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THE CITY AS THEATER

London in the 1820s

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Early nineteenth-century London was a city in transition, no longer Augustan and not yet Victorian, no longer the buoyant, bawdy city of Boswell and not yet the menacing labyrinth of the later Dickens.[1] In the first three decades of the century, and particularly in the aftermath of Waterloo, the nation celebrated itself and its metropolis, keeping at bay an awareness of the new social realities that would ultimately dominate urban consciousness. The harsh facts of poverty and urban squalor, slums and homelessness that later troubled and animated the Victorian imagination made themselves felt in the most peripheral and subliminal of ways; they were detected but generally resisted as social problems worthy of attention and action. The urban observers and writers of these decades reflected this transitional state in their essays and sketches. They continued to employ the literary conventions of eighteenth-century urban description and tried in large measure to retain the equanimity about urban life that their predecessors had expressed. But their faithfulness to convention ultimately came under stress, and their writing betrayed ill-suppressed anxieties about the urban scene and the society that had spawned it.

The 1820s in particular saw the creation of a distinctive London character, shaped by such disparate cultural events as the reordering of city streets under George IV's "London improvements"; the appearance of the famed literary monthly the *London Magazine*, with its self-consciously urban identity; the proliferation of a popular urban literature, most notably the works of Pierce Egan; and the creation of new urban amusements that occupied the reconstructed capital and made it their very subject. We see in the 1820s a society that regarded the metropolis as a stage on which to perform and witness its own civility, grandeur, and ebullience. The image of theater is

crucial to urban representation in the early nineteenth century, for it suggests not only entertainment and performance but also a relationship of distance and tentativeness between spectator and the action on the stage. The urban spectator of this period, whether writer or imagined subject, experienced the sights and people of the street as passing shows or as monuments to be glimpsed briefly or from afar. This distance helped to obscure and control all that was seen, however arresting or unsettling, and it helped, too, to ensure that whatever did unsettle the spectator would not be understood as a symptom of some larger social disturbance.

During these years of what one urban historian has referred to as "a period of self-satisfied urban pride and grandiose speculative projects," a number of writers with a more skeptical relationship to the theatrical city began to represent the metropolis from the marginal position of the artist.[2] Although their portraits of urban experience were not as celebratory as the theme of "metropolitan improvements," they signaled their aloofness from urban strife in terms of nostalgia, insouciance, or bohemian detachment. Among many of these evocations the prostitute figures as female partner to the rambler, at times a feature of the theatricality and high-spiritedness of city sprees, and at others the embodiment of transience, ephemerality, and estrangement. As marker of the urban demimonde, she could represent both the liberating attractions and the victimized underclass of city life. The spectator-reveler regarded her as an emblem of pleasure and diversion, while the bohemian found in her not an object of pity but a reflection of himself.

In August 1822 a fairly unexceptional sketch by Cyrus Redding, titled "The Tea Garden," appeared in the *London Magazine*, which first published Lamb's "Elia," De Quincey's "Opium Eater," and Hazlitt's "Table Talk." In this brief piece the narrator takes a familiar evening ramble up Primrose Hill in the north of London for the often-sought "bird's-eye view" of the metropolis. Here, from a considerable height and distance, he achieves a vision of what for this particular writer is the essential London, not a "mighty heart lying still" but the active, powerful, and glorious center of the Western world: "Royalty, legislation, nobility, learning, science, trade, and commerce, were concentrated before me in a mightier whole than had ever before been in the history of the world; and its fame and glory had gone forth and been felt in the most remote corners of the earth."[3]

This London spectator, full of pride and pleasure in his city and his nation, moves on to Chalk Farm, a celebrated tea garden on Primrose Hill, where he is accosted by a clarinet-playing beggar. The beggar proceeds to tell the rambler all about his plan for ridding England of poverty and "achieving a more equitable distribution of the good things in life," until their chat is interrupted—much to the rambler's relief—by a procession of little girls from a charity school. The girls are about to have tea to celebrate their annual public day when, the author tells us, they are "marshalled to gratify

their patrons." His response to this custom is quite different from that of Blake, who, as the poet of "Experience," cursed the "cold and usurous hand" that fed the miserable babes of his second "Holy Thursday" poem. The sight of the little girls moves our rambler to meditate on the virtue and generosity of the English people, on their "stock of pure unadulterated feeling—a redeeming charity of the most exalted kind." He goes on, echoing his pride in the greatness of the capital, "No nation under heaven has ever yet come near us in deeds of charity."[4]

I begin with this sketch because it embodies, in a characteristic and uncritical way, two dominant perceptual and literary modes of evoking the early nineteenth-century city: the panoramic view and the sudden, instructive encounter with a solitary figure. These are found in a variety of different forms of urban representation during this period, in literary and graphic portraits of the city, in urban entertainments, and even in the renewal and reconstruction of the city under George IV. The literary use of these devices can be seen in Wordsworth's two very different poetic evocations of London: the view from Westminster Bridge, which partially subverts the image of the imperial capital by wedding it to the image of nature, and the epiphanic encounter with the blind beggar in book 7 of *The Prelude*. In this London section of *The Prelude* Wordsworth transposes the experience of what Geoffrey Hartman has called the "halted traveler" from the bucolic to the urban scene.[5] In fact, this mode of urban encounter—the revelatory meeting with a solitary figure—is inherited from romanticism and, before that, from eighteenth-century conventions of the sublime.

Panoramic descriptions replicate in literary form the topographic views of the city which proliferated in nineteenth-century illustrations of London and which had their origins in eighteenth-century graphic representations of European cities after the manner of Canaletto. And descriptions of chance encounters with street figures have their pictorial analogue in the sketches of London types that were collected in bound editions and exhibited singly in printshop windows to entice buyers and to provide free entertainment for those who could only afford to look.[6] Panoramic London also provided forms of amusement, both as it could actually be seen on Sunday outings from vantage points such as Primrose Hill and as it was depicted in panoramas and dioramas, those new popular entertainments of the period.[7]

These two modes, panoramic and episodic, though radically different in structure and content, convey an essentially coherent and consistent interpretation of urban experience. Cyrus Redding's rambler offers a fairly crude version of this interpretation. He loves to view London from afar, to see it as a stage set, a mural, or a panorama in order to take in without obstruction the grandeur, the splendor, and the monumentality of the city. As Donald Gray has observed, the descriptions of London that accompanied nineteenth-century collections of graphic views are filled with "such words as 'elegant,' 'grand,' 'beautiful and varied,' 'noble,' and 'princely.' "[8] Panoramic

London is not only highly picturesque but also artificial. Topographers altered the scale of streets and buildings to accentuate the stateliness, symmetry, and sheer beauty of the city; and they imagined the streets themselves as largely devoid of people, and certainly of the chaos—not to say anarchy—of the London scene.[9] The ideological message of this perspective seems clear: here is an ordered and virtuous capital, emblematic of a majestic and great society, indicative of a nation fit to rule a great and growing empire.

If panoramic views of London speak unequivocally to a buoyant and untroubled confidence in the grandeur of English society, traditional encounters with the urban solitary seem at first glance less convincing as emblems of Regency smugness. Again, Redding's rambler provides us with an unsubtle version of the way in which the urban solitary can confirm the complacency that a panoramic view from Primrose Hill inspires in the observer. The rambler is accosted by the clarinet-playing beggar only to be diverted by the procession of charity girls, a timely reassurance that all is right with English social justice and with the English national character. But in some important sense the romantic moment of revelation has been aborted, or at least subverted, in this case. The rambler never receives the lesson—moral or philosophical—that the beggar might offer, and indeed derives quite a different one by turning his attention to the orphans. It is as if he introduces the beggar only to deny his significance, to defuse the obvious social question that his existence raises, both in life and in literature. So in this *London Magazine* sketch the urban solitary does little if anything to disturb the equanimity achieved by that splendid "bird's-eye view."

In a larger sense, literary representations of isolated urban encounters—as well as graphic sketches of street types—share with panoramic views of the city the element of theater or spectacle. The urban solitary becomes, as we shall see in the essays and literary sketches of the period, an act in the passing show of London, an object to consider, observe, and appreciate. He (or she) exists for the sake of the spectator's pleasure or education rather than as a character in his or her own right or as an introduction to the wider social scene of which the character is a part. Walter Benjamin, writing of an analogous genre of urban representation, observed that in the French feuilleton the urban worker appeared for the last time outside of and separated from his class, as a "stage extra in an idyll."[10] This is equally true of the English sketch, both graphic and literary, of the period. While the spectator remains invisible, his *experience* is paramount; the urban "type" is visible, fully exposed, yet his or her thoughts, feelings, and experience of life remain mysterious.

In eighteenth-century traditions of the lowlife sketch, typical street figures—ballad singers, chimney sweepers, dustmen, prostitutes, pick-pockets—were, as Dorothy George has phrased it, "a subject for ridicule, not compassion."[11] In the early part of the nineteenth century, ridicule gave way to detached amusement, as well as to the "scientific" impulse of cataloguing

and sorting. It has been remarked that in early nineteenth-century sketches the crossing sweep was depicted in a manner and tone not unlike that used to represent outings at Blackheath or Vauxhall Gardens: both were entertainments, and their juxtaposition or disjunction signaled no cause for alarm, no grounds for social criticism.[12] To include and embrace all of London—its low as well as its high life, its orphans, prostitutes, and beggars as well as its monuments and grand edifices—was to disclaim the anxiety about urban life and British society that existed just below the surface in an as yet unconscious and unarticulated form.

Another way to understand the link between these two seemingly distinct ways of seeing the city is to refer to Michel Foucault's evocation of the Panopticon, the Benthamite device for surveying prisoners from a central tower. The Panopticon—which, Foucault speculates, owed something to the concept of the early panorama—afforded the surveyor or spectator both a panoramic view of the whole prison scene and the ability to scrutinize individual prisoners isolated in their cells.[13] As in the case of the panorama, the privileged central vantage point of the Panopticon gives the surveyor control over what he sees, control that is heightened by his own invisibility. "He is the object of information," writes Foucault, "never a subject in communication."[14] Similarly, the urban spectator of this period remains anonymous and invisible, always an observing eye whose own presence is suppressed. As the sketch of the urban type separates the potentially dangerous or unsettling face from the crowd in order to tame it and to defuse its mystery, so the Panopticon abolishes, in Foucault's words, "a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect," and replaces it with a "collection of separated individualities."[15] Whether viewed from afar, atop the dome of St. Paul's or Primrose Hill, or at close range as in isolated encounters or images, the city's disruptive nature, like the prisoner's, is muted and controlled.

The image of London as a great world city possessed of an expansive and charitable spirit was embodied in George IV's grand scheme for rebuilding the capital during the era of "metropolitan improvements." With the help of his architects John Nash, John Soane, and Robert Smirke, George—first as regent and then as king—oversaw the transformation of the West End. These men re-created Regent's Park in the north and St. James's Park in the south in their modern forms, linked the two by extending Regent Street, built Trafalgar Square and its grand monuments, reconstructed the west end of the Strand, transformed Buckingham House into Buckingham Palace, and erected the Hyde Park arch and screen.[16] Nash's original plan for the West End amounted, in John Summerson's words, to a "highly picturesque conception of a garden city for an aristocracy, supported by charming panoramas showing a composition of alluring groves and elegant architecture of a somewhat Parisian character."[17] Although only a fraction of the original

plan was carried out, these London "improvements" gave the city a new sense of grand scale, classical stateliness, openness, and prosperity, and provided spectators, artists, and writers alike with panoramic views and unbroken vistas. This transformation expressed what one historian has referred to as the "euphoria" of the years between Waterloo and the Reform Bill, the belief of the many that London was "healthy, happy and beautiful."[18]

If these Regency improvements accentuated the beauty and grandeur of London, they also enhanced, to some degree, its quality of theatricality and sheer spectacle. London took on a new aura of artifice and became not only a more easily navigable city but one more readily viewed as an enormous stage set. A number of decades later George Moore observed, as others must have done, that the "circular line" of Regent Street itself resembled an amphitheater. Parks and museums were at the center of the new plan, for amusement, as well as taste and power, was essential to the character of the metropolis. Theaters, too, had their place in the refashioned city: Covent Garden and Drury Lane had both been rebuilt earlier in the century, the former by Robert Smirke himself. Smirke gave Covent Garden its Doric portico and grand staircase, and in the 1820s Benjamin Wyatt added porticos to Drury Lane. The Theatre Royal, Haymarket, was rebuilt in 1820–21, designed by Nash as part of the program of metropolitan improvements.[19] The grand neoclassicism of the theaters' facades complemented the monumentality and stateliness of Regent Street and the Hyde Park arch, and the porticos provided opportunities for promenading, loitering, and enjoying a space both interior and exterior.[20] The entertainments outside the theater, both elegant and lowlife, competed with those inside. The theaters and adjacent coffee-houses and cafés were the provinces of male sociability and slumming.[21]

As if to underscore this connection between the "new" London and urban entertainment, buildings erected expressly to house the panoramas and dioramas of the 1820s were planned as part of the Regent's Park area. The first London diorama opened in 1823 in a Georgian building designed by Augustus Pugin, at that time employed by John Nash, at the southeast corner of the park amidst the most fashionable new mansions of the day.[22] The diorama, designed by its French inventor Louis Daguerre, fed the public taste for "romantic topography, the stuff of picturesque art and of sentimental antiquarianism," the same taste that shaped, or at least responded to, the new look of the West End.[23] Even more obviously emblematic of the tie between Regency improvements and the London of artifice was the Colosseum, the Greek Revival building that housed an extraordinary panorama of London as seen from a bird's-eye view atop St. Paul's.

Decimus Burton, designer of the triumphal arch and screen at Hyde Park Corner, planned the Colosseum as a "magnificent palace-for-profit, dedicated to the more seemly pleasures of Regency society . . . a kind of public counterpart of Carlton House, the sumptuous mansion in Pall Mall on

which the Prince Regent . . . had squandered a fortune."[24] The creator of the panorama, Thomas Hornor, described a number of years later as a "compound of Barnum and Nash," captured a rounded panorama of the city from its highest point, a view of an "absolutely ideal" London without smoke, clouds, or fog. The Colosseum, which took almost the entire decade of the 1820s to complete, became the most celebrated entertainment of its day. It was built, appropriately, on "one of the most desirable sites in London," next to the grand terraces surrounding Regent's Park.[25] What visitors came to see depicted in the panorama they could also see in actuality by mounting to a lookout point atop the Colosseum. "Winding still higher," wrote James Elmes in his lengthy description of the extraordinary building in *Metropolitan Improvements*, "the spectator suddenly emerges into an extensive gallery, built round the exterior of the building, where it is no longer a picture that is before him, but a living panorama of the whole circle around him."[26] This experience must have helped to blur the distinction between representation and reality for the viewer and to make the city and its entertainments seem as one.

The bird's-eye view from St. Paul's or the Colosseum and the refashioning of Regency London both worked to obscure the poverty that was built into the very structure of the modern city. H. J. Dyos writes that although the Regency improvements were not designed to affect slum areas in any direct way, their presumably incidental result was to reinforce and sharpen the already existing geographic separation between classes and to contain the slums of the West End.[27] An article in the July 1825 issue of *London Magazine* celebrated the projected improvements of St. James's Park and berated the "sentimental philanthropy" of the day that "indulges itself in weeping over the inconveniences of those who must be removed."[28] According to the author of this article, too much concern had been wasted on the plight of the poor and criminal classes, and clearing them out of certain areas and public spaces would not be a bad thing. Systematic slum clearance would be a project of the post-Reform Bill future, but the desire to make slums less visible, even invisible, to the upper classes was already finding expression in Nash's plans. Nash spoke explicitly of making the line from Charing Cross to Oxford Street a "boundary and complete separation" between the dwellings of the nobility and those of the commercial classes. It was implicit in his scheme—and went without saying—that the poor would remain completely out of sight.[29]

The comments in *London Magazine* and Dyos's analysis of the implicit motives of those who were reshaping London in the 1820s suggest that, as in the case of Redding's rambler, there was a persistent consciousness of urban poverty even as it was being denied, contained, and minimized. Among the writers, planners, and observers of this period there seems to have been a need to raise the social question if only to abnegate it. One such case is the dedication to George IV that prefaces Thomas Shepherd and

James Elmes's impressive volume of prints and descriptions of new London sites, *Metropolitan Improvements, or London in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1827. In Elmes's homage to the king he compares the British monarch to the emperor Augustus and the new London to ancient Rome. But, as Elmes is careful to remark, in Rome "the few were prodigiously rich, and the mass of the people as wretchedly poor; in Britain, the *converse* of this unhappy condition prevails: and the majority of your MAJESTY'S subjects are in the secure enjoyment of liberty, prosperity and happiness."[30] The beggar is present, as he is in the rambler's outing to Primrose Hill, but he is acknowledged only to be dismissed. It was not *his* story, the story of the "wretched poor," that was to be revealed in the period of "metropolitan improvements."

If journalists and George IV's planners and architects represent the dominant official vision of London in the early decades of the nineteenth century, writers such as Charles Lamb, Thomas De Quincey, and Pierce Egan mirror and yet transform that vision in their literary evocations of the metropolis. That these writers, bohemian and peripheral to the middle class as they were, should echo many of the sentiments and attitudes of Redding's chauvinistic rambler can be explained, at least in part, by their very marginality. They remained outside the class relations they saw enacted on the city streets, disengaged from the social struggle they watched as observers.[31] But as they reaffirmed the conventions of urban writing within which they worked, so too did they subvert and reshape them, betraying varying degrees of discomfort with the obliviousness to social suffering that these conventions reinforced.

All three writers, deeply influenced in a variety of ways by eighteenth-century traditions of urban description, mark a period of transition that looks backward in tone and form and yet forward to the subjects and concerns of Victorian urban spectators. Their marginality allows them to see a wider drama of urban life than many of their contemporaries did, but they stop short of framing the full critique of society that this drama would later elicit. The personae they create—Egan's Tom and Jerry, Lamb's Elia, De Quincey's Opium Eater—remain observers, perhaps (as in the case of Egan's swells) participating briefly in city sprees, but withdrawing again, looking in from the outside like an audience at a play, a window-shopper on the boulevard, a flaneur. Elia and the Opium Eater remain invisible, virtually anonymous, only tentatively engaged in the urban scene. Similarly, the implied reader of Egan's *Life in London* is invited to observe the urban scene vicariously and invisibly by reading Egan's book.

The forms these three writers employ reinforce, indeed mimic, this tentativeness. Lamb's essay or sketch, the strange, seemingly formless prose of De Quincey, the nonnovelistic fiction of Egan bring us in touch with the city without sustaining our involvement or resolving the questions these tantalizing

glimpses often raise. These episodic forms, more akin to anecdote than story, are what Walter Benjamin would call "dioramic literature" (the French edition of Egan's *Life in London*, published in 1822, was titled "The English Diorama; or Picturesque Rambles in London"). Individual sketches of street characters in the popular press, he comments, can be compared to the "plastically arranged foreground of the dioramas," while their "documentary content" corresponds to the "painted backgrounds" of these entertainments.[32] The city—the social setting—of these dioramic forms is an unchanging backdrop; their representations of human life are static, not unfolding or changing but captured in a frozen state. The form of the literary sketch reproduces the brief encounter, the moment of viewing the urban scene. It tells no stories, nor does it sustain the encounter between author and reader any more than the content of the sketch itself sustains the relation between the urban observer and what he observes.

Pierce Egan's *Life in London, or The Day and Night Scenes of Jerry Hawthorne, Esq. and his Elegant Friend Corinthian Tom in their Rambles and Sprees through the Metropolis*, illustrated by Isaac Robert and George Cruikshank, owes much to Elizabethan forms of popular literature that featured the underworld of London with its rogues, criminals, and prostitutes, and at the same time anticipates both fictional and journalistic Victorian accounts of the London scene.[33] Egan employed the well-established device of sending a country gent—in this case Jerry Hawthorne—around London in the company of a swell—here his urbane cousin Corinthian Tom—to "SEE LIFE." The principle that organizes their sprees around town is that of contrast: high life and low life, industry and idleness, religious virtue and criminality, usefulness and dissipation, charity and wickedness. Glittering scenes of wealth alternate with scenes of poverty, crime, and drunkenness; the sights of London are valued for their variety and, above all, for their novelty. The metropolis, we are told, is a "complete CYCLOPEDIA," each street a volume of intelligence."[34]

As in contemporary collections of graphic sketches of London scenes and types, contrast works here only inadvertently as a tool of social criticism and functions primarily as a mode of entertainment and a source of delight. One of the book's most popular set pieces, for example, consists of a visit to "All-Max," a dive in the East End where gin and lowlife types dominate the scene, followed immediately by a trip to "Almacks," a grand assembly room in the West End where Tom, Jerry, and their man-about-town companion Bob Logic will have to mind their "P's and Q's." All-Max impresses even the jaded Bob Logic as "one of the greatest *novelties* that he had ever witnessed in low life" (p. 322; emphasis added). But it is the contrast between the two homonymous places of amusement that provides these swells with the most intense pleasure. "This will be a rich treat to you JERRY," Tom assures his friend, "and the contrast will be delightful; more especially, as the time is so short that we shall pass from ALL-MAX in the East to ALMACKS in the West almost like the rapid succession of scenes in a play" (p. 325). London is very

much a "play" for Tom and Jerry, and its "scenes" are put together not to tell a story but to amuse, surprise, or shock simply by appearing side by side. As in a "CYCLOPEDIA," the juxtaposition of items promises no revelation of plot and no discernible connection between those chosen for inclusion.

Life in London puts its readers in the audience with Tom and Jerry and offers to protect them from the dangers of urban experience. It insulates its readers and, as we shall see, its heroes from the ultimately disturbing scenes of poverty and human degradation that it nevertheless represents. At the outset the narrator offers his audience what he calls a "*camera obscura*" view of the city, "not only [for] its safety, but because it is so snug, and also possessing the invaluable advantages of SEEING and not being seen" (p. 46). We can read about the most dangerous characters and parts of London and remain perfectly safe, keep our participation vicarious, even voyeuristic, sit by the fireside, see "LIFE," and emerge unscathed. Egan makes explicit what many urban observers of his age only implied: that they wished to maintain their own invisibility and invulnerability while enjoying, and even learning from, the "shows" of the city.

Tom and Jerry reproduce this avoidance of real danger—physical, social, and moral—in their own rambles and adventures. At a number of points Egan brings his genteel young men face to face with the hard-core underworld of the city. Tom and Jerry visit a sluicery (gin shop) to drink "blue ruin" and there observe two figures who give them—and the reader—pause: an aging, gin-sodden streetwalker, "Gateway Peg," and a barely clothed urchin begging for gin to take home to his ailing mother. The narrative response to Gateway Peg is cold-blooded; she offers an opportunity for moralizing rather than for pity or understanding. "This *lump* of *infamy, disease* and *wretchedness*," Egan writes, "was once a well-known toast among the *bon-vivants* for her elegance of person" (p. 218). The urchin is harder either to censure or to dismiss flippantly, so instead the narrator turns away almost without comment, assuring his readers that this unexceptional scene can be observed nightly "in *much more depraved* colours," as he declares with a parting flourish that this is, after all, "LIFE IN LONDON" (p. 219). This final phrase abruptly cuts off the possiblity of commentary on the boy's circumstances and reabsorbs him into London's passing show.

After consuming too much gin, Tom and Jerry enter a coffee shop in the same neighborhood, and here they are greeted by "a complete picture of . . . drunkenness, beggary, lewdness, and carelessness". The narrator responds first by praising the gruesome scene as "quite *new* to thousands" and then by resorting to an all but incomprehensible vocabulary of London slang (p. 219). The slang allows the narrator to describe in a coded manner a group of "Cyprians," or prostitutes, but it also places psychological distance between him and the lowlife gang he brings into view. Indeed, the chapter takes on the quality of a split narrative, with a boisterous running commentary on the "Cyprians," "Lady-birds," or "Fancy Pieces" and their pimps

and procuresses in the main part of the text and a lament about the abuse and exploitation of prostitutes in the footnotes. "In the motley group," writes the narrator from the point of view of a swell delighted to have come across such a scene in his rambles, "are several *Coves of Cases* [proprietors of brothels] and procuresses, keeping a most vigilant eye that none of their 'decked-out girls' *brush off* with the property intrusted to them for the night; and other persons of the same occupation, may be *seen* closely WATCHING the females belonging to their establishments" (pp. 215–16). The lengthy footnote to this passage includes an account of how procurers keep women "as dirty as sweeps" until they go out on the town; berate, starve, and beat them if they bring home no earnings; search them after they have been with a client; and do not allow them to keep any money of their own. "The life of a PROSTITUTE," reads the footnote, "is of itself a most severe *punishment*, independent of *disease* and *imprisonment*. A volume would not unfold the *miseries* allied to such a character" (p. 216). Whether a volume would suffice or not, Egan's tour of London does not set out to tell the prostitute's story from her point of view. Instead, his volume presents the drama of pimp and streetwalker as a sight to be consumed. And yet the notes introduce a counternarrative of protest against a system of abuses that leaves its traces and prefigures a later Victorian theme.

Egan's central narrative, however, does work to keep sentiments of concern and guilt at bay. In the penultimate chapter Tom takes Jerry to the "back slums" of the "Holy Land" to see the cadgers. Here the beggars of London are unmasked, exposed as hypocrites and impostors. An apparently pregnant woman removes the pillow from under her stays; a crossing sweep manages to drink and feast grandly; a blind beggar turns out to see quite well; the poor woman with twins returns her "children" to the people from whom she has hired them (p. 375). This exposé, coming as it does at the end of numerous ostensibly amusing but potentially uncomfortable scenes of London low life, partly reassures the reader that what has seemed so disturbing should not be contemplated with too much concern after all. The real victims of urban life turn out to be those "charitable and humane persons" (p. 375) who have been taken in by the beggars' disguises.

It is during Tom and Jerry's visit to Newgate Prison on the morning of execution, however, that one senses most palpably Egan's anxiety about the cruelty of urban life and his desire to represent and yet repress its implications. Once again he is on the verge of evoking in both his heroes and his readers feelings of sympathy and horror, only to retreat into speechlessness. "Neither the PEN nor the PENCIL . . . can do it justice, or convey a description of the '*harrowed feelings*' of the few spectators that are admitted into the Condemned Yard upon such an occasion," he writes (p. 315). The swells decline the opportunity to get a bird's-eye view of the prison yard during their tour and hastily quit the "gloomy falls of Newgate" to join the "busy hum and life of society" (p. 317) at the Royal Exchange. The avoidance of

grim social reality that this quick exit represents is underscored a number of episodes later when Tom and Jerry return to Newgate briefly on their way to the docks. When they now climb up to get their bird's-eye view, it is not the condemned prisoners but the order pervading the prison that impresses them. They "expressed themselves much pleased, on looking down into the different yards, and witnessing the excellent mode of discipline practised in that prison, of sorting the criminals into classes, according to their distinction of crimes" (p. 261). The brutal sight of men about to be hanged is exchanged for a vision of penal rationalism.

The view from the top of Newgate calls to mind the views from Primrose Hill and the dome of St. Paul's as well as Bentham's Panopticon. Here, in *Life in London*, we have a much more explicit expression of the need to achieve distance—and height—in order to see modern life at its best, its most palatable, and its most easily celebrated. The view of the prison yards serves almost as a parodic panorama: it brings order into relief while it obscures suffering, and it ensures the power to see without being seen.

Although the world of Egan's bucks and swells would seem remote from the bittersweet nostalgia of Lamb's Elia essays, the two can be found in close proximity in the August 1820 number of John Scott's *London Magazine*. In that month Elia made his first appearance as the author of "Recollections of the South Sea House," and J. H. Reynolds published an enthusiastic review of Egan's *Sporting Anecdotes*.[35] Despite what separates their two quite distinct styles of writing about and perceiving the world, the element that brings Egan and Elia together in this particular journal is their love for an older London, an older England. The antiquarian character of Lamb's essays is echoed throughout *London Magazine*, from its frontispiece reproductions of classical busts and antique friezes to its nostalgia for bygone urban festivals and its laments for the passing of the coaching days. Meanwhile, what particularly attracts Reynolds in Egan's work is his knack for keeping the tradition of older sports and amusements alive. We find Reynolds the following month praising Egan's account of dogfighting, which he regards as a tribute to the Elizabethan age, the "golden age of poetry and bear-baiting."[36]

The backward-looking nature of the Elia essays—their nostalgia, their distaste for utilitarian reform, their mockery of the future—has a complex origin in Lamb's experience of personal loss, in his sense that London itself had changed radically in his lifetime, and in the highly crafted literary voice he had chosen for these particular reflections.[37] As has often been noted, Lamb writes about many different Londons. The language and tone he uses to evoke the city in his early letters, for instance, differ dramatically from those of his later essays. The London of a November 1800 letter to his friend Thomas Manning resembles Egan's London, or even Boswell's, far more than it does Elia's:

> Streets, streets, streets, markets, theatres, churches, Covent Gardens . . . noise of coaches, drowsy cry of mechanic watchmen at night, with bucks reeling home drunk; if you happen to wake at midnight, cries of Fire and Stop Thief; inns of court . . . just like Cambridge colleges; old book-stalls, Jeremy Taylors, Burtons on Melancholy, and Religio Medicis on every stall. These are thy pleasures, O London with-the-many-sins. O City abounding in whores, for these may Keswick and her giant brood go hang![38]

The exuberance of this description and the explicit opposition Lamb sets up between urban and rural pleasures (with Keswick he alludes to his poet-friends' beloved Lakes) are present, too, in his well known "Londoner" essay of 1802, in which he declares that he takes far more delight in a "mob of happy faces" crowding before the pit door of Drury Lane than in "all the *silly sheep* . . . of Arcadia or Epsom Downs."[39]

This London of the early Lamb is a nighttime London, a fallen city ("London with-the-many-sins") inhabited by workmen and swells, arsonists and thieves, book browsers, theatergoers, and whores. It is the masculine city we have seen in Egan, in which pleasures and entertainments abound, all laid on for the consumption of the nocturnal male rambler. In the "London" essay Lamb presents himself as a man of the crowd ("I was born . . . bred, and have passed most of my time, in a *crowd*") and praises the effects on his humor of the inspiriting flow of humanity on the Strand—"like the shifting scenes of a skilful Pantomime."[40] London here is not merely a city of whores and passing shows. It is also the city as mother: "Where has spleen her food but in London—humour, interest, curiosity, suck at her measureless breasts without a possibility of being satiated. Nursed amid her noise, her crowds, her beloved smoke—what have I been doing all my life, if I have not lent out my heart with usury to such scenes?"[41] Whether whore or suckling mother, the city as female provides for masculine desires and breeds "the Londoner," who never gets his fill of urban pleasures.

In the guise of Elia some nineteen years later, however, Lamb transforms the London of his youth into a prelapsarian, nearly pastoral place. In "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple" Elia remembers the gardens and courtyards of the Temple, where he passed the first seven years of his life, as a small paradise, an Eden, with sundials, fountains, and "antique air." Marshaling the support of Adam and Marvell, he asks why the now bricked-over fountains of his childhood cannot be allowed to remain: "Why not, then, gratify children, by letting them stand? . . . Why must everything smack of man, and mannish? Is the world all grown up? Is childhood dead?" His focus shifts back to the Edenic city of his childhood while his persona grows older, now a "superannuated" and celibate man, a "bachelor" who complains about the "behaviour of married people" and dreams of the fantasy children he will never have.[42] He longs for the presexual innocence of childhood

and reconfigures London as the sexless city he remembers and experiences once again in his superannuation. Girl children rather than whores populate the metropolis, and the masculine appetites of "the Londoner" have been replaced by the bittersweet celibacy and nostalgia of Elia.

In the Elia essays it is difficult to separate what Lamb himself referred to as Elia's resentment of the "impertinence of manhood" from his discomfort in a changed city; and the change was taking place as much within Lamb's own life as it was in the city of George IV. Writing to Bernard Barton in 1829, after he had retired to Enfield, Lamb spoke of London as a graveyard: all the old friends were gone, the houses and old haunts now "empty caskets," the bodies he had cared for "in graves, or dispersed."[43] It is, however, most often the pastoral city he praises in the Elia essays, not the boisterous, teeming London he described to Manning or the joyful city of the "Londoner" essay. The city now becomes a living museum, a collection of "magnificent relics" like the old South Sea House, or an archaeological site at which to mine the past and view the layers of personal and urban history.

Elia sees the city from a distance and, in Hazlitt's phrase, "through the film of the past." But distance is achieved as well by seeing London as a stage—a "pantomime and masquerade"—and by the use of persona and pseudonym. This latter convention, so common in the journalistic tradition of which Lamb was a part, seems to underscore the writer's tentative relationship to what he observes and records. "Elia" is not, in fact, so much a person as a signature, the mark of someone who briefly notes or remembers and then walks off—or signs off. The anonymity, not to say invisibility, of the spectator is preserved, the scene not entered, the proscenium not crossed. The form of Lamb's essays or sketches recalls Benjamin's notion of episodic or dioramic literature and Egan's vision of the city as an encyclopedia. Scenes, people, events appear and recede. The essays, like the "physiologies" Benjamin describes, deny narrative and continuity. "Narrative teases me," writes Lamb in discussing his preference for the essay or the literary anatomy. "I have little concern in the *progress* of events . . . The fluctuations of fortune in fiction—and almost in real life—have ceased to interest me."[44]

But distance is achieved above all, especially in those Elia essays that meditate on the strays and waifs of the city streets, through the use of irony, a tool both of distance and of a barely declared social criticism. This irony, which at certain moments flares into bitterness, is never totally separable from Lamb's nostalgia for a beloved, remembered London, and its real import, therefore, is not always easy to discern. The very titles of two of the Elia essays exemplify this doubleness: "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers" and "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis" are both laments for an older, socially simpler, paternalistic England and, at the same time, seemingly ruthless portraits of social inequity and inhumanity. In "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers" Elia teeters between a sentimental recollection of the myth of the sweep as orphaned nobleman and a bitter sense of the fragility

of these wasted young lives. He alludes to two older representations of the child sweep: Blake's young chimney sweeper in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and Hogarth's boy, in his drawing of the March to Finchley, "grinning at the pieman . . . with a maximum of glee."[45] Lamb would appear to stand between and yet encompass both of these visions, the harsh Blakean knowledge of these "dim specks—poor blots—innocent blacknesses" about to fade to an early death and the Hogarthian celebration of innocence and urban festival. The tension between these two impulses remains unresolved (this is the art of Lamb's irony), and so the essayist's ultimate detachment from the social question is maintained.

In "Complaint of the Decay of Beggars" Elia's explicit target is the reforming zeal that would remove beggars from the streets and drive them into the poorhouses. He prefers the anarchy of the streets and regrets this ostensible progressivism not only for its inhumanity to the beggar, deprived of liberty and companionship, but also for its effect on the spectators of London, for whom the beggars are the "standing morals, emblems, mementos, dial mottos, the spital sermons, the books for children, the salutary checks and pauses to the high and rushing tide of greasy citizenry."[46] Like Wordsworth's leech gatherer on the heath or, indeed, the blind beggar of *The Prelude*, Elia's beggars remind us of our humanity and act as moral instructors. In his "Londoner" essay Lamb describes this romantic philosophy of the streets: he can learn more of the "universal instinct of man" from observing a pick-pocket than from "an hundred volumes of abstract polity," just as the inhabitants of Shakespeare's Arden read much in the stones and brooks of the forest. Thus, he concludes, "an art of extracting morality from the commonest incidents of town life is attained by the same well-natured alchemy."[47]

Although this emphasis on the salutary influence of beggars does not absolutely reduce their humanity, it does help to accomplish Elia's transformation of the beggar into an object, an artifact. The beggar is a "grand fragment, as good as an Elgin marble"; he is one among London's "shows, her museums, and supplies for ever-gaping curiosity." And, he asks, "what else but an accumulation of sights—endless sights—is a great city; or for what else is it desirable?"[48] The literal and ironic meanings of these questions cannot be unraveled. Yes, we answer, a great city should be an accumulation of endlessly amusing, edifying, surprising sights, but no, a city must also be a place where each person's humanity is remembered and preserved. Elia struggles to remain the spectator, the audience at the shows of London, but Lamb the critic and ironist forces his hand.

One year after Elia's first appearance in the *London Magazine*, De Quincey's Opium Eater joined the ranks with his *Confessions*. With an introduction from Wordsworth in hand, De Quincey had come down to London in 1821 to make his living as a journalist. He had already broken with *Blackwood's*,

where he was to have published the *Confessions*, and now secured lodgings in a tiny set of rooms in Covent Garden in which to write his opium memoir for the *London Magazine*. Here he began by writing of the winter of 1802–3, when he was seventeen, poor, hungry, and alone in the metropolis.

The early parts of the *Confessions*, in which London figures prominently, seem at first glance to be peripheral to the central preoccupations, indeed obsessions, of De Quincey's idiosyncratic text. They also differ radically from the jaunty or benignly nostalgic renderings of the city in Egan and Lamb. It seems to me, however, that the London episode is crucial to the meaning of the *Confessions* and, more important, that it enacts in a hallucinatory way the essential nature of the London experience which I have been describing. The *Confessions* also articulate the centrality of female sexuality to the evocation of the city's meaning and the construction of bohemian identity. Here, female sexuality both chaste and fallen acts as a unifying narrative thread, externalizing male experience and drawing together the disparate episodes of the Opium Eater's life.

De Quincey noted that the introductory section of his *Confessions* made his entire work intelligible since, "without this narration, the dreams (which were the real object of the whole work) would have no meaning."[49] The dreams or images of the London experience were to act as a thread connecting his early with his later days, his waking moments with his trancelike ones, his conscious with his unconscious thoughts. That a London seen through unintoxicated eyes should be so linked with a later, postaddictive state is somewhat paradoxical. Not only did images of the city establish the texts of his future opium dreams, however, but there is also evidence that in his own life De Quincey needed opium to recover the otherwise irretrievable repressed memories of his London sojourn.[50] For him London and opium addiction were inextricably connected, first, because he believed the London experience to have been the cause of the gastric illness for which he later took the drug, and second, because in memory the metropolis was enveloped in the haze of addiction.

After a Fieldingesque start in which the young orphaned hero runs away from unsympathetic guardians to seek liberty and fortune, the narrative shifts radically to the description of a hallucinatory London, and we begin to understand why these months in the city were, as the author says, crucial for his opium experience. Young De Quincey leaves the world of bildungsroman for the rambling narrative of bohemia. We see, too, how De Quincey's London narrative serves as an unwitting commentary on the nature of urban life—especially the life of the streets—in the early nineteenth century. What is implicit in the relations between observer and Londoner in Egan and Lamb here absolutely determines the Opium Eater's every urban experience and makes each one surreal and inexplicable. This London is a place of sudden events, unidentified people, bizarre coincidences, and unexpected intimacies, all of them ultimately without explanation. The links between people or

events that we have missed in Egan's *Life in London* and in Elia's essays are here relinquished as well, even though the *Confessions* takes the form of neither sketch nor essay but an apparent autobiographical narrative.

At the very start, for instance, an empty house inhabited by an always nameless ten-year-old child presents itself conveniently but mysteriously as shelter. More striking, perhaps, than this odd coincidence is the inability, or lack of desire, of the Opium Eater to discern or uncover the meanings of such unexplained circumstances: "Whether this child were an illegitimate daughter of Mr.——," he writes, "or only a servant, I could not ascertain; she did not herself know."[51] Knowing neither her origins nor her name, he nevertheless sleeps on the floor of the unoccupied house with the girl wrapped in his arm and loves her as his "partner in wretchedness" (p. 49). His relationship with this nameless girl prefigures the more dramatic but equally mysterious and decontextualized relationship with Ann, the young prostitute. His expression of excessive gratitude to her for saving his life with a glass of sherry, his failure either to learn or to remember her surname, his vague appointment to rejoin her after a trip to Eton to get money, and his ultimate and inevitable loss of her are all perplexing, inexplicable aspects of their acquaintance.

He is drawn to Ann, as he is drawn to the nameless orphan, because she mirrors his own isolation and his status on the streets: "Being myself at that time of necessity a peripatetic, or a walker of the streets, I naturally fell in more frequently with those female peripatetics who are technically called street-walkers" (p. 50). Ann enacts for him the relationship between bohemian and prostitute. She mimics his marginality and homelessness, and in his romanticization of her he dramatizes his own position. Later in the narrative, under the heading "The Pleasures of Opium," he talks of his tie to the proletarian figures of the city in a similar way. He delighted in wandering about London on Saturday nights, he tells us, frequenting the markets where the poor purchased their food for the week. Cloaked in the incognito of the classless stroller, he would eavesdrop on family negotiations and experience as a silent observer people's "wishes, . . . difficulties, . . . and opinions." Unlike most members of his own class, who "show their interest in the concerns of the poor, chiefly by sympathy . . . with their distress and sorrows," he was "disposed to express [his] interest by sympathising with their pleasures" (p. 80). What distinguishes the rambler's or the flaneur's stance from that of the social investigator or reform-minded novelist is this identification with and delight in the privileges of the poor. The flaneur sees the poor and the prostitute not as victims or objects of pity but as urban actors free from the constraints of bourgeois life.

De Quincey focuses on Ann because her condition is emblematic of urban alienation and therefore serves as a projection of the male observer's state of being and mind. Not only is her solitary condition symbolic of urban experience, however, but also the relationship between client and prostitute

exemplifies the transitory and anonymous nature of the relationship between urban spectator and the people of the streets. Like Baudelaire's "passante," she represents the erotic tenor of the crowd and the quintessential urban phenomenon of discovery and loss.[52] The Opium Eater's tie to Ann is apparently not a sexual one but an intensely felt platonic bond that nevertheless mimics the fleeting, strangely impersonal encounter between prostitute and client: they meet, become intensely attached, learn nothing of each other, separate, and never meet again. He is at pains to tell his readers that, because of his weakened and impoverished state, his connection with Ann "could not have been an impure one." And yet, as if contradicting himself, he insists that "at no time in my life have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape" (pp. 49–50). The question of pollution and of the Opium Eater's susceptibility or immunity to its effects becomes a crucial leitmotif later in the *Confessions*. Ann is at the center of the Opium Eater's London and remains a powerful figure in his imaginative life because she epitomizes urban marginality, the disjointed, inexplicable images of opium reveries, and the paradox of the chaste sinner.

As in an opium dream images and people appear in De Quincey's London and fade away, seemingly unlinked to one another by lasting ties, unconnected textually by any interpretive or narrative thread. In this way the urban apparitions of the *Confessions* resemble and indeed prefigure one of the strangest characters in the later part of De Quincey's text: the Malay who suddenly appears at the Opium Eater's home in the Lake District and proves to be a source for his opium nightmares. The Malay also plays a role in the Opium Eater's obsessions with innocence and pollution which center on female sexuality: the "Oriental" comes to represent the sin that *can* pollute, and he is immediately contrasted with a chaste femininity that harks back to Ann. When De Quincey first sees the Malay in his cottage kitchen, it is as part of a tableau that the turbaned foreigner forms with the young English servant girl who works in the Opium Eater's home. The visual contrast between Malay and servant girl carries with it for De Quincey an implicit moral contrast: "A more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany, by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures and adorations" (pp. 90–91). The racialist distinctions available to De Quincey—clear-eyed, pure, self-respecting English-woman versus tainted, unhealthy, groveling Asian—intersect here with a sexual imagery of chastity and defilement.

Indeed, when the Malay later "fasten[s] upon" De Quincey's dreams, bringing with him "other Malays worse than himself" who "[run] 'a-muck' " at the Opium Eater, he unleashes in the Englishman's imagination a nightmare that culminates in the infectious kisses of crocodiles (pp. 92, 109). In

the section titled "The Pains of Opium" De Quincey describes the hideous dreams he claims were shaped both by his London experience and by the sight of the Malay. Clotted with every sort of "Asiatic" image, from Chinese to African to Egyptian to Indian, the dream leaps from Vishnu and Siva to Isis and Osiris and ends: "I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud" (p. 109). The crocodile, like the Malay, seems an externalization of the narrator's own sin—his addiction as well as his guilt toward those he feels he has betrayed—and the homoerotic, not to say autoerotic, gesture of the kiss suggests an inescapable circuit of contamination.[53] A subsequent dream does, however, offer resolution and escape, and it is through the figure of Ann the prostitute that he finds, or rather dreams, redemption.

In this dream an "Oriental" scene merges with the iconography of an Easter Sunday. The Opium Eater can see the domes of a celestial city much like Jerusalem in the distance. Here the "Oriental" has been domesticated and sanctified, the demonic and pagan replaced by a Judaeo-Christian setting and imagery. Seated next to him, "shaded by Judean palms," is a woman who turns out to be his lost Ann. He embraces her with words of relief and delight—"So then I have found you at last"—and sees that her face is unchanged, that she has never grown older and is indeed even more beautiful. He recalls the last time he kissed her lips: "lips, Ann, that to me were not polluted" (p. 112). Then a cloud comes between them, all vanishes, and within the dream he finds himself back in London, walking again with Ann, "just as we walked seventeen years before, when we were both children" (p. 112). Not only does this dream fulfill the Opium Eater's wish to find Ann again and to assuage the guilt he had felt at abandoning her, but it also redeems the city itself and breaks the circle of contamination represented by the crocodiles' cancerous kisses. London now shares something of the glory of Jerusalem and, perhaps more important, becomes a place of reunion and reconciliation rather than of separation and loss. De Quincey himself regains the innocence of his youth and through Ann recovers the possibility of a kiss that is not polluted or polluting. The crocodile, a monstrous reification of his own sin, traps him in guilt and degradation; Ann, his erstwhile double, offers the possibility of reconciling sin and innocence. The prostitute, a reflection of his own street-walking, peripatetic self, emerges as a market of voluntary bohemianism, to be distinguished from the inescapable nightmare of opium madness.

The Malay, like the figures of the unredeemed city, serves as an emblem, an image that appears without explanation, lends coherence to the text by virtue of its symbolic weight, and disappears from the narrative. The text of the *Confessions* can be read as a dream is deciphered: the narrative synapses are missing, but figures and events accrue meaning as symbols do, by repetition or association. De Quincey's text, like the London of his youth, can be

explained or interpreted not according to the logic of linear narrative but only according to the logic of the Opium Eater's psyche.[54]

Despite the distinctive, idiosyncratic quality of De Quincey's vision, then, his representation of London in the early part of the *Confessions* seems a surreal expression of the early nineteenth-century observer's quintessential experience and view of the city. De Quincey declines to tell or invent the story of what he sees, to give to urban experience or to his own narrative what one critic has called its own "discursive interpretation."[55] He does not "read" the city as we try to read his narrative. And what he declines to read is not only the story of the individual life but the collective story of the social life of London. What kind of place, what sort of metropolis, generates the abuse and abandonment of children, abject poverty, child prostitution? These are simply not the questions De Quincey asks. As V. A. DeLuca has observed, De Quincey's work represents the "sufferings of urban experience" without acknowledging what systemic repression might have caused them or imagining what sorts of responses might change them.[56]

In one of the many odd passages in De Quincey's *Confessions*, the Opium Eater laments that the "stream of London charity," though "deep and mighty," is "yet noiseless and underground" (50–51). If only this charity could be "better adapted," he believes, the orphans and prostitutes of the city would not have to suffer. With the social solution of charity we come back to where we began with Redding's rambler on Primrose Hill. The rambler's unquestioning belief in the efficacy of English charity and De Quincey's more qualified faith in the power and usefulness of a perhaps temporarily inaccessible charity point to the common vision of urban reality that underlies all the representations of the city I have introduced here. For all of these shapers and observers of the London scene regarded the social reality of the city as part of a *natural order*, a system of social relations that was fundamentally organic and not to be challenged or radically transformed. At the very end of Egan's chapter on the bawdy coffeehouse frequented by an array of streetwalkers, he includes a sentimental narrative about one young woman, seduced and ruined, who had been dragged before a magistrate by a coachman to whom she owed a fare. After hearing that she had no money, no residence, and no friend in the world, the magistrate paid the coachman and gave the woman herself three shillings. The narrator marvels at the generosity and charity of the magistrate and at the touching effects of the story on everyone who heard it. Indeed, he concludes, "it was a fine scene altogether. It was one of NATURE's richest moments" (p. 226).

The beauty and stateliness of the city could be enhanced, as in the "improvements" of the Regency, and its appearance brought closer to what already lay within the British nation and character. The grandeur and scope of the city could be captured or exaggerated in a panoramic view, or in the sudden encounter with an urban solitary recorded in its momentary form.

But the questioning or probing of complex social relations was avoided by architect, essayist, and graphic artist alike.

What concerned these early urban observers was the experience of the individual as he is acted upon by the metropolis, not the power of the individual to act upon or change the city. As Egan's Tom and Jerry conclude their urban rambles, the narrator of *Life in London* tells us that they have seen the best and the worst, the most virtuous and most depraved, and so have learned the "advantages resulting from the connexions with one, and the evils arising from associating with the other" (p. 394). The individual spectator can be enlightened, corrupted, instructed, or even, as in the case of the Opium Eater, injured both physically and psychologically, but the spectator can always retreat or escape; his experience of the life of the streets is always temporary and fleeting. The people of the street are signs to be read only for the moral edification of the spectator, or left unread as part of the unraveled urban mystery, but they are not to be taken as manifestations of a wider social disturbance, a systemic fault in need of fixing or even of detecting. Neither are they to be understood as figures whose stories must be teased out and told. They are creatures of a scene or a moment, not characters or actors in an ongoing narrative. Whereas the experience or vision of the spectator remains paramount, the people of the streets remain objects, sights, landmarks, images in the spectator's dreams. Like the prostitute, who plays a role in all the urban evocations I have mentioned, the crowd comes and goes, bringing pleasure or illumination, and offering the observer only a reflection of himself or a spectacle to consume.

Notes

1 For a discussion of eighteenth-century London, see Max Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). Byrd writes, "When Boswell's soul bounded toward happy futurity, London had not yet become Cobbett's great wen nor had its furnaces and factories yet become satanic mills" (p. 1).

2 Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 21.

3 "The Tea Garden," *London Magazine* 6 (August 1822): 137. Frank P. Riga and Claude A. Prance identify the author as Cyrus Redding in their *Index to the London Magazine* (New York: Garland, 1978), p. 61.

4 "The Tea Garden," p. 140.

5 Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pt. 1.

6 For more on visual representations of London, see two very fine essays, Donald J. Gray's "Views and Sketches of London in the Nineteenth Century" and Will Vaughn's "London Topographers and Urban Change," in *Victorian Artists and the City*, ed. Ira Bruce Nadel and F. S. Schwarzbach (New York: Pergamon Press, 1980), pp. 43–58, 59–77. In this same volume see Guilland Sutherland's "Cruikshank and London" (pp. 106–25) on the viewing of graphic satire as popular urban entertainment.

7 For outings to Primrose Hill, see M. Dorothy George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank: Social Change in Graphic Satire* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 77; for panoramas and dioramas, see Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), esp. chaps. 10–12.
8 Gray, "Views and Sketches," p. 45.
9 Vaughn, "London Topographers," pp. 59–60.
10 Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: New Left Books, 1973), p. 161.
11 George, *Hogarth to Cruikshank*, p. 73.
12 Gray, "Views and Sketches," p. 47.
13 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 317, n. 4.
14 Ibid., p. 200.
15 Ibid., p. 201.
16 For the best account of the changes London underwent during the Regency, see John Summerson, *Georgian London* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), chap. 13. He writes: "Once, and only once, has a great plan for London, affecting the development of the capital as a whole, been projected and brought to completion. This was the plan which constituted the 'metropolitan improvements' of the Regency" (p. 177).
17 Ibid., p. 178.
18 Donald J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1976), p. 38. Olsen writes: "Chadwick and Shaftsbury and Mayhew had yet to point out that London was unhealthy, overcrowded, and miserable. . . . Street and park seemed to point the way for the positive transformation of London into a city that would stir the pride and command the affection of the whole British people, and represent to the world the taste and humanity of the British nation" (p. 38).
19 Summerson, *Georgian London*, pp. 254–56.
20 See Walter Benjamin on the arcades of Paris as the perfect site for strolling, as "a cross between a street and an *intérieur*" (*Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 36–37).
21 In many larger towns in England a "red-light district" was located near places of entertainment, especially theaters. See Penelope J. Corfield, "Walking the City Streets: The Urban Odyssey in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Urban History* 16 (February 1990): 148. Thomas Burke, in *English Night-Life: From Norman Curfew to Present Black-Out* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1941), describes Covent Garden in the eighteenth century as a place where wealthy rakes would sit in carriages and watch the "up-and-down procession" of women of the streets in the piazzas nearby (p. 49).
22 See Altick, *Shows of London*, pp. 163–64. Augustus Charles Pugin was the émigré architect father of the author of *Contrasts*.
23 Ibid., p. 166.
24 Ibid., p. 142.
25 Ibid., pp. 141, 149, 142.
26 Thomas Shepherd and James Elmes, *Metropolitan Improvements, or London in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Jones and Co., 1827), p. 78.
27 H.J. Dyos, "The Objects of Street Improvement in Regency and Early Victorian London," in *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History*, ed. David Cannadine and David Reeder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 82–83.
28 "On the Projected Improvements of St. James's Park," *London Magazine*, n.s., 2 (July 1825): 446.
29 Quoted in Dyos, "The Objects of Street Improvement," p. 82.

30 Shepherd and Elmes, *Metropolitan Improvements*, pp. iv–v.
31 The flaneur, writes Walter Benjamin, "still stood at the margin, of the great city as of the bourgeois class. Neither of them had yet overwhelmed him. In neither of them was he at home. He sought his asylum in the crowd" (*Charles Baudelaire*, p. 170).
32 Ibid., p. 161.
33 See J. C. Reid, *Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency London* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 50–52.
34 Pierce Egan, *Life in London* . . . (London: John Camden Hotten, 1869), pp. 51–52; subsequently cited in the text. Carol L. Bernstein, in *The Celebration of Scandal: Toward the Sublime in Victorian Urban Fiction* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), discusses *Life in London* in the context of the "fashionable novel" and dandyism (pp. 86–91).
35 [J. H. Reynolds], "The Jewels of the Book," *London Magazine* 2 (August 1820): 155–58. The author is identified in Riga and Prance, *Index to the London Magazine*, p. 18.
36 "The Jewels of the Book," *London Magazine* 2 (September 1820): 272.
37 The personal tragedy to which I refer is, of course, Mary Lamb's murder of her mother in 1796 and the periodic insanity that left Charles his sister's guardian for the rest of their lives. Something froze in him during the last years of the eighteenth century; his growth was irrevocably stunted in some profound way.
38 Letter to Thomas Manning, November 28, 1800, in *The Letters of Charles Lamb*, ed. E. V. Lucas (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1935), 1:223.
39 Charles Lamb, "The Londoner," in *The Works of Charles Lamb*, ed. William MacDonald (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1903), 4:8. The essay first appeared in the *Morning Post*, February 1, 1802.
40 Ibid., pp. 317–18.
41 Ibid., pp. 318–19.
42 Charles Lamb, "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple," in *The Essays of Elia and Eliana* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1883), p. 114. The essay was first published in *London Magazine*, September 1821.
43 Charles Lamb to Bernard Barton, July 25, 1829, in *Letters*, 3:224.
44 Charles Lamb, "Mackery End, in Hertfordshire," in *Essays of Elia*, p. 98; emphasis added.
45 There is evidence that Lamb was familiar with Blake's poem "The Chimney Sweeper," which he referred to in a letter to Bernard Barton as the "Sweep Song" (see *Letters*, 2:425–26). Lamb's "*peep-peep* of a young sparrow" in the first paragraph of "The Praise of Chimney Sweepers" is a possible echo of Blake's " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"
46 Lamb, "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis," in *Essays of Elia*, pp. 150–51.
47 Lamb, "The Londoner," p. 318.
48 Lamb, "A Complaint," p. 154.
49 Thomas De Quincey, *Literary Reminiscences* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1851), 1: 114.
50 Alethea Hayter notes that in a diary De Quincey kept in Everton, near Liverpool, in 1803–4, he never once mentions his then very recent sojourn in London. A year later, after taking opium for the first time, he had visions that blended his earliest childhood memories with recollections of his London experiences. Hayter writes, "The events of his London destitution were no longer shut off from his idea of himself; they were being integrated into his personality by the agency of dreams produced by opium." See Alethea Hayter, *Opium and the Romantic Imagination*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 119. See also De Quincey, *Literary Reminiscences*, 1:114, for a description of how he wrote the beginning section of the *Confessions* with the aid of an increased dose of opium.

51 Thomas De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 47; subsequently cited in the text.

52 See Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, pp. 44–46.

53 A number of readers of the *Confessions* and other autobiographical writings have traced a connection between De Quincey's loss of his sister Elizabeth, who died of hydrocephalus in childhood, and his feelings about other young women, who seem to have taken her place or merged with her in his imagination. Ann is one such figure, as are the nameless orphan who inhabits the large London house and Wordsworth's young daughter Kate, who also died as a child. In a fascinating study, John Barrell focuses on De Quincey's guilt surrounding his sister's death and connects it to an extensive imagery of contamination and racism in his writing. See John Barrell, *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey: A Psychopathology of Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991).

54 See J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God: Five Nineteenth-Century Writers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 29, for the analogy between De Quincey's city and his prose.

55 V. A. DeLuca, *Thomas De Quincey: The Prose of Vision* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 13.

56 Ibid., p. 16.