Quincey differs only in his personal focus. Hayles, in *How We Became Post-Human*, cogently interrogates post-modern conceptions of information as disembodied,\textsuperscript{450} betraying her own influences from both semiotics and material philosophy. Hayles argues:

> Words never make things happen by themselves—or rather, that the only things they can make happen are other abstractions [...] They can’t put marks onto paper. They can’t get letters in the mail. They can’t bring twenty-five people together at the right time and in the right place [...] For that, material and embodied processes must be used—processes that exist never in isolation but always in contexts where the relevant boundaries are permeable, negotiable, instantiated [...] information is never disembodied, that messages

don’t flow by themselves, and that epistemology isn’t a word floating through the thin, thin air until it is connected up with incorporating practices.\textsuperscript{451}

For De Quincey, the embodied memory processes become materially incorporated in his narrative. Analogously, Hayles explains the cybernetics dilemma of separating information from the embodied media, sender and receiver. The information model serves as a varied interdisciplinary model; Greimas, for instance, features it in his semiotics of discourse, an “assemblage of structures of signification.”\textsuperscript{452} De Quincey’s involute model, however, approaches the sense of assemblage at the forefront of theory since Deleuze and Guattari established it as collective enunciations depending on redundancy, on language repeating (rather than representing), whether “a series of different reactions” or “repeating the same reaction.”\textsuperscript{453} In addition to \textit{linguistic assemblages}, symbolic and based in language, Deleuze and Guattari provide literary theory the \textit{machinic assemblage} for objects, such as texts and technology, assemblages of \textit{enunciation} of “Concrete Rules and Abstract Machines”\textsuperscript{454}—a description fitting for De Quincey’s involutes. Applied in their understanding of the body “strata, stratification,” (including “[s]edimentation and folding, fiber and infolding”), Deleuze and Guattari’s machinic (rather than mechanic) assemblage stresses the entity’s metamorphic processes and multiplicities

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Deleuze and Guattari, 2014 (1987), \textit{Plateaus}, 75-80, 501-506. From the subject (and title) of their concluding portion, the idea of distinguishing concrete rules and abstract machines as a way of describing De Quincey’s involutes and partitioning the functioning or processing as the abstract mechanisms adhering to concretization (actualizing and counter-actualizing) seems promising. Indeed, De Quincey’s involute might serve a more apt figure than their rhizome, for language as both “informational and communicational” (75).
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
of self, complimenting their sense of the stratified subject. In his crafting involutes through both concreteness and abstractions, mathematic objects and linguistic functions, De Quincey offers a hybrid or involutely-interlacing matrix of both assemblages. De Quincey’s reciprocally defined text and body become sites for and structures of involutes as linguistically functioning self-generating machines.

The involute site and involute system demonstrates information and media as compound and incapable of being disentangled. The “permeable, negotiable, instantiated” boundaries of material and embodied processes that Hayles underscores are contingent to each other and their context: “The displacement of presence by pattern thins the tissue of textuality, making it a semi-permeable membrane that allows awareness of the text as an informational patter to infuse into the space of representation.” De Quincey’s involutes in the caduceus-narrative and palimpsest/archive-mind explain the functioning of structure and relations Hayle recognizes—but a century earlier. This approach to cybernetics and digital media assists, as media archeaologist Jussi Parikka argues, in understanding past media: “Through the lenses of the digital, we start to see old media anew as well.” The digital text, however, resonances with interface, temporality, and virtuality in De Quincey’s involute texts only first through the intermediate medium of the moving images, or still images in motion throughout the involute system. Involutes of language interact and interlace with involute images, each wheeling nexus becomes a cyclical figure featured in various tableaus. Images, vital to De Quincey’s narrative


episodes, linking mnemonic associations, and conveying the language of dreams all implicate memory (short-term and long-term) in the process of narration.

Through De Quincey’s relational understanding of the narrative and the subject(s) in Suspiria, he reveals a media focus that explains his understanding of narrative as a medium for apprehending memory. De Quincey’s interest in images combines Ricoeur’s narrative dialectic of time and Deleuze’s distinction of the movement-image (again, the arrow of time) and the time-image. In his related work on time and its new media implications, Cinema I & Cinema 2, Deleuze examines time in relation to images.459 De Quincey structures his narrative to exploit the montage of moments against their material, spatial representations. Theatrically, or cinematically, drawing back the curtain on his memory, the trope of “the young lady in the boudoir,” De Quincey indulges in architecturally designing memory as a house, a rhizomatic memory-palace, or, more an involute labyrinth. “Opening from one angle of this embowered study,” De Quincey suggests of life’s archive—or, what Deleuze would suggest is the transcendental form of time in the time-image—“issues a little narrow corridor” of adjacency, of tangents, of further involutes. For De Quincey, the structure ultimately involutes back upon the self, “a little circular chamber,” mingling the text and the representation of its contents.

Ricoeur’s narrative approach recognizes that “[t]he plot’s configuration also superimposes ‘the sense of an ending’” a sense of ending or resolution to the otherwise “open-endedness of mere succession.”460 Relatedly, Deleuze’s attention to cinema (founded strongly on Bergsonism theory) suggests engaging temporal readings of images with internal reflection of concept-images


separate from the text (or film) itself. Both material objects of time and in time (narrative-plot or film-image), as with De Quincey’s memory study, offer contingent variables of time in their formation. Duration’s infinite extension both forward and backward, has a counterpart in the succession of events, images, or memories. Contracted and dilated time separate motion from space, just as his non-linear digressions violate the linearity of narrative progressing toward an end. Narrative, much like memory, is reversionary, beginning at an endpoint, travelling backward along the same path while propelling forward. The symbiosis of narrative and memory behaves similarly to duration. The child’s imagination in the vast systematic machinery corrects time and teleos, even teleology.

Section 2: Relative Experiences in Contracted and Dilated Time/Space

What, more precisely, is the difference between a recollection-image and a dream-image? We start from a perception-image, the nature of which is to be actual. The recollection, in contrast—what Bergson calls ‘pure recollection’—is necessarily a virtual image. But in the first case, it becomes actual in so far as it is summoned by the perception-image. It is actualized in a recollection-image which corresponds to the perception-image. The case of dream brings two important difference to light. On the one hand, the sleeper’s perceptions exist, but in the diffuse condition of a dust of actual sensations—external and internal—which are not grasped in themselves, escaping consciousness. On the other hand, the virtual image which becomes actual does not do so directly, but becomes actual in a different image, which itself plays the role of the virtual image being actualized in a third, and so on to infinity: the dream is not a metaphor but a series of anamorphoses which sketch out a very large circuit.

Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 2, 56

The memory-recollections and dream-recollections of De Quincey combine, forming a complex system in Suspiria de Profundis. Issues of diffusions of conscious and unconscious representations complicate any reading of semantic layering. The confluence of virtual and actual
make the narrative temporal and semiotic, dialectic compelling, yet ultimately indeterminate. In
the “Finale to Part I” of Suspiria, subtitled, “Savannah-La-Mar,” De Quincey crafts a tableau of
temporality in memory and narrative. De Quincey envisions Savannah-La-Mar, a Jamaican port
destroyed by natural disaster in 1780, as a submarine asylum, untouchable in its current depths
by even time. The notion of the intact city resembles the no less fantastical notion that
information can remain unaltered, whether digitally or materially stored (both physically located
somewhere, albeit in different languages). In How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in
Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics, N. Katherine Hayles surveys interdisciplinary attention
to informatics as an approach to understanding the human body/mind, noting that, “in fact, a
defining characteristic of the present cultural moment is the belief that information can circulate
unchanged among different material substrates.” The information model builds into it a need
for maintaining output integrity (and signal strength). Digital archeology is not unlike textual
scholarship in scouring an archive of variant or deviant iterations. De Quincey’s re-construction
of Savannah-La-Mar certainly humors such a sense of invariability, though his representation of
visiting it is more complicated than it first appears.

The seeming paradox of a city effaced yet preserved is De Quincey’s fantasy. De
Quincey’s preoccupation with the vision connected with Elizabeth, now extends to Savannah-La-
Mar (and even shows traces of linking back to the illustrated nursery bible). As a memory or part
of self, even an emblem for Elizabeth, the city seems to align with a sense of the immutable,
pristine message that is incorruptible. Post-modern new media interests in information are just as
concerned with applying information in the human as in the machine, as well as examining the
extension of the human as the increasingly blurred boundary between both entities. “As early as

the 1950s,” Hayles surveys, “Norbert Wiener proposed it was theoretically possible to telegraph a human being, a suggestion underlaid by the same assumptions informing [Hans] Moravec’s scenario,” which consisted of downloading human consciousness into a computer. Moravec’s contributions to the fields of robotic and artificial intelligence offer insights into human neural processing, and, as with noteworthy discoveries, generates new discussions for several fields, practical and theoretical, including information science, the science of processing data for storage and retrieval. As media studies notes of contingency between message and medium, the issue of medium structure immediately problematizes the ability to translate consciousness through binary code. Hayles explains that “much of the discourse on molecular biology treats information as the essential code the body expresses, a practice that has certain affinities with Moravec’s ideas.” Viewing information in this manner seems to miss the generic grammar and syntax De Quincey keenly notes of all language. Part of Hayles’s study includes semiotics, materiality, and virtuality intersecting various post-/modern fields, yet, part of where she directs the conversation is to the unity of material and embodied processes and structures in informatics (the applied areas of information engineering) as well as humans. Hayles, as a result, is fairly


463. Hans Moravec lends his name to the Moravec Paradox, discovered by him along with Rodney Brooks and Marvin Minsky. The Paradox, as its known, provides the counter-intuitive insights into computational demand for higher and lower order tasks. According to their findings, high-level reasoning requires little computation, whereas, low-level sensorimotor skills demand vast computational resources. Their findings offer some baring on De Quincey’s concept of involutes, much as with Freud’s iceberg as a hierarchical structure of the unconscious—the sub-processes operate with greater scope and scale in the pyramid of mental processes. By developing the processes and structures of involutes, De Quincey accounts for (and accepts) certain limitations in faint glimpses that the conscious mind can trace back to episodes of vivid sensorimotor-intake. For more on the discussion, see discussions of Moravec in conjunction with Ray Kurzweil and James Gleick; an insightful survey of these and others can be located in: Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in the Time of Brilliant Technologies*. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2016). Also see: Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When We Will Live, Work and Think in the New Age of Intelligent Machines*. (New York: Penguin, 2000); Hans P. Moravec, *Robot: Mere Machine to Transcendent Mind*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and, James Gleick, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. (London: Fourth Estate, 2012).

(and justifiably) dubious of the ambitious aims to transfer consciousness. Even adaptations from written text to cinema (arguably related media) must accommodate translating their respective languages. De Quincey demonstrates his struggle simply to render a representation of consciousness through narrative. The resulting Suspiria is more than stream of consciousness. As memory operating in dual trajectories in time, the narrative exposes the patterning between and beneath even fleeting moments in narrative. De Quincey does this himself by not simply depicting Savannah-La-Mar, but my representing his own habitual visits to the underwater city in his mind.

The preoccupations with which De Quincey riddles the latter sections of Suspiria de Profundis similarly situate his concerns in relation to other post-modern areas in the wake of Bergsonism, quantum mechanics, and systems. These last cross-sections provide the elements necessary for applying De Quincey’s own methodology on the three parts that comprise “The English Mail-Coach.” To employ de Man’s term aporia, for moments of terminal uncertainty,\(^465\) these sections introduce elements that form a distinct series of recollection-images and dream-images for “The Dream-Fugue.” Such aporia ultimately demonstrate that the subjects of these separate sections are influenced by previous memories; they are but eddies circling back upon the maelstrom at the core of Suspiria. De Quincey’s reiterations in narrative showcase involute memory in action. Involutes provide a medium that resonates with the historicized notions of the spectator and the apparatus Parikka finds among the “alternative practices of cinematic experience, mediascape and industry.”\(^466\) Parikka explains that “simultaneously modes of sensation and perception became embedded in an analytical view that encompasses multiple,

\(^{465}\) De Man, 1996, Allegories of Reading, 131.

\(^{466}\) Parikka, 2015, Geology of Media, 10.
non-linear histories.” Parrika’s attention not only helps to inform a study of De Quincey’s involutes, but locates another manner in which his involutes can assist understanding the phenomena new media studies. “Savannah-La-Mar” displays an insightful duality: the immutable strata and the multiple, non-linear histories or iterations of self, which may operate on different processes.

The initial temporal attraction of Savannah-La-Mar is the archeological vision. While most Romanticists focus on actual sites and uncovered ruins, De Quincey exalts a place rather opposite to the more popular Pompeii, which, according to De Quincey, God claims he did “bury and conceal from men through seventeen centuries; this city [Savanna-La-Mar] I will bury, but not conceal” (185). “Enshrin[ing] her in a crystal dome of my tropic seas,” is no less fantastical a claim for God than De Quincey’s own admission of “oftentimes in dreams did I and the Dark Interpreter cleave the watery veil that divided us from her streets” (185-186). The pristine condition of visiting the slumbering dead is not only a deep impulse of retrieval or access to Elizabeth, but expresses a quite relevant dilemma of archeological excavation. In Gavin Lucas’s discussion of the history and developing approaches to archeology in Understanding the Archaeological Record, he expresses the key principle archeology must recognize: excavation as destruction. Lucas explains that “the paradox of excavation” includes “partial or restricted excavation on the one hand, and total recording on the other hand.” The opposing approaches to “site archive” or “preservation by record” exposes excavation while also questioning the archive objective and related paradoxes as “anxiety about the incompleteness of the

archeological record,” of complete incompleteness in “the total record.” Pompeii’s ashen imprints offer a particularly vivid and haunting sense of the presence in absence—and one which De Quincey discards for the more appealing prospect of the submarine city.

De Quincey’s ideal for memory is not to destroy the material substrates, but rather to revisit them in hibernation, suspended. Savannah-La-Mar exemplifies immutable information—it is a fantastical illusion as much for informatics as for archeology. De Quincey’s preference, his ideal archeological site is equally insightful to the problems of the archive for archeologists. Lucas explains, “[b]etween present practice and future expectation,” the flaws in one archival solution is the archivist’s expectations. While dismantling archeologists ought to record everything that might be of import in the future, “their criticisms of the mechanical nature of recording and, more important, the deferral of interpretation it engendered in many ways presented a new paradox which this was supposed to solve.” The archivist’s expectations are readerly, interpretive expectations. Suddenly the importance of Savannah-La-Mar as De Quincey’s ideal memory or archeological site assumes additional weight; it is also the ideal archive, the total record that secures information without selective choice. “To defer interpretation to some future point,” Lucas argues, “presupposes anticipating all possible information that any given future interpretation might make.” In effect, archeology’s recording archive cannot be disinterested; it must read the archeological record with anticipation. The fantastical vision of De Quincey’s Savannah-La-Mar is that it eternally provides a view of the

past. The most important remembrances for Suspiria involve a moment encapsulated in time’s constraints.\textsuperscript{474} The section itself proffers to fulfill the gaps of information in De Quincey’s trance, first dream-image then recollection-image. One premise Deleuze raises in The Logic of Sense, which not only relates to the dueling/dual-ing systems of De Quincey but also to the media theory concerns for the relationship between medium and message, is his concept of “quasi-causality”: “alogical incompatibilities and noncausal correspondences […] the relations of events among themselves.”\textsuperscript{475} Deleuze, addressing larger historical philosophical issues from the Stoics, including materiality and action,\textsuperscript{476} offers his addition to the idea of event that provides insight on his other theories, while assisting our apprehending the role of images and materiality for De Quincey.

The revisiting of memory or dreams, for De Quincey, are their own experiences, or events. Deleuze suggests that events involve causes and effects: “all bodies are causes,” he explains, however, “effects are not bodies, but properly speaking, ‘incorporeal entities’” that are only “quasi-causal.”\textsuperscript{477} The Interpreter, a prominent figure in this section of Suspiria, offers a distinct figure to the other bodies operating within De Quincey. When De Quincey describes “thoughts and feelings” (passing to himself), the idea resembles incorporeal entities or effects that are tied and bound to the event. Deleuze’s “quasi-causality” explains how effects only partially contribute to other effects or events that are “co-fated.”\textsuperscript{478} The circumstances of any

\textsuperscript{474} Archaeology’s preoccupation with time and temporality directs Lucas’ other work: Gavin Lucas, The Archaeology of Time. (London: Routledge, 2011).


\textsuperscript{477} Deleuze, 1990, Logic, 5, 6-7.

\textsuperscript{478} Deleuze, 1990, Logic, 4, 8-23.
experience, as a result, operate as other bodies or objects (images, language and so forth) interacting with his own. For Deleuze, the event is “subject to a double causality, referring on the one hand to mixtures of bodies which are its cause, and on the other, to other events which are its quasi-cause.” Such an idea of events chained together through the causality of interacting bodies and quasi-causal effects assists with understanding the duality of the involute. The material or bodily substrates interact alongside immaterial non-bodily psychical associations, impressions or spaces. The De Quincey re-collector interacts with the De Quincey within memory (or dream); the other self is the layered iteration. Recollection and dreaming—and also dream-recollection—each becomes a new event, a further involute. Each time the quasi-causal effects—the thoughts and feelings—are new ones, though related or renewed, rewritten, reproduced, revived.

De Quincey attempts a complete record, for memory and narrative, in the crystalline image of Savannah-La-Mar. Significantly, the time captured is post-cataclysmic event. The parallel to the core involute is uncanny: his suspension in time during his trance over Elizabeth’s body. In fact, the near-cinematic handling of the location as a setting for a digression on the

479. Deleuze, 1990, Logic, 94.

480. De Quincey views her after her death but prior to her cranial autopsy, due to her fever—his elevated terms for her head housing the mind he holds in such esteem aligns her with the description of the structures of Savannah-La-Mar: “On the day after my sister’s death, whilst the sweet temple of her brain was yet unviolated by human scrutiny, I formed my own scheme for seeing her once more. Not for the world would I have made this known, nor have suffered a witness to accompany me. I had never heard of feelings that take the name of ‘sentimental,’ nor dreamed of such a possibility” (142). “On the day following this which I have recorded, came a body of medical men to examine the brain, and the particular nature of the complaint, for in some of its symptoms it had shown perplexing anomalies. Such is the sanctity of death, and especially of death alighting on an innocent child, that even gossiping people do not gossip on such a subject. Consequently, I knew nothing of the purpose which drew together these surgeons, nor suspected any thing of the cruel changes which might have been wrought in my sister’s head. Long after this I saw a similar case; I surveyed the corpse (it was that of a beautiful boy, eighteen years old,[note] who had died of the same complaint) one hour after the surgeons had laid the skull in ruins; but the dishonours of this scrutiny were hidden by bandages, and had not disturbed the repose of the countenance. So it might have been here; but, if it were not so, then I was happy in being spared the shock, from having that marble image of peace, icy and rigid as it was, unsettled by disfiguring images.[note] Some hours[note] after the strangers had withdrawn, I crept
measure of time is keenly appropriate for linking temporal images. A major contribution to contemporary media theory is the work Deleuze provides (in both Cinema 1 and Cinema 2) on the cinematic image, arguing that all the world, ultimately, is no longer a stage but cinema. For Deleuze, clearly influenced by modern physics (and Bergson of course), the movement of matter conveys best through image; all things are images. The semiotic or figural image has literal materiality through the medium—yet this does not discount the significance of De Quincey’s images, rather it informs them in retrospect of the newer medium. Part of Deleuze’s extensive project brings him to rework Bergson’s understanding of cinema (as advanced by other phenomenologists) and its interpretation of motion. Deleuze contests images not as external domains, but rather material subjectivity or internal reflections in which the viewing-subject “perceives itself, or rather experiences itself or feels itself ‘from the inside.’”481 De Quincey’s companion, the Dark Interpreter functions in this inverted externalization. Deleuze operates within the bodily exteriorization of functions and organs, a trajectory Lucas similarly follows, from tools to computers, in the history of material culture.482 Lucas offers post-structuralism’s approach to texts, in the wake of departure from nineteenth-century views “drawing on the general linguistic turn in the humanities and social sciences at the time,” as opposed to tensions between internal thought and external behavior.”483 To some extent this coincides with Deleuze’s redirection of the reading of images to the internal, in which the viewing-subject finds refection again to the room, but the door was[note] now locked – the key was taken away – and I was shut out for ever. Then came the funeral” (145-6).


within images. In a Deleuzian suffusion of past/future, Savannah-La-Mar provides an actual image of the virtual time/image of De Quincey’s trance during the coining involute. De Quincey is himself the specter of Savannah-La-Mar.

Savannah-La-Mar is the epitome of time suspended, a veritable snow-globe or submerged time-capsule. The description or actual image De Quincey provides of the city possesses a virtual image that shares corresponding imagery with the trance or coining involute involving Elizabeth’s body. Deleuze explains what De Quincey might call confluence or combination as coalescence:

We can say that the actual image itself has a virtual image which corresponds to it like a double or a reflection. In Bergsonian terms, the real object is reflected in a mirror-image as the virtual object which, from its side and simultaneously, envelopes or reflects the real: there is ‘coalescence’ between the two. There is a formation of an image with two sides, actual and virtual.\(^4\)

Savannah-La-Mar is De Quincey’s fantasy of memory; it materially remains unviolated, like sleeping substrates on the palimpsest. The ideal leaves his past selves and experiences intact and completely accessible: both his recollection of his idyllic nursery years and his most inner self. The coalescence allows for a direct relationship. Within his surveying of the city, he orchestrates travelling through the virtual trance, able to examine the large interval of time passing while having experienced it contracted into a short one. The materiality of the city as an actual image he and the Dark Interpreter enter provides the textual (and typological) venue to embody the virtual experience:

Then, turning to me, he said, “This is sad, this is piteous; but less would not have sufficed for the purpose of God. Look here. Put into a Roman clepsydra one hundred drops of water; let these run out as the sands in an hour-glass; every drop measuring the

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hundredth part of a second, so that each shall represent but the
three hundred-and-sixty-thousandth part of an hour. Now, count
the drops as they race along; and, when the fiftieth of the hundred
is passing, behold! Forty-nine are not, because already they have
perished; and fifty are not, because they are yet to come. You see,
therefore, how narrow, how incalculably narrow, is the true and
actual present. Of that time which we call the present, hardly a
hundredth part but belongs either to a past which has fled, or to a
future which is still on the wing. It has perished, or it is not born. It
was, or it is not. (186)

The Dark Interpreter voices the incalculability or indefinability of the present moment. Unlike
individual grains of sand simply rearranging or re-collecting into a different pile, waterdrops are
transitory. Waterdrops exist in temporary states between reforming from one body of water
(“they are yet to come”) into another (“already they have perished”). Water lends a fluidity to
existence and time, vital to involutes, but also a plasticity to structures, both traits reinforcing the
stretching or expanding of temporal movement, limited by spatial markers. The drops of the
clepsydra, a suitable aquatic hour-glass for such a locale, represented in the spatial arrangement
of the text, parallel the effort of pinpointing the present. De Quincey fancifully asks the reader to
“behold!” the passing of the “fiftieth of the hundred,” or midpoint of a second, divisible to the
hundredths when “represent[ed]” by one solitary drop. “Count the drops as they race along,” De
Quincey prompts his imagined reader, who must imagine the clepsydra. Imaginative thought,
creative in the sense of production and representation, is the type of seeing De Quincey expects
for understanding time and involutes: “You see, therefore, how narrow, how incalculably
narrow, is the true and actual present.” The clepsydra is now an actual image for the virtual
Savannah-La-Mar; the dream-image, in being recollected, occupies a rung in the chain of
involutes.
Yet, as soon as the Dark Interpreter offers the clepsydra hypothesis, the approximation is deemed problematic:

> Yet even this approximation to the truth is *infinitely* false. For again subdivide that solitary drop, which only was found to represent the present, into a lower series of similar fractions, and the actual present which you arrest measures now but the thirty-sixth-millionth of an hour; and so by infinite declensions the true and very present, in which only we live and enjoy, will vanish into a mote of a mote, distinguishable only by a heavenly vision. Therefore the present, which only man possesses, offers less capacity for his footing than the slenderest film that ever spider twisted from her womb. (186)

The spider web recalls the hidden network—suddenly time presents itself as the hidden mesh, the threads binding all matter. The subdivision of fractions or series seems best described in its infiniteness through language: “infinite declensions.” Any limitation concerning time or “the actual present” is bound to the human, to human perception, and is always an “approximation.” De Quincey returns to the image of the spider’s thread—which farther back than the network echoes his childhood understanding (“at four years old”) of sparing a spider and seeing “the holiness of all life” (160). To spare the spider from a housemaid’s hunt, he “devise[d] plots for saving the poor doomed wretch,” revealing additional associations concerning representation: “my policy was, to draw off the housemaid on pretense of showing her a picture, until the spider, already *en route*, should have had time to escape” (160). The housemaid eventually sees through his stratagem and explains—in a moment in which De Quincey must glance in both directions of time—the “many murders that the spider had committed, and next (which was worse) of the many that he certainly *would* commit” (160). “The case of the spider,” for De Quincey, in the dilemma of sparing “one spider in order to scatter death amongst fifty flies,” he explains “troubled [his] musing mind [. . .] [and] remains thenceforwards even more perplexing to my
understanding than it was painful to my heart” (160). The recollected image of the spider, the imagined “slenderest film,” ties together finitude in tension with the infinite.

The spider, as De Quincey’s recollected image, according to Deleuze’s terminology, re-links to the disconnected images of the cinematic time-image of Savannah-La-Mar. Deleuze, re-defining cinema’s movement, refines the empirical form of time (movement-image) by following the presentation of time through physical movement in space. The points the Dark Interpreter makes concerning time spiral into De Quincey’s musings that return to the key features of involutes. Even the circumstances of the coining rise like sighs to the surface of the description:

Therefore, also, even this incalculable shadow from the narrowest pencil of moonlight is more transitory than geometry can measure, or thought of angel can overtake. The time which is contracts into a mathematic point; and even that point perishes a thousand times before we can utter its birth. All is finite in the present; and even that finite is infinite in its velocity of flight towards death. But in God there is nothing finite; but in God there is nothing transitory; but in God there can be nothing that tends to death. Therefore, it follows, that for God there can be no present. The future is the present of God, and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human present. Therefore it is that he works by earthquake. Therefore it is that he works by grief. 0, deep is the ploughing of earthquake! (187)

De Quincey invokes theology for distinguishing the temporal scale he examines (though arguably also an allusion to Hamlet485). Aligning human geometry’s measurement with the speed of an angels thought, De Quincey argues the present is yet an “incalculable shadow.” The discussion alludes to his earlier trance and experience of contracted time: “time which is contracts into a mathematical point […] All is finite in the present […] even that finite is infinite in its velocity of flight towards death.”486 Deleuze distinguishes the pure form of time as three

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485. The comparison of man to angel and god, concerning “infinite faculty,” “form and moving,” “action,” “apprehension” in Act 2, Scene2 (the punctuation shifting the syntax significantly between the Quarto 1, Quarto 2, and Folio) in relation to the earth as a “sterile promontory” and the air, “this most excellent canopy,” with the “brave o’rehanging firmament,” all share features with De Quincey’s involute trance and moment of contracted time.

486. Husserl’s retention and protention have some baring on this; for this discussion. I pursue Deleuze’s conceptual framework in terms of temporality, images, and virtuality. For a recent discussion of Husserl in conjunction with
incommensurable points that are nonspatial, which is where De Quincey’s abstractions bring
him. For Deleuze these points are the passing present, the conservation of the past, and the
indeterminate protention of the future. Much like Deleuze, De Quincey moves past space to
empowering thought for perceiving temporal representation. As Deleuze suggests cinema
redefines how our society sees seeing, when recollection images can expand the present while
dream images expand the world, De Quincey may indeed be suggesting that involutes redefine
being and time. Much as De Quincey’s trance brought him in pursuit of an infinitely unreachable
throne of God, he grants a sense of temporality through the timelessness and everlasting qualities
of God: “in God there is nothing finite […] nothing transitory […] there can be nothing that
tends to death.” In terms of communication systems and information or energy death, or entropy,
De Quincey images God outside of the temporal system: “it follows, that for God there can be no
present […] the future is the present of God, and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human
present.” De Quincey rescales his position in relation to the imagined aquatic city (“[t]herefore it
is that he [God] works by earthquake […] works by grief”) as a deistic spectator in relation to
saving and excavating his own memories: “O, deep is the ploughing of the earthquake.” The
issue of involutes, however, implicates not the salvage of experiences but the motion of thought
or conscious mind navigating between or along curved lines of memories and remembrances, the
movement in the maelstrom of recollection, and apprehending the ephemeral present and
presence of thought.

Efforts to disentangle the chains of associations in De Quincey extensive study of time
would be futile, even antithetical to his project. His discussion more than alludes to previous
moments, it embodies them. Joining with Deleuze’s cinema-eye, the more physics and

other ongoing phenomenological discussions, see: Neal DeRoo, *Futurity in Phenomenology: Promise and Method in
mechanics based attention to motion and time offered by Norbert Wiener\textsuperscript{487} (a key figure in interdisciplinary informatics, addressing the difference in Newtonian and Bergsonian time) suggests a framework for recognizing the course(s) or meshing of De Quincey narrative layering. The temporal mechanics De Quincey outlines resonate with Wiener’s discussion of film’s capturing the differences of \textit{time} in the motion of astronomical and meteorological time. Wiener explains: “if we were to take a motion picture of the planets, speeded up to show a perceptible picture of activity, and were to run the film backward, it would still be a possible picture of planets conforming to the Newtonian mechanics.”\textsuperscript{488} With Wiener’s distinction of meteorological time, anticipation works chronologically but not in reverse: “On the other hand, if we were to take a motion-picture photograph of the turbulence of the clouds in a thunderhead and reverse it,” in terms of Newtonian mechanics, “it would look altogether wrong.”\textsuperscript{489} The comparison of astronomical and meteorological behavior in time concerns the complexities of the two system. As with De Quincey’s involute systems, his narrative progression is a product of the complex system.

In \textit{Suspiria de Profundis} De Quincey celebrates \textit{sighs}, the emanating upward to the surface those hibernating, yet reverberating, experiences: deep memory or involutes that suspend memories in time and to the past and the future. The image Wiener proposes of contrasting time systems assists in isolating the properties of the complex system at work in the temporal functioning of \textit{Suspiria}. Wiener offers a detailed description of meterological time: “We should see downdrafts where we expect updrafts, turbulence growing coarser in texture, lightning


\textsuperscript{489} Wiener, 2014, \textit{Cybernetics}, 32.
preceding instead of following the changes of cloud which usually precede it, and so on indefinitely. Reversing the film positions the observer in the role of re-collector, yet as with the trajectory of De Quincey’s narrative recollection, Wiener posits the question: “What is the difference between the astronomical and the meteorological situation which brings about all these differences, and in particular the difference between the apparent reversibility of astronomical time and the apparent irreversibility of meteorological time?” Wiener’s answer is the components of the systems, which in turn dictate the structural functioning: “In the first place, the meteorological system is one involving a vast number of approximately equal particles, some of them very closely coupled to one another.” The description sounds applicable to involutes and the system(s) of memory for De Quincey. An underlying order, an unseen algorithm, a mysterious structure, the involute offers cohesion.

Involute coupling provides a viable explanation for the movement and progressions of De Quincey’s narrative. Wiener elaborates the coupling factor in behavioral and visual effects: “The astronomical system of the solar universe contains only a relatively small number of particles, greatly diverse in size and coupled with one another in a sufficiently loose way,” clarifying that, “the second-order coupling effects do not change the general aspect of the picture we observe, and the very high order coupling effects are completely negligible.” Extrapolating the sense of high order coupling effects and second-order couplings which distinguish the two systems, applies to the resurfacing of echoes among De Quincey’s visual-linguistic systems in Suspiria.

The vast number of approximately equal elements are so closely coupled to one another that the variability resembles meteorological time and motion. Concerning time, Wiener concludes that, much as with “a system starting from an unknown position […] we are directed in time, and our relation to the future is different from our relation to the past.” To appeal to uncertainty, an attempt to pinpoint any one position of his various voices would be to lose sight of the movement of his narrative-recollections, and vice versa. The involute as a mechanism that is nevertheless “mechanism-independent” adheres to the virtual processes DeLanda aligns with “intensities” or dynamical differences. DeLanda appeals to mathematic vector fields as well as information theory to arrive at “the plane of consistency” he uses to reinforce the philosophical concepts of non-actualized or virtual “chaotic attractors.” Moreover, applying a general sense of physics’ complementarity, the images De Quincey offers behave as both recollection and experience, both virtual and actual, depending on what the observer appeals to in explaining the phenomena.

The system of Suspiria de Profundis is both a narratological system and a representation of De Quincey’s memory system. The progression, narratological as well as chronologically, demonstrates the significance of involute experiences. Any teleological progression in narrative, De Quincey thwarts with his retrospective awareness of the fruitifications already come to bear. When De Quincey begins to conclude the Savannah-La-Mar temporal discussion, he notes God’s out of time-ness in such a manner: “But in God there is nothing finite; but in God there is nothing transitory; but in God there can be nothing that tends to death. Therefore, it follows, that

for God there can be no present. The future is the present of God, and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human present” (187). The authorial self “is always already textualized in the Derridean sense,” as Hayles reminds us; “in writing about a ‘real’ self,” it is “a self that is essential in fact but one posited within the text as beyond the reach of textuality.”497 De Quincey correlates the city with himself:

Therefore it is that he works by earthquake. Therefore it is that he works by grief. […] Upon a night of earthquake he builds a thousand years of pleasant habitations for man. Upon the sorrow of an infant he raises oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages that could not else have been. (187)

De Quincey’s self-text positions itself somewhere between archive and cinema. The smitten city stands in for the grief, the child self, the elevated fruitifications that grow upward, the adult surveying the site. “Such a self is itself a fabrication of the text,” continues Hayles, explaining for narrative, that “the ‘real’ self, manifesting itself within the text as absence, rupture, or gap, further complicates the linear flow of the narrative and punctuates the accretion of the inscribed self, rendering its evolution discontinuous or indeterminate.”498 Hayles argues, in a manner that speaks to De Quincey, that “the sequence reestablished by this suturing is not a smooth continuum,” elaborating that, “although the suture succeeds in stitching past to present, it also leaves a visible scar, testimony to the depth of the rupture.”499 The lack of continuum, De Quincey’s accreted archive-self demonstrates the iterations stored, both in stasis and in flux.

497. Hayles, 1994, Chaos Bound, 64. Hayles offers a reading in her chapter “The Necessary Gap: The Education of Henry Adams,” that is strikingly appropriate for De Quincey: “confronting the possibility that the multiplicity he [Adams] has always fought against is not just an external force but an internal one as well” (65).


De Quincey provides the fantasy of fixture while mindful of plasticity’s practicality. The growth and change retains its roots, similar to firmware or software updates, making the digital (computer-cybernetic) model a useful parallel. Parikka explains the move from cinema “to digital becomes itself an epistemological switch, which can be used to investigate ruptures and continuities, intermedial relations and parallel histories”; though the media-archeological perspective also means “looking at the precinematic technologies and practices as one resource for rethinking our current visual and media field.”

With the involute as the basic unit of both systems, the sense of coupling within and between both systems stresses the combination and entanglement—the incapability of disentangling the elements of involutes again prefiguring a vital quantum mechanics principle; strongly correlated systems possess correlations and interactions between particles, that once separated retain evidence of their cohesion.

Section 3: Involute Reading: The Wandering or Suspension of the Mind

The archive – one key institutional ‘site’ of memory with an intertwined history with modernity and the birth of the state apparatus, but which now is increasingly being rearticulated less as a place of history, memory and power, and more as a dynamic and temporal network, a software environment, and a social platform for memory – but also for remixing. The archive is becoming a key concept for understanding digital media culture, and its practices are worthy of investigation in the context of media archaeology as well. This means bringing media archaeology into proximity with the archive as a key site of digital software culture, as well as – through that agenda – bringing media studies ideas into proximity with key non-academic institutions involved in cultural heritage in the digital age.

Jussi Parikka, *What is Media Archeology?* 15

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The study Suspiria de Profundis presents includes one separate yet rather contingent part: “The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion.” It is often considered a distinct work for having been published on its own under that title in 1854, despite the fact that five years earlier the amalgamated essay was divided into two “essays” in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine during the last quarter of 1849. Addressing the “The English Mail-Coach” text as one cohesive study, the first “half” (with the same title) contains a second part, “Going Down with Victory,” which though concerned with war tidings, certainly precipitates elements of the second. “The Vision of Sudden Death” includes the “Dream-Fugue: on the Above Theme of Sudden Death” and together they comprise the recollection of a near-miss collision between the coach and a gig, followed by a dream-sequence concerning his uncertainty of the female passenger’s fate. Yet, the total of four parts argues for their relation to Suspiria more than in De Quincey’s presumed intention. 501

The involute, first as a theory, then the core component of De Quincey’s philosophies of language, narrative, time and memory—and the interconnection of these systems—provides a methodology for examining “The English Mail-Coach.” In it, De Quincey returns to the memory archive as, to employ Parikka’s phrase, a dynamic and temporal network. The mail-system offers a communications backdrop to the transit (and transitory) systems the coach and De Quincey travel. The added complexity of recollections and dreams assists to model duration, the expanding of time and its experience/representation. The suspended fate of the female figure, her indeterminate state, embodies De Quincey’s temporal focus as a participant in each level of the memory-text. De Quincey’s systems have archeological tendencies but more complexity than mere strata.

501. Refer to my discussion, and note, in my introduction.
De Quincey’s involutes in memory and narrative—like language—share the qualities of autopoeisis or self-generation and recursion that position them in the company of his contemporary William Paley’s machine making machines (1802) through to more modern examples, such as Stephen Kleene’s recursion or computability theory (1930s). Each involute memory functions as a self-generating machine, but also as a unit in the language or processes of thought. The sequence of the coach and gig collision offers a crystalline image of the space between two wheeling systems, operating at different velocities, and their parallel correspondence. The fact that these two wheels, unlike the proper functioning of involute gears, fail to intersect provides the moment of trauma, the suspension between two states that proliferates into De Quincey’s dream fugue. The geometric fractal provides a compelling sense of the shifting scale of involutes in memory and narrative. Fractals, a curve or geometric figure, possesses in each part the same statistical character as the whole. Fractal geometry, though coined by Benoit Mandelbrot, spans back to British cartographers to express scale for complex irregular forms. Episodes in Suspiria are not linked by theme but by resurfacing and reviving images. With similar principles to concrete universals, fractals return to the mathematic practices key for De Quincey’s involutes. The concern for scale, in relation to time, reinforces the fractal property of patterns that recur on progressively larger or smaller scales, such as crystal growth, or the types of phenomenon captured in the recurring memory imagery that orders seeming random or chaotic digressions.

De Quincey’s impulse to revisit the sequence to locate a relationship between the order and disorder of the system, which he describes in organic functioning, invites reading the study as a juncture of text and externalized memory. The combination resonates in the movement from cinema to newer media of the digital age, particularly those digital texts that embed or en-script user experience/memory, often multiple iterations, the most notable example being video games. Memory in such a medium, applicable to *Suspiria*, operates as a system with interconnections between natural processes and media technologies or the human and non-human domains Parikka emphasizes in the leakage of media into human communications, particularly in *A Geology of Media* (2015). Digital texts share characteristics of De Quincey memory system, they contain their own past iterations. Participatory digital texts, might offer a useful comparison of the two matrixes of memory (human and medium) in *Suspiria*. Several genres of video games archive save files of user-game play. Suddenly the human experience and medium create a

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matrix of dialectic exchange. The movement among theory, technology, and culture underlie
“The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion” as the capstone of Suspira de Profundis.

The English mail system offers De Quincey an actual image of the mysterious network, the spider-web of his childhood anxieties. The (sub-)title, “The Glory of Motion,” balances, if not redirects, the shared interests of the study to moving through and within such a system. De Quincey’s amusing opening does well to situate himself in relation to his first subject:

Some twenty or more years before I matriculated at Oxford, Mr. Palmer, M. P. for Bath, had accomplished two things, very hard to do on our little planet, the Earth, however cheap they may happen to be held by the eccentric people in comets: he had invented mailcoaches, and he had married the daughter of a duke. He was, therefore, just twice as great a man as Galileo, who certainly invented (or discovered) the satellites of Jupiter, those very next things extant to mailcoaches in the two capital points of speed and keeping time, but who did not marry the daughter of a duke. (408-409)

“Speed and keeping time,” provide a distinct understanding of distance for De Quincey but also the relationship of space and time. The contrast offered, of Palmer to Galileo, is doubled: “twice as great a man as Galileo.” Palmer exemplifies, more importantly than the distinction of having “invented (or discovered),” two significant accomplishments of mobility or motion: mail coaches (physical) and marriage (social). The accomplishments are “very hard to do on our little planet, the Earth, however cheap they may happen to be held by the eccentric people in comets,” bemuses De Quincey while at the same time offering a view from those heights and the future. The “satellites of Jupiter,” images of cyclical orbit akin to the circulation of systems and the concentricity of network are “those very next things extant to mail-coaches in the two capital points of speed and keeping time.” De Quincey stresses the priority of velocity with time, “keeping time” foregrounded before space.

Suspiria establishes time as a principle of organization for De Quincey, evident as he elaborates their relevance both in his present narrative’s system and his internal system: “these
mail-coaches, as organized by Mr. Palmer, are entitled to a circumstantial notice from myself having had so large a share in developing the anarchies of my subsequent dreams” (409). These “anarchies” might suggest the same motion or agitations De Quincey features in the rest of *Suspiria*; yet, the implication is one that reconciles chaos and order, rather than establishing disorder as an antagonist. To survey the elements within the scholarship of chaos and order, the interdisciplinary aims of Hayles provides an accessible view that also accommodates the two opposing approaches to chaos/order in ways quite useful for De Quincey. Additionally, DeLanda’s sense of “The Actualization of the Virtual in Time” offers another view to reconcile dynamic and non-linear or heterogeneous continuums as a *plane of consistency*—and recognize De Quincey’s application of involutes as not only a philosophy but a method of analysis. Where De Quincey implicitly presents a new way of thinking in the world, he is particular in explicitly stating *Suspiria de Profundis* as a project, a study, external to the mind, yet within the mind.

“The indeterminate and mysterious” Coach-Gig-Passage: “Obvious, but yet not strictly defined”

No dignity is perfect which does not at some point ally itself with the indeterminate and mysterious. The connection of the mail with the state and the executive government a connection obvious, but yet not strictly defined gave to the whole mail establishment a grandeur and an official authority which did us service on the roads, and invested us with seasonable terrors. But perhaps these terrors were not the less impressive, because their exact legal limits were imperfectly ascertained.

Thomas De Quincey, “English Mail-Coach,” 414

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De Quincey explains that mail-coaches, “organized” as they are, shared “in developing” the content of “subsequent dreams.” An additional and related factor is certainly his awareness of the form and behavior of “anarchies.” The mail-coach, for De Quincey, provides an image of synthesis of time: in a Deleuzian sense wherein past and future contract into a lived present. It is also an emblem of past/news. “Indeterminate and mysterious,” the message and the network have “a connection obvious” as much as the institutions in place behind “the whole mail establishment”—though, as De Quincey stresses, the connection is “yet not strictly defined.” The result is both “grandeur” and “terrors” for De Quincey. The breakdown De Quincey offers of the mail outlines the properties:

An agency which they accomplished, first, through velocity, at that time unprecedented; they first revealed the glory of motion: suggesting, at the same time, an undersense, not unpleasurable, of possible though indefinite danger; secondly, through grand effects for the eye between. Lamp-light and the darkness upon solitary roads; thirdly, through animal beauty and power so often displayed in the class of horses selected for this mail service; fourthly, through the conscious presence of a central intellect, that, in the midst of vast distances, of storms, of darkness, of night, overruled all obstacles into one steady cooperation in a national result. (409)

“Unprecedented” velocity reveals “the glory of motion”—which connects the near-cinematic effect of oscillating “lamp-light and the darkness.” The “undersense, not unpleasurable, of possible though indefinite danger,” strikes inadvertently upon the indeterminacy of position and velocity, though the last two on his list stress the organic elements of the technological wonder. The horses provide a sense of the body/tool extension while the “conscious presence of a central intellect”—the spider/core/self—“in the midst of vast distances, of storms, of darkness, of night,” anthropomorphizes the system. The human network “overruled all obstacles into one steady cooperation,” resembling De Quincey’s previous descriptions of both self and narrative. The involute of the mail-coach, its turbulence as a specific self-replicating machine (an involute)
brings these four properties as an immediate ring of associated connotations—additional chains emanate outward from each node. The involution, wreathing entanglements, are as De Quincey notes, the subject more so than the axis on which they rotate, the shaft or topic they eddy. The involute as a geometric fractal suggests the scope or scale of view which permits patterns to emerge.

Fractals resulting in the “chaos game”—algorithm M. Barnsley describes in 1988

The narrative, following the law of its subjects, resembles the organization of the system consisting of both order and chaos. Hayles offers a concise sense of the stakes:

Within chaos theory, two general emphases exist. In the first, chaos is seen as order's precursor and partner, rather than as its opposite. The focus here is on the

The spontaneous emergence of self-organization from chaos; or, in the parlance of the field, on the dissipative structures that arise in systems far from equilibrium, where entropy production is high. The realization that entropy-rich systems facilitate rather than impede self-organization was an important turning point in the contemporary reevaluation of chaos […] The second branch emphasizes the hidden order that exists within chaotic systems. Chaos in this usage is distinct from true randomness, because it can be shown to contain deeply encoded structures called "strange attractors." Whereas truly random systems show no discernible pattern when they are mapped into phase space, chaotic systems contract to a confined region and trace complex patterns within it.507

The sense of precursor and successor—from chaos to order—has some bearing on the basis in establishing the mail coach system where there was none, yet there remains “anarchies” systemically. Entropy is the thermodynamics concept, just as relevant to informatics, that (thermal) energy or (informational) signal may decline into disorder, meaning either the system reaches the point of unavailability for mechanical work or the transmission of a signal degrades when overwhelmed by the disruptive noise corrupting it. As Hayles notes, those systems maintaining the most autopoesis are actually “entropy-rich”508 (which brought about the contingent concept of negentropy). The “anarchies” De Quincey senses do in fact facilitate their reproduction and self-organization in his dreams. Moreover, the second approach appeals to a sense of mysterious or indiscernible order, “distinct from true randomness” that only appears chaotic without the proper perspective or decoding. “Strange attractors” is a suitable term for the manner in which involutes of human sensibility entangle in the mind.

The complex patterns are only ever traces for De Quincey. Traces, however, provide a glimpse at organizational patterns, a chaotic order. This applies to all systems at work in De Quincey and Suspiria. He offers the analogy of musical discordant harmony to explain the order in chaos:


To my own feeling, this post-office service recalled some mighty orchestra, where a thousand instruments, all disregarding each other, and so far in danger of discord, yet all obedient as slaves to the supreme \textit{baton} of some great leader, terminate in a perfection of harmony like that of heart, veins, and arteries, in a healthy animal organization. But, finally, that particular element in this whole combination which most impressed myself, and through which it is that to this hour Mr. Palmer's mail-coach system tyrannizes by terror and terrific beauty over my dreams, lay in the awful political mission which at that time it fulfilled. The mail-coaches it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo. (409)

Music provides an ancient, cosmological sense of order to the chaos of the universe; and, here, provides De Quincey a segue into comparisons with the human biological system. The “perfection of harmony” De Quincey sees in the post service is “like that” of the circulatory system. “heart, veins, and arteries, in a healthy animal organization.” The image, besides having a central regulator in its web, provides the interface and interlacing spaces (here cellular) vital to De Quincey’s other images of branching structures; here the cellular interface between systems leaving and returning to the heart complicates an otherwise straightforward sense of cyclicality. The orchestra produces something transitory. De Quincey’s description provides a keen example of \textit{extensive time}, for DeLanda in building upon Deleuze’s sense of passive synthesis. The “dream fugue” crystalizes De Quincey’s appeal to music for offering pattern where other lenses might fail to discern successive, developing, and interweaving parts—or harmonies, like phrases and images, introduced and self-generating. The contrapuntal, or musical counterpoint, seems in accord with the dialectic of semantic discourse but even more so as a way of understanding the relationship between chaos and order: perceivable counterpoints or combinations incapable of being disentangled.

The links and associations for the work’s subject(s) combine in multiple systems of memory that are paralleled in narrative. The mission of the mail-coach, “as the national organ for
publishing these mighty events,” is primarily to disseminate news of war, victory, and death (409). The post is an institutionalized messenger service, delivering news and revelation (as with the nurse announcing his sister’s impending death), and the spider in the center of it is Hermes-Mercury. De Quincey explains the post’s mission as the most striking feature: “finally, that particular element in this whole combination which most impressed myself […] and through which it is that to this hour Mr. Palmer’s mail-coach system tyrannizes by terror and terrific beauty over my dreams, lay in the awful political mission which at that time it fulfilled.” The mail-coach, “a spiritualized and glorified object to an impassioned heart,” De Quincey admits impresses him as it distributes, over “the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news,” seem incapable of separating emotion and thought (409). Again, the discord is not necessarily chaos; and, the associations here, like strange-attractor involutes, reveal traces of his childhood afflictions. Hayles explains: “The strange-attractor branch differs from the order-out-of-chaos paradigm in its attention to systems that remain chaotic […] for them the focus is on the orderly descent into chaos rather than on the organized structures that emerge from chaos.”

509 His first-hand travel on the mail-coach is due to travel during school breaks, which further attracts involute associations of home and holiday. 510 The routine establishes a temporal pacing for De Quincey: it “became a point of some interest with us, whose journeys revolved every six weeks on average, to look into the executive details of the system” (410). His interest in the concealed ordering of the system are inextricably entangled with time. Rather than contrast the valid points of each area of chaotic systems, their commonalities prove beneficial to examining De Quincey’s tensions over order and chaos. Hayles notes that “despite


510. De Quincey explains: “‘short terms;' that is, the four terms of Michaelmas, Lent, Easter, and Act, were kept severally by a residence, in the aggregate, of ninety–one days, or thirteen weeks” (410).
the breach” among chaos branches, “it is possible to identify several characteristics that chaotic systems share.”

By interspersing discussions of each characteristic, consisting of nonlinearity, scale, and recursive symmetries, with examples from “The English Mail-Coach” (somewhat corresponding with the ordering of sections) a distinct harmony emerges informed by involutes.

The first chaotic system shared characteristic is nonlinearity. “With linear equations, the magnitudes of cause and effect generally correspond,” in other words, correspondence is proportional, Hayles explains. “Small causes give rise to small effects, large causes to large effects,” in linearity: “equations that demonstrate it [magnitude correspondence] can be mapped as straight lines or planes.”

Involutves, however are manifold and spherical. De Quincey’s systems that operate on involutes adhere to the non-linear. “Nonlinear functions, by contrast, connote an often startling incongruity between cause and effect, so that a small cause can give rise to a large effect”:

a phenomenon of germination and fruitification operating in the remolding in dreams a seemingly transient moment. Hayles notes that, “there is a good reason why linear equations have dominated the study of dynamical systems; nonlinear differential equations do not generally have explicit solutions.”

Chaos theory reveals that nonlinearity “is the rule of nature” and linearity “the exception.” Not only does De Quincey express the incongruity between causes and effect, he outlines nonlinearity concerning the mail coach system in several ways, but most consistently in his need to count time, even to hundreds of seconds, not solely as a measure of the coach’s motion.

During his “earliest and boyish acquaintance with the mails,” and in his droll courtship of Fanny on the Bath road, he explains the phenomena of associations: “but alike the gayest and the most terrific of my experiences rose again after years of slumber, armed with preternatural power to shake my dreaming sensibilities” (416). Such is the example of Miss Fanny: “the slight case” (as opposed to monumental) and one that only resonates “through some causal or capricious association with images originally gay, yet opening at some stage of evolution into sudden capacities of horror; sometimes through the more natural and fixed alliances with the sense of power so various lodged in the mail system” (416-417). Part of the sense of power is time—but a very particular pattern or system of time. “Did I then make love to Fanny? Why, yes,” De Quincey explains through the span he had available: “as much love as one can make whilst the mail is changing horses, a process which ten years later did not occupy above eighty seconds; but then, viz., about Waterloo, it occupied five times eighty” (418). For his audience he clarifies that, “four hundred seconds offer a field quite ample enough for whispering into a young woman's ear a great deal of truth; and (by way of parenthesis) some trifle of falsehood” (418). He offers more numeric particulars—for instance, the number of her suitors—yet this portion prepares for the fastidious counting he performs during the threat of collision and sudden death later.

The power and non-linear causality, akin to metaphor for cognitive semantics, as well as strange attractors bring Fanny and the fleeting time along with her in association with the horses and the system itself:

The modern modes of travelling cannot compare with the mail-coach system in grandeur and power. They boast of more velocity, but not however as a consciousness, but as a fact of our lifeless knowledge, resting upon alien evidence; as, for instance, because somebody says that we have gone fifty miles in the hour, or upon the evidence of a result, as that actually we find ourselves in York four hours after leaving London. Apart from such an assertion, or such a result, I am little aware of the pace. But, seated on the old mail-coach, we needed no evidence out of ourselves to indicate the velocity. (417)
Not entirely influenced by his preference to sit outside of the coach beside the driver, De Quincey explains from the perspective of “modern modes” and locomotives, that he is not concerned with velocity as fact but experience: “as a consciousness” or life-filled, empirical knowledge that does not require “alien evidence.” The pace and velocity are sensory in the mail-coach. “On this system the word was— Non magna loquimus, as upon railways, but magna vivimus,” De Quincey claims. And his scientific observer feels the participation as much as the agents in the pace: “the vital experience of the glad animal sensibilities made doubts impossible on the question of our speed; we heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as a thrilling”; he claims, moreover, for seeing it in the horse, for “this speed was not the product of blind insensate agencies, that had no sympathy to give, but was incarcerated in the fiery eyeballs of an animal, in his dilated nostril, spasmodic muscles, and echoing hoofs” (417). De Quincey need not rely on “somebody” saying “that we have gone fifty miles in the hour,” but the embodied energy and work of the system operates before his eyes: “This speed was incarnated in the visible contagion amongst brutes of some impulse, that, radiating into their natures, had yet its centre and beginning in man” (417). Metaphoric exchange as a kinetic network seems evident here as well, along with images of the symbolic order or the analytic unconscious containing interlinked signifiers. Yet De Quincey’s study suggests avoiding reliance on psychoanalytical readings; even Lacan’s linguistic attention seems too separate from the material and concrete concerns of De Quincey. Metaphor makes concrete abstract relations. And language, for De Quincey, has concreteness and materiality. De Quincey outlines his various systems—dreams, memory, language, narrative, self—in actualities, images, concrete events. Experience and remembrance are texts and intertextual systems.
The intelligent center of this system is man; but what differs from the train is the evidence in the perception by the horse (vehicle) conflated with the message it carries:

The sensibility of the horse, uttering itself in the maniac light of his eye, might be the last vibration of such a movement; the glory of Salamanca might be the first but the intervening link that connected them, that spread the earthquake of the battle into the eyeball of the horse, was the heart of man kindling in the rapture of the fiery strife, and then propagating its own tumults by motions and gestures to the sympathies, more or less dim, in his servant the horse [...] But now, on the new system of travelling, iron tubes and boilers have disconnected man's heart from the ministers of his locomotion. (417)

The power of the communication, the news, conveys in the pace and velocity of the horse and mail-coach. When De Quincey sublimely states that the heart of man, is “the intervening link that connected” the strength of the battle into the eye of the horse, he recognizes the influence of contexts for communication and for information. The pace of the horse, the energy and work behind dissemination, is part of the message. “Propagating its own tumults by motions and gestures to the sympathies” of the horse, yet “the last vibration of such a movement” remains a “servant” to the man-driven system. De Quincey anchors his systems in the body and the embodied. The internal clock, his inner counting, makes him a contingent participant in the experience—this, in turn, marks moments on the mail-coach for his dreams.

De Quincey’s sense of time, or rather re-presentation of time, during his recollections showcases his preoccupation with the bodily experience but also with narrative. In the defining the moment and the vision of sudden death, De Quincey will innumerate the seconds for the on-coming gig’s occupants, the two lovers, their momentous experience: “Between them and eternity, to all human calculation, there is but a minute and a half” (440). In such a brief span, De Quincey not only recalls Achilles’s shout in Iliad in order to prompt his calling out—twice—to the couple, but the minutiae—mere intervals of seconds—of the driver’s reaction and attempts to
right their gig and his female companion to safety. Much as the war news conveyed or rather “propagat[ed] its own tumults by motions and gestures to the sympathies,” De Quincey positions thought between the systems of memory that unite literary allusion to contextual circumstances. De Quincey connects “man’s heart” with “the ministers of his locomotion,” both physical and internal.

In the narratological expansion of the short interval of near-collision, *intensive time* assists in understanding the involute as De Quincey’s model for the virtual or non-actualized systems of memory. DeLanda explains intensive time as sequences oscillating between critical points or singularities that complicate “the metrization or quantization of time.”⁵¹⁶ Parallel sequences can mesh into heterogeneous assemblages; the process of stimulus-independence is the “signature of the virtual” or traces left in the intensive.⁵¹⁷ De Quincey describes the oncoming driver’s realization with a mixture of sensorimotor functions and figuration: “He saw, he heard, he comprehended, the ruin that was coming down: already its gloomy shadow darkened above him; and already he was measuring his strength to deal with it” (440). De Quincey compares courage on a scale: “Ah! what a vulgar thing does courage seem, when we see nations buying it and selling it for a shilling a day: ah! what a sublime thing does courage seem, when some fearful crisis on the great deeps of life carries a man, as if running before a hurricane, up to the giddy crest of some mountainous wave” (440). Upon that “mountainous wave” De Quincey positions the driver, “from which accordingly as he chooses his course, he describes two courses, and a voice says to him audibly, ‘This way lies hope; take the other way and mourn for ever’” (440). From the internal conversation, manifesting extensive time, as if with another dark

interpreter (whether in Savannah-La-Mar’s earthquake destruction or within the eddies of the maelstrom), the driver is “yet, even then, amidst the raving of the seas and the frenzy of the danger, the man is able to confront his situation – is able to retire for a moment into solitude with God, and to seek all his counsel from him!” (440-441). Much like the clepsydra and his trance of contracted time, the figure of a consciousness outside of time presents a contrast for humans in duration. De Quincey slows time in the manner of counting it:

> For seven seconds, it might be, of his seventy, the stranger settled his countenance steadfastly upon us, as if to search and value every element in the conflict before him. For five seconds more he sate immovably, like one that mused on some great purpose. For five he sate with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt, for wisdom to guide him towards the better choice. Then suddenly he rose; stood upright; and, by a sudden strain upon the reins, raising his horse's forefeet from the ground, he slewed him round on the pivot of his hind legs, so as to plant the little equipage in a position nearly at right angles to ours. Thus far his condition was not improved; except as a first step had been taken towards the possibility of a second. If no more were done, nothing was done; for the little carriage still occupied the very centre of our path, though in an altered direction. Yet even now it may not be too late: fifteen of the twenty seconds may still be unexhausted; and one almighty bound forward may avail to clear the ground. (441)

De Quincey’s keeping time and segmenting the seventy seconds remaining for the driver’s reaction offers little sense of the fairly inconsequential spatial span: time measures and “value[s] every element in the conflict before him,” including velocity, distance, and their possible “ruin.” Underlying the description of the relationship between the two vehicles is De Quincey’s geometrical eye to the angles and tangents of intersection. The velocity and duration of the sequence take on their separate trajectories.

The briefest sequence, as De Quincey assigns the time span, expands into “The Vision of Sudden Death,” then the “theme” of the fugue. The collision sequence provides De Quincey an example of fleeting moments that can be revisited, or re-played, an intact enshrined city-like memory-text. The short intervals involving Fanny clearly involute, or strangely attract, to this
episode, yet so too do previous figures in *Suspiria*, particularly other females, most significantly those tied to trance of contracted time. By correlating any (or all) of the parallel episodes to the coach-gig-passage, an important sense of scale emerges. A key part of how Hayles outlines the shared characteristics of chaotic systems is that their complex forms “lead to a new awareness of the importance of scale”:

The new models ring into question an assumption so deeply woven into classical paradigms that it is difficult to see that it is an assumption. In classical physics, objects are considered to be independent of the scale chosen to measure them. A circle is assumed to have a set circumference, whether it is measured with a yardstick or with a ruler an inch long. Classical paradigms grant that smaller rulers may yield more precision than larger ones. But these differences are considered to be merely empirical variations that do not affect the existence of a “true” answer. This assumption works well for regular forms, such as circles, rectangles, and triangles. It does not work well for complex irregular forms—coastlines, for example, or mountain landscapes, or the complex branchings of the human vascular system. Here measurements on scales of different lengths do not converge to a limit but continue to increase as measurement scales decrease. De Quincey offers scaled reiterations of events just as he measures on scales of different length the courage bought cheaply by nations daily with that discovered in the gig’s driver. The geometry concerned with the scale complexities of chaotic systems adds a further appreciation for the behavior De Quincey assigns the structure-processes or concrete-virtual object-events he calls involutes. De Quincey’s involute is a complex irregular form—and one ever entangling and entwining. The multiple and multi-faceted systems of De Quincey are complex irregular forms, built upon involute experiences. Reading for these structural and processing patterns is one step toward involute analysis.

De Quincey models the procedures for involute analysis rather than formally delignating methodological steps or rules. The precision De Quincey offers his readers in reproducing the

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intervals of the near-collision represents the sense of scale he requires for conveying the intensity and quality of dream reproduction. In the Deleuzian vein, De Landa suggests the virtual possess fixed sets of definite properties both “extensive” and “qualitative.”519 De Quincey reproduces or recreates the virtual moment attending to such particulars—even those allusions and associations drawn up then, in time, to entangle previous involutes, or form a type of assemblage. In this way, the episode showcases the virtual’s possession of an indefinite set of “affordances” to affect and be affected by other virtual memories or non-actualized multiplicities.520 The capacities in De Quincey’s description of the urgency—or intensity—of the “emergent” properties DeLanda suggests are relational.521 Reading for intensity and scale directs reading Suspiria’s entangling of involute layers as possessing such emergent properties that interconnect.

Remembrance recollects or reproduces sedimentary levels that provide the dimensionality involutes possess beyond the contoured two-dimensional fractal. Involutes span outward, inward, but also upward and downward. De Quincey demonstrates interlocking affordances in reproducing, in narrative, a sense of presence to convey the significance of time: “Hurry then, hurry! for the flying moments they hurry! Oh hurry, hurry, my brave young man! for the cruel hoofs of our horses they also hurry! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses” (441). The flight of moments, even in memory, stresses the trauma of failure, of sustained indeterminacy, of known unknowability. The aftermath of the driver’s course-correction leaves De Quincey in a position to know that the horse and “the larger half of the little equipage had then cleared our over-towering shadow: that was evident even to my own agitated

sight,” yet to remain in doubt: “But it mattered little that one wreck should float off in safety, if upon the wreck that perished were embarked the human freightage” (441). He reproduces the rather uncertain result in the question: “The rear part of the carriage was that certainly beyond the line of absolute ruin?”—but one he is unable to answer definitively, opening the moment to emergent properties of other iterations of unknowability or uncertainty:

What power could answer the question? Glance of eye, thought of man, wing of angel, which of these had speed enough to sweep between the question and the answer, and. divide the one from the other? Light does not tread upon the steps of light more indivisibly, than did our all-conquering arrival upon the escaping efforts of the gig […] We ran past them faster than ever mill-race in our inexorable flight. Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit! Either with the swingle-bar, or with the haunch of our near leader, we had struck the off-wheel of the little gig, which stood rather obliquely and not quite so far advanced as to be accurately parallel with the near wheel. The blow, from the fury of our passage, resounded terrifically. I rose in horror, to look upon the ruins we might have caused. From my elevated station I looked down, and looked back upon the scene, which in a moment told its tale, and wrote all its records on my heart for ever. (441-442)

The eye, man, angel assigned a glance, thought, and wing, respectively, each provide different time scales in addition to their other properties. De Quincey aptly equates the “indivisibility” of light with time. With the coach’s “inexorable flight” and “the fury of our passage,” De Quincey assigning the resounding power of his motion and movement onto the figures in the other vehicle as much as on the “records” of his heart, further invoking his core involute remembrance. De Quincey bares striking similarities to DeLanda’s description of actualization in A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History: “there were coexisting motion of destratification of intermediate intensity which connected these flows, generating meshworks of different kinds.”522 (267).

DeLanda’s meshwork resembles the permeable textuality and embodiment Hayles announces of the present—meshwork approaching a more concrete entity (“consisting of spaces and interstices

between the threads”\(^5\), though not one as complex as De Quincey’s involute. “A world in which geology, biology, and linguistics are not seen as three separate spheres, each more advanced or progressive than the previous one,” DeLanda explains, is the advantage of “heterogeneous mixtures,” here specifically, “three perfectly coexisting and interacting flows of energetic, replicative, and catalytic materials.”\(^5\) The qualitative multiplicity or plane of consistency the scenario holds for De Quincey is a meshwork of all these involute systems, sharing qualities of virtual, chaotic, dynamic systems.

Besides the image-sets belonging to the patterns of Suspiria, De Quincey’s narratological expansion of the fleeting moments from minutes to seconds demonstrates the recursive symmetries that reproduce the nested sets of associations in the sequence. Contributing to the discussion of scale, Hayles explains the difficulties of fractal properties:

Nonlinear dynamics, another important area within the sciences of chaos, is akin to fractal geometry in that it posits a qualitative and not merely a quantitative difference between linear and complex systems. Turbulent flow, for example, possesses so many coupled degrees of freedom that even the new supercomputers are inadequate to handle the required calculations. Since doing more of the same kind of calculations that one would use for laminar flow does not usually yield a solution, the difference between turbulent and laminar flow amounts to a qualitative distinction, an indication that another kind of approach is needed. An essential component of this approach is a shift in focus from the individual unit to recursive symmetries between scale levels.\(^5\)

The recursivity of patterns or symmetries even in different scales, like a bi-recursive algorithm, suggests the relationship of actual to virtual, in which differentiation manifests key aspects of the non-actuality. The involute moment, here concerning the coach-gig-passage, and its qualitative distinction may indeed be its own virtual moment, its own dynamic system, complicated further

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523. *OED*, s. v. “mesh, n. (and adj.)”.
when rendered in narrative. Yet, the sequence suggests a teleological positioning that could make it significant for De Quincey because it simultaneously actualizes other virtual moments, differentiation of past involutes. Symmetries manifest in the imagery and descriptions. The fractal replicable pattern emerges. De Quincey describes the fate, as best as he knows, of the other carriage with a narrative voice that easily blurs with the man who just struggled to steer the gig to safety:

The horse was planted immovably, with his fore-feet upon the paved crest of the central road. He of the whole party was alone untouched by the passion of death. The little carry carriage-partly perhaps from the dreadful torsion of the wheels in its recent movement, partly from the thundering blow we had given to it as if it sympathized with human horror, was all alive with tremblings and shiverings. […] The young man sat like a rock. He stirred not at all. But his was the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest by horror. As yet he dared not to look round; for he knew that, if anything remained to do, by him it could no longer be done. And as yet he knew not for certain if their safety were accomplished. But the lady—

The abrupt suspension of the final thought of the paragraph provides a brilliant expression of the scene. The “thundering blow” recalls the nurse’s announcement that his sister must die; De Quincey and the young man share “the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest,” not unlike the sunken city. “The passion of death” places the passage sequence parallel with the nursery readings and afflictions. The situation De Quincey narrates assumes a place on the continuum, a recursive pattern, a plane of consistency.

Even when the next paragraph resumes the thought concerning “the lady,” the placeholder for concluding the thought is the same emphatic dash to convey separation, suspension, and possibly a shaft or sullen shape around which his thoughts swirl and entwine. Now, he adds an exclamation for a combined punctuation that forms a visual diagram of her possible states. De Quincey’s oblique description of the lady’s suspended fate is the closing
image of a “umbrageous aisle” or region of deep total shadow in the tract of road, complete with recursive imagery:

But the lady −! Oh heavens! will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying, raving, despairing! Figure to yourself, reader, the elements of the case; suffer me to recall before your mind the circumstances of the unparalleled situation. From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dreamlight from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love suddenly as from the woods and fields suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice.

The moments were numbered. In the twinkling of an eye our flying horses had carried us to the termination of the umbrageous aisle; at right-angles we wheeled into our former direction; the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes in an instant, and swept it into my dreams for ever. (440-441)

The “saintly summer night” returns to the nursery and “murmuring love suddenly as from the woods and fields” evokes Fanny; then a trance reappears of “the chambers of the air opening in revelation suddenly” with the funeral image of the “ground yawning.” In this convergent moment, “with the flashing of cataracts,” De Quincey sees the young woman raise her “arms wildling to heaven” performing the supplication he imagined in Elizabeth’s upturned palms. In “the silence and deep peace” De Quincey provides the temporal measure he lacked during his trance, apprehending then that all “moments were numbered”—an aptly ambiguous statement that speaks to several layers and trajectories of counting and re-counting. The moment of “termination” at the open-endedness of the scene “swept it into [his] dreams for ever.” Much as with digressive tangents, “at right angles [the coach] wheeled into our former direction” and with
“the turn of the road” the scene only temporarily closes. Her fate oscillates, much as intensive time, between similar critical points, creates an interplay of singularities and affects. The parallel sequences of Suspiria form an involute assemblage. His uncertainty over the resolution mirrors the uncertainty that oscillates between the numbering in time, during recollection or narrative.

Suspiria oscillates indeterminately between the system of memory represented and the narrative produced. The final aspect to consider in respect to De Quincey’s involute system(s) for cognition, memory, and narrative is the role of feedback for trans-coding between systems, but also in actualization (pre-actualization and counter-actualization). In terms of chaos, Hayles clarifies feedback’s role:

Other characteristics that complex systems share are feedback mechanisms that create loops in which output feeds back into the system as input. In certain chemical reactions, for example, a product may also serve as a catalyst for the reaction, driving it to generate more product, which in turn becomes more catalyst. The resulting dynamics are instrumental in explaining why organized structures can spontaneously emerge from initially small perturbations in the solution. In computer modeling of mathematical functions, iteration operates according to a similar principle, the output of one calculation serving as input for the next. When the function is strongly nonlinear, small fluctuations in the data are not smoothed out as iteration proceeds.

Hayles’ is a concise overview. Entropy has different relationships to chaos and order. Wiener points to Gibb’s view that closed systems in the universe “tend naturally to deteriorate and lose their distinctiveness, to move from the least to the most probable state, from a state of organization and differentiation in which distinctions and forms exist to a state of chaos and sameness.” Of course, the sets of organization/differentiation and chaos/sameness are nearly

526. The similarity, again to Wordsworth’s “A Night-Piece”: “At length the Vision closes; and the mind, / Not undisturbed by the delight it feels, / Which slowly settles into peaceful calm, / Is left to muse upon the solemn scene” (lines 23-26).


528. Qtd. in Hayles, 1999, Post-Human, 102.
the exactly opposed pairings for a system operating by principles of virtual space-time. De Quincey’s “The Dream-Fugue,” compared to the narratological and teleological order of “A Vision of Sudden Death,” might appear to deteriorate into chaos—but that would fail to account for the position of De Quincey as both the sender and receiver of the signal.

De Quincey occasionally personifies the communicative partner, the coupling in his system of memory, as the Dark Interpreter—though the figure need not be recognized formally to still be present here. When in the guise of a persona, this curative agent—both restorative and custodial, as the Latin curare is the root of cure, curate and curator—in De Quincey offers objectivity from a perspective distinct from the lived events to which De Quincey seems bound. The Dark Interpreter and interpretation provide De Quincey’s involute systems their vital procedures of restoration and archiving. Brockden reveals he is ever-present within time (and De Quincey); Savannah-La-Mar demonstrates that he is privy to an outside or without-time perspective, similar to God’s. Deleuze’s “dark precursor” seems uncannily similar to the role of De Quincey’s Dark Interpreter: their shared characteristic of dialectic and difference within the virtual-actual. By correlating their properties in the emergence of system, these two dark figures assist to reconcile the two approaches to entropy (or negentropy) in chaotic systems. Hayles juxtaposes Claude Shannon’s entropy with Léon Brillouin’s negentropy: “when information could be conceived of as allied with disorder, a passage was opened into the new paradigm of chaos theory.”

529. OED, s. v. “curator, n.”.

530. For an insightful discussion of the pivotal figure, see: Eleanor Kaufman, Deleuze, the Dark Precursor: Dialectic, Structure, Being. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

“Entropy correlates with uncertainty.” The crucial differences revealed by the heuristics are two opposite ways of valuing disorder,” Hayles clarifies; “Shannon considers the uncertainty in the message at its source, whereas Brillouin considers it at the destination.” In other words, “different attitudes toward the chaos by their orientations toward the message,” demonstrates that uncertainty of the message can be on both ends of the communication, simultaneously. Hayles diffuses the conflict concisely: “disorder is not necessarily bad, and the void is not always empty.” As DeLanda develops Deleuze’s dark precursor different trajectories of actualization follow the orientation or perspective difference of Shannon and Brillouin. Furthermore, bearing in mind that the communications here transcode between distinct languages in the systems of memory, the complexity and ordered disorder of De Quincey’s dream-fugue—and involute—become more apparent.

Fugues, Shadow Selves, and the Ordered Chaos of Involutes and Involute Systems

The musical fugue is, in structure and processes, quite similar to De Quincey’s involute. The idea of counter points or dual melodies intertwining and being woven successively into a network of parts invokes the narrative caduceus, the elusive web, and discursive palimpsests in the virtual archive. Music also offers an appropriate temporality and textuality, simultaneously two distinct entities eternal and transient while embodied and incorporeal. The fugue provides an interesting view of the Dark Interpreter and the communication between iterations of De

Quincey, those remembering-reading selves, accreted alongside their involutes of experiencing remembrance/re-experiencing (movements of actualization and counter-actualization), all operating in virtual space-time. DeLanda’s development of Deleuze’s *dark precursor* helps to position the uncertainty of perspective for De Quincey rendering the dynamics of the systems at work.

Rather than surveying extensively the full imagery of the section, which resonates with the larger *Suspiria*, De Quincey’s discussion of the formal movement of the fugue offers insight into the processes that manifest the content of the narrative, as well as rendered dream(s) and memories. Employing the terms that appeared earlier, “agitations,” “infinite,” “unfathomable,” “agony” and “passion” for the manifest content of the dream, the slippage applies to fugue system as well:

Then rose the agitation, spreading through the infinite cathedral, to its agony; then was completed the passion of the mighty fugue. The golden tubes of the organ, which as yet had but sobbed and muttered at intervals gleaming amongst clouds and surges of incense threw up, as from fountains unfathomable, columns of heart-shattering music. Choir and antichoir were filling fast with unknown voices. (448)

The image of columns that shatter the heart and tubes reaching the clouds recall the image-set or semes of the core involute; yet, just as relevant are the sounds “sobbed and muttered at intervals gleaming,” the oscillated appearance of the images. The choir returns to his memories of music on Sunday mornings, in which, “oftentimes in anthems, when the mighty instrument threw its vast columns of sound, fierce yet melodious over the voices of the choir, when it rose high in arches, as might seem, surmounting and overriding the strife of the vocal parts, and gathering by strong coercion the total storm into unity” (149). The parallels with the wind that assists in inducing his trance are clear: “sometimes I seemed to walk triumphantly upon those clouds
which so recently I had looked up to as mementos of prostrate sorrow, and even as ministers of sorrow in its creations; yes, sometimes under the transfigurations of music I felt of grief itself as a fiery chariot for mounting victoriously above the causes of grief” (149). When this returns in the dream fugue, it manifests as the tension of the two melodies, the “choir and anti-choir.” These are not simply narrative echoes, nor the cogito and anticogito. There is a “quasi-causal operator,” the dark *precursor*, which DeLanda explains as performing both “counter-actualization” and “pre-actualization.”536 The dialogue of De Quincey’s dynamic complex system is of distinctions of trajectory between the virtual and actual. In counter-actualization, according to DeLanda, advancing Deleuze’s idea of the *line of flight*, virtual multiplicities arise from the intensive traces. In such a process, all actual events derive the virtual, which in De Quincey’s case explains the repetition as those multiplicities extracted from the pattern of his life experiences. For a system that includes the communication exchange between dreams and memory, De Quincey moves away from privileging one as a reading of the other. Rather than crystallization in dreams, in a psychoanalytical reading, De Quincey displays the effect of a line of flight from actuality to the virtual.

Counter-actualization may operate in both memory and dreams, but appears to be requisite for connecting involutes in the high intensity nonlinear system of memory. With each event or experience, De Quincey redefines the relevant, through anticipation but also *interpreting* the virtual node, or involute, at the center of the web. Relatedly, pre-actualization, DeLanda explains, is Deleuze’s *plane of consistency*, the instantaneous continuum emerging from the virtual, “unfolding into past and future, a time where nothing ever occurs but where everything is

endlessly becoming in both unlimited directions at once.” Suddenly a heterogenous assemblage of differentiation and repetition, dreams *reproduce*. The dream-fugue exemplifies this:

Thou also, Dying Trumpeter! with thy love that was victorious, and thy anguish that was finishing, didst enter the tumult: trumpet and echo farewell love, and farewell anguish rang, through the dreadful sanctus. We, that spread flight before us, heard the tumult, as of flight, mustering behind us. In fear we looked round for the unknown steps that, in flight or in pursuit, were gathering upon our own. Who were these that followed? The faces, which no man could count whence were they? 'Oh, darkness of the grave!' I exclaimed, 'that from the crimson altar and from the fiery font wert visited with secret light that wert searched by the indulgence in the angel's eye were these indeed thy children? Pomp of life, that, from the burials of centuries, rose again to the voice of perfect joy, could it be ye that had wrapped me in the reflux of panic?' What ailed me, that I should fear when the triumphs of earth were advancing? (448)

The conflation of time as well as the temporal ties of each image demonstrates the dual trajectory of the involution. Self-organization ties actual instances to entangled virtual multiplicities or mental markers, yet, the reflexivity differentiates to self-generate dreams that actualize. That the imagery coincides so fittingly with the geometric topology of virtual philosophy demonstrates shared roots in philosophy and mathematics.

As De Quincey resumes the culmination of the fugue, the movement of actualization either from or to the virtual seems as uncertain as the perspective of the sender and receiver. It is not memory or dreams that can be assigned either actualization or counter-actualization, but rather the temporal position of the self, the teleological orientation in both systems. In recollection the observer looks back from the end of the continuum. Re-collection suggests making actual what has already been actual, but only through the conversion or transcoding through the virtual storage of memory. To narrate dreams is the same re-collection; to dream,

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however, like encoding into memory, archives the actual by intensive organization, locating the virtual. DeLanda would point out that high intensity nonlinear systems, such as this, move toward the virtual—in a similar sense as entropy. Non-actualized attractors direct this organization, just as the dark precursor is the *quasi-causal operator* of these processes.

De Quincey is aware of the approximate autonomy of these process, dictated as they are by the structure of the human system. The Dark Interpreter, as with the *dark precurs*or, is an effect not a cause, an only quasi-causal operator. De Quincey’s term seems more suitable for underscoring both linguistics and informatics. The precursor may be ever elusive, yet, the interpreting roles are apparent and available for analysis. Influenced by the communications model, events arise directly by two bodies interacting. The interpreter, effect and by-product of colliding memories or communicating iterations, demonstrates the entanglement of involutes. The scope now exceeds the smitten, submarine Savannah-La-Mar, but the whole expanse of time:

Ah! Pariah heart within me, that couldst never hear the sound of joy without sullen whispers of treachery in ambush; that, from six years old, didst never hear the promise of perfect love, without seeing aloft amongst the stars fingers as of a man's hand, writing the secret legend −'Ashes to ashes, dust to dust!' wherefore shouldst thou not fear, though all men should rejoice? Lo! as I looked back for seventy leagues through the mighty cathedral, and saw the quick and the dead that sang together to God, together that sang to the generations of man ah! raving, as of torrents that opened on every side: trepidation, as of female and infant steps that fled ah! rushing, as of wings that chased!

De Quincey can simultaneously be the narrator and the six-year old, two simultaneous events of experience and recollection. The uncertainty over the fate of the young woman on the mail-road, not dissimilar to his construing Elizabeth’s sleep-like appearance in death, extracts a counter-actualization of the multiplicity he apprehends as the paradox of presence in absence.
Simultaneously the line of flight (to virtual) and plane of consistency (to actual) operate, interpret themselves, in each direction of transcoding.

De Quincey’s interpreter manifests out of the hardware of involutes as much as the firmware of self or the software of conscious states. The apparatus of the mind, that permits storage of involutes for their entangling functions, is the hardware and machinery consisting of such gears. The software, the programs and operating information of involute language, functions and discourses between the states that permanently imprint the self or read-only firmware. The term wetware, in fact, attempts the organic analogy of the brain to the interconnected systems within computers. The interpreter operates in the spaces between these; the interpreter is process. The level of communication-event between actualized or re-produced recollections operates in tandem with intersystem dialogue or the movement from actual to virtual (and vice versa) within encoding and recall. De Quincey, following the fugue outline, creates entwined trajectories. The merger of the church choir, the trance, the mail-coach and Savannah-La-Mar are just the more obvious iterations. His memory-images and dream-images dialogue for revelatory reassurance:

But I heard a voice from heaven, which said ‘Let there be no reflux of panic let there be no more fear, and no more sudden death! Cover them with joy as the tides cover the shore!’ That heard the children of the choir, that heard the children of the grave. All the hosts of jubilation made ready to move. Like armies that ride in pursuit, they moved with one step. Us, that, with laurelled heads, were passing from the cathedral through its eastern gates, they overtook, and, as with a garment, they wrapped us round with thunders that overpowered our own. As brothers we moved together; to the skies we rose to the dawn that advanced—to the stars that fled; rendering thanks to God in the highest that, having hid his face through one generation behind thick clouds of War, once again was ascending—was ascending from Waterloo in the visions of Peace: rendering thanks for thee, young girl whom having overshadowed with his ineffable passion of death suddenly did God relent; suffered thy angel to turn aside his arm; and even in thee, sister unknown! shown to me for a moment only to be hidden forever, found an occasion to glorify his goodness. (449)
The ascension and enveloping imagery recurs back to the structure of the dreaming faculty, the depths of psyche, to reinforce the excavations issue heavenward the sighs, silent signals, communications from the encrusted strata. De Quincey’s use of repetition and “reflux” conveys a sense of haste and recursion or reversion. The apparent pattern is one of vision and concealment, like the ineffability of God, yet, obviously evoking Elizabeth: “sister unknown! shown [...] for a moment only to be hidden forever.” The cathedral recurs to God “work[ing] by earthquake” (“his voice swelled like a sanctus rising from the choir of a cathedral) with Savannah-La-Mar, which in turn returns to the rituals of Elizabeth’s burial. The enveloping course of thought renders in disjunctive syntax, “was ascending—was ascending from Waterloo in the visions of Peace,” movement from the general node of meaning vital to his involute memory to specifics pinning him to the later layer of the mail-coach sequence. The varied perspectives collide (“As brothers we moved together”) and extract a virtual paradigm, a multiplicity to be formed into a heterogeneous continuum.

The interpretations operating the movement from virtual to actual and vice versa are the self-organization and autopoiesis of involute systems. The emergence of self-organization from the seeming chaos of narrative demonstrates the processes of involutes. De Quincey provides a textual rendering of the externalization of memory within memory:

A thousand times, amongst the phantoms of sleep, has he shown thee to me, standing before the golden dawn, and ready to enter its gates with the dreadful word going before Thee with the armies of the grave behind thee; shown thee to me, sinking, rising, fluttering, fainting, but then suddenly reconciled, adoring: a thousand times has he followed thee in the worlds of sleep through storms; through desert seas; through the darkness of quicksands; through fugues and the persecution of fugues; through dreams, and the dreadful resurrections that are in dreams only that at the last, with one motion of his victorious arm, he might record and emblazon the endless resurrections of his love! (449)
De Quincey’s closing portion settles with “the phantoms of sleep,” displayed in dreams now with the “dreadful word going before”—a moment of time suspension “suddenly reconciled.” The “thousand times,” repeated here, repeats the repetition of dreams for those suffering at opium’s hands; yet, opium is but the coefficient making evident the operations of the human system. “Through dreams, and the dreadful resurrections that are in dreams,” the past revives, re-produced, re-interpreted, re-actualized. The “fugues and the persecution of fugues” provide the final sense of the tensions of dual (and dueling) systems, interacting and communicating, coupled and operating in tandem. The agitations of the human system are only the more evident exacerbated by opium and the impact of his nursery afflictions. Between the materiality of informatics and the semiotics of virtuality, De Quincey maps the human system with the involute, carving out a post-human adaption of digital-cyber mechanisms with only the available technics of his time. The spontaneous emergence, “only that at the last, with one motion of his victorious arm, he might record and emblazon the endless resurrections of his love,” completes the narratological, dreamed and immemorial self-organization of the involute-self from the seeming chaos of the spiraling, layered, entangled characteristics of the involute systems operating within and without. The informational processing of the human mind-body at stake for De Quincey permits the text of the mind to exceed the clepsydra and even the text he renders it through.

*Suspiria de Profundis* stands, with all its appendages, tangents, and eddies, as a model and a study that defines De Quincey’s senses—contingently defined—of mind and text. Through current developments of theory and technology, the sciences and the arts that branch out common concerns for philosophy and mathematics in De Quincey’s writing, the shared interests between De Quincey and memory as system(s), virtuality cum archive, linguistics, and textuality
become apparent. De Quincey’s parallel ideas place him within several trajectories of thought. Yet, while current semiotics, media theory, and philosophy offer avenues to appreciate De Quincey’s commonality, they also distinguish his additions to each as contributions that can inform current thought. Reading Suspiria de Profundis with De Quincey’s involutes in mind transforms the act of reading to a set of processes that do not reduce a text to a single, homogenous meaning. Rather, reading for De Quincey, is a translation, is communication, is recollection, is process. Involute methodology is reading for the transformative act of involution, of entangling actuals around nodes of virtual, indeterminate signification and archiving each experience as a distinct iteration—ever further and ceaselessly involuting.
Conclusion

The Past is Now

Through this dissertation, I hope to secure a place for De Quincey’s metaphysical involute in the two fields he hoped to merge: literature and philosophy. Now, the involute belongs as much to systems theory and media studies. Involutes also evolve archive theory through the premises of virtuality.

Involute analysis is the formal method I propose for Thomas De Quincey’s involute reading practices. De Quincey reads his memory-text with the recursion of involutes. Rather than static images or cinematic frames, involutes are dimensionally compound and perplexingly entangling objects for ordering existence. They pattern themselves, as do fractals, into larger formations. Yet, even as De Quincey recognized memory and narrative intersecting at points of meaning, the systems of interaction are not always apparent. Associations and meaning may interplay through juxtaposition by elusive agencies, entangle with oscillating undercurrents, and recur elsewhere with algorithmic functioning. From De Quincey’s reading of his memory-text, all texts become viable objects for the same analytical method. Involutes invite new layers for interdisciplinary inquiry. I anticipate involutes speaking to newer textualities of media (including the social and communal ephemera media) and the adapting experiences that accompany them.

I invite developments to involute analysis that assist our evolving understandings of human interaction with an increasingly technologically textual world. Involutes help reimagine the site of textual interface, having restructured both the text and the reader. The structural
implications of involute systems form the basic methodological level of involute analysis. The untraceable tethered properties De Quincey locates in his own readerly associations demonstrate the layered and dueling trajectories within any node of meaning or signification. De Quincey revises the typical literary figuring of antagonism as relations, contradictions even, that are not oppositional but complementary. The involute system accommodates multiple trajectories from interacting systems and sub-systems. As a medium, involutes impact their procedures and formulaic analysis of their functioning. Involutes operate the systems without and within the text and the reader. I trust that by recognizing involute processing, our apprehension of the increasingly rapid currents of technological acceleration can locate new cross-currents of inquiry.

As a methodology for literary readings this means that when we read we must remain mindful of the systematic suspensions of current passages in the literary text alongside past ones. Noteworthy passages are relative and fluidly reassessed by automatic subroutines of correspondence and congruence, of genre, of grammar and syntax, of general and specific discourses and so forth. We translate as we read. We interpret as we translate. Reading, as with memories and experiences, are dually virtual and actual, continually actualizing and counteractualizing. At each moment, the text is a text within a series. We suspend points in the recursive sequence. Each text is a reiteration from two directions: informed by its present addendum and readerly anticipations, interests. To recollect, to read, moves simultaneous in two directions, suspending and oscillating the conscious mind in space and time. The text is always multiple. We counteractualize the virtual text and multiplicity (of texts) in our reading. Our interest is rapid and simultaneously and continually actualizing the virtual of the text(s). And all this occurs—not in a vacuum—but in tandem with our readerly pasts and reading process, within our layered pasts made present in memory. All this occurred in the compositional process. All
remains ongoing in the virtual-actualization processes of reading, recollecting, rereading. The involute offers a placeholder for archiving as much of these processes of process as possible.

Involute analysis provides for our locating collapsing lines of remembrance and lines of experience. Involute moments in a textual reading pinpoint moments of intersection and recursion within reading. The foliated involute point permits one textual point to become several, one reading course to become layered as multiple. After isolating a textual involute (or $Ti$) as a remembrance involute (or $Ri$), analysis can then trace various recollection points ($Rp$), returning to the lines of the text leading toward and issuing from the involute point ($Ip$). Revisiting an involute sequence locates the relationship between order and disorder of the textual system. Reading is a juncture of text and virtual memory, a crosscutting of other points, vectors, and involutes juxtaposed in archival memory’s palimpsestuousness. Involute analysis may have a clearer example in the digital text than the literary text, the former often including an archive or log of activity. Newer media forms, with either their own archives of iterations or record of user/reader progress help partially document the two systems merging in involute reading. Or, maybe this simply offers additional textual layers? Memory in such a medium, applicable to *Suspiria*, operates as a system with interconnections between natural processes and media technologies or the human and non-human domains emphasizes in the leakage of media into human communications. The notable texts that embed or en-script user experience/memory, often multiple iterations, also develop meta-awareness, even commentary on, the places and spaces of interface, the interactions of the involute system.

Between the materiality of informatics and the semiotics of virtuality, De Quincey maps the human system with the involute. With the technics of his time he locates a post-human ahead of current digital-cyber mechanisms. Thomas De Quincey’s involute and involute analysis
provide a bridge to the non-specialized principles of science. Non-causal entangling, gravitational manipulation, and perception distortion are just as relevant for De Quincey’s study of memory and narrative as the physics of the universe. Recent years, even the past few months, continue to provide evidence and studies of Einsteinian physics in action, many of which scientists, including Einstein, thought unprovable. The non-causal behavior of quantum mechanics, the gravitational power of comic bodies on light, even the power of extreme light to alter its behavior on objects are just a sampling of the areas yielding advanced data about the universe. The specialized focus of these fields seldom suggests application in the study of literature, or more largely language. De Quincey’s method appreciates language, literature, and the mind as related subjects for which scientific tenets are valuable—moreover, their study in this manner even yields reciprocal benefit.

**New Game Mode**

Imagine, if you will, that you could go back in time and bring useful objects back with you—but this process requires you to suspend time (and yourself in it), keep your thoughts oscillating in both states, so that you can locate objects of use to you now and in the past for the future.

This is not a description of reality based on the laws of involutes. Rather this is the metagameplay of a participatory digital text that demonstrates how relevant involute analysis is for our modern understanding. A recent puzzle video game, *Braid* (2009), includes a unique and defining feature involving the protagonist’s movement and progression during gameplay. The player possesses the power to manipulate time, to reverse the movement of the world or *rewind*
their such actions of their own as evading enemies or various puzzle solving — this power is in fact a required mechanic the game demands be used in order to progress.

You advance forward and survey the environment before you pause and rewind yourself at a different speed than the continuing velocity of certain spaces and objects around you, applying your cognizance of what already happened—a suspended state—to undo (yet, not un-experience) your re-engagement with the world around you. You can go backward, most of the world can regress too, physically, though your consciousness progresses forward along with strategic objects. Some things you can bring back with you, artifacts of the world that emblematize your effaced experiences. Then you send time forward yet again in a newly established layer of experience, informed by effaced knowledge. You alter velocity or position from your previous path; now you’re elsewhere and else-when than you are/were.

The blatant distortion of space-time is the main mechanic of the video game *Braid* (2008) that asks players to undo their actions in order to manipulate certain objects and bring them backward to different points in time/space, to moments and places other and before. Clearly, storytelling in this form interrogates the basic principles of physics in ways that speak to humanity’s yearning for power over time (and space). *Braid* suggests a self-conscious text, utilizing its media for commentary on form. The meta-mechanic of *Braid* collapses the notion of replay, particularly the replay-ability required of some games in the hopes of improving performance through layered experience. Several genres of video games archive save files of user game-play.

Typical meta-game mechanics expect players to recognize successful completion; a save file, a historical record of performed experiences, can trigger “new game mode” that alters the game world or objectives to offer a new experience. Electronic media is aware of its medium.
Braid expects players to overtly perform as an external memory for the game itself—rather than
the other way around. Participatory digital texts, might offer a useful comparison of the two
matrixes of memory (human and media) in Suspiria. Suddenly the human experience and
medium create a matrix of dialectic exchange, privileging neither and demanding simultaneity of
remembrance.

We’ve reached a moment in which a digital text can ask its user to provide it external
mnemonic aid. Reading Suspiria de Profundis with De Quincey’s involutes in mind transforms
the act of reading from one that does not reduce a text to a single, homogenous meaning. Rather,
reading for De Quincey, is a translation, is communication, is recollection, is process. Involute
methodology is reading for the transformative act of involution, of entangling actuals around
nodes of virtual, indeterminate signification and archiving each experience as a distinct
iteration—but ever further and ceaselessly involuting.

An Inter-net of Involute Texts

“Pics or it didn’t happen”, proclaims (rather unoriginally, albeit succinctly) one internet
meme. Yet it’s oddly profound. Approaching two centuries of photography’s existence, visual
media reign; Deleuze avers we now think cinematically; and, certainly, this is all just an
extension—surely not the pinnacle?—of external memory storage that Socrates cautioned
against. The concept of (digital) memory storage is so common-place even those not intimately
aware of the process, or even willing to comprehend translating anything into zeros and ones, use
the terminology daily and without a second thought. But what does it mean for a society (and
culture) when occurrences or experiences rely on photo evidence? Why must experiences have
visual representation in order to have happened? What does it mean for experiences to have
external (perhaps even autonomous?) existence within time and space? These are hardly the only concerns that plague me as a part of a generation whose first experience of digital storage was not the personal computer per se but rather video game save data. (Was there not an NES in the “average” household long before there was a PC?) At once there is both a personal memory and an external record of events a player can load or delete—and, if unintentionally overwritten, the blurred space of that virtual experience is suddenly gone, gone somewhere. I’d like this dissertation to contribute to the discussion of what some media theorists call our “mnemotechnical milieu” by studying the conceptual implications of storing experience and perhaps structuring memory to fit given housing parameters and to operate accordingly. And perhaps this goes for experiences as well. The ephemerality yet permanence of the internet, of new media, of memes and video games, demonstrate that not only do must we expand our definitions of text and narrative, but we must adapt to new forms and behaviors of discourse.

Interestingly, a Romanticist offers some provocative questions, if not a few answers, to these very concerns. Brilliant and overlooked, De Quincey introduces a sense to the term “involute” that resonates with our digital experiences and may even illuminate a paradigmatic or philosophical anticipation of how we think, a century ahead of schedule. It was kismet encountering Thomas De Quincey and his intoxicating work Suspiria de Profundis—and now I can’t get him or his concepts out of my head, literally (and I do mean literally, for reading can impact brain connectivity, though metaphorically as well). In the early 1800s De Quincey not only has the impulse to render—in narrative—the visual detail of a poignant memory but to conceptualize that memory as physically stored in the brain. What is truly provocative is not so much this sense of memory storage but his concept of experience as a physical and visual object. Suddenly the meme takes on new meaning when experiences start out as concrete objects rather
than abstract and internal “thoughts and feelings”—it didn’t happen if you only think it or feel it, somehow these are incomplete or untrustworthy.

Provide pics, proof, physical presence or it didn’t happen. Thomas De Quincey’s involutes complete the narratological, dreamed and immemorial self-organization of the involute-self from the seeming chaos of the spiraling, layered, entangled characteristics of virtual experience. Involute analysis suggests one way to understand our evolving priorities, presences, and places of experience.
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