

Visions and Revisions: Addiction and Additions in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione*

Alessia Pannese

Abstract

Thomas De Quincey's autobiographical account *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* compares opium-induced states of mind with the imaginary architecture of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's etching series *Carceri d'Invenzione*. Here I examine how this inner-to-outer transposition acts as a locus of convergence of Piranesi's and De Quincey's works at a metaphorical level, as well in more subtle and direct ways. Bringing together textual and visual evidence from the original and revised editions of the *Confessions* and the *Carceri*, I discuss ways in which both De Quincey and Piranesi negotiate the themes of freedom and restraint, and suggest parallels with the reality of opium addiction.

In his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, Thomas De Quincey¹ recalls:

Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's Antiquities of Rome, Mr Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls: on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, &c. &c. expressive of enormous power put forth and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself: follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it come to a sudden abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. [...] raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher: on which again Piranesi is perceived, but this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aerial flight of stairs is beheld [...] and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. – With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. In the early stage of my malady, the splendours of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural: and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye.²

The '*Dreams*' cited in De Quincey's passage do not exist – at least not under that title. What De Quincey refers to is understood to be a set of plates that Piranesi³ etched in

¹ Born in 1785 in Manchester into an 'upwardly mobile middle-class family' (Faflak, *Thomas de Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (Toronto: Broadview, 2009)), Thomas De Quincey idolised Kant (whose *Observations on our feelings of the Beautiful and the Sublime* he translated), Coleridge (whom he met by 1806), and Wordsworth, with whose family he moved in after abruptly leaving Oxford, in 1807, to remain as a tenant in Grasmere's Dove Cottage starting from 1809 (the friendship eventually soured). Although he intended to achieve recognition as a poet – 'I have [...] always intended that *poems* should form the cornerstones of my fame' (De Quincey's *Diary*, 26 May 1803, quoted in Morrison and Roberts, *Thomas De Quincey: New Theoretical and Critical Directions* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 1) – De Quincey remains largely known for his publications in periodicals. The *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* first appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1821.

² De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*. In: *The London Magazine*, IV, XXII, p. 374.

³ Giovanni Battista Piranesi was born outside Venice in 1720, and moved to Rome in 1740, where, with the exception of a short period back in Venice in 1744-5, he remained until his death, in 1778 (Hind, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: A Critical Study, with a List of his Published Works and Detailed Catalogues of the Prisons and the Views of Rome* (New York, NY: E Weyhe, 1922)). He studied architecture, engineering, and stage design, but spent most of his professional life as a printmaker, producing nearly one thousand etchings (Wiener, 'Eighteenth-Century Italian Prints. In: Eighteenth-Century Italian Draughtsmen'. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (1971), pp. 203-225).

Rome during the late 1740s,⁴ and anonymously published in 1745⁵ as *Invenzioni Capric. di Carceri*.⁶ The series consists of fourteen plates depicting imaginary prisons – *Carceri* – that Piranesi allegedly conceived during a state of delirium caused by malaria – if not by opium, which was at the time a common ‘remedy’ for malaria.⁷ Whatever the origin of Piranesi’s *Prisons*, it seems clear that De Quincey never saw them.⁸ His ekphrasis is based on a second-hand account by his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge. De Quincey is not only straightforward about this level of remove (‘Mr Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates’),⁹ but also cautious and almost apologetic for any resulting inaccuracies (‘I describe only from memory of Mr Coleridge’s account’).¹⁰ Some argue that the levels of remove are actually four¹¹, as De Quincey re-creates from *memory* Coleridge’s *verbal recollection* of his past *visual encounter* with Piranesi’s *etchings* of the prisons.¹² To complicate matters further, some have suggested the possibility that Coleridge himself had never seen the plates.¹³ The question of the multiple *mises en abyme* ushers in the other central issue, namely, what – i.e. which plates, if any – had Coleridge seen? Whilst De Quincey’s references to ‘vast Gothic halls’, ‘aerial flight[s] of stairs’, ‘staircases [coming] to a sudden abrupt termination’, human figures ‘standing on the very brink of the abyss’¹⁴ are readily identifiable in the series *Invenzioni Capric. di Carceri* of 1745, the allusion to ‘all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults [...] expressive of enormous power put forth and resistance overcome’¹⁵ – all of which are absent from the *Carceri* of 1745 – suggests that Coleridge had seen something else. And it is in this *something else*, I argue, that Piranesi’s and De Quincey’s visions and revisions converge.

Piranesi’s *Carceri* exists indeed in two editions: the first – i.e. the original 1745 edition – consists of fourteen unnumbered plates, and was published by Bouchard in various issues. In 1760, the *Carceri* were completely reworked, and two new plates were added to the series.¹⁶ This second edition, consisting of sixteen numbered (I to XVI) plates,¹⁷ was published by Piranesi himself,¹⁸ and appeared in four (virtually identical) issues between 1761 and 1778.¹⁹ The plates reproduced in Figures 1-4, currently housed in the British Museum (with the exception of the original title-plate in Figure 1, which is housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art), belong to the 1749 issue of the first edition (plates on left), and to the fourth issue of the second edition (plates on right).²⁰

⁴ Scott, *Piranesi* (London, Academy Editions, 1975), cited in Britishmuseum.org.

⁵ Focillon, *Giovanni-Battista Piranesi: Essai de Catalogue Raisonné de son Œuvre* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1918).

⁶ The series is inscribed within a Venetian tradition of *capricci* (literally ‘caprices’, imaginary subjects), and was based on an earlier image, the *Carcere Oscura* (‘dark prison’), plate 2 of Piranesi’s *Prima Parte di Architettura, e Prospettive*, 1743. The ‘dark prison’ was then copied by Turner in 1794-1797.

⁷ Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1968), p. 94. There is however no clear evidence for Piranesi’s involvement with opium.

⁸ What he did see is the *Antiquities*: ‘when I was looking over Piranesi’s *Antiquities of Rome*’.

⁹ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 374.

¹⁰ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 374.

¹¹ Scott, ‘Shelley, Medusa, and the perils of ekphrasis’. In: Burwick, Frederick; Klein, Jürgen (eds.), *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany* (Amsterdam, and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996), p. 319.

¹² Italic denotes levels of remove.

¹³ In this case the ekphrasis becomes ‘what he [De Quincey] imagines Coleridge to have imagined Piranesi to have imagined’ (Wilson, ‘Romantic Autobiography’. In *The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography* (M. DiBattista and E.O. Wittman, eds) (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 74).

¹⁴ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 374.

¹⁵ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 374.

¹⁶ Hind, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: A Critical Study*, p. 24.

¹⁷ Hind, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: A Critical Study*, pp. 11 and 24. The title-plate of the Bouchard’s edition exists in two issues, one of which uses the spelling *Buzard* in lieu of *Bouchard*.

¹⁸ Unlike the first edition, whose frontispiece names only the publisher (Bouchard), the second series bears on the title-plate Piranesi’s name, and the appendage ‘Venetian architect’ (Figure 1).

¹⁹ Campbell, *Piranesi, the Dark Prisons: An Edition of the Carceri d’Invenzione from the Collection of The Arthur Ross Foundation* (May 25 - July 5, 1988, The Italian Cultural Institute, New York, Spring 1989, Arthur Ross Gallery/Kamin Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA), p. 31.

²⁰ The acquisition of the series by the British Museum is recorded in Hind, *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: A Critical Study*, p. iii.

In the second edition, Piranesi greatly increased the complexity of the architecture, the contrast between light and shade, and the sharpness of the detail. The strengthened chiaroscuro confers a sombre quality on the space, which is now filled with a tangled web of newly added arches, piers, pontoons, galleries, and ever ascending and indefinitely receding flights of stairs. Crucially, he also introduced those disquieting details – the wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, and catapults – to which Coleridge seems to have alluded, and which are lacking from the 1745 edition.

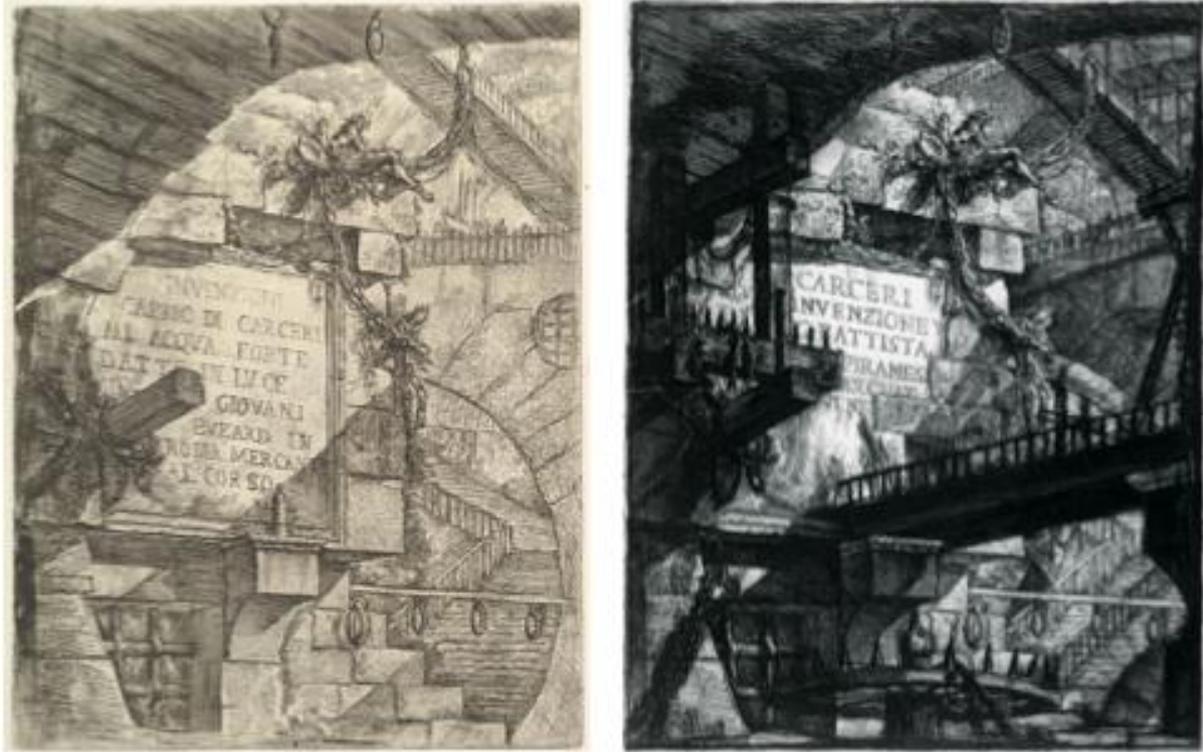


Figure 1. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'Invenzione*, Plate I (title plate). Etching with engraving and sulphur tint. Left: first edition, 1749, with lettering 'Invenzioni capric di carceri all'acqua forte datte in luce da Giovanni Buzard [italianisation of the French name 'Bouchard'] in Roma mercante al Corso'. Dimensions: 54.6 × 41.4 cm. Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, online collection (www.metmuseum.org). Right: second edition, 1761, with lettering 'Carceri d'invenzione di G Battista Piranesi archit[etto] Vene[zia]'. Dimensions: 54.5 × 41.2 cm. Source: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Take Plate I, for example: in the first edition (Figure 1, left) the foreground is relatively clear, inviting the gaze to dwell on the slab surmounting the barred window, upon which is inscribed the series' title. In the reworked version (Figure 1, right) the foreground is populated by a newly added walkway projecting onto the now partly obscured slab, by an unspecified wooden structure dominating the upper left wall, and by a sinister spiked wheel lying prominently on the floor.

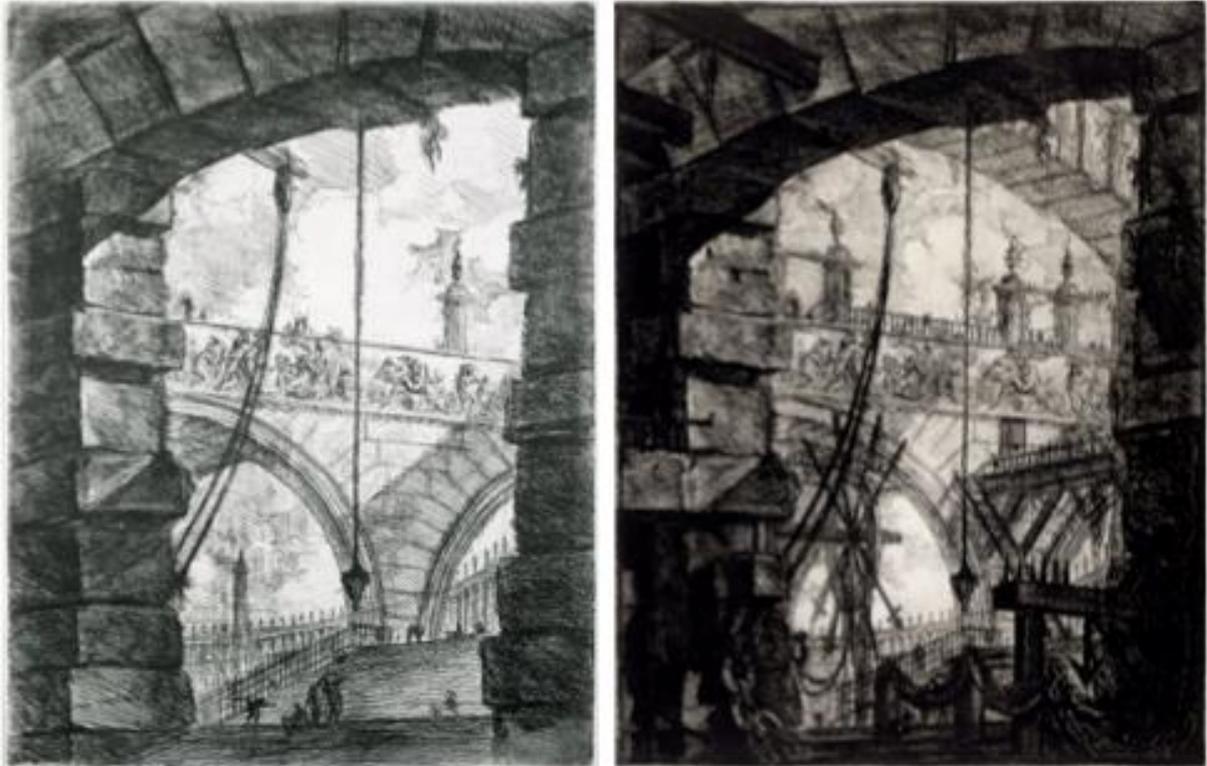


Figure 2. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'Invenzione*, Plate IV: the grand piazza. Etching with engraving and sulphur tint. Left: first edition, 1750. Dimensions: 54 × 41.2 cm. Right: second edition, 1761. Dimensions: 54.5 × 41.3 cm. Source: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

In the first edition of Plate IV (Figure 2, left) the dominant feature is the lofty arch in the foreground, which opens onto an arcade surmounted by a frieze, suggesting a notion of verticality and vastness. In the second version (Figure 2, right) the addition of seemingly unnecessary ladders, walkways, balustrades, columns, and of a large arched structure perpendicular to the main one, confers on the image a quality of redundancy. The beams (upper left), hook (left wall), chains (on the floor), bollards (on the staircase), spiky protrusions from an unidentified wooden structure (lower right), and, again, an enormous wheel, all point to enigmatic macabre mechanisms.

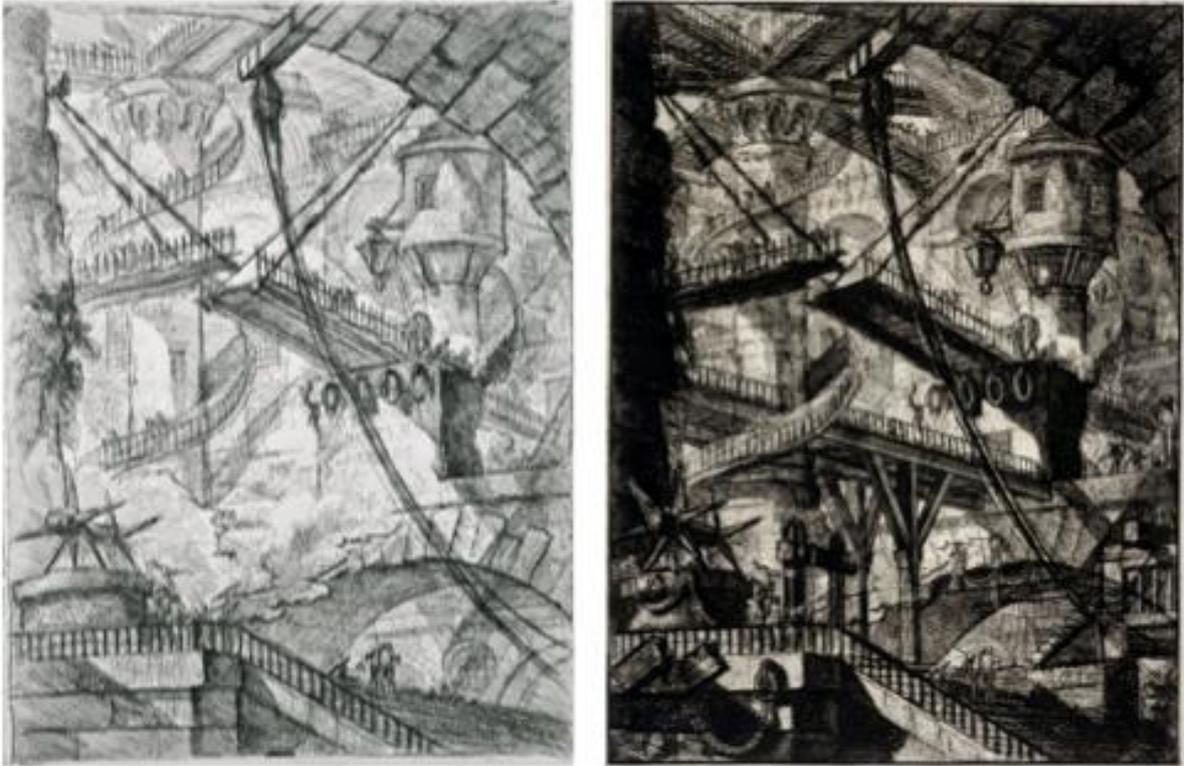


Figure 3. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'Invenzione*, Plate VII: the drawbridge. Etching with engraving and sulphur tint. Left: first edition, 1750. Dimensions: 54.9 × 40.6 cm. Right: second edition, 1761. Dimensions: 55.6 × 41.1 cm.
Source: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

A similar transformation is found in Plate VII (Figure 3), with their newly added balustrades, ladders, bollards, and various chains, ropes, and racks. In Plate XI (Figure 4), the substitution of the original grid under the vault with an open vista onto receding staircases expands the scene beyond the visible, whilst the addition of a colossal staircase, extra ladders, beams, and pillars, as well as the ubiquitous ropes and chains, signals monumental pointlessness and chilling mystery.

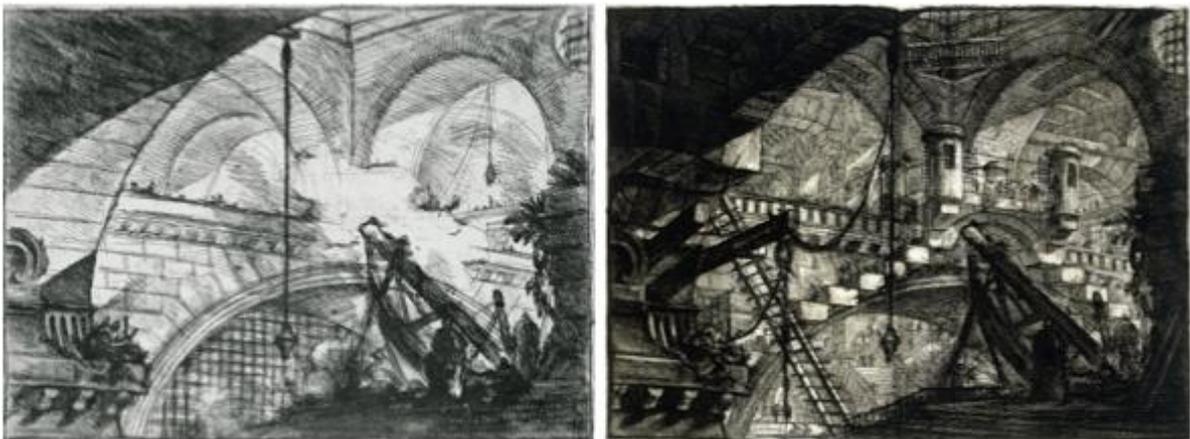


Figure 4. Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri d'Invenzione*, Plate XI: the arch with a shell ornament. Etching with engraving and sulphur tint. Left: first edition, 1750. Dimensions: 40.2 × 54.5 cm. Right: second edition, 1761. Dimensions: 40.5 × 55 cm.
Source: © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Hence, throughout the revised series, ropes swing from pulleys, nooses hang from walls, crypts, vaults, and rickety gangways lurk in the shadow, outlining new horizontal and vertical planes in seemingly infinite regression, whilst unspecified devices – spiked wheels, pillars, bollards, wooden racks – and an abundance of chains and other shackling instruments clutter the walls and floors evoking images of torture and undefined horror.

Taken together, Piranesi's revisions seem to gravitate towards two main attractors. The first consists in a combination of notions of extension, expansion, movement, and overall increased possibilities. The addition of ladders, staircases, pontoons, suspended bridges, and aerial walkways – i.e. structures whose nature is that of connecting and affording access to different places – suggests increased opportunity for mobility and exploration. Similarly, the addition of deep perspectives and open vistas onto infinitely receding backgrounds – i.e. elements whose nature is that of cueing the existence of spaces beyond the boundaries of the visible scene – extends and expands the imaginary horizon by increasing awareness of possible hidden alternative realities. Overall, all these features seem to connote ideas of liberation and freedom. The second gravitational cluster consists of a combination of notions of compression, constriction, entrapment, and overall reduced possibilities. The addition of ropes, hooks, and chains – i.e. structures whose nature is that of tying, hanging, and restraining – insinuates deprivation of mobility, and suggests constraint and enslavement. This connotation is further characterised by a sense of uncanny ambiguity conferred on the plates by the various racks, levers, spiked wheels, and other unspecified sharply pointed devices, which imply some kind of punishment, but whose purpose and working are unclear. Nor are the minuscule and featureless human figures climbing endless staircases any more illuminating: they could be damned souls, prisoners, guards, or visitors, as there is no direct evidence of torture being perpetrated on or by anyone. All is suggested, and left to the viewer's imagination to complete. Hence, Piranesi's revisions simultaneously monumentalise and demolish, highlight vastness of spaces and possibilities, but crush both into the suffocating clench of claustrophobia and impossibility of escape, accompanied by the terrifying prospect of unspecified torment. There results a perverse combination of freedom and enslavement – and the impossibility of telling them apart.

The dichotomous connotation of Piranesi's *Prisons* lurks in De Quincey's *Confessions* as well. Opium-induced perceptual distortions are described as expanding space to 'unutterable infinity', extending time 'beyond the limits of any human experience', and enlarging buildings and landscapes to proportions 'so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive'.²¹ These augmented sensory capabilities are accompanied by cognitive and affective enhancement – 'my brain performed its functions as healthily as ever before [...] my feelings of pleasure expanded themselves to all around me'²² – leading to the attainment of a superior state of mind in which 'the diviner part of [one's] nature is paramount; that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity; and over all is the great light of the majestic intellect'.²³ These metaphors of spatial, temporal, and intellectual expansion suggest a notion of opium consumption as liberating, i.e. as enabling the opium-eater to break away from the physical and mental constraints of the ordinary human condition and rise to a superior state of loftier intellectual and moral achievement. Conversely, a series of parallel and opposite metaphors represent opium consumption as enslaving, i.e. as progressively ensnaring the opium-eater into a state of hopeless despondency and ultimate fall. The sense of entrapment is suggested by the reference to 'knotty problems of alleys, [...] enigmatical entries, and [...] sphynx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares';²⁴ the ensuing despair transpires from the descent into 'chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that [one] could ever re-ascend'.²⁵ The dark shadow of claustrophobic doom drives the

²¹ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 373.

²² De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 365.

²³ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 357.

²⁴ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 361.

²⁵ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 373.

opium-eater to 'suicidal despondency',²⁶ as he uncovers within himself 'some horrid alien nature' replicated two, three, four, or five times, and 'introduced within what once he thought the inviolable sanctuary of himself'.²⁷ The duplicitous effect of opium as both liberating and constraining affects body and mind, as the opium-eater 'lies under the weight of incubus and night-mare [...and...] curses the spells which chain him down from motion [...] he is powerless as an infant, and cannot even attempt to rise',²⁸ but at the same time 'loses none of his moral sensibilities or aspirations: he wishes [...] to realise what he believes possible [...] but his intellectual apprehension of what is possible infinitely outruns his power'.²⁹ It is unsurprising that Piranesi's monumental yet labyrinthine interiors, immense yet claustrophobic vastness, and alarming yet mysterious contraptions should resonate with De Quincey's opium-induced mental geography of hypnagogic visions, dizzying spatiotemporal distortions, alienating doppelgängers, and suicidal despondency. What *is* surprising is that the parallel between Piranesi's visual representation and De Quincey's narrative account seems to extend beyond the metaphorical level, to include more direct correspondences: those between their respective visions, and between their respective revisions.

Like Piranesi's *Carceri*, De Quincey's *Confessions* have known innumerable editions. After the first publication in the *London Magazine* in 1821, the *Confessions* were reprinted in book format in 1822, re-edited (with minor changes)³⁰ in 1823, and eventually completely reworked in 1856. Between 1821 and 1856, the text doubled in size,³¹ and quadrupled the number of (often irrelevant) footnotes.³² The relatively simple and direct style of the original 1821 version yielded to a more convoluted and artificial prose in the revised 1856 edition. For example, what in 1821 reads 'I have often been asked, how I first came to be a regular opium-eater',³³ in 1856 becomes 'I have often been asked how it was, and through what series of steps, that I became an opium-eater';³⁴ the 1821 'My father died when I was about seven years old, and left me to the care of four guardians'³⁵ swells into 'My father died when I was in my seventh year, leaving six children, including myself (viz. four sons and two daughters), to the care of four guardians, and of our mother, who was invested with the legal authority of a guardian'³⁶; 'Space [...] was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity'³⁷ turns into 'Space [...] was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity'³⁸; 'streets without thoroughfares'³⁹ into 'streets without obvious outlets or thoroughfares'.⁴⁰ The De Quincey of the revised *Confessions* proceeds 'obliquely and convolutedly',⁴¹ indulges in peculiar idiosyncrasies, inversions of word order, parentheses, detours, and displays a 'growing inability to keep to the point'.⁴² He is 'riven by self-doubt', and refuses to 'come at the heart of the matter', preferring instead endless digressions and rewriting, thus betraying an underlying 'over-awareness that no text is final'.⁴³

²⁶ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 373.

²⁷ De Quincey, *The English Mail-Coach*. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1849), LXVI, CCCCVIII, p. 496.

²⁸ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 372.

²⁹ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 372.

³⁰ Corrections of a Greek passage, and addition of a quotation from Shakespeare's *Sonnets* on the title-page.

³¹ From 45000 to 90000 words.

³² For a detailed analysis of the differences between the 1821 and 1856 editions, see Jack, 'De Quincey revises his Confessions'. *PMLA*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (1957), pp. 122-146.

³³ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXI, p. 296.

³⁴ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, In: *Writings Published and Unpublished*, Vol. 5 (Edinburgh: James Hogg, and London: R. Groombridge & Sons, 1856), p. 1.

³⁵ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXI, p. 296.

³⁶ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 12.

³⁷ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 373.

³⁸ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 252.

³⁹ De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 361.

⁴⁰ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 204.

⁴¹ Morrison and Roberts, *Thomas De Quincey: New Theoretical and Critical Directions*, p. 2.

⁴² Jack, 'De Quincey revises his Confessions', p. 135.

⁴³ Bridgwater, *De Quincey's Gothic Masquerade* (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2004), p. 160.

A second aspect of the revised *Confessions* is the evolution of De Quincey's voice from that of a (in 1821) relatively anonymous thirty-something-year-old, unpublished, opium-experimenting misfit, to that of a (in 1856) seventy-year-old, established author, cult-idol,⁴⁴ and chronic opium-addict.⁴⁵ This progression is reflected in a shift in focus: opium-induced 'dreams and dream-sceneries' – more than opium per se – became 'the true objects – first and last'⁴⁶ of the *Confessions*. These dreams, however, turn to nightmares whose imaginary material blurs with autobiographical details about an emotionally challenged childhood, marked by solitude and loss. De Quincey's mother was 'freezing in excess',⁴⁷ whilst his father, elder brother, and sister all died at an early age. The death of his sister, in particular, is believed to have been determinant in plunging De Quincey in the state of depression that eventually drove him to addiction.⁴⁸ The 1856 edition of the *Confessions* incorporates these painful memories – especially those related to his orphanhood and forced assignment to a 'perfidiously administered'⁴⁹ guardianship, 'crushed [...] under the fierce pressure of penal and vindictive enforcements'⁵⁰ – into a marked dark turn. As a result, the narrative is dominated by emotionally loaded expressions – e.g. 'This word "guardian" kindles a fiery thrilling in my nerves'⁵¹; 'my somewhat torpid guardian'⁵² – occasionally trespassing into imagery of punishment – be it corporal: 'thorn in the flesh',⁵³ 'martyrdom'⁵⁴; or psychological: 'it gave him pleasure that he could reach me in the very recesses of my dreams.'⁵⁵ Like a captive in Piranesi's imaginary prisons, De Quincey's orphaned self is a hostage to his guard(ian). Both are confronted with a chilling prospect of punishment that looms nearer and grows larger with each chain, rack, wheel, spike, and thorn, be they real objects – as in the *Prisons* – or imagined metaphors – as in the *Confessions*. For both, escape is impossible, both outside – the prisons are so vast that there is no 'outside' – and inside – the guard(ian) can reach every inner recess.

De Quincey's literary digressions are the narrative equivalent of Piranesi's architectural ones: they both draw bridges and connections, expanding space and possibilities. Similarly – but inversely – Piranesi's disquieting restraining devices are the visual equivalent of De Quincey's disturbing memories from his emotionally challenging childhood: they both evoke horror and helplessness in the face of punishment and restraint – guards (or guardians) included. Through this mapping of internal states onto external objects, De Quincey follows in a tradition of symbolic imagery which Piranesi himself seems to have adumbrated.⁵⁶ Presaging Coleridge's account of imagination as a 'Gothic cathedral', in which one finds oneself alone 'in a gusty moonlight night of autumn [...] in palpable darkness not without a chilly sensation of terror',⁵⁷ Piranesi's 'dark mind'⁵⁸ makes one 'tremble in fear',⁵⁹ as he juxtaposes the experience of 'Gothic

⁴⁴ By 1856, De Quincey had become a 'de facto popular authority' on opium use (Milligan, 'Morphine-Addicted Doctors, the English Opium-Eater, and Embattled Medical Authority', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2005), p. 543).

⁴⁵ Jack argues that in the 1856 version De Quincey was more knowledgeable and objective ('truer to fact'), whereas in the 1821 edition he was more faithful to his own emotions ('truer to feeling') (Jack, 'De Quincey revises his Confessions', p. 145).

⁴⁶ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ De Quincey, undated quotation cited in Japp (ed.), *De Quincey Memorials* (London: Heinemann, 1891), p. 9.

⁴⁸ Lindop, *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas de Quincey* (London: Dent; New York, NY: Taplinger, 1981), p. 202.

⁴⁹ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 13.

⁵⁰ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 14.

⁵¹ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 12.

⁵² De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 20.

⁵³ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 24.

⁵⁴ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 24.

⁵⁵ De Quincey, *Selections Grave and Gay*, p. 24.

⁵⁶ An example of this symbolism is the spiral staircase, which Victor Hugo associates to the 'spiral motion of the dreamy thought' ('les mouvements spiraliqes de la pensée rêveuse') (quoted in Keller, *Piranèse et les romantiques français: le mythe des escaliers en spirale* (Paris: José Corti, 1966), p. 250).

⁵⁷ Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (London: Rest Fenner, 1817), Chapter 13.

⁵⁸ 'noir cerveau' (Hugo, *Les Contemplations*, vol. II (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères – J Hetzel – Pagnerre, 1856), Book VI, Poem XXIII 'Les Mages', p. 315).

verticality⁶⁰ to a 'Gothic sense of claustrophobia and incarceration'.⁶¹ Through their conjugating verticality and incarceration, 'vertiginous élan' and anguish over the 'imprisoned space',⁶² Piranesi's *Carceri* evoke both claustrophobia and agoraphobia, thus mirroring De Quincey's double nightmare of guardianship and orphanhood. In Piranesi's *Prisons*, the space is so vast that there is no escape from it. Likewise, in De Quincey's opium-induced perceptual distortions, the space is so vast that 'the eye is not fitted to receive it'.⁶³

The interplay between liberating and enslaving connotations of De Quincey's and Piranesi's revisions mirrors the antagonism between opium's stimulating (in the early stages of consumption) and paralysing (at advanced stages of dependence) power. As a result, De Quincey's ekphrasis in the *Confessions* is as much a representation of Piranesi's *Prisons* as the *Prisons* themselves – especially in their reworked edition – are an illustration of De Quincey's struggle with his never overcome addiction.

⁵⁹ 'trembler d'effroi' (Nodier, 'Le dessin de Piranèse'. *L'Europe littéraire*, 26 juin 1833. Reprinted as 'Piranèse, Contes psychologiques, à propos de la monomanie réflexive', pp. 167-204 in: *Œuvres complètes de Charles Nodier*, vol. XI (Paris: Eugène Renduel, 1837), p. 189).

⁶⁰ 'verticalité gothique' (Le Scanff, *Le paysage romantique et l'expérience du sublime* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2007), p. 44).

⁶¹ Bridgwater, *De Quincey's Gothic Masquerade*, p. 167.

⁶² 'l'espace prisonnier' (Yourcenar, 'Le cerveau noir de Piranèse'. In: *Sous bénéfice d'inventaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962).

⁶³ Adapted from De Quincey, *Confessions*, IV, XXII, p. 373.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Baudelaire, Charles, *Les paradis artificiels: opium et haschisch* (Paris: Poulet-Malassie et De Broise, 1860)

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *Biographia Literaria; or Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (London: Rest Fenner, 1817)

De Quincey, Thomas, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar*. In: *The London Magazine*. First instalment: vol. IV, XXI (September 1821), pp. 293-312; Second instalment: vol. IV, XXII (October 1821), pp. 353-378. (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1821). Also consulted in edition by Barry Milligan (London: Penguin, 2003)

De Quincey, Thomas, *The English Mail-Coach*. In: *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. First instalment: vol. LXVI, CCCCVIII (October 1849), pp. 485-500; second instalment: vol. LXVI, CCCCX (December 1849), pp. 741-755. (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1849). Also consulted in edition by Barry Milligan (London: Penguin, 2003)

De Quincey, Thomas, *Selections Grave and Gay*, In: *Writings Published and Unpublished*. 14 vols. (1854-60), Vol. 5 (Edinburgh: James Hogg, and London: R. Groombridge & Sons, 1856)

Hugo, Victor, *Les Contemplations*, vol. II (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères – J Hetzel – Pagnerre, 1856)

Huxley, A, *Prisons: With the "Carceri" Etchings by G. B. Piranesi* (London: The Trianon Press, 1949). Republished as 'Variations on The prisons' in: Huxley, A., *Themes and Variations* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950)

Nodier, Charles, 'Le dessin de Piranèse'. *L'Europe littéraire*, 26 juin 1833. Reprinted as 'Piranèse, Contes psychologiques, à propos de la monomanie réflexive', pp. 167-204 in: *Œuvres complètes de Charles Nodier*, vol. XI (Paris: Eugène Renduel, 1837)

Piranesi, Giovanni Battista, *Invenzioni capric. di carceri* (set of 14 plates, 1750). Reissued in reworked and expanded version (set of 16 plates) as *Carceri d'invenzione* (Rome: Bouchard, 1761)

Wordsworth, William, *The Excursion*, 1814. In: *The Complete Poetical Works*, with an introduction by John Morley (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888)

Secondary Sources

Abrams, M.H., *The Milk of Paradise: The Effects of Opium Visions on the Works of De Quincey, Crabbe, Francis Thompson and Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934)

Bridgwater, Patrick, *De Quincey's Gothic Masquerade* (Amsterdam and New York, NY: Rodopi, 2004)

Campbell, Malcolm, *Piranesi, the Dark Prisons: An Edition of the Carceri d'Invenzione from the Collection of The Arthur Ross Foundation* (May 25 - July 5, 1988, The Italian Cultural Institute, New York. Spring 1989, Arthur Ross Gallery/Kamin Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA)

Faflak, Joel (ed.), *Thomas de Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (Toronto: Broadview, 2009)

Focillon, Henri, *Giovanni-Battista Piranesi: Essai de Catalogue Raisonné de son Œuvre* (Paris: Henri Laurens, 1918)

Hayter, Alethea, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1968)

- Hind, Arthur M., *Giovanni Battista Piranesi: A Critical Study, with a List of his Published Works and Detailed Catalogues of the Prisons and the Views of Rome* (New York, NY: E Weyhe, 1922)
- Jack, Ian, 'De Quincey revises his Confessions'. *PMLA*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (1957), pp. 122-146
- Jamieson, Paul F., 'Musset, de Quincey, and Piranesi'. *Modern Language Notes*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (1956), pp. 105-108
- Japp, Alexander H. (ed.), *De Quincey Memorials*, Two Volumes in One. (London: Heinemann, 1891). Consulted in the 1974 edition (Hildesheim and New York, NY: Georg Olms)
- Jones, Jonathan, 'No way out'. *The Guardian*, 6 November 2002
- Keller, Luzius, *Piranèse et les romantiques français: le mythe des escaliers en spirale* (Paris: José Corti, 1966)
- Le Scanff, Yvon, *Le paysage romantique et l'expérience du sublime* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2007)
- Lindop, Grevel, *The Opium-Eater: A Life of Thomas de Quincey* (London: Dent; New York, NY: Taplinger, 1981)
- Lindop, Grevel (ed.), *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater: And Other Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- Milligan, Barry, 'Morphine-Addicted Doctors, the English Opium-Eater, and Embattled Medical Authority'. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (2005), pp. 541-553
- Morrison, Robert; Roberts, David Sanjiv (eds.), *Thomas De Quincey: New Theoretical and Critical Directions* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008)
- Reed, Arden, *Romantic Weather: The Climates of Coleridge and Baudelaire* (Hanover, NH; and London: Brown University Press, 1983)
- Sackville West, Edward, *A Flame in Sunlight: The Life and Work of Thomas De Quincey* (London: Cassell, 1936)
- Scott, Grant F, 'Shelley, Medusa, and the perils of ekphrasis'. In: Burwick, Frederick; Klein, Jürgen (eds.), *The Romantic Imagination: Literature and Art in England and Germany* (Amsterdam, and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996)
- Yourcenar, Marguerite, 'Le cerveau noir de Piranèse'. In: *Sous bénéfice d'inventaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962)
- Wiener, Victor, 'Eighteenth-Century Italian Prints. In: Eighteenth-Century Italian Draughtsmen'. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (1971), pp. 203-225
- Wilson, Frances, 'Romantic Autobiography'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Autobiography* (M. DiBattista and E.O. Wittman, eds) (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014)
- Wilton-Ely, John, *The Mind and Art of Giovanni Battista Piranesi* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988)