



WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
VOLUMES I-VIII
1981-1991

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INTRODUCTION

The Wilkie Collins Society is pleased to make available the first series of the Society's Journal with the eight issues from 1981 to 1991. With the aid of modern technology and the diligent work of Paul Lewis all the content is now available online for searching and downloading.

The Wilkie Collins Society "dedicated to serving the Study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects" was co-founded by Kirk Beetz and Andrew Gasson in 1981. It has now been in existence for nearly 40 years. The history of its creation can be found in our Newsletter for Summer 2005 (available on the Wilkie Collins Society website). From its beginning, Kirk Beetz envisaged that the Society should have a Journal and quoting from his first Editor's Note: "Although the Wilkie Collins Society is only in its first year, its ambitions begin to be realized. The Journal is representative of those ambitions."

Those early issues were created by Beetz without the aid of computers, internet, or email. Nevertheless, he managed to assemble high quality essays from well respected scholars including the then doyen on Collins studies, Robert Ashley, who made several distinguished contributions. Perusal of the index reveals a fascinating range of material. Examples include a reprint and commentary by Steve Farmer of Collins's own otherwise inaccessible essay from 1881 "The Use of Gas in Theatres" or "The Air and the Audience: Considerations on the Atmospheric Influences of Theatres"; an article by Collins's biographer, the late William Clarke; 'The Naming of *No Name*' by Virginia Blain; and a review by Peter Thomas of 'The Wilkie Collins Centennial Conference' held from September 27 to October 1, 1989.

There is much else for Collins enthusiasts and students and we are pleased to bring back into circulation essays from the foundation of our Society.

Andrew Gasson
Chairman
June 2020

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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY
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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

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Editor's Note

Although the Wilkie Collins Society is only in its first year, its ambitions begin to be realized. The Journal is representative of those ambitions. I hope to expand the number of reviews in future volumes, as well as broaden the Journal's services to Society members. Comments and queries are invited for future issues, and book collectors are invited to advertise needs and extras. The Journal is open to submissions not only about Wilkie Collins, but on related topics such as Charles Reade and sensation fiction. Already, I have received several inquiries about possible topics for future articles: the entire membership is encouraged to participate.

Volume I of the Journal offers high quality essays. Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV provides a discussion of the various works which relate to Collins published in the last five years. Robert Ashley honors the Journal with an essay on Basil. Long the doyen (as Dr. Fisher remarks) of students of Collins, Ashley gives further insight into Collins's art. His essay is a welcome addition to Collinsian criticism. The third essay of the present Volume is by a brightening star in the firmament of scholarship, Natalie Schroeder. She reviews an important recent study of Collins.

The Wilkie Collins Society Journal is in its infancy; it will grow. Its present contents promise much for its future prosperity.

K.H.B.

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Wilkie Collins and the Critics

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV

The reputation of Wilkie Collins has long endured a twofold suffering. First, other Victorian writers seem ever to receive greater attention. Second, a principal but-bear in this neglect of Collins, The Life of Charles Dickens John Forster, continues as a much touted, oft consulted book from and about the nineteenth century. There, Forster's jealousy over what he imagined was the usurpation of his place in Dickens's affections by Collins led him to ignore the younger man's relationship with the King of English novelists. Successive Dickensians have maintained that rank, one of low esteem, for Collins much this past century and more.

Recently, loud lamentations have sounded concerning the paucity of biographical materials relevant to Collins. We must remember, ironically, that his was not a life for detailing from those governed by Victorian prudery, and that consequently much significant documentation was scrapped by those whose personal delicacies supported "respectability." These tendencies toward avoidance or evasion of ambivalent matters in Collins's personal affairs have seemingly affected criticism of his fiction, and only now is he coming into his own within that house of many mansions (even those untenanted by Dickens, Eliot, Trollope, or Thackeray) that is "Victorian Fiction." Even if Collins has not attained the industry proportions of some of these others, he would be pleased to know that interest in his writing continues, and that much of it comes from America -- where his work called forth acclaim during his own times.

Testimony to his sign of the times appears in E. R. Gregory's "Murder in Fact" (NR, 22 July 1978: 33-34), wherein persuasive appreciation lures all but the hardest of hearts to the major novels: The Moonstone, The Woman in White, Armadale, and No Name, with Man and Wife running a possible fifth. Much more of a milestone, Kirk H. Beetz's Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography 1889-1976 (METUCHEN 1978) clarifies long clouded records as it lists and comments upon primary titles and then addresses secondary materials from Collins's death through recent years. My essay is intended to supplement Beetz by commentary about developments since his cut-off date, although some (and there are few) items falling within his time span are noticed.

Primary Collinsiana has waxed of late with the appearance of Dover's reissues of important titles, a series spearheaded by that indefatigable seeker after recondite nineteenth-century fiction, Everett F. Bleiler. His efforts are saluted herewith; the Collins series ought to make convenient works all too often inaccessible. A plus is the appearance of several less familiar, though not unimportant, titles. Instead of The Moonstone and The Woman in White, Dover gives us Armadale, No Name, The Dead Secret, Hide and

Seek, and Basil. A volume sampling the supernatural short fiction, as well as that inaccurately named Little Novels, are also available. A notice of these books, prepared by Beetz, will appear in the forthcoming UMSE, for 1981, and so lengthy comment upon them here is supererogatory. Would that funds and devoted workers could be had for the assembling of a Collins edition of the scale of the Clarendon Dickens or the Duke-Edinburgh Carlyle.

Production of the Dover reprints at a time when textual studies of Collins are also on the increase points the way toward an unplowed but potentially rich field. The inherent fertility is evident in John A. Sutherlands's study of The Woman in White Ms., now in the Morgan Library. In "Two Emergencies in the Writing of The Woman in White" (YES, 7: 148-165) we find a scrutiny of Wilkie's mastering hold over the large majority of readers, who do not detect discrepancies in chronology, consequent upon his being pressured to complete the serial. Crucial observations on Collins's serial talents in The Woman in White occur in Larry K. Uffleman's review of the Dover No Name (NCF, 34: 96-100), where he compliments the choice of the 1873 text, supervised by Collins as opposed to the version rife with misprints put out by Anthony Blond in 1967.

Turning now to secondary materials, one must move from Beetz's book to Robert P. Ashley's terse check-up on recent scholarship, in Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research, ed. George H. Ford (MLA, 1978). Building upon his chapter in the first guide, ed. Lionel Stevenson, Ashley, doyen to all Collins scholars, creates a model survey of the cream of primary and secondary Collinsiana. He also suggests certain paths still to be charted. For example, the letters, of which many more exist than has long been believed, and the dramas cry out for editing. Fortunately, since the publication of Ashley's essay, Beetz has announced an edition of correspondence, and I am undertaking editorial work on the plays. Both should shed light upon Collins's literary aims and methods, supplement critical approaches to the fiction, and provide handy documents in the illumination of biographical matters. By such, and other, means, the pioneering of astute scholars like Clyde K. Hyder, H.J.W. Milley, Ashley, Noel Pharr Davis, and Kenneth Robinson may be amply expanded.

Further bibliographical clarity is achieved in Andrew Gasson's "Wilkie Collins: A Collector's and Bibliographer's Challenge" (The Private Library, 3rd ser., vol. 3, No. 2: 51-77). Gasson leads us securely through the welter of serials, first and later hardcover and soft-cover volume editions or reissues (authorized and pirated), to a position of understanding better the traits of individual works in and the spans of Collins's voluminous output. Gasson obviously knows in the in's and out's of collecting, and his knowledge is expressed in a most readable

sketch. He deftly updates Sadleir's XIX Century Fiction with statistics on relative scarcity of Collins titles, and comments in particular about the altered rank of The Guilty River. This essay is another chapter in the history of Victorian Fiction, wherein collecting first and early editions becomes ever more perilous in terms of availability of the collectibles and their costs! Assisting in creating additional literary history, exemplified by the case of Wilkie Collins, Anne Lohrli details magazine composition, contributions and labor in Household Words: A Weekly Journal 1850-1859, Conducted by Charles Dickens—Table of Contents, List of Contributors, and Their Contributions (University of Toronto Press, 1973). Her compilation is based on the office book for the journal, now in the Morris L. Parrish Collection of Victorian Novelists, at the Firestone Library of Princeton University. Lohrli offers not merely bibliographical listings; she supplements studies of the Dickens-Collins situation. Deborah A. Thomas's shorter pieces on Household Words should also be consulted (Dick., 69: 163-172; idem., 70: 21-29). Sensible outlines of Collins's career, along with synopses, brief critiques, and bibliographical aids in English Novel: Richardson to Hardy, ed. Frank N. Magill (Salem Softbacks, 1980), bring into a single volume material available for nearly two decades. Apart from some howlers in spelling and bibliography, e.g., p. 115, where Hill's article is cited as pages 57-57, Magill's screeds are useful for introductory purposes.

Looking now at more critical-analytical items, we cite two books to flank Beetz's on the shelf of serious Collins fans: R[ay] V[ernon] Andrew's Wilkie Collins: A Critical Survey of His Prose Fiction, with a Bibliography (Garland, 1979) and Dorothy L. Sayers's Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Biographical Study (The Friends of the University of Toledo Libraries, 1977). Actually, both are much older than their publication dates indicate. Andrew's is a Doctor Litterarum Thesis completed in 1959 for Potchefstroom University, photographically reproduced for Garland's series, "The Fiction of Popular Culture: Twenty-four Important Resources for the Study of Mystery and Detective Stories, Gothic Novels, Nineteenth Century Sensation Novels, Etc." This rubric may suggest the regard in which Collins is commonly held. Sayers commenced her work during the 1920's, and as late as July 1957 she still entertained notions of completing it. As in the cases, say of Collins and Blind Love, Dickens and Edwin Drood, or, after nearly fifty years' labors, Thomas Ollive Mabbott and The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe, death wrested the pen from Sayers's hand before she could finish her long-awaited work.

Comparison of Andrew's and Sayers's books may initially seem invidious toward the former, which carries all the ill features of thesis-writing: stilted tone and mechanical, boresome repetition in chapter structuring. An index would also enrich the book. If synthesized, penetrating information is what a thesis should supply as its main ware, however, Andrew's book does merit plaudits. It is divided into five large segments. First comes

essential biographical information. Next, the early literary experiments and the acquaintance with and work for Dickens is set forth. Third, analyses of The Woman in White, No Name, Armadale, and The Moonstone. Fourth, critiques of the novels and selected short fiction from Man and Wife through Blind Love. Finally, part Five surveys Collins's life and literary or other art influences that shaped his writing. Andrew's view, overall, is dispassionate. A brief conclusion emphasizes how Collins's work during Dickens's era and his incurring Forster's enmity conspired with the wary regard of other contemporaries and their successors to bury his literary reputation beneath hushed hints and critical neglect for many years.

The conclusions presented above may no longer seem wholly new or fresh, but in 1959 the Dickens-Collins relationship, not to mention the image of Collins as a writer with artistic gifts, had not been so well sifted as it has been since, by friend and foe alike. Andrew's opinions convey calm and soundness; Collins did profit from association with Dickens, so far as fiction goes, in matters of dramatic sense, dialogue, an "eye for character" (notably in Captain Wragge), as well as in abilities to coordinate the multiple elements of lengthy novels into felicitous unity. The Dickens-Collins situation received proper attention, vis-a-vis the Drood mystery, in Charles Forsyte's The Decoding of Edwin Drood (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980). After reviewing similarities between The Moonstone and Edwin Drood, Forsyte notes likenesses of the latter with "Miss or Mrs?" a Collins tale in The Graphic for 1871, a document which, Forsyte argues, penetrates dangerously close to the heart of the Drood case. Here is food for thought.

Andrew deals a blow to the question of Reade's "influence" and sends that long cherished notion down the pipe. He observes, too, that Gaboriau's impact is less than generally supposed, arguing solidly upon bases of chronology, but claims much for Poe's contributions to Collins's aims and methods—a subject inviting further examination. Treatment of Collins's literary descent through later writers is terse. The names of Le Fanu, Stoker, Innes, and Sayers do not surprise; those of Yonge, Twain, and Bennett might. Overall, Andrew's book must not be by-passed, despite its long delayed appearance. From Andrew, one might profitably turn immediately to R.F. Stewart's ...And Always a Detective (David & Charles, 1980). Bracketing Collins with Poe, Stewart's charting the vicissitudes of the former's reputation, his keen pinpointing of Collins's contributions to detective fiction, and his criticism of The Moonstone, are all presented in lively fashion.

Had she lived to see it through, Dorothy Sayers might have managed the best critical-biographical book on Collins to date. I speak thus with regard for the work of Ashley, Robinson, Davis, and William H. Marshall, but with like realization that quantities of relevant materials have only come to light in more recent times, and that even now many remain to be made available. What Sayers

left is an unfolding of Collins's young life and its links to his writings through Hide and Seek, that is, up to 1854. With thirty-five years of her subject's life unattended, Sayers's Wilkie Collins has decided limitations. The riches therein, however, only make one yearn for more. Sayers thoughtfully relates the fiction and plays as no other has done. With her own predilections for detective fiction in mind, we must respect her analyses of the portion of Collins's oeuvres she does encompass. Like Andrew, she does not hesitate to speak of Wilkie's defects. She has also not left one of Collins's early good novels, Hide and Seek, to rust unburnished on the shelf.

Two other books in which Collins figures prominently place him as a Sensationalist. Not so objective as it might be toward Collins, because of its author's evident bias toward his own Victorian Novelist, Michael L. Wolff's Sensational Victorian: The Life and Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon (Garland, 1979) fleshes out yet another chapter in the chronicles of nineteenth-century fiction, and one often derided in past years, that of Sensation fiction. Although the verdict of time favors Collins, Wolff implies that Braddon has the edge over him in creating fine novels, hauling in Henry James, no less, to bolster his opinion (P. 155)! Braddon's career resembles Collins's, though, in that both were Sensation novelists, who grew clear-sighted about the requirements for producing gripping serials. Their novels are near relatives, too, in terms of intermittent social criticism and dramatic qualities, plausible enough characteristics in two whose lives diverged from accepted norms and whose involvement with stage plays is a matter of record.

A book of more objective proportions in Winnifred Hughes's The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the Eighteen Sixties (Princeton, 1980), the first major study of this topic, superseding Walter C. Phillips's Dickens, Reade, and Collins: Sensation Novelists (Columbia, 1919), a book subsequently oft deplored. Bracketing Collins with other Sensationalists, like Braddon and Reade, Hughes applauds the great dramatic gifts coursing through his fiction. Recalling the strident antipathies toward Sensation novels that have held sway for over a century, we may find a salubrious change—as well as a forecast of more sound work on this area to come, we hope—in The Maniac in the Cellar. Hughes's praise for Sensation fiction echoes in a voice from the grave (appropriately located, given our context), that of Montague Summers, who devotes a chapter to Victorian novelists, with major attention and laudation to Sensationalists, in his autobiography, The Gallant Show, ed. Brocard Sewell (Cecil Wolf, 1980). As might be expected, Summers's tome implies that he never considered writers like Collins, Braddon, and Reynolds anything but the greatest. His gusto, however, does not blind him to genuine artistic merits in Collins, and his chapter is one more item not to be omitted from Collinsians' reading lists.

Moving now to shorter studies, we properly note here Walter

M.Kendrick's argument (NCF, 32: 18-35) against dismissing Sensationalism in The Woman in White as sleazy melodramatics. It is rather the product of a mind attuned to numerous ambivalences in human existence. Thus, in this novel Collins departs from mid-Victorian realism to achieve multiple subtleties in narrative technique [cf. Sutherland above]. Like views appear in A. Brooker Thro, "An Approach to Melodramatic Fiction: Goodness and Energy in the Novels of Dickens, Collins, and Reade" (Genre, 11: 359-374). Represented respectively by Oliver Twist, The Woman in White, and Griffith Gaunt, these novelists resort to no clumsy handling of melodramatic strategies, but employ them subtly, as they create goodness, a feature they prize more than such admirers of energy as Lewis in The Monk and Maturin in Melmoth the Wanderer, among older Gothic novelists. This article should be dear to those charting modifications in Gothicism between Maturin and, say, Hardy or Doyle. Teaming with Thro's outlook is Keith B. Reirstad, whose "The Demon in the House; or, The Domestication of Gothic in the Novels of Wilkie Collins" (University of Pennsylvania, 1976) is one of the most impressive dissertations to date on Wilkie Collins. There are long, but never dull, opening chapters on Mrs. Radcliffe and Bulwer-Lytton as precursors, followed by two on Sensationalism and Collins's theories of fiction. The last four chapters survey the novels chronologically, with keen criticism of all. This work merits publication. Similarly, Paul J. Delmar's "The Sensation Fiction of Wilkie Collins" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1978) follows the recurring "splitting" of character traits, in both villains and heroes, thereby establishing a tone from which readers respond to the novel at hand. Some attention goes to Antonina, but the lion's share is accorded The Woman in White, Armadale, and The Moonstone. At no great distance we reach Sue Lonoff's "Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship" (CUNY, 1978). She draws upon unpublished letters and other Ms. documents, plus the fiction itself, to determine Collins's relationship to his audience. Dickens, Reade, as well as his English and French readers, gave advice in many instances. Lonoff's consideration of The Moonstone as a detective novel makes one wonder if indeed it is so "modern" as she implies. A published portion of her work, "Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins," will interest readers (NCF, 35: 150-170). Although a book growing out of her dissertation is listed as available in the current Books in Print, no copy has been forthcoming as of this writing. Collins, therefore, still provides bibliographers' mares' nests.

Finally several items in which we might not immediately detect the presence of Collins must not be ignored. Several analyze the blends of realism with Gothic fantasy with which he often worked. Some do not concern him directly, but they contain critical methodology that is applicable to him because of his imbibing main currents in fiction a century ago. The first, Barbara Silberg's dissertation, "Rhoda Broughton: A Victorian Popular Novelist" (Pennsylvania State University, 1977) nicely outlines the career of this niece of Sheridan Le Fanu. Often a

social critic and blunt realist—too much so for many of her readers and reviewers—Broughton also wrote tales of the psychological-supernatural variety. Such traits, along with Silbert's commentary on her popularity, which resembles that of Collins, make her a fit literary companion for him. Like implications reside in the evaluations of "G. [sic] M. Reynolds, Dickens, and the Mysteries of London" (NCF, 32: 188-213), by Richard C. Maxwell, Jr., and "Exorcising the Past: Scott's The Bride of Lammermoor" (NCF, 32: 379-398), by George Levine. Mysteries and terrors evolving from concrete realities, and powerful when linked with psychological bases, are delineated in all. The course of the Gothic during the nineteenth century is manifest in many implications throughout these two fine articles. Collins's name turns up in yet another outré spot, where violence and mystery are staples, Jame B. Twitchell's The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire in Romantic Literature (Duke University Press, 1981). Unfortunately, the title for The Dream Woman pluralizes the final word (does nobody proofread anymore?). Another distinguished critique not to be missed by Collinsians, is Albert D. Hutter's "Dreams, Transformation, and Literature: The Implications of Detective Fiction" (VS, 19: 181-209). Beginning with a synthesis of and his departures from modern psychoanalytic theories of literature, Hutter turns these tools to a keen reading of The Moonstone, although the names of other writers, like Poe, who he draws into his discussion, make clear that the novel exists in no vacuum. The dream as a literary motif, of course, has received overloads of attention, but Hutter's fresh observations ought to stimulate further application of his principles to examinations of Collins. His excellent analysis of submerged sexuality in The Moonstone may also provide keys to new doors in studies of our author. A glance into Crime, Detective, Espionage, Mystery, and Thriller Fiction and Film: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Critical Writing through 1979 (Greenwood Press, 1980), a self-explanatory title, will keep the curious informed about tendencies in these aspects of Collins's writings. Like information is supplied by Janet Pate's The Great Villains (David & Charles Ltd.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), with sketches of Godfrey Abelwhite and Sir Percival Glyde, accompanied by lists of films and printed editions. Why Fosco, whose name is misspelled with an -e- on the end, does not figure in this book is an enigma: he is a far greater character than Abelwhite or Glyde.

What should we conclude from this survey? Foremost, Wilkie Collins's fiction does not in its entirety offer gems of purest ray, although at its best it yields ample support to his continuing fame among Victorian writers. The Moonstone, The Woman in White, Armada, and No Name are the stars of this writer's crown, as is evident from the sweep of this essay. Collins is ripe for ranking among Victorian novelists as more than a second-rate Sensationalist or, when not presented as that, a would-be social reformer whose artistry, like that found in so much of the later Mark Twain, gives way to ranting ideology. Collins's fiction is not the simple heir of timeworn Gothicism, as so much

of G.W.M. Reynolds's is. Evidence offered above demonstrates the care and art underlying many of Collins's works, and study of such subjects is needed. A comprehensive, annotated checklist of contemporaneous reviews would be a valuable tool for this research. Editorial and textual work will likewise expedite the process. The Woman in White alone has received creditable editing, but what about The Moonstone, Armadale, and No Name—or others? A well edited anthology of the short stories could take a merited spot on library shelves. Handy volumes of the correspondence and plays will clarify understanding of Collins's fiction. We also need a census of manuscripts for imaginative works and others like the letters, biographical, and critical writings. Were Collins collectors to make known their holdings, our organization, and others would benefit. Assessments of influence, to and from Collins, await their makers, as does that "magisterial" summation of his drawing into the composition of prose fiction elements customarily deemed those of stage drama—and I don't mean solely that of a suspense-filled "curtain" or cliff-hanger. Such methodology aligns Wilkie Collins with others who were instrumental, if not always conscious of that faculty, in collapsing generic fixities, even before the novel had achieved that peak of eminence as art now considered so much a matter of course. "Novels," we must remember were new and different among literary forms, even during much of the reigns of Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, not to mention minor fictionists, and thus the term for newness and difference was meetly applied. Thus, nineteenth-century periodicals overflow with reviews of fiction that depend heavily on the terminology associated with visual arts synthesized into criticism of the literary babe, so to speak, or perhaps, more accurately in certain cases, "seized" for purposes of strengthening a notice. Totals for "painters" of fiction might dangerously approximate those for visual artists, were one to pursue the matter diligently! Although the 1890's is typically the time for generic breakdowns, according to the critical lights of numerous students, Collins ought not to be consigned outside ranks of earlier pioneers engaged in such pursuits. In closing I am reminded after surveying Collinsiana of Goethe's remarks about the smallness of accomplishments when they are compared with what remains yet to do.

I express my gratitude to Andrew Gasson, Kirk H. Beetz, William J. Zimmer, Jack H. Barton, Anne I. Barton, Shona L. Barton, and James A. Barton for their help in the completion of this essay.

Within My Experience

An Essay Suggested by the Dover Reprint of Wilkie Collins's Basil

Robert Ashley

In adding Basil to its series of Wilkie Collins reprints, Dover Publications chose wisely and well since it is likely to have stronger appeal to modern readers than many another Collins "minor" novel. It is relatively short and uncomplicated. It has power and intensity seldom, if ever, equaled in Collins's later work. It has lurid scenes, and for a Victorian novel, remarkably explicit treatment of sexual passion, jealousy, and revenge, surpassed if at all, only by Dickens in his final two novels. Taken together with a "Letter of Dedication," notable both for what it reveals and what it conceals, the narrative is rife with autobiographical and psychological implications. And for those readers primarily interested in Collins's development as a novelist, Basil foreshadows practically everything for which Collins later became famous.

Most importantly, after mildly successful excursions into historical romance (Antonina, 1851) in the mold of Bulwer-Lytton's The Last Days of Pompeii and into sentimental comedy (Mr. Wray's Cash Box, 1851) in the mold of Dickens' Christmas stories, Basil (1852) sets Collins squarely into the territory where he belonged, the melodrama of contemporary Victorian life. Against a backdrop of two families--Basil's own family, dominated by his proud, excessively class-conscious implacably unyielding and intolerant father, and the Sherwins, dominated by a greedy, miserly, social-climbing linendraper, as tyrannical, though less justifiably so, as Basil's father -- Collins unfolds a typically sensational plot. Basil sees Margaret Sherwin on an omnibus and falls utterly in love at first sight, a favorite Collins motif. Mr. Sherwin agrees to an immediate marriage, but stipulates that the marriage be kept secret and unconsummated for a year. This not too convincing plot device ensures the entrapment of Basil as well as a rise for the Sherwins from the lower middle class into the gentlemanly society of Basil's family, but at the same time presumably gives Basil a year in which to polish Margaret into acceptability by his father, a task at which he fails miserably because of his wife's shallow character. Another stipulation of the marriage contract is that the two young people never meet unchaperoned. Fortunately for them, the chaperone is the bullied invalid Mrs. Sherwin (Does Dickens' Mrs. Gradgrind of Hard Times, written two years later than Basil, owe anything to Mrs. Sherwin?), who sits silently in a darkened corner, thus allowing for a certain amount of hanky-panky between Margaret and Basil, which Collins, however, never explicitly mentions. On the night before the year's postponement elapses, Basil becomes a virtual witness of his wife's

deflowering, in a cheap hotel bedroom, by the villain Mannion, confidential clerk to Mr. Sherwin. When the guilty couple leave the hotel, Basil, in a fury of sexual rage and jealousy, flings Mannion to the ground, grinding his face into the macadamized surface of the road, blinding him in one eye, and horribly disfiguring his handsome features. In a long letter to Basil, Mannion reveals his motives: He had planned to marry Margaret himself; furthermore, his father had been detected in forgery by Basil's father and subsequently hanged. Thus Mannion's seduction of Margaret is both an act of thwarted sexual passion as well as an act of revenge on Basil's whole family. In these and subsequent acts, Mannion is an early example of Collins's best-known character-type, the humanized villain: sinister, mysterious, singleminded, yet deserving some measure of respect or sympathy. Mannion's letter also announces his intent, like Falkland's in Caleb Williams, to pursue Basil implacably to the ends of the earth, poisoning his reputation wherever he goes and publishing his disgrace to the world. Basil flees to Land's End in Cornwall, followed by Mannion. But Mannion's diabolic plans come to an abrupt end when, hot on the trail of Basil, he falls to his death from a Cornish cliff. Since Margaret has already died of typhus contracted in the hospital where Mannion recuperated, Basil is free for a gradual reconciliation with his family.

Over the whole novel broods that sense of fatality and foreboding for which Collins is justly famous. This is partly due to abundant hints of Margaret's true character and of her sexual infatuation with Mannion, hints which the equally infatuated Basil ignores, but more impressively to Collins's typical skill in creating atmosphere. Here is a description of the great black hole into which Mannion falls:

In one of the highest parts of the wallside of granite... there opened a black, yawning hole that slanted nearly straight downward, like a tunnel, to unknown and unfathomable depths below....Even at calm times the sea was never silent in this frightful abyss, but on stormy days its fury was terrific. The wild waves boiled and thundered in their imprisonment, till they seemed to convulse the solid cliff about them like an earthquake. (Basil, Dover, 1980, pp.321-322)

Technically, Basil embodies Collins's first experiment with the multiple first-person point of view used most notably in The Woman in White and The Moonstone. By far the largest segment is an autobiographical account by Basil of his experiences up to his arrival in Cornwall. Into the midst of this segment, however, is inserted Mannion's long letter detailing his family history, his relations with Margaret, and his plans for revenge. The Cornwall segment consists of excerpts from Basil's journal, and the novel ends with "Letters in Conclusion": two by a Cornish

miner and his wife and one by Basil to a friend.

The dedicatory letter in Basil is one of Collins's most informative and intriguing prefaces. For the first time Collins set down his artistic creed: 1) a novel should be based on a solid foundation of fact drawn from the novelist's own experiences or experiences related to him by others; 2) the dramatic and exceptional incidents of real life are as legitimate materials for fiction as are "common-place, everyday realities"; 3) the novelist is privileged to admit "scenes of misery and crime" provided "they are turned to a plainly and purely moral purpose"; and 4) the novelist should bring to the writing of fiction "the patient, uncompromising, reverent devotion of every moral and intellectual faculty." No one would seriously quarrel with these precepts, but Collins, in words anticipating those Hardy was to use in his first preface to Tess, attacked those readers and reviewers who had labeled Antonina prurient:

To those persons...who shrink from all honest and serious reference, in books, to subjects which they think of in private and talk of in public everywhere; who see...improper allusions where nothing improper is alluded to; whose innocence is in the word, and not in the thought; whose morality stops at the tongue, and never gets on to the heart—to those persons...I do not address myself...in this book, and shall never think of addressing myself to them in any other. (Basil, Dover, 1980, pp.vi-vii)

This was asking for trouble, and Collins got it from the reviewers. Despite a warning from Dickens (who did not always follow his own advice), the dedicatory note to Basil was merely the first in a series of bristling prefaces which kept Collins in a lifetime battle with Victorian critics.

But by far the most provocative statement in the "Dedication" was Collins's claim that he had "founded the main event out of which this story springs on a fact within my own knowledge." Now Collins says, "within my own knowledge," not "within my own experience." Nevertheless, certain modern scholars have wondered whether "the main event," presumably Basil's "witnessing" the seduction of his wife before the marriage had been consummated, actually happened to Collins. Kenneth Robinson, certainly a levelheaded critic of Collin, says, "...it is probable that Wilkie had recently undergone a violent emotional experience and wrote Basil as a form of catharsis."¹ In his psychoanalytic analysis of The Moonstone, Charles Rycroft concludes that Collins was "compelled...to give symbolic expression to an unconscious preoccupation with the primal scene [sexual intercourse]" and that "he was obsessed with the idea of virginity."² These two obsessions, he theorizes, may have originally sprung from the autobiographical event which lay behind Basil.³ But Nuel Pharr Davis, who usually sees autobiographical significance lurking behind every bush in Collins's works, states that the "Letter of

Dedication" is deliberately intended to conceal the real source of the plot.⁴ "Wilkie," he says, "based his novel on the life of the celebrated fourth Earl of Chesterfield and derived almost everything from this source": the Earl is Basil's father; the Earl's illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope, who secretly married beneath his station, is Basil; Dr. William Dodds, whom Chesterfield might have saved from hanging for forgery, is Mannion's father.⁵ Davis does admit that the introductory portion of the novel is "astonishingly autobiographical": the stern, but basically affectionate, father; the trip to Italy; the brief flirtation with matriculation at Oxford; the lukewarm legal studies; the choice of a literary career; the writing of a historical novel; the habit of riding the omnibus, "a perambulatory exhibition-room of the eccentricities of human nature" (*Basil*, p. 27 Part One, Chapter Seven).⁶ Davis also points out that Basil and Mannion retrace Wilkie's own trip through Cornwall, described in *Rambles Beyond Railways* (1851). Likewise, the secret marriage may owe something to Wilkie's role in arranging Henrietta Ward's elopement with her namesake Edward Ward, brother of Charles James Ward, to whom the novel was dedicated.⁷ In addition, the Basil-Margaret relationship may have been suggested by Wilkie's brother Charles' unrequited passion for Maria Rosseth.⁸ For the gruesome details of Margaret's death from typhus, Collins drew upon his uncle Frank's death of the same disease.⁹ But on the central question of whether the seduction of Margaret had an autobiographical source, Davis remains silent except to state that the sordid hotel setting was probably one with which Wilkie was familiar.¹⁰

Another critic whom one might have expected to make much of *Basil* is Gavin Lambert. In *The Dangerous Edge*, Lambert offers the theory¹¹ that crime writers are driven to write "by some childhood wound, shock or experience--too much for the child to master at the time."¹² *Basil* would seem to be the perfect example of this thesis, but Lambert uses *The Dead Secret* (1857) instead. Possibly, he rejected *Basil* because the central episode could not be a reproduction of a childhood experience. It could, however, be a reproduction of something Wilkie witnessed or knew of.

Ultimately, the central riddle of *Basil* seems unsolvable. However, one intriguing question persists; whether Collins experienced something like the seduction of Margaret Sherwin or witnessed it or merely heard of it, is it at least a partial explanation of why he never married?

Notes

¹Kenneth Robinson. Wilkie Collins (London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 69.

²Charles Rycroft. "A Detective Story: Psychoanalytic Observations," Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 26 (1957) 238.

³Rycroft, p. 239.

⁴Nuel Phar Davis. The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 119.

⁵Davis, p. 116.

⁶Davis, p. 118; see also pp. 48-49.

⁷Davis, p. 118.

⁸Davis, p. 119.

⁸Davis, p. 119.

⁹Davis, p. 118.

¹⁰Davis, p. 118.

¹¹Gavin Lambert. The Dangerous Edge (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), pp. ix-xiv.

¹²Patricia Highsmith, "The Power of Fear," Times Literary Supplement, 15 August, 1975, p. 912.

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Reading the Victorian Novel: Detail into Form, ed. Ian Gregor, pp. 314. A Barnes and Noble Critical Study. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980, \$27.50.

Natalie Schroeder

In the final interchapter of Reading the Victorian Novel, Ian Gregor writes: "This is a book for reading: so, like others, its pages will be turned fast or slow once, or more often, its details remembered or forgotten, its form registered and rejected" (p. 309). Unfortunately, Reading the Victorian Novel is likely to be a frustrating book for a reader who approaches it as a unified whole rather than what it is—a collection of essays that range widely in content and style. The book with its two-fold thesis examines these topics: 1. the process of reading, "the way novels come to us as a page by page experience," and 2. the articulation of detail into form, "finding a suggestive contour in the parts to express the whole" (p. 9). The attempt to unify fifteen essays to accommodate the double thesis is the major weakness both of the work as a whole and of some individual essays. In his "Introduction" Ian Gregor comments that the focus on the reading process brought all the contributing writers "to experience the diversity of that process. In consequence, it is not a book which presses towards a specific conclusion" (p. 13). The several authors did not leave it at that, however; they apparently attempted to press towards some sort of conclusion by addressing themselves to the same dual thesis.

The five interchapters appear to be another try to unify the whole, but they are annoying at times and incomprehensible at others. Ironically, Reading the Victorian Novel has a kind of internal coherence which makes the predetermined thesis and the interchapters extraneous. The most useful and compelling aspects of the book are the comparisons the authors make between the novels discussed in other essays in the volume.

Some of the essays are labored (especially as a result of the authors' attempts to address themselves to the group thesis) and bog down in theory (e.g., Doreen Roberts's "Jane Eyre and 'The Warped System of Things'" and Ruth Raider's "The Flash of Fervour: Daniel Deronda"). Some, on the other hand, are surprisingly good. Essays like A. Robert Lee's "The Mill on the Floss: 'Memory' and the Reading Experience" and Keith Carabine's "Reading David Copperfield" are able to adapt the thesis well, and the results are fresh approaches to some already critically saturated Victorian novels.

Happily, David Blair's "Wilkie Collins and the Crisis of Suspense" belongs with the latter group, especially since Armadale has not been saturated with criticism. The essay does have some problems, however. Although Blair makes some important observations about the function of detail in Collins's fiction, he tends to be too self-conscious of the group thesis. His frequent

repetition of the words "detail" and "form," for example, are distracting.

Blair begins by refuting the charge that sensation fiction is not realistic because "every detail is ... equally important" (p. 33). He shows instead that through Collins's narrative methods, the "institution of suspense and the resultant provocation of the reader to scrutiny and anticipation provides a crisis ... for the identity and 'meaning' of individual details as [it does] for the identity and 'meaning' of form" (p.44). The two Allan Armadales, Blair says, are two halves of a single self that "enact a crisis between different 'novels'" (p. 41). Midwinter's novel is suspenseful, "dark, doom-laden, sensational"; Armadale's is comic, "light, inconsequential social and romantic" (p. 41). Armadale, who lives in a world of "important and unimportant details ... in uncritical juxtaposition" (p. 41), provides the novel with verisimilitude. Blair's explanation of the function of Miss Gwilt in *Armadale* is especially illuminating. As he puts it, she "inherits the full burden of this crisis"; the "'identity crisis' of the novel is, in a sense, her crisis: she is caught between ... her apparent identity as a detail, 'the shadow of a woman,' ... and ... her own sense of her passion and complexity" (p. 44).

Blair feels, though, that finally Collins fails in *Armadale* because the novel "poses questions about its own life and identity in an extraordinarily self-conscious way" (p. 39). He doesn't, however, provide enough specific examples from the novel to illustrate this point. He simply states (in his abstract way) that "the life of detail frustrates the various senses of possible or probable forms, and the novel proves to be, in some respects, a labyrinthine hoax" (p.45). On the other hand, Blair says that Collins more "mutedly" and thus more successfully used detail "to suggest an alternative focus, the experience of each character an alternative 'novel'" in his "two great novels" (p. 45). His essay would have been more satisfactory had Blair illustrated the "failure" of *Armadale* more specifically by contrasting it with *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* to show "how subtly the 'intermediate' sense of detail can be made to provide a productive complication of response and meaning" (p. 45). The one extended example of contrast that he does give—to Charlotte Bronte's *Villette*—is only marginally relevant.

Overall, "Wilkie Collins and the Crisis of Suspense" makes some useful points about Collins's narrative techniques and the reader's role in suspense fiction, but the essay is limited because of the author's tendency to manipulate his ideas to fit the preconceived thesis of the collection. Blair's style is also occasionally objectionable; he lacks clarity at times, and he is unnecessarily wordy. The complicated explanation of how Collins successfully created suspense in one part of *Armadale* is symptomatic of his bothersome, stylistic quirks: "The reader in the process of reading can never wholly share the neutrality of *Armadale*'s experience of detail because the possibility of fatality is more dominant for him than for his 'surrogate': thus

suspense acts upon his experience to give 'neutral' detail colouring and resonance" (p. 43). How much easier it would have been for the reader had Blair simply said, "Collins achieves suspense through the use of dramatic irony." Sadly, he didn't.

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Queries

Andrew Gasson (3 Merton House, 36 Belsize Park, London, N.W.3. 4EA) wishes to purchase a copy of The Life of Wilkie Collins, by Nuell Pharr Davis (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1956). Anyone with a copy who is willing to part with it is asked to contact Mr. Gasson.

William Clarke (37 Park Vista, Greenwich, London S.E. 10) is seeking materials for his biography of Wilkie Collins. He wishes to find the diary and commonplace book of William Collins, father of Wilkie, which was sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet in New York in 1948 or 1949. He also seeks any correspondence relating to Caroline Graves and Martha (Rudd) Dawson which might be privately owned.

Thomas D. Clareson (Box 3186, College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio 44691) seeks information about the relationship of Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade for use in his biography of Reade.

Kirk H. Beetz seeks letters by Wilkie Collins which may be in private hands. (813 Radcliffe Drive, Davis, California 95616.)

Notes on the Contributors

Robert Ashley's work and Robert Ashley, the man, have both long been focuses of Wilkie Collins research. He is author of numerous works on Collins, including Wilkie Collins, a biographical study published in 1952 and still in print. His essays include studies of Collins's plays, detective fiction, sources, and reputation. His essays "Wilkie Collins Reconsidered" (Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Vol. 4, March 1950, pp. 265-273) and "Wilkie Collins and the Dickensians" (The Dickensian, Vol. 49, March 1953, pp. 59-65) remain the definitive statements on the problems with Collins's reputation and relationship to Charles Dickens. Recent publications include the essay on Collins in Victorian Fiction (1978). Dr. Ashley is a Professor of English at Ripon College, Wisconsin.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV teaches in the Department of English, The University of Mississippi, where he edits University of Mississippi Studies in English. President of the Poe Studies Association (and a charter member), Bibliographer for the Houseman Society, and a Director for the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, he is active in the areas of Victorian, Gothic, and American Literature. He has published books on Poe, many studies of writers from the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, and is particularly interested in detective fiction. Recently, he has prepared an introduction for a reprint of the rare volume of detective short stories by Frederick Irving Anderson, Adventures of the Infallible Godahl, to appear in the Gregg Press series of mystery reprints sometime in Fall, 1981. He has also written the article about Anderson for the Dictionary of Literary Biography, another piece for a Festschrift honoring Darrel Abel ["Playful 'Germanism' in 'The Fall of the House of Usher': The StoryTeller's Art"], and the section on Victorian and nineteenth-century American Gothic in Anatomy of Horror: Guide to Horror Fiction, published by R. R. Bowker in 1981. He wishes here to acknowledge the inspiration and the generous assistance in many of his projects from Professor Clyde K Hyder.

Natalie Schroeder is author of articles on Regina Maria Roche and Charles Dickens. Her essay "John Jasper: Hero Villian" (University of Mississippi Studies in English, New Series, Vol. I, 1980) is the best study of Dickens' troubled character in Edwin Drood. Dr. Schroeder is writing a book on sensation fiction and an essay on Armada. She is an Instructor of English at the University of Mississippi.



WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
VOLUME II
1982



Poster by Frederick Walker for the dramatic version of *The Woman in White* 1871

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £5.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

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England

The Wilkie Collins Society Journal is published once a year by the Society for its members. Submissions should follow the guidelines of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (1977). Query first for reviews. Send submissions to Kirk H. Beetz, Editor, 1307 F Street, Davis, California 95616, USA. Be sure to include a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of a submission.



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Kirk H. Beetz, Editor

On the cover: poster by Frederick Walker for the dramatic version of The Woman in White.

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Editor's Note

The Wilkie Collins Society Journal features two fine essays for 1982. Andrew Gasson provides an excellent study of the publishing history of The Woman in White. Although the article will have a special appeal to book collectors, critics should also take note: the text of the novel was significantly altered in its early editions. Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., provides a provocative study of the similarities and differences between The Woman in White and Dracula. Again, Collins's novel is revealed as a work of fundamental importance to understanding the writings of later Victorians and for understanding Victorian culture.

As have most other scholarly societies, the Wilkie Collins Society has been hurt by the hard economic times that beset its members. Inflation has cut into its ability to serve its members, and recession is costing its younger members their jobs. The Society has had difficulty offering its members the benefits its officers hope to provide. Projects in progress are offerings of Collins-related books at discounts and the Newsletter. The Secretary and President continue to help students and scholars contact one another and find sources for research.

K.H.B.

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE: A CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY

Andrew Gasson

The Woman in White was first published in serial form in All The Year Round from November 26th 1859 to August 25th 1860, and concurrently in Harper's Weekly from November 26th 1859 to August 4th 1860. It rapidly became Collins's most popular novel and was issued in a great many editions. The identification of these early editions is difficult: first because of their variety and number; second because of the virtually simultaneous publication on both sides of the Atlantic; and third because of the many changes in the complicated text introduced by the author.

CHANGES IN CHRONOLOGY

Collins frequently revised his works in matters of style and detail. In The Woman in White, however, the complex nature of the plot, revolving as it does about certain key dates, obliged him in the interests of accuracy to make several alterations in the actual chronology of the story. These changes can to some extent be linked with its publishing history and the progress of its many early editions.

The most well known error of chronology is that first described in The Times¹ of October 30th 1860. The plot of Volume III relies on the fact that Lady Glyde's departure date for London was July 26th, whereas the reviewer points out ". . . we could easily show that Lady Glyde could not have left Blackwater-park before the 9th or 10th of August. Anybody who reads the story, and who counts the days from the conclusion of Miss Halcombe's diary, can verify the calculation for himself."

Collins wrote to his publisher, Edward Marston of Sampson Low, on October 31st ". . . If any fresh impression of 'The Woman in White' is likely to be wanted immediately, stop the press till I come back. The critic in the 'Times' is (between ourselves) right about the mistake in time. Shakespeare has made worse mistakes--that is one comfort, and readers are not critics who test an emotional book by the base rules of arithmetic, which is a second consolation. Nevertheless we will set it right the first opportunity . . ." ² Despite this stated intention, the book, which according to The Times critic was already in its third edition, was not revised in this particular respect until the first one volume edition in 1861,

respect until the first one volume edition in 1861, where Collins wrote in a new preface "Certain technical errors which had escaped me while I was writing the book are here rectified." The main correction involved putting back the relevant dates by sixteen days so that Miss Halcombe's Diary at Blackwater Park, for example, commences on June 11th instead of June 27th. But, as Kendrick³ has pointed out, the different Narratives of the story are so closely interwoven that this alteration introduced yet further inconsistencies such as those to be found in Mrs. Clement's testimony.

A second chronological error had already been noted by the Guardian⁴ of August 29th 1860, where the reviewer writes "... and it is almost a compliment to point out a slip in vol. iii., where an important entry in a register, assigned in p. 149 to September, is given in p. 203 to April." From a publication stand-point, the significance of this error in Hartright's Narrative is that it has been corrected by the time of the third edition.⁵

The majority of purely textual changes occurred between the serial version in All the Year Round and the first English, three volume edition. These have been fully documented in the Riverside Edition,⁶ which also indicates several other related alterations in chronology. Examples of these are:

1. Miss Halcombe's Diary at Limmeridge House commences on November 8 instead of November 7th (10th. Number).
2. In Miss Halcombe's Diary for November 27th, Laura's marriage date is changed from December 23rd to December 22nd (11th. Number).
3. In the Narrative of the Tombstone, the dates of Laura's marriage and death have been changed from December 23rd 1849 and July 28th 1850 to December 22nd 1849 and July 25th 1850 (26th. Number).
4. In the Narrative of the Doctor, the date of death has been similarly changed from July 28th to July 25th 1850 (26th. Number).
5. In Fosco's Narrative, the dates of Anne Catherick's death and Lady Glyde's arrival from London have been changed from July 28th and 29th to July 25th and 26th respectively (40th. Number).

In Mr. Fairlie's Narrative, however, "The fifth, sixth or seventh of July" in All the Year Round becomes "Towards the middle of July" in the English three volume edition, but "At the end of June, or the beginning of July" in the 1861 edition (22nd number).

PUBLISHING CHRONOLOGY

It is generally accepted that The Woman in White was published in America during August 1860, and probably on the 15th of that month. For this reason the Harper's edition has often been held to precede the English publication. Sadleir,⁷ for example, states that the book was published in England during September 1860; and that "[the Harper's edition] preceded the English by one month."⁸ His frequently used bibliographies are in accord with Brussel,⁹ who notes that "The New York edition was issued during August 1860, and the London edition was not published until September of the same year."

Robinson,¹⁰ on the other hand, suggests that both English and American editions were published on or about August 15th and how "... on August 22nd ... he learned ... that the entire first impression had been sold out on the day of publication, and that the second impression was selling fast." August publication in England is also supported by Parrish,¹¹ who gives a date between the 14th and 31st and refrains from suggesting priority for either the English or American edition.

The book form of The Woman in White was first announced by Sampson Low in the Publishers Circular as early as April 2nd 1860. It was then advertised as "to be published shortly" for the next three months until on July 2nd and July 17th it was described as "available immediately," although the story had not yet been actually completed. Robinson in this connexion quotes from a letter to Collin's mother dated July 26th, "... I have this instant written ... 'The End.'"¹¹

On August 1st 1860, Sampson Low become more precise and in their "List of Books for the month of August" the first title is The Woman in White with a publication date of "the 15th Instant." The same issue of the Publishers Circular carries on p. 407 the advertisement: "Notice - THE WOMAN IN WHITE, by Wilkie Collins, Esq., Author of the Dead Secret will be ready on Wednesday 15th August at all Libraries and Booksellers in Town and Country. In 3 vols. post 8vo. 3ls 6d. To provide against disappointment in obtaining a supply of this work in the day of publication, orders must be received by the publishers before the 8th instant."

On August 15th Sampson Low have a further notice that "THE WOMAN IN WHITE ... may be obtained this day"¹² and the book is listed in the fiction section of the editorial review of current publications.¹³ This is further confirmed in the subsequent issue of the Pub-

Publishers Circular, where it is listed as being published from the 14th to the 31st August.

The conclusion from these various advertisements and notices is that the English first edition shared a publication date with the American first, assuming this also to have been published on August 15th 1860. In any event, simultaneous publication on both sides of the Atlantic is surely what Collins intended.

ENGLISH THREE VOLUME EDITIONS

THE WOMAN IN WHITE. By Wilkie Collins. Author of The Dead Secret After Dark, etc., etc. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1860. 3 Vols.

Vol. I pp. viii + 316
 Vol. II pp. (ii) + 360
 Vol. III pp. (ii) + 368 + 16pp. advertisements dated August 1, 1860.

Purple cloth, blocked in gold and blind. Pale yellow end-papers. No half-titles. Preface dated August 3, 1860.

Because of its popularity, there were several issues of The Woman in White within the first few months. Robinson, for example, states that seven impressions appeared in six months,¹⁴ whilst Ashley¹⁵ records that "... published in mid-August ... Five editions were called for in the next two months, and a seventh appeared in February."

The true first edition is now rarely seen and requires the 16pp. publishers catalogue to be dated August 1860. Sadleir¹⁶ sounds a note of caution, stating that the first editions which he had seen had advertisements dated November 1860, "so that they clearly belong to a subsequent issue. The Woman in White is a case over which the buyer should take great care. A so called 'New Edition' was issued in the year of publication and with binding identical to that of the first edition, for which reason only the right advertisement matter can show that a copy is untampered with." This caveat of 1922 is probably even more important today when one considers the possible price for such an important but scarce first edition. The New Edition referred to is the one most frequently encountered by the collector. It can still be found with relative ease, but is quite often described erroneously as a second edition.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE DEAD SECRET," "AFTER DARK," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THIRD EDITION.

LONDON :

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1860.

[The Right of Translation is Reserved.]

THREE VOLUME THIRD EDITION

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE DEAD SECRET," "AFTER DARK," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON :

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1860.

[*The Right of Translation is Reserved.*]

"NEW EDITION" IN THREE VOLUMES (SEVENTH EDITION)

It has already been noted that according to a letter from Collins, himself, a new impression was required by the end of the day of publication and that by August 22nd 1860 this was selling fast. (Perhaps it may be speculated that this was a second impression of the first edition and contained the later advertisements to which Sadleir refers.) Certainly an identifiable second edition was published, since it has the words "second edition" on the title page and at least some of the errata listed by Parrish for the first edition have been corrected.¹⁷ Additionally, the editorial review of the Publishers Circular for September 15th 1860, page 454, records the "2d. of The Woman in White by Wilkie Collins" in their "more important publications of the fortnight," and Sampson Low featured this second edition in their bound-in book advertisements.

Also in the Publishers Circular of September 15th (page 464), a third edition is advertised as being available "on the 24th instant." This is similarly identifiable from the title page, and it is the first occasion in which the Guardian error of chronology has been seen corrected. The next editorial review, dated October 1st, refers to a fourth edition.¹⁸ This also has the words "fourth edition" on the title page, and at least one further difference in Parrish's errata. A fifth edition is listed in the issue of October 16th (page 503), and Sampson Low, themselves, advertised a "New Edition this day" on November 1st (page 554). Thereafter, all reference in the Publishers Circular until the end of 1860 is to the new edition in three volumes.

This new edition appears to exist in two distinct states for volumes II and III. In the case of Volume II, p. [1] sometimes carries its signature "B," but is sometimes unsigned. In Volume III, two collations have been seen:

a) [ii] + [1 - 3] + 4 - 368 + 16pp. advertisements dated November 1, 1860.

b) [ii] + [1 - 2] + 3 - 368 + 16pp. advertisements dated November 1, 1860.

Since the first of these collations is the same as that of the first, third and fourth editions, it may be that the second variation represents a later state.

Since the various three volume issues have differences in both chronology and errata, it does seem more correct to refer to them as editions, although some may have had more than one impression.

ENGLISH ONE VOLUME EDITION (1861)

THE WOMAN IN WHITE. By Wilkie Collins, Author of "Antonina", "The Dead Secret", etc., etc. New Edition. London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1861. 1 Volume. pp. viii + 496.

Magenta Cloth, blocked in gold and blind. Pale yellow end-papers. Half-title. Steel engraved, additional illustrated title page by J. Gilbert, opposite mounted portrait photograph of Collins.

It is generally stated that this one volume edition was published in February 1861. However, further study of the Publishers Circular shows that, despite mention of The Dead Secret and Antonina in the same one volume series, The Woman in White was not advertised until April 15th 1861. The May 1st issue records a publication date from the 15th to the 30th April, although Sampson Low's own advertisement states "The cheap edition of The Woman in White is published this day, May 1st."

This one volume edition is of interest for several reasons:

1. It contains a new preface, dated February 1861 (despite the apparently later date of publication).
2. It is the first occasion on which The Times error of chronology is corrected, and it contains several other alterations in the text.
3. Parrish records variations in the style and position of the printer's imprint (W. Clowes and Sons on p. [iv], or William Clowes and Sons on p. [ii]), together with a variation in the binding.¹⁹
4. It contains a notable misprint in p. 190 with "marrying we" for "marrying me." N.U.C. records a further, corrected state of this edition.
5. It forms part of the first collected edition of Collin's works.
6. It forms the basis of the text for the majority of subsequent editions.²⁰
7. It contains a mounted portrait photograph of Collins.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "ANTONINA," "THE DEAD SECRET," ETC., ETC.

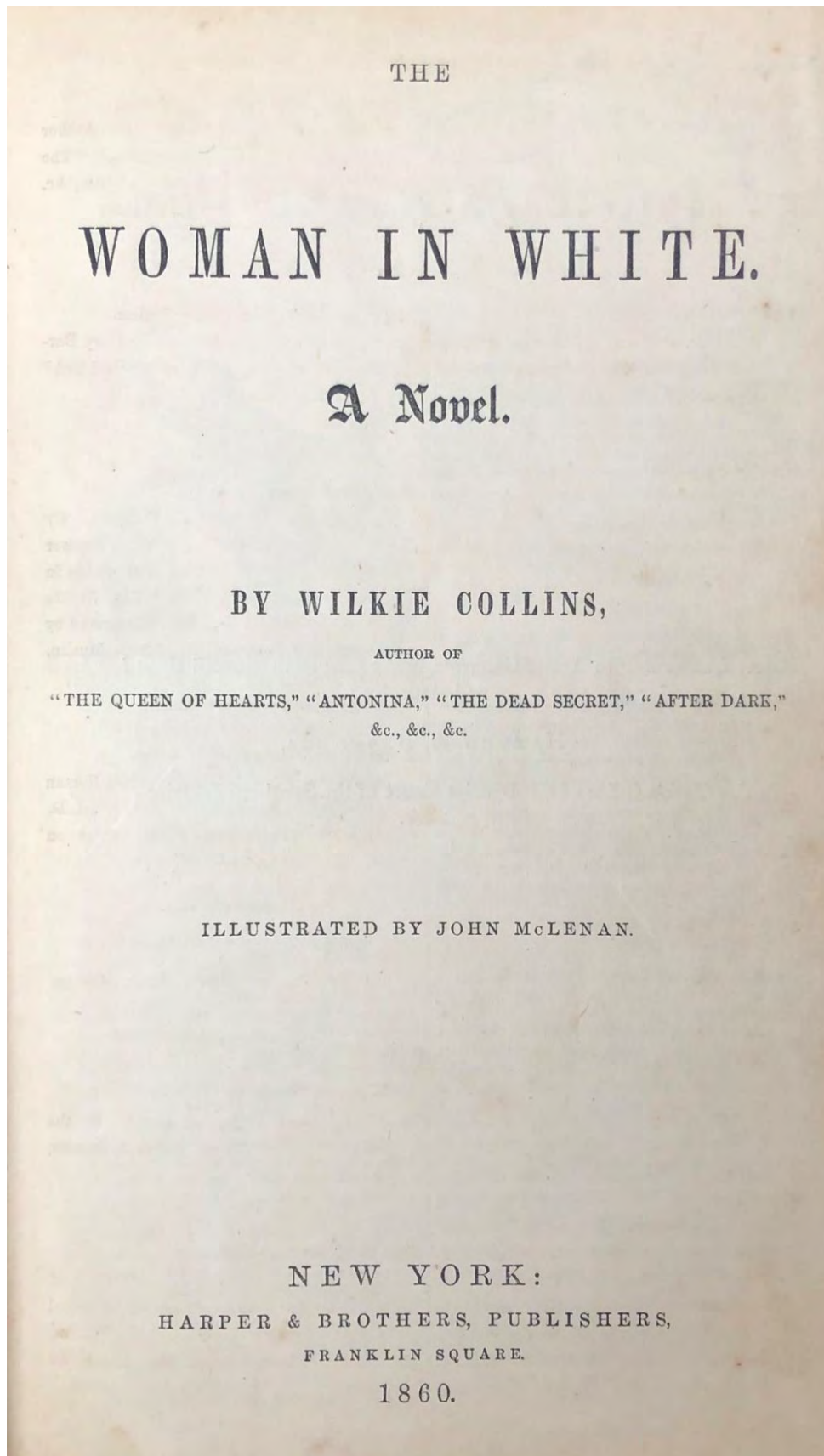
NEW EDITION.

LONDON :

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1861.

[The Right of Translation is Reserved.]



AMERICAN EDITIONS

THE WOMAN IN WHITE. A Novel. By Wilkie Collins, Author of "The Queen of Hearts", "Antonina", "The Dead Secret", "After Dark", &c., &c., &c. Illustrated by John McLenan. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers. 1860.

1 Volume pp. 264.

Publisher's advertisements occupy pp. [1] and 2 (dated August 1860); (261 - 264). This edition contains seventy-four illustrations by John McLenan. Dark brown cloth, blocked and lettered in blind; spine lettered in gold and illustrated in silver with the figure of a woman. Brown end-papers. No half-title. (Brussel states that this edition was issued in various coloured cloths. Although Sadleir describes the brown cloth, Parrish records both brown and black.)

The advertisements form part of the collation, and there appear to be three distinct states. Two of these (1 and 3) are noted by Parrish and the third (2) has been described by Moss:²¹

1. P. [261] has "Muloch" for "Mulock" and lists nine of her books; p. [262] advertises The Mill on the Floss.

2. "Mulock" is correctly spelled on p. [261], eleven titles are listed and p. [262] advertises The Mill on the Floss.

3. "Mulock" is correctly spelled with eleven titles listed, but p. [262] carries an advertisement for nine titles by W. M. Thackeray.

In contrast with the first English, the Harper's edition follows the original All the Year Round text very much more closely, so that the great majority of chronological errors remain uncorrected. With the exceptions of a single change in each of the 15th and 38th numbers, alterations in the text of the American edition occur only in the 33rd, 34th, and 35th numbers, where most but not all of the English changes have been incorporated. In the case of the 38th number, the omission of Mr. Vesey's letter means that it is altogether absent from the Harper's version in both places where it might have appeared in the text. It is also of interest that the later 1865 Harper's edition follows precisely that of 1860, so that all of the errors of chronology, including those pointed out by The Times and the Guardian are perpetuated. This is once again in contrast with the many alterations between English serial, three volume and one volume versions. The 1860 First American Edition contains no preface, although a shortened version of that published in the English First does appear in the 1865 Harper's edition.

OTHER EDITIONS

On the Continent, The Woman in White was translated into French and several other languages. It was also published by Tauchnitz in 1860 as Volumes 525 and 526 of the "Collection of British Authors," its chronology being the same as that of the three volume, first English edition.

In America, Collins suffered from his perennial difficulty with pirated editions. This was despite his best endeavours on behalf of Harpers to provide them with proofs as rapidly as possible, and explains why time did not permit illustrations in the final two Numbers, 39 and 40. Nevertheless, twenty years later he bitterly recalled in Considerations on the Copyright Question Addressed to an American Friend (London: Trubner 1880, p. 12) "... one American publisher informed a friend of mine that he had sold 'one hundred and twenty thousand copies of The Woman in White.'"

Sutherland²² suggests that the equivalent of more than 100,000 copies were sold in All the Year Round, together with a probable 50,000 of the 1861 edition. If these numbers are added to those from the several three volume editions, subsequent English editions in 1865, 1872, 1875, 1889, 1890, 1894, and 1896 and later Harper's issues in 1861, 1863, 1865, 1867, 1871, 1873, 1893 and 1899, it can be seen that during the nineteenth century The Woman in White was sold in truly prodigious quantities.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE: A CHRONOLOGY

November 26th 1859	Serialisation begins in <u>All the Year Round</u> and <u>Harper's Weekly</u> .
January 1860	Sampson Low acquire book publication right.
April 16th 1860	First Announcement by Sampson Low in <u>Publishers Circular</u> .
July 26th 1860	Collins completes <u>The Woman in White</u> .
August 4th 1860	Serialisation completed by <u>Harper's Weekly</u> .

August 15th 1860	Publication in book form of first English edition and first American edition.
August 22nd 1860	Second impression of English edition "selling well."
August 26th 1860	Serialisation completed in <u>All the Year Round</u> .
August 29th 1860	<u>Guardian</u> Review.
by September 15th 1860	Second edition.
September 24th 1860	Third edition.
Between September 14th and 29th 1860	Fourth edition.
By October 16th 1860	A fifth edition.
October 30th 1860	<u>The Times</u> Review.
November 1st 1860	New edition.
February 1861	Date of Preface to one volume edition.
April 15th 1861	First advertisement for one volume edition.
Between April 15th and May 1st 1861	Publication of one volume edition.

Notes

¹Page, Norman. Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. p. 103.

²Marston, E. After Work. London: William Heinemann, 1904. p. 85.

³Kendrick, W. M. "The Sensationalism of The Woman in White." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 32 (June 1977), 23.

⁴Page, p. 90.

⁵Although a third edition has been examined, it has not yet been possible to locate a second edition of Vol. III, so that this correction may have been made in either the second or third edition. It would be of interest to hear from anyone possessing a copy of the second edition to clarify this point.

⁶The Woman in White, ed. Anthea Trodd. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969.

⁷Sadleir, Michael. Excursions in Victorian Bibliography. London: Chaundy and Cox, 1922. p. 140.

⁸Sadleir, Michael. XIX Century Fiction. London: Constable, 1951. p. 95.

⁹Brussel, I. R. Anglo-American First Editions, 1826-1900. Volume I, East to West. London: Constable, 1935. p. 45.

¹⁰Robinson, Kenneth. Wilkie Collins: A Biography. London: Bodley Head, 1951. pp. 145-146.

¹¹Robinson, p. 145.

¹²Publishers Circular, p. 422.

¹³Publishers Circular, p. 415.

¹⁴Robinson, p. 147.

¹⁵Ashley, Robert. Wilkie Collins. London: Arthur Barker, 1952. p. 59.

¹⁶Sadleir, Excursions, pp. 140-141.

¹⁷parrish and Miller, pp. 139-140.

¹⁸publishers Circular, p. 477.

¹⁹parrish and Miller, pp. 42-43.

²⁰E.g. Chatto and Windus editions, and Odham Press edition. O.U.P. World's Classics (1980), p. xxiii, adds Cassell's (1902), Everyman's Library (1910), Maurice Richardson (1955), and World's Classics (1921).

²¹Mott, H. Bookseller's catalogue and personal communication.

²²Sutherland, J. A. Victorian Novelists and Publishers. London: Athlone, 1976. p. 42.

TWICE-TOLD TALES OF TWO COUNTS:
THE WOMAN IN WHITE AND DRACULA

Mark M. Hennelly, Jr.

Anyone who reads Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White (1859-60) and Bram Stoker's Dracula (1897) in close succession should experience repeated flashes of deja vu. Stoker admitted "borrowing"¹ the epistolary form perfected by Collins; but late Victorian critics of Stoker's Gothic masterpiece, especially those from Punch and The Bookman, saw little other evidence of Collins's influence: "Since Wilkie Collins left us we had no tale of mystery so liberal in manner and so closely woven. But with the intricate plot, and the methods of narrative, the resemblance to the stories of the author of 'The Woman in White' ceases; for the audacity and the horror of 'Dracula' are Mr. Stoker's own."² In the twentieth century, only Nuel Pharr Davis has gone further. After suggesting that by the example of the The Woman in White, "Bram Stoker was inspired to frighten generations of youth with Dracula," Davis footnotes that "the schoolroom scene of children talking about the beautiful lady in the cemetery is the most exactly identifiable evidence of Dracula's debt to The Woman in White, but there are a host of others, and the letter-diary form of Dracula is one of the most interesting of The Woman in White's imitations."³ Unfortunately, Davis never specifies his "host of others," though there is evidence of provocative similarities, if not downright influence, which is much more "exactly identifiable" than the schoolroom scene. Rather than stressing a reductive chain of influences, however, I would like to indicate some of the many uncanny resemblances between the two novels. The real value of such an exercise lies in the reader's consequent understanding of the similarities (and dissimilarities) between a mid and a late nineteenth-century handling of corresponding Victorian and Gothic narrative structures, plot structures, image patterns, and character clusters. More specifically, it lies in a final understanding of how the remarkably analogous Count Fosco and Count Dracula mutually personify compatible themes as their mysterious characters fascinate and invade the vulnerable defenses of the Victorian audience reading these twice-told tales of two counts.

As I have indicated in a previous study of Dracula,⁴ its narrative structure is splintered into various private and public papers for epistemological reasons. Stoker notes in his Preface that these papers are "given from the standpoints and within the range of knowledge of those who made them" so as to assure the late Victorian reader "that a history almost at variance with

the possibilities of later-day belief may stand forth as simple fact" (D,p.vii).⁵ And as we know, this narrative structure is an admitted "borrowing" from Collins who, in The Woman in White, originally stressed the legal necessity of Walter Hartright's unifying various, different points of view: "The terrible story of the conspiracy so obtained, was presented in fragments, sadly incoherent in themselves, and widely detached from each other" (WW,p.390).⁶ The point of Collins's narrative "borrowing," however, goes far beyond style and directly into the substantive concerns of both novelists. Both epistolary tales are almost obsessed with trading information or acquiring "knowledge," that is, the gnostic or noetic process which is at the thematic core of the Victorian crisis of faith as well as at the nerve-center of the shock of recognition provoked by the otherworldly, apparent or real, in Gothic fiction. These two common crises of belief or faith are the particular, shared concern of The Woman in White and Dracula.

Both works initially are reflexive treatises on the empirical methodology of induction; in lawyer Kyrle's words to Hartright: "I pass over minor point of evidence, on both sides, to save time; and I ask you, if this case were to go now into a court of law--to go before a jury, bound to take facts as they reasonably appear--where are your proofs?" (WW,p.407). Yet both are also complementary exercises in subjective literary detection--what we might call Victorian-Gothic whodunits--trying to capture and symbolically assimilate the alien mentalities, or epistemologies, of Fosco and Dracula. Both, then, try to reconcile the apparently conflicting persuasions of objectivity and subjectivity. Marian Halcombe writes: "In the perilous uncertainty of our present situation, it is hard to say what future interests may not depend upon the regularity of the entries in my journal, and upon the reliability of my recollection at the time when I make them" (WW,p.259). And Jonathan Harker echoes her concern with personal certitude and objective authority: "Let me begin with facts--bare, meagre facts, verified by books and figures, and of which there can be no doubt. I must not confuse them with experiences which will have to rest on my observation, or my memory of them" (D,p.33). Indeed, the private eye finally becomes the private I in each novel as the intimate, personal act of recording one's thoughts and collating them with apparently unrelated public documents discovers certitude in once relative emotion collected and recollected in tranquillity. Moreover, this act engages the Victorian reader in the surrogate but simultaneous process of assimilating diverse epistemological viewpoints and reconciling them by personally discovering similarity in dissimilarity. Marian is careful to preserve her auto-

nomous self in the sanctuary of her writing-desk where her "journal was already secured, with other papers, in the table-drawer" (WW,p.276); and Hartright repeats this insistence on the sanctity of solipsism, the Victorian heritage of the Gothic quest for the absolute validity of heightened states of sense and sensibility:⁷ "I turn to my diary for repose. The habit of entering accurately must help to soothe me" (D,p.40). Interestingly enough, at the conclusion of both novels, a child--Hartright's and Harker's--becomes the heir apparent to the collected papers, the novels themselves, and a significant surrogate for the reader who has also just inherited the various epistemologies gathered in this reflexive "mass of material": "We want no proofs; we ask none to believe us! This boy will some day know what a brave and gallant woman his mother is" (D,p.418).

Such a narrative structure is reinforced by the comparable plot structures of both novels, which likewise stress the resolution of rival epistemologies. Hartright participates in a "mysterious adventure" (WW,p.39) to solve the enigma behind the woman in white; while Harker also pursues what I have called the Victorian "gnostic quest,"⁸ "a wild adventure" in which he and the other questers "seem to be drifting into unknown places and unknown ways; into a whole world of dark and dreadful things" (D,p.395). That is, the occidental vampire hunters wish to detect or solve the noetic riddle of Dracula and his exotic life force; as Van Helsing puts it, "We shall go to make our search--if I can call it so, for it is not search but knowing" (D,p.348). Appropriately, both structures in Gothic fashion seek to reconcile rational and irrational premises. On the one hand, like conventional detective novels, both appear to be chess games of rational logic between master detective and master criminal, each attempting a special syllogistic strategy to outwit and checkmate both the other and, temporarily, the reader. Marian implies that Fosco's gamesmanship is an analogy for his criminal strategies: "For the first two games he politely allowed me to conquer him; and then, when he saw that I had found him out, begged my pardon, and, at the third game, checkmated me in ten minutes" (WW,p.206). Dracula's momentary disappearance prompts Van Helsing to use the same metaphor to describe seizing the advantage: "Good! It has given us opportunity to cry 'check' in some ways in this chess game, which we play for the stake of human souls" (D,p.279). On the other hand, Hartright anticipates the irrational cosmos of Dracula when he compares his mysterious quest to the deja vu ambience of a chthonian nightmare: "a sensation oddly akin to the helpless discomfort familiar to all of us in sleep, when we recognize yet cannot reconcile the anomalies and contra-

dictions of a dream" (WW,p.25). In similar fashion, Harker wonders "whether any dream could be more terrible than the unnatural, horrible net of gloom and mystery which seemed closing around me" (D,pp.36-37).

As The Woman in White and Dracula approach their goals of answering epistemological riddles, both rely on a comparable kind of breathless suspense to anticipate their respective re-solutions of Gothicism's rational and irrational modes. For example, Hartright's imminent collision with his flesh-and-blood Count stimulates and simulates the reader's own terrified anxieties: "The rapid motion of the cab, the sense that every instant now was bringing me nearer the Count, the conviction that I was embarked at last, without let or hindrance, on my hazardous enterprise, heated me into such a fever of excitement that I shouted to the man to go faster and faster" (WW,p.543). Mina's description of the vampire hunters' desperate attempt to overtake the ghoulish Dracula's coffin in Transylvania before sunset echoes analogous but more horrified audience anxiety: "On the cart was a great square chest. My heart leaped as I saw it, for I felt that the end was coming. The evening was now drawing close, and well I knew that at sunset the Thing, which was all then imprisoned there, would take new freedom and could in any of many forms elude all pursuit" (D,p.412). And indeed Collins, in an 1887 letter to The Globe, annotated the resolution of his symbolic structure with a perception that seems even more true of Stoker's tale of the Victorian divided self than of his own: "The destruction of her identity represents a first division of the story; the recovery of her identity marks a second division" (WW, quoted on p. 596). His Laura symbolically dies and is reborn; in turn, Mina "almost" becomes an "Un-Dead," and then is redeemed by her transfusion of Eastern and Western bloodlines, by her sanguine understanding, in fact her oral incorporation, of Dracula's blood knowledge.

The major image patterns in each novel are very similar and should be apparent to readers of both tales. Many of the Gothic locales and atmospherics, for example, are alike, approximating what Anne calls "the world beyond the grave" (WW,p.253). In fact, a sentence like "I saw the white tomb again, and the veiled woman rising out of it" could easily describe the central Gothic iconography from either book, though here it is from The Woman in White (p.262). Thus graveyards, insane asylums, dreary mansions, old chapels, zoological gardens, spectral trysts in "the thickening obscurity of the twilight" (WW,p.262), and eerie encounters during misty or foggy, moonlight nocturnes, especially at Blackwater Park and Transylvania where "in almost complete darkness, . . . the rolling clouds obscured

the moon" (D,p.15), establish the chiaroscuro tone of Victorian-Gothic in both novels. Again the difference resides only in the relative reality of the otherworldly impulses in each tale; and yet as G. R. Thompson has suggested, both kinds of Gothic phenomena, the rational and irrational or natural and preternatural, are "compatible" with each other.⁹ Both ultimately stress the validity of instinctual or imaginative responses to metaphysical crises. In The Woman in White, of course, as in Ann Radcliffe's Gothic romances, the suspected occult defers, though with serious qualification, to the more rational symbols of conventional science and law; while in Dracula the related point of the story, as in Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, is the desperate need to balance the rational with belief in the existential validity of the irrational. In each novel an exclusively secular or rational approach to life, symbolized by the ineffectual legal systems of Harker or Kyrle, by the medical sciences of Mr. Dawson, who misdiagnoses Marian's typhus, or of the skeptical Dr. Seward, and by the aristocratic prejudices of Mr. Fairlie or Godalming, is explicitly condemned. In Dracula, as Van Helsing preaches repeatedly, irrational belief in vampirism, or maintaining "the open mind," is the only successful weapon against the Count. In The Woman in White, on the other hand, it is not belief in the irrational lore of vampires, but the irrational belief in love that resolves the dualism of the divided self. At the end of his quest, Hartright consequently discovers that his and Marian's symbolic goal of a reborn Laura would have been unattainable if "we had loved her less dearly, if the instinct planted in us by that love had not been far more certain than any exercise of reasoning, far keener than any process of observation" (WW,p.399). And yet the final sentence of Dracula likewise emphasizes that out of the irrational, nightmare imagery of that novel, the vampire hunters' legacy of love for Mina will ultimately redeem and renew her son: "later on he will understand how some men so loved her, that they did dare much for her sake" (D,p.418).

Finally, then, a belief symbolically dramatized by both Collins and Stoker is that a Victorian life without Gothic libidinal energy is a paralyzed or parasitic, empty gesture, while libido without love and self-sacrifice is mere lust and licentiousness. In a therianthropic Gothic image, which prefigures both his own (ironically) and Dracula's instincts, the vampirish Count Fosco reviles a "savage" bloodhound and implies that its cowardly demonism must be domesticated, that natural savagery and civilization must be symbolically reconciled: "Anything that you can surprise unawares-- anything that is afraid of your big body, and your wicked white teeth and your slobbering, bloodthirsty mouth, is the thing you like to fly at. You could

throttle me at this moment, you mean, miserable bully; and you daren't so much as look me in the face, because I'm not afraid of you. Will you think the better of it, and try your teeth in my fat neck?" (WW,p.199). And in *Dracula* the cockney London zoo-keeper uses a comparable kind of theriomorphism to describe the natural instincts of his wild wolves: "there's a deal of the same nature in us as in them theer animiles" (D,p.149). Indeed, both novels finally employ the same image to emphasize the need for a fortunate fall from the heady towers of Victorian class superiority, cloistered innocence, and skeptical rationalism to the repressed "bitter waters" of instinctual human nature which flood Gothic fiction. For Marian the "thought of" Laura's victimization by the Count "welled up like a spring in the depths of my heart, and filled it with waters of bitterness" (WW,p.262); while Van Helsing often repeats the same metaphor, noting that after the loss of Lucy, they "must pass through the bitter waters to reach the sweet" (D,p.222). Both bitter baptisms assure an ultimate, sweet renewal.

Like the image patterns, the symmetrical character relationships in each novel are remarkably similar. Even the individual names--Hartright-Harker, Marian-Mina, Laura-Lucy--suggest the probable extent of Collins's influence on Stoker. And the figurative hint of almost incestuous or narcissistic *menages a trois*, like those implied between Hartright, Laura, and Marian or Fosco, Lady Fosco, and Marian, and between Dracula, Lucy, and Mina are also notably parallel. Even Pesca and Renfield are similar grotesques personifying Victorian Jekyll-Hydeism. Briefly, then, Hartright and Harker play comparable roles as sympathetic double agents, that is, as the major reporters and actors in the drama. Each is a reader-identification figure, what Stoker terms "a sufficient substitute" (D,p.19) for the nineteenth-century audience. As detached Victorian lawyer and artist, both also grow from mere uninvolved spectators of life so that, as Hartright indicates, the rising Gothic action can force him, like Harker, finally "to act for [him]self" (WW,p.578). Along the way, both also learn the danger of repressive concealment and the redemptive value of "open-minded" trust and revelation. Speaking really of all his later improved relationships, Hartright confirms: "We had no concealments from each other" (WW,p.374); and Harker seconds such a motion: "there was to be no more concealment of anything amongst us" (D,p.359). It should be noted, though, that some of Hartright's thematic functions seem split between Harker and Van Helsing so that just as Walter must learn to identify with, and at least partially assimilate his Count's powers, so too must the Professor. In fact, Hartright affirms that "I thought with his mind" (WW,p.546, Col-

Collins's emphasis); and Van Helsing repeats, almost verbatim, this telepathic virtue: "I, too, am wily and I think his mind" (D,p.346).

Laura and Anne, those "living reflexions of one another" (WW,p.84), are likewise reflected in Lucy since all three are not only conventional emblems of Gothic embowered damsels in distress, but are also and more crucially tragic victims, or scapegoats, of Victorian female stereotyping. Thus, Laura's apparent death creates "the false Lady Glyde" and "the true Lady Glyde" (WW,p.568) just as Lucy's qualified death juxtaposes "the false Lucy" against "the true Lucy" (D, p.341). Laura, then, becomes "the dead alive" (WW, p.387), and Lucy of course, one of the "Un-dead" (D, p.221). Each suffers under the repressive "dual life" (D,p.320) which both Collins and Stoker find plaguing their respective mid and late Victorian audience, especially the female audience. Indeed, the "suppressed tigerish jealousy" (WW,p.175) of Madame Fosco and the latent "serpent hatred" (WW,p. 451) of Mrs. Catherick often metamorphose them into sinister succubi. Still, Collins's condemnation of the tragic, life-denying consequences of cloistering females against sexual realities is generally less blatant than Stoker's similar though more outraged critique. Laura, for instance, after Glyde's proposal of marriage, must hear the facts of sexual life from Marian: "I poured the profaning bitterness of this world's wisdom into that pure heart and that innocent mind. . . . The simple illusions of her girlhood are gone" (WW,p.167). Stoker's fainting female, on the other hand, more irrationally personifies the ghastly Gothic results of the Victorian dislocation between flesh and spirit, between its own prurience and its pretensions of "purity": "She seemed like a nightmare of Lucy as she lay there; the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth--which it made one shudder to see--the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity" (D,pp.234-35).

Finally, it is the emblematic posture of Laura and Anne replayed in Lucy that the reader may find most eerie when comparing the two novels. All three girls are virtually mysterious women in white, suspected lamias etched against a backdrop of moonlight and tombstone marble. And the obsessive Victorian fascination with the macabre interrelations between female sexuality, death, change, and changelessness¹⁰ is captured, indeed almost metaphysically frozen, in the enigma of this recurring Gothic tableau. Thus, Hart-right feverishly describes the deja vu titillations of seeing Laura mime the symbolic attitude of Anne: "My eyes fixed upon the white gleam of her muslin gown and head-dress in the moonlight, and a sensation, for

which I can find no name--a sensation that quickened my pulse, and raised a fluttering at my heart--began to steal over me" (WW,p.50). And Dr. Seward's account of the reincarnation of Lucy, his "dead" lover, echoes the disturbing oxymoron of Hartright's mingled sense of dread and desire: "There was a long spell of silence, a big, aching void, and then from the Professor a keen 'S-s-s-s!' He pointed; and far down the avenue of yews we saw a white figure advance--a dim white figure, which held something dark at its breast. The figure stopped, and at the moment a ray of moonlight fell upon the masses of driving clouds and showed in startling prominence a dark-haired woman, dressed in the cerements of the grave" (D,p.231).

But the similarities between Marian and Mina are even more startling and significant since both women outgrow the Gothic postures of their weaker sisters and thereby reintegrate and heal the divided self. Indeed, both ultimately prove to be the Victorian answer to Margaret Fuller's famous question: "Will there never be a being to combine a man's mind and a woman's heart?"¹¹ Initially, though, both girls appear to be as one-sided as their epicene counterparts. Marian's notions of caste assume it is indecorous for her blue-blooded sister to contemplate marriage with a commoner like Hartright, while Mina feels it is even "improper" (D,p.188) for her husband to hold her hand in public. Both change, however, as soon as they are wooed and branded by their demon lovers. Count Fosco admits his restrained passion for Marian: "behold in the image of Marian Halcombe, the first and last weakness of Fosco's life!" (WW,pp.261-62). Count Dracula similarly, though with more sadomasochism, admits his ardor for Mina: "And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while; and shall be later my companion and my helper" (D,p.317). And certainly his act of "passion" is far more violent and overtly sexual than Fosco's when "the ruthless hands of the Count had held" Mina "in that terrible and horrid position, with her mouth to the open wound in his breast" (D,pp.313-14). The fact that these early emblems of female orthodoxy are singled out for love by such glaring personifications of depravity ultimately marks both women with ambivalent sexual connotations.

Such a reversal is quite rare in most mainstream Victorian fiction and thus is disturbing to an audience weaned on languishing ladies of Shalott like Laura, Anne, and Lucy (before her "undeath"). In Gothic fiction, despoiling virgins like Antonia in The Monk is almost a perfunctory convention, if titillation can be said ever to be perfunctory; but when virgins are

violated in the Victorian novel, and in one sense even seem to welcome the violation, it makes for a shattering commentary on cultural repression. Though Collins chose to kill off the illegitimate and distracted Anne, and Stoker did the same with her fictional twin, the corrupted Lucy, neither writer resorts to such an expedient with his major heroine. Rather, Marian and Mina both develop sanguine, androgynous personalities after their baptisms of blood and flesh; and consequently they adumbrate, as much as Hardy's Sue Bridehead or Eliot's Gwendolen Harleth, the "New Woman" whom Mina early scoffs at (D,p.98). Thus Marian matures to a "magnificent woman," with "the foresight and the resolution of a man," one who "stands in the strength of her love and her courage" (WW,p.296). Similarly, "that wonderful Madame Mina" boasts a "man's brain--a brain that a man should have were he gifted--and a woman's heart" (D,p.258). Indeed, the last sentences of both novels preach comparable testaments to the greater glory of Marian and Mina. Collins ends: "Marian was the good angel of our lives--let Marian end our Story" (WW,p.584); and as we have heard, Stoker concludes: "some men so loved her [Mina], that they did dare much for her sake" (D,p.418).

Two of the most eccentric, corresponding characters in the novels are the Italian homunculus Pesca and the native English "zoophagist" Renfield. Both Gothic curiosities are also classic examples of the Victorian divided self, or what Dr. Seward terms "unconscious cerebration" and its "conscious brother" (D,p.76), when reflecting on Renfield's split-personality. Moreover, both lead comparable double lives; both are grotesque alter-egos for the major, self-divided characters, and both are intimately connected with their respective counts. Pesca, for instance, unaware of the real extent of Hartright's past trials and tragedies, ironically adumbrates the links between himself and Fosco and thus, more importantly, links Hartright with the dualism of this "secret self": "The iron that has entered into our souls has gone too deep for you to find it. Leave the refugee [Fosco] alone! Laugh at him, distrust him, open your eyes in wonder at that secret self which smoulders in him, sometimes under the every-day respectability and tranquility of a man like me" (WW,p.535, Collins's emphasis). The masquerading Pesca is early characterized "by the harmless eccentricity of his character" (WW,p.3); and yet it is later clear that his "extraordinary anxiety" (WW,p.540) brands him as a possible murderer and thus a fitting prefiguration of the self-masking, often gentle homicidal maniac Renfield. Seward suggests Renfield's normal abnormality when he wonders whether "I have anything in common with him" (D,p.118). Thus, this "sanest lunatic" (D,p.273), like Pesca, personifies the "secret self" which erases the false Victo-

rian boundary line between reason and rage and in Gothic fashion bridges the gap between abnormality and normalcy. As Renfield himself understands when remembering the Count's last visitation, "I must not deceive myself; it was no dream, but all a grim reality" (D,p.306). And just as Pesca and Count Fosco are marginal members of the symbolic "secret Brotherhood" of humanity, so too Renfield is "so mixed up with the Count" (D,p.273) that the unavoidable symbolic implication is that fledgling, native vampires, like Renfield, are already alive and unwell in London before the "foreign" Dracula ever smuggles himself ashore. Ultimately, though, both would-be murderers convert to self-sacrificing messiahs as Renfield, in battle with the Count, gives up his life for Madam Mina and Pesca struggles to bring his Count to justice for the salvation of Hartright and the honor of the Brotherhood.

By far the most teasing and thematic correspondences, however, exist between those dark paracletes, the two counts--Fosco and Dracula. Again and again, Collins's and Stoker's irony implies that their respective Gothic villains represent crucial atavistic and anarchic values which the repressive Victorian culture, to its own detriment, has neglected.¹² Consequently, these foreign imports must be culturally assimilated if they are to rehabilitate England's insular creeds. But at first glance the culture and the reader see both men only as monstrous, if masterful, criminals. To justify his own *raison d'être*, Fosco even descants on the craft of the creative criminal: "The hiding of a crime, or the detection of a crime, what is it? A trial of skill between the police on one side, and the individual on the other When the criminal is a resolute, educated, highly-intelligent man, the police, in nine cases out of ten, lose" (WW,pp.210-11). And Mina similarly identifies the criminal pleasure principle she finds motivating Dracula: "The Count is a criminal and of criminal type. . . . as he is a criminal he is selfish" (D,p.378). Clue by clue, however, the attentive detective-reader discovers that beneath these villains' veneer of surface evil and corruption survives a vital life force capable of redeeming the moribund Victorian wasteland. Marian is most honest here: "I can only repeat that I do assuredly feel, even on this short acquaintance, a strange half-willing, half-unwilling liking for the Count. He seems to have established over me . . . [a] sort of ascendancy" (WW,p.210). Mina's less urbane Count, of course, has also "infect[ed]" her (D,p.353); but a good part of this infection is figuratively as well as literally sanguine and thus salutary since "There have been from the loins of this very one great men and good women" (D,p.265). Fosco discusses his symbolic role as a jaded reality principle in terms of its shock therapy: "I say what other people

only think; and when all the rest of the world is in a conspiracy to accept the mask for the true face, mine is the rash hand that tears off the plump pasteboard, and shows the bare bones beneath" (WW,p.213). Dracula is content to abandon skeptical metaphysics for "open-minded" epistemology: "There is reason that all things are as they are, and did you see with my eyes and know with my knowledge, you would perhaps better understand" (D,p.23).

Aside from Fosco's corpulence, which itself is indicative of his vampirish orality, even the particular emphases in the appearances of the two counts are quite similar. In fact, Stoker's life-long confidant, the famous Victorian actor Sir Henry Irving, was almost certainly one of the models for Dracula's commanding presence and physiognomy; and his "quality of strangeness" has been described as possessing "a dash of Wilkie Collins's Count Fosco."¹³ At any rate, Fosco's "singular sallow-fairness" of complexion, his cruel, "plump yellow-white fingers" and rich head of "dark brown" hair (WW,pp.197-99) are repeated in Dracula's "extraordinary pallor," his "white" hands, "broad, with squat fingers" which were "cut to a sharp point," and his bushy "hair growing. . . profusely" (D,pp.19-20). More significant are the almost identical eyes and mouth. Indeed, Fosco's identifying trait is "the extraordinary expression and extraordinary power of his eyes," which Marian describes as possessing "a cold, clear, beautiful irresistible glitter in them, which forces me to look at him, and yet causes me sensations when I do look, which I would rather not feel" (WW,p.197). Dracula's famed eyes are even more hypnotic, always "gleam[ing]" or "burn[ing] into" one (D,p.309) and often "positively blazing. . . . as if the flames of hell-fire blazed behind them" (D,p.42) like the "blaze of basilisk horror" (D,p.57). As suggested earlier, while Dracula "can transform himself to [a] wolf" (D,p.263), Fosco's gastronomic appetite also becomes carnivorous when it is symbolically displaced onto a vampirish "bloodhound" who cowers under his gaze and hand, a brutal familiar with "wicked white teeth, and . . . slobbering, bloodthirsty mouth" that would like to "try [its] teeth in . . . a fat neck" (WW,p.199). Dracula's parasitic appetites, of course, leave him "like a filthy leech . . . gorged with blood," while "on his lips were gouts of fresh blood" (D,p.56). And his mouth, too, is "rather cruel-looking with peculiarly sharp white teeth" (D,p.20).¹⁴ Moreover, Marian remarks on Fosco's "unusual command of the English language" and his impeccable "fluency" (WW,p.197); and Harker likewise remarks to Dracula: "you know and speak English thoroughly . . . you speak excellently" (D,p.22). Finally, both counts give the appearance of perpetual rejuvenation, almost of immortality (WW, p.197; D,p.20)

Of course, as one of the "undead" Dracula, suffering "the curse of immortality" (D,p.235), justifies such a claim--he is a master of "necromancy," or "divination of the dead" (D,p.260). But even Fosco, significantly, "has discovered . . . a means of petrifying the body after death, so as to preserve it . . . to the end of time" (WW,p.199).

More revealing is the common Faustian pedigree of Fosco's and Dracula's scholarly and scientific backgrounds, which pedigree helps in part to explain their original powers. Fosco's pompous heading to his narrative¹⁵ indicates that, among other upper case titles, he is the "PERPETUAL ARCH-MASTER OF THE ROSICRUCIAN MASONS OF MESOPOTAMIA" (WW,p.557). But he is just as adept at chemistry as hermetics: "Chemistry, especially, has always had irresistible attractions for me, from the enormous, the illimitable power which the knowledge of it confers" (WW,p.560). Indeed, Fosco is such a polymath that he would be "the prominent personage of any assembly in the civilised world" (WW,p.199). He boasts "a daring independence of thought, a knowledge of books in every language and an experience of society in half the capitals of Europe" (WW,p.199). Dracula "learned his secrets in the Scholomance" (D,p. 265); and part chimera and part alchemist, like the chemist Fosco, he is a true Renaissance creature: "he was in life a most wonderful man. Soldier, statesman, and alchemist--which latter was the highest development of the science-knowledge of his time. He had a mighty brain, a learning beyond compare" (D,p.333). Dracula's extensive reading also resembles Fosco's and includes "history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law" (D,pp. 21-22). And like the earlier Count, Dracula also associates such knowledge with power: "All through [his background] there are signs of his advance, not only of his power, but of his knowledge of it" (D,p.333). Both men, then, for their Victorian culture, are walking testaments to the redeeming gospel of the "open mind," and conversely are admonitions against the life-denying stagnation of narrow-mindedness. This is at least one of the reasons why both are also strangely boyish, that is, invariably flexible and growing toward mature knowledge. Fosco is infatuated with "childish interests and amusements" (WW,p.198); and Dracula is equally puerile, though more potentially pernicious if his libidinal "child-brain" is not reintegrated into the Victorian frame of mind. In "some faculties of mind he has been, and is, only a child" (D,p.334).

And yet the two counts possess still other common powers, which are also conventions of Gothic, over-reaching horror. Both share, for instance, the uncanny ability to materialize, apparently ex nihilo. For example, Fosco characteristically appears before Marian

"as if he had sprung up out of the earth" (WW,p.245); while Dracula "can, within limitations, appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are [available] to him" (D,p.264). Both are night creatures, or more precisely, twilight creatures whose powers seem to ebb and flow during threshold periods of natural transition between light and darkness (D,p.264). The force of this imagery ultimately condemns the solar reading-public who cannot adapt to changing conditions and certainly cannot therapeutically externalize its own unconscious heart of lunar darkness. Fosco "love[s]" the "trembling English twilight," believing that it foreshadows "all that is noble and great and good." As he tells Marian, he even identifies with its darker symbology: "Observe, dear lady, what a light is dying on the trees! Does it penetrate your heart, as it penetrates mine?" Further, he begs that "the lovely dying light might not be profaned . . . by the appearance of lamps" (WW,p.261). Appropriately, Fosco's demise begins after Hartright has boldly sat through the night with him and after "the sunlight of the new morning poured into the room," while the Count, more and more, "was getting anxious . . ." (WW,p.555). And, as every reader knows, one of Stoker's recurrent moments of suspense is that Dracula's "power ceases, as does that of all evil things, at the coming of the day" (D, p.264) so that Van Helsing's prayer is that "we shall travel towards the sunrise" (D,p.354). Moreover, both counts exert an enigmatic influence over the animal kingdom, especially their verminous familiars. Fosco loves dogs, birds, but particularly his white rodents which he "kisses" as they "crawl all over him" (WW,p.198); while Dracula "can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat--the moth, and the fox, and the wolf" (D,p.261). Lastly, both counts exercise degrees of telepathic powers which transcend rational discourse by irrational, intuitive impulses. Marian reveals that Fosco's "eyes seemed to reach my inmost soul through the thickening obscurity of twilight"; and this hint of telepathic projection recalls the "mystery and terror of [her] dream" (WW,pp.261-62) of Laura returning from the grave. And vying with Van Helsing, Dracula more certainly mind-reads and hypnotizes Mina into a state of "sad dreaminess" (D,p.344), just as his eyes also "burned into" Renfield while the lunatic's individuality "became like water" (D,p.309).

But what, finally, is the value of comparisons like the foregoing? My aim here has not been to insist upon a series of exact, intentional points of influence, though even without Stoker's admission of "borrowing" from Collins, the textual evidence for it is most compelling. Indeed, the remarkable affinity between the two novels seems to be one of the more identifiable instances of a source relationship in all of literary

history. Yet it is not enough merely to suggest sources and parallels unless these also tell us something new about both works, their interrelationships, and the literary traditions which inform their mutual vision. What we have seen, then, to be most enlightening about the multiple correspondences between The Woman in White and Dracula is that, although written a generation apart in the nineteenth century, both tales make remarkably analogous use of compatible Victorian and Gothic tropes and themes in order to criticize and correct mid and late nineteenth-century philosophical and psychological dilemmas. Indeed, some themes, like that of the divided self, one hardly knows whether to call Gothic or Victorian. And the fact that Collins's Gothicism is finally rational while Stoker apparently felt compelled to push beyond into the irrational realm suggests, among other things, how deeply entrenched and probably incurable was such Victorian one-sidedness.

Collins ridicules the fact "that men, in the nineteenth century, were above superstition" (WW,p.52) and relied upon "insular notions of propriety" (WW,p.5). In the same way Stoker, though again in more extreme Gothic fashion, rails against "this age, so skeptical and selfish" (D,p.207), this "scientific, skeptical, matter-of-fact nineteenth century" which rejects "traditions and superstitions," though "tradition and superstition--are everything. Does not the belief in vampires rest . . . on them?" (D,p.262). As primal, atavistic life forces, both the terrifying Fosco and the horrifying Dracula represent a form of the Demiurge,¹⁶ a psychological, philosophical, and at least in Dracula's case almost religious insistence on the redemptive value of Matter and its symbolic equivalents--instinct, emotion, sex, and the intuitive and imaginative belief in (as against the cerebral intelligence of) all these values. Thus, Fosco's iconoclastic, cardinal faith reverses normal deistic rationalism: "Mind, they say, rules the world. But what rules the mind? The body" (WW,p.560). Dracula's demiurgism, on the other hand, is much more actively supernal since he is that god of matter or "the body," a negative force with the "attributes of the Deity" (D,p.296) who is "brute, and more than brute; he is devil . . . he can, within his range, direct the elements; the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things" (D,pp.260-61). Thus, the different chthonian emphases in Collins's and Stoker's Manichaeism both ironically uphold the values repressed and displaced in nineteenth-century culture.

In this essay I have tried to suggest that Collins's mid Victorian strategy chose the more reasonable strain of Gothicism, classically located in Ann Radcliffe's romances; that is, Fosco's implied preternaturalism is all but finally explained away by rational discourse,

though the disturbing memory of his presence and powers lingers on.¹⁷ Stoker's fin de siècle Gothicism, on the other hand, posed the more radical epistemological challenge of Monk Lewis or Charles Maturin, which demands complete imaginative belief in the agency of the netherworld: "that faculty which enables us to believe things which we know to be untrue" (D,p.211). Significantly for the Victorian common reader, both Gothic gospels preach to what we have heard Marian call "a strange, half-willing, half-unwilling liking" (WW,p.201) for each Count. Stoker's folkloric defense of Dracula's mysterious accessibility to the home of even the sanest Victorian is finally a more fitting epitaph to the combined power of these twice-told tales of two counts: "He may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come" (D,p. 264).

Notes

¹See Daniel Farson's The Man Who Wrote Dracula: a biography of Bram Stoker (London: Michael Joseph, 1975), p. 141. Interestingly Farson also suggests that Collins's fear of vampire-induced, premature burial provoked him to write a long list of precautions to be followed before he could be interred, p. 120. He also notes that Collins, like Stoker, made periodic trips to Paris to enjoy the famed pleasures of Parisian bordellos. His point here is the conjecture that Stoker really died of syphilis, pp. 234-35. For other information on the composition of Dracula, see Joseph S. Bierman, "The Genesis and Dating of 'Dracula' from Bram Stoker's Working Notes," Notes and Queries, 24 (1977), 39-41, and Raymond T. McNally and Radu F. Florescu, In Search of Dracula: a True History of Dracula and Vampire Legends (New York: Galahad Books, 1972), pp. 178 ff.

²This excerpt from The Bookman is quoted in H. Ludlam's The Life Story of Bram Stoker (London: W. Foulsham, 1962), p. 107. Punch was considerably less impressed with the "borrowing": "The story is told in diaries and journals, a rather tantalising and somewhat wearisome form of narration, whereof Wilkie Collins was a past-master," p. 108.

³The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 216 and 328, note 55.

⁴"Dracula: The Gnostic Quest and Victorian Wasteland," English Literature in Transition, 20(1977), 13-26. As I indicate in this essay, strangely there has been little critical attempt to relate Dracula to the

Gothic tradition. See McNally and Florescu for a cursory treatment, pp. 175 ff.

⁵Bram Stoker, Dracula (New York: Modern Library, 1897). Cited hereafter as D in text.

⁶William Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White, edited with an introduction by Harvey Peter Sucksmith (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975). Cited hereafter as WW in text.

⁷After the original writing of this essay, I discovered the following recent article which sporadically alludes to "Victorian Gothic": Anne Humphery, "Dombey and Son: Carker the Manager," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 34(1980), 397-413, especially 399-400. See also John Reed's "The Occult in Later Victorian Literature" in Victorian Conventions (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 459-73.

⁸See note 4 and also my "Reading Detection in The Woman in White," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 22 (1980), 449-467, passim.

⁹Romantic Gothic Tales 1790-1840, edited with an introduction and bibliography by G. Richard Thompson (New York: Harper, 1979), p. 16.

¹⁰I have treated the Victorian preoccupation with change and changelessness in a series of previous essays: "David Copperfield: 'The Theme of This Incomprehensible Conundrum Was the Moon,'" Studies in the Novel, 10(1978), 375-96; "The Time Machine: A Romance of 'The Human Heart,'" Extrapolation, 20(1979), 154-167; and "The 'Silent Symbols' of the 'Fatal Cross-Roads' in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," Gothic, 1(1979), 10-16.

¹¹Quoted by Lydia Blanchard in her review-essay, "Women and Fiction: Life as Imitation of Art," Studies in the Novel, 10(1978), 456.

¹²For a discussion of this Victorian theme, see U. C. Knoepfelmacher's relevant study of "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction and The Woman in White," in The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 351-70.

¹³See Madeline Bingham, Henry Irving: The Greatest Victorian Actor (New York: Stein and Day, 1978), p. 58. McNally and Florescu quote Stoker's reaction to one of Irving's performances as "foretaste" of Dracula's personality, p. 173.

¹⁴For studies of the sexual implications in Dracula, see C. F. Bentley, "The Monster in the Bedroom: Sexual Symbolism in Bram Stoker's Dracula," Literature and Psychology 22(1972), 27-34; Joseph S. Bierman, "Dracula: Prolonged Childhood Illness and the Oral Triad," American Imago, 29(1972), 186-98; and Phyllis A. Roth, "Suddenly Sexual Women in Bram Stoker's Dracula," Literature and Psychology, 27(1977), 113-21.

¹⁵It is interesting to note here that Stoker allows his Count no such sustained narrative section. Perhaps this would elicit too much sympathy for Dracula; more probably it would be too difficult for Stoker to maintain Dracula's high charge of evil if the Count were allowed a great deal of articulation. He is much more evil off stage as a silent menace. For an outline of Dracula's infrequent appearances in the novel, see The Annotated Dracula, with an Introduction, Notes, and Bibliography by Leonard Wolf (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1975), pp. 350-51. By Wolf's count from his edition, Dracula appears in only sixty-two of three hundred and ninety pages, or roughly sixteen percent of the novel.

¹⁶For a detailed discussion of this theme in Dracula, see "Dracula: The Gnostic Quest and Victorian Wasteland," 13-17, 23.

¹⁷Henry James developed the relationship between Mrs. Radcliffe and Collins further, suggesting that "To Mr. Collins belongs the credit of having introduced into fiction those most mysterious of mysteries, the mysteries which are at our own doors. This innovation gave a new impetus to the literature of horrors. It was fatal to the authority of Mrs. Radcliffe and her everlasting castle in the Apennines Instead of the terrors of Udolpho, we were treated to the terrors of the cheerful country-house and the busy London lodgings. And there is no doubt that these were infinitely the more terrible." Stoker, of course, transports his horror from its exotic homeland to "the cheerful country-house." This unsigned review, "Miss Braddon," first appeared in Nation, 1 (1865), 593-5, and is reprinted in Wilkie Collins: The Critical Heritage, ed. Norman Page (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 122-24.

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Queries

Andrew Gasson seeks to examine a copy of the second edition of The Woman in White. He needs to study the edition for his analytical bibliography of Collins's works. Please write to him at: 3 Merton House, 36 Belsize Park, London, N.W.3. 4EA.

Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., needs information on the alchemical background of the gem in The Moonstone for an article he is writing. Please write to him in care of: Department of English, California State University, 6000 J Street, Sacramento, California 95819.

Notes on the Contributors

Andrew Gasson is author of several articles on Wilkie Collins. He is an important collector of Collinsiana, and owns the largest private collection of Collins's letters. He has worked for several years on an analytical bibliography of Collins's works. He is cofounder of the Wilkie Collins Society and serves as the Society's Secretary.

Mark M. Hennelly, Jr., is Professor of English at California State University, Sacramento, and he teaches nineteenth-century literature, myth, and romance literature. Until its recent demise, he was a member of the editorial board of Gothic. He has been a reader for several journals and has published over twenty-five essays on literature, including a fine article on Collins--"Reading Detection in The Woman in White," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 22, No. 4 (Winter 1981), 449-467.



WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
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THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

NOVEMBER, 1864.

Armada.

BOOK THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRAVELLERS.



IT was the opening of the season of eighteen hundred and thirty-two, at the Baths of WILDBAD.

The evening shadows were beginning to gather over the quiet little German town; and the diligence was expected every minute. Before the door of the principal inn, waiting the arrival of the first visitors of the year, were assembled the three notable personages of Wildbad, accompanied by their wives—the mayor, representing the inhabitants; the doctor, representing the waters; the landlord, representing his own establishment. Beyond this select circle, grouped snugly about the trim little square in front of the inn, appeared the towns-

people in general, mixed here and there with the countrypeople in their quaint German costume placidly expectant of the diligence—the men in

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25.

Beginning of the serialisation of *Armada* in *Cornhill Magazine*, X, Nov. 1864, p. 513

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume III

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THE TWO ARMADALES.

'The Two Armadales' by W. Thomas in *Cornhill Magazine*, X, Dec. 1864, fp 641

Wilkie Collins Society Journal

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Editor's Note

In 1932, in his "The Early Novels of Wilkie Collins" (The Eighteen-Sixties, ed. John Drinkwater), Walter de la Mare noted a general weakness in Collins's male characters and an unusual strength in the novelist's female characters. De la Mare did not elaborate on his observation, nor have most subsequent critics. For the 1983 issue of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal, Natalie Schroeder provides a detailed study of Collins's unusual women in Armadale, and in so doing she indicates some potentially fruitful avenues for future investigations of Collins's characters.

In addition to Schroeder's interesting essay, the 1983 volume of the Journal presents provocative commentary by Robert Ashley on The Dead Secret and reviews by Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV and Schroeder of R. V. Andrew's Wilkie Collins and Sue Lonoff's Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers. The Journal is fortunate to have its pages graced by such perceptive commentaries.

The note on page 33 of the present volume is of special interest to those Society members who wish to participate in the Society's activities and who hope that the Society will gain wider public recognition. Please note that there will be no Society meeting at the MLA Convention this year.

The Journal continues to attract fine essays, and the Society continues to attract members of all sorts from hobbyists to professional scholars. The editor thanks one and all for their support and interest.

K.H.B.



THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE.

'The Moth and the Candle' by W. Thomas in *Cornhill Magazine*, XII, Oct. 1865, fp 461

Armadale: "A Book That Is Daring Enough
to Speak the Truth"

Natalie Schroeder

In his Preface to the 1866 edition of Armadale, Wilkie Collins wrote: "Readers in particular will, I have some reason to suppose, be here and there disturbed, perhaps even offended, by finding that 'Armadale' oversteps, in more than one direction, the narrow limits within which they are supposed to restrict the development of modern fiction--if they can. . . . Estimated by the claptrap morality of the present day, this may be a very daring book. Judged by the Christian morality which is of all time, it is only a book that is daring enough to speak the truth."¹ U. C. Knoepfelmacher has shown that in The Woman in White Collins undermines conventional morality with what Knoepfelmacher calls "the counterworld," a world that is "asocial and amoral."² The counterworld of Armadale, however, does not simply involve the sympathetic treatment of a murderess. In his characterizations of the major characters, presumably the heroes and heroines, Collins undermines prevailing contemporary beliefs in the superiority of men and the subjection of women; but, in his refusal to uphold chastity as an ideal--to desexualize his major characters--Collins is even more daring. In Armadale Wilkie Collins explores aspects of female sexuality and female psychology; and while ultimately he is deeply ambivalent about independent women, he treats the relations between the sexes with a candor unmatched by other Victorians.

All the heroes and heroines of Victorian fiction, of course, are not stereotypes of the ideal of masculinity and femininity. But the morally perfect, strong, aggressive hero and the frail, passive heroine are certainly in the majority. There is no sign in Armadale, though, as there is in The Woman in White, of the traditional capitulation to the norm in the form of a conventionally masculine hero and feminine heroine like Walter Hartright or Laura Fairlie.³ Both sets of heroes and heroines of Armadale reverse the commonly believed stereotypes about masculinity and femininity prevalent in the fiction and in the medical books of the 1860's.

According to William Acton, author of the popular book The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs (1857), by learning to repress his sexual desires a man could experience "mysterious sensations

which make up "VIRILITY." As a result he would gain a "consciousness of his dignity, of his character as head and ruler of his importance, which is absolutely essential to the well-being of the family, and through it, of society itself. It is a power, a privilege, of which the man is, and should be, proud. . . ."4

Allan Armadale, the weaker and less compelling of the two heroes of Armadale, never rules. He is led, and he is particularly susceptible to the manipulations of women. According to Miss Gwilt, "Any moderately good-looking woman who chose to take the trouble could make him fall in love with her" (XIII, 482). Because he is made to fall in love first with Miss Milroy, then with Miss Gwilt, and again with Miss Milroy, Miss Gwilt's first impression of Armadale is validated. Also, unlike the "virile" hero of Victorian fiction--the superior man who is intelligent, dignified, honorable, and self-possessed--Allan Armadale is a flighty, somewhat dense blunderer whose behavior is more characteristic of the "weaker sex." He "acted recklessly on his first impulses, and rushed blindfold at all his conclusions" (XIII, 83). His only conventionally "erotic" aspect is an attractive physical appearance--he is "handsome" and blond. The lack of any specific description of Armadale's features, though, in contrast to the detailed descriptions of the other characters in the novel, suggests that Collins's "rosy, light-haired, good-tempered" hero (XIII, 482) is a parody of the convention.

Although Charles Dickens "could not stomach" Ozias Midwinter, he is a more conventionally masculine hero.⁵ Miss Gwilt, for example, describes him as "little and lean, and active and dark, with bright black eyes which say to me plainly, 'We belong to a man with brains in his head and a will of his own'" (XIII, 486). Midwinter's unrepressed sexual desires, on the other hand, which allow him to be manipulated by Miss Gwilt, are atypical for a Victorian hero. Although Midwinter's "double"--the "miserable, shabby, dilapidated" Bashwood (XIII, 490)--cannot be termed a "hero," I shall discuss his character (also unconventional) along with Midwinter's.⁶

Collins clearly intended for the elder man to serve as the younger's alter-ego from their first meeting. Seeing Bashwood on the road, Midwinter is strangely affected: "For the first time in his life, Midwinter saw his own shy uneasiness in the presence of strangers reflected, with tenfold intensity of nervous suffering, in the face of another man--and that man old enough to be his father" (XIII, 332). Midwinter continues to think of Bashwood, but it does not yet occur to him

that the old man reminded him of himself. Midwinter's second reaction to Bashwood mingles compassion and distrust, but when Armadale leaves the two alone, they are drawn closer:

The two strangely assorted companions were left together--parted widely, as it seemed on the surface, from any possible interchange of sympathy; drawn invisibly one to the other, nevertheless, by those magnetic similarities of temperament which overleap all difference of age and station, and defy all apparent incongruities of mind and character. From the moment when Allan left the room, the hidden Influence that works in darkness began slowly to draw the two men together, across the great social desert which had lain between them up to this day. (XIII, 392).

Although Midwinter and Bashwood do not realize it, they are also "drawn together" by their sudden, intense, and unsettling passions for Miss Gwilt. Describing the different ways that they handle their sexual desires, Collins offers important observations about male sexuality.

In an age when any erotic excess was considered immoral and unhealthy, Miss Gwilt's sexual attraction for Bashwood and Midwinter makes their characters most remarkable. When Bashwood initially responds to Miss Gwilt with a "mixture of rapture and fear," (IX, 62) he responds to the Victorian fear of the dangers of sex.⁷ His response is also connected to his weakness--to the absence of his male power. Bashwood's lack of "virility" is emphasized by his being neither head nor ruler of his household; he could control neither his wife's drinking nor his son's behavior. Because he lost his "manhood" (i.e., his male dominance) because of his domestic tragedy, he is initially unprepared for the desires that Miss Gwilt awakens in him: "His past existence had disciplined him to bear disaster and insult, as few happier men could have borne them; but it had not prepared him to feel the master-passion of humanity, for the first time, at the dreary end of his life, in the hopeless decay of a manhood that had withered under the double blight of conjugal disappointment and parental sorrow" (IX, 65-66). Because Bashwood's desire is stronger than his fear of sex, Miss Gwilt is able to tyrannize him.

Like Bashwood, Midwinter is unready for the "master-passion"--for the way that Miss Gwilt's "sexual sorcery" (IX, 73) arouses him. Collins's explicit sexual innuendoes are indeed candid and daring:

The magnetic influence of her touch was thrilling through him while she spoke. Change and absence, to which he had trusted to weaken her hold on him, had treacherously strengthened it instead. A man exceptionally sensitive, a man exceptionally pure in his past life, he stood hand in hand, in the tempting secrecy of the night, with the first woman who had exercised over him the all-absorbing influence of her sex. At his age, and in his position, who could have left her? The man (with a man's temperament) doesn't live who could have left her. (IX, 71)

Both Bashwood's and Midwinter's sexual excitement confirms--perhaps for the first time--that they are men; that is, they possess all the equipment and energy for some of the active male eroticism that was typically associated with male dominance.

In Bashwood's case, however, Miss Gwilt simply succeeds in castrating the man. She uses the power that she has aroused in him, speaking to him "with a merciless tyranny of eye and voice--with a merciless use of her power over the feeble creature whom she addressed" (IX, 63). Even though Bashwood learns the truth about her past and tries to use his knowledge to control her (to keep her forever with him), Miss Gwilt continues to make his new-born power work for her. Thus Bashwood remains at her mercy:

He struggled desperately to go on and say the words to her . . . which hinted darkly at his knowledge of her past life; words which warned her--do what else she might, commit what crimes she pleased--to think twice before she deceived and deserted him again. In those terms he had vowed to himself to address her. He had the phrases picked and chosen; he had the sentences ranged and ordered in his mind; nothing was wanting but to make the one crowning effort of speaking them--and, even now, after all he had said and all he had dared, the effort was more than he could compass! In helpless gratitude, even for so little as her pity, he stood

looking at her, and wept the silent, womanish tears that fall from old men's eyes. (IX, 533-34)

Through Bashwood, Collins deals with the melancholy aspect of a man's not becoming a man until too late in life, and then at the expense of a humiliating discovery thanks to a manipulating woman.

Midwinter, on the other hand, does achieve "virility" for a while. He is better able to channel his sexual drives after he marries Miss Gwilt. As a result, he, not his wife, becomes the master. His male dominance contributes to Miss Gwilt's disappointment with her marriage. Collins even specifically attributes the change that she senses in Midwinter to his acquiring the power to control his sexual energy: "It is only at night, when I hear him sighing in his sleep, and sometimes when I see him dreaming in the morning hours, that I know how hopeless I am losing the love he once felt for me. He hides, or tries to hide, it in the day, for my sake. He is all gentleness, all kindness; but his heart is not on his lips when he kisses me now; his hand tells me nothing when it touches mine" (IX, 351). In order to regain her independence once her husband has gained power over her, Miss Gwilt must leave him. Ultimately, Midwinter is unable to control his wife, who finally denies him to his face.⁸ Midwinter vows, "She has denied her husband to-night, . . . She shall know her master to-morrow" (IX, 496), but he never has the opportunity to exhibit such mastery.

Although the characterizations of the heroes of Armadale challenge Victorian conventions, the strength of the novel, both literally and figuratively, lies in its female characters. They are hardly frail vessels. They are, in fact, more masculine than the men--they are the aggressors and manipulators.⁹ Acton's repeatedly quoted description of women can be applied to the majority of the heroines of Victorian fiction, particularly those who appeared regularly on the pages of the contemporary periodicals: "The best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little or nothing of sexual indulgences. Love of home, children, and domestic duties, are the only passions they feel. As a general rule, a modest woman seldom desires any sexual gratification for herself. She submits to her husband, but only to please him; and, but for the desire of maternity, would far rather be relieved from his attentions."¹⁰

The majority of Victorian heroines were described as perfectly beautiful and sexless--often, especially in Dickens's novels, childish. The perfection of their features reflected the moral perfection of their characters. The heroine of The Woman I Loved, and the Woman Who Loved Me, a sentimental novel replete with cliches, for example, is described as "the perfection of prettiness. . . . [her] beauty is not only undeniable, but it is singularly expressive of herself. That limpid purity of complexion, and that exquisite regularity of outline, are symbolical . . . of great innocence of heart, and an inexpressible genuineness . . . of character."¹¹

Miss Milroy is, in Mr. Pedgift Senior's eyes, the "heroine" of Armadale; Collins's emphasis, however, is that Miss Milroy is not perfectly beautiful, nor is she sexless: she is "self-contradictory." She lacks the classic beauty of the conventional heroine. Her complexion is not clear and white (which would imply inner purity), but rosy and freckled: "She was pretty; she was not pretty; she charmed, she disappointed, she charmed again. Tried by recognized line and rule, she was too short and too well developed for her age. And yet few men's eyes would have wished her figure other than it was . . . Her nose was too short, her mouth was too large, her face was too round and too rosy" (XIII, 287-88). Miss Milroy's "well developed" figure and her large mouth are clues that she is sensual rather than sexless.¹²

Neelie Milroy's behavior, like her appearance, is not that of the passive, passionless heroine. When she first meets Armadale, she is deliberately flirtatious and coy: "She saw the way, on her side, to a little flirtation. She rested her hand on his arm, blushed, hesitated, and suddenly took it away again" (XIII, 292). She knows it is wrong to speak with him without a chaperone, refers to the impropriety of their walk, and continues to act as she pleases. Miss Milroy is also spoiled, jealous, and short-tempered. Her hypocritical manipulation of Armadale during their private interviews (observed secretly by Mill Gwilt) indicates that once married, Neelie Milroy will probably never agreeably submit to her husband. Miss Gwilt's description of Miss Milroy's behavior during one such clandestine meeting, for example, affirms that the latter is more akin to Becky Sharp than to Agnes Wickfield. As Miss Gwilt tells it, Miss Milroy sends Armadale away, apparently outraged by his proposal of a runaway marriage, but actually delighted that she has landed him. Then "She waited, after he had gone, to compose herself, and I [i.e., Miss Gwilt] waited behind the trees to see how she would succeed. Her eyes

wandered round slyly to the path by which he had left her. She smiled (grinned would be the truer way of putting it, with such a mouth as hers); took a few steps on tiptoe to look after him; turned back again, and suddenly burst into a violent fit of crying. I am not quite so easily taken in as Armadale, and I saw what it all meant plainly enough" (IX, 156).

The fascinating Lydia Gwilt, however, is the major character of Armadale; and because of Collins's undisguised admiration for her, I consider her the "heroine" of the novel. Significantly he entitled the stage adaptation of Armadale "Miss Gwilt." Destructive, aggressive females like her (what Gilbert and Gubar call monster women) are quite conventional in Victorian fiction. They reflect a classical conception of women; but such women are generally not the major character, nor are they treated sympathetically. Furthermore, a destructive female is usually counter-balanced by a saintly figure--the heroine.¹³ Miss Gwilt's independence does not make her a revolutionary character; Collins's compassion for her does. As a heroine Miss Gwilt is chiefly unconventional because of her past crimes: forgery, murder, thievery, adultery, blackmail. Collins invokes sympathy for her, though, by revealing her sordid past through the narration of "the vile creature . . . the Confidential Spy of modern times" (IX, 305), James Bashwood. Her history also affirms what she writes to Midwinter at the end: "I might, perhaps, have been . . . [a] better woman myself, if I had not lived a miserable life before you met me. . . . Even my wickedness has one merit--it has not prospered. I have never been a happy woman" (IX, 559).

Like Marian Halcombe of The Woman in White, Lydia Gwilt is a "mannish" woman; but Halcombe is an ugly, swarthy-complexioned spinster, and the upper lip of her "large, firm, masculine mouth" sports an "almost" moustache.¹⁴ Gwilt, by contrast is exquisitely beautiful and voluptuous:

[Her] forehead was low, upright, and broad toward the temples; her eyebrows, at once strongly and delicately marked, were a shade darker than her [red] hair; her eyes, large, bright, and well opened, were of that purely blue color, without a tinge in it of gray of green, so often presented to our admiration in pictures and book, so rarely met with in the living face . . . the nose . . . was the straight, delicately molded nose (with the short upper lip beneath) of the ancient statues and busts. . . . [Her] lips were full,

rich, and sensual. Her complexion was the lovely complexion which accompanies such hair as hers--so delicately bright in its rosier tints, so warmly and softly white in its gentler gradations of color on the forehead and the neck. Her chin, round and dimpled, was pure of the slightest blemish in every part of it, and perfectly in line with her forehead to the end. (XIII, 470-71)¹⁵

With the exception of her perfect nose and complexion, Miss Gwilt's features are not like those of the ideal sexless Victorian heroine. First of all, her red hair hints at her sexuality, her apartness. And, according to Jeanne Fahnestock, the broadening of a female's forehead towards the temples indicates intellect, the roundness of her chin, "the desire to love."¹⁶ Collins was undoubtedly familiar with physiognomy, for he tells the reader (through Midwinter) that her "full, rich" lips are sensual. Also, her every movement expresses "that subtle mixture of the voluptuous and the modest, which, of the many attractive extremes that meet in women, is in a man's eye the most irresistible of all" (IX, 63).

Ironically, this beautiful, sensual woman is actually more "manly" by conventional Victorian standards than most of the male characters in the novel. Even Mr. Pedgift, Senior, her enemy, displays a reluctant admiration for Miss Gwilt's abilities: "What a lawyer she would have made . . . if she had only been a man!" (IX, 36). One of Miss Gwilt's masculine traits is her creativity, which trait, according to Francoise Basch, the Victorian doctrine of women's inferiority denied most women. Men alone were believed to have the "intellectual capacity for creation, invention and synthesis"; women were believed to be able only to exercise "judgment on details and insignificant things."¹⁷ Unlike many a Victorian heroine who regarded music "as a means to an end, as an accomplishment enhancing her prospects in the marriage market,"¹⁸ Miss Gwilt turns to music because she passionately loves it and because it soothes her when she is frustrated or depressed. She writes to Mrs. Oldershaw: "Instead of feeling offended when you left me, I went to your piano, and forgot all about you till your messenger came" (XIII, 359). She finds a similar fulfillment through writing: "Why have I broken my resolution [to stop writing in her Diary]? Why have I gone back to this secret friend of my wretchedest and wickedest hours? Because I am more friendless than ever; because I am more lonely than ever, though my husband is sitting writing in the next room to me" (IX, 350).

Miss Gwilt is also "unfeminine" because of her wit, her impatience, and her intellect, actually mocking many of the commonly accepted stereotypes about women. When she notifies Mrs. Oldershaw that she has changed her mind and will apply for the governess position, she writes: "I want a husband to vex, or a child to beat, or something of that sort" (XIII, 276). Later, when she relays her plan for deceiving Mr. Brock: "Some brute of a man says, in some book which I once read, that no woman can keep two separate trains of ideas in her mind at the same time" (XIII, 360). Also, when she begins to become irritated by Armadale's presence in Naples and by Midwinter's continued neglect, she writes in her Diary: "If so lady-like a person as I am could feel a tigerish tingling all over her to the very tips of her fingers, I should suspect myself of being in that condition at the present moment. But, with my manners and accomplishments, the thing is, of course, out of the question. We all know that a lady has no passions" (IX, 363).

Miss Gwilt's passions and her unwilling sexual attraction to Midwinter are the most compelling aspects of her character.¹⁹ Unlike the ease with which she manipulates Armadale and Bashwood, she finds it difficult to deceive Midwinter because she desires him. In "a sudden panic of astonishment," she wonders, "Am I mad enough to be thinking of him in that way?" (IX, 82). Miss Gwilt's description of the love scene by the pool, which culminates in Midwinter's proposal of marriage, is boldly explicit. Midwinter's very presence makes Miss Gwilt warm: "Either the night was very close, or I was by this time literally in a fever" (IX, 130). Yet, his declaration of love makes her feel old; when she submits to her passion, she loses some of her vibrant energy. As she runs her fingers through his hair, she shudders as she remembers her former "lovers"--her other moments of passion that ended in her being dominated. She actually believes that she sees the ghosts of those lovers when Midwinter proposes to her. In a final desperate effort to preserve her power, she forgets to maintain her mask of femininity. In order to make Midwinter reveal his name, she becomes her unreserved self--the aggressor: "My curiosity, or more likely my temper, got beyond all control. He had irritated me till I was reckless what I said or what I did. I suddenly clasped him close, and pressed my lips to his. 'I love you!' I whispered in a kiss. 'Now will you tell me?'" (IX, 138). Ironically, instead of the conventionally passive angel inspiring the man to dominate with her gentility, the aggressive-tigerish Lydia Gwilt gives Midwinter his "courage," his masculinity; and "in a new voice" he commands her to sit "as only men can [command]" (IX, 139).

Miss Gwilt's attempts to resist her passion for Midwinter are easy to understand. She is an independent woman; she remembers the degradation she suffered from her earlier experience with passion. Because she is reluctant to place herself again in a man's power, she scorns herself.²⁰ Miss Gwilt's decision to marry Midwinter, however, is inconsistent with her mannish character. It appears to derive neither from her desires for sex nor for power, but rather from a desire to become innocent--to become the ideal passive woman for whom she had earlier exhibited such contempt: "I have won the great victory; I have trampled my own wickedness under foot. I am innocent; I am happy again. My love! my angel! when tomorrow gives me to you, I will not have a thought in my heart which is not your thought, as well as mine!" (IX, 302)

It is somewhat unsettling for Miss Gwilt to choose suddenly to become a "relative creature" approximately two-thirds of the way into the novel--a woman who is nothing in herself, who "can only justify her presence on earth by dedicating herself to others; [who] through deliberate self-effacement, duty and sacrifice, . . . will discover the identity and raison d'être of which, by herself, she is deprived."²¹ Collins, however, implies that marriage is not the salvation that many Victorians supposed. The creative Miss Gwilt cannot share all her thoughts with her husband, nor find fulfillment only through her relationship with him. Then too, he no longer satisfies her sexually: "How happy I was in the first days that followed our marriage, and how happy I made him! Only two months have passed, and that time is a by-gone time already!" (IX, 351). She is confused about the change in their relationship, especially about the control Midwinter maintains over his former passion for her; and she fears that either he loves her less or that he suspects the truth about her character. None of her speculations is validated by his behavior. The fact is, she is unhappy being married--being submissive rather than independent. She equates her present unhappiness with the despair she suffered from the other men who mastered her--with her first husband's whipping her and with her lover Manual's deserting her. Her misery, she says, when she resumes writing in her Diary, "is a woman's misery" (IX, 350). Midwinter channels his new energy into his writing, and she becomes lonely and depressed: "I have often heard that the wives of authors have been for the most part unhappy women. And now I know why" (IX, 354).²² Just as earlier she mocked feminine conventions, she ironically comments on her role as a neglected wife: "What a pattern wife, what an excellent Christian I am" (IX, 365). Finally, when Manual contacts her and his presence causes her to feel

like the woman she once was, she abandons her attempt to become the woman she had tried to be.

When Miss Gwilt and Dr. Downward become accomplices at the end, he often reminds Miss Gwilt that she is female--almost as if he is determined to keep her in her place: "'So like a woman!' he remarked, with the most exasperating good humor. 'The moment she sees her object, she dashes at it headlong the nearest way. Oh, the sex! the sex!'" (IX, 433).²³ Miss Gwilt reacts like a twentieth-century feminist: "'Never mind the sex!' I [i.e., Miss Gwilt] broke out, impatiently. 'I want a serious answer--Yes or No?'" (IX, 434). Denying her husband makes Miss Gwilt even more masculine. That bold action, in fact, seems to erase most of her amazing beauty; she appears haggard and old. When she saves her husband's life, however, she again becomes "womanly and lovely" (IX, 558). Her final kiss is "her last weakness" (IX, 560).

Ultimately, Collins is ambivalent about independent women. The word "woman" is repeatedly associated with Miss Gwilt in the final pages. The woman who sacrifices her life for her husband at the end significantly raises her moral status. She is no longer masculine, though, nor is she voluptuous: "She silently bent over him and kissed his forehead. When she looked up again, the hard despair had melted from her face. There was something softly radiant in her eyes, which lit her whole countenance as with an inner light, and made her womanly and lovely once more" (IX, 558). In fact, she dies a conventional combination of the ideal angel-woman and the melodramatic repentant sinner: "Oh, God, forgive me! . . . Oh, Christ, bear witness that I have suffered!" (IX, 560).

Collins's unconventional attitude towards sex, however, remains unwavering. In the Victorian age sexual decency was intricately connected to social stability,²⁴ and sexual misconduct was especially pernicious in a woman.²⁵ Collins implies, however, that Miss Gwilt's sexual sins are not as serious as her criminal propensities. When Armadale believes that Miss Gwilt is a fallen woman, Collins says that her story is "infinitely less revolting, and yet infinitely more terrible" (IX, 7). That Miss Gwilt became an adulteress (and, in a sense, also a fallen woman) when she married the already married Manual is never an issue--the murder of her first husband and her three attempts on Armadale's life are.

True, Miss Gwilt finally repents, but she confesses to her civil not to her sexual crimes. She writes to her husband: "I am worse than the worst you can think

of me. You have saved Armadale by changing rooms with him to-night; and you have saved him from Me. You can guess now whose widow I should have claimed to be, if you had not preserved his life; and you will know what a wretch you married when you married the woman who writes these lines (IX, 559). The ending of Armadale is melodramatic, unbelievable, and conventional, but because Lydia Gwilt never feels the "overwhelming remorse of little Em'ly,"²⁶ Collins succeeds in challenging the "clap-trap" morality of his day.

NOTES

¹ Wilkie Collins, Armadale (Part One and Part Two), The Works of Wilkie Collins, XIII and IX (New York: Peter Fenelon Collier, Publisher, 1900), XIII, 4. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be included in the body of the text.

² U. C. Knoepfelmacher, "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction and The Woman in White," The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), p. 352.

³ Although Knoepfelmacher argues that both Walter Hartright and Laura Fairlie become, for awhile, unconventional and then return to their stereotypical roles at the end (pp. 362-365), for most of the novel Hartright is a stereotypical embodiment of "the Jacob figure"--the faithful lover. See John R. Reed, Victorian Conventions (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), pp. 79-89. Laura Fairlie Glyde is the epitome of what Reed calls "the Griselda" figure (the long suffering wife), pp. 40-44.

⁴ Quoted in Steven Marcus, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1964), p. 25.

⁵ See Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 246.

⁶ Despite the assertions of John R. Reed and David Blair that Armadale and Midwinter are doubles, there is little evidence in the novel to support their claims. Reed cites as evidence Midwinter's saving of Armadale's life "by taking his place." Bashwood, however, saves Midwinter's life by leaving the latter's handkerchief in the room. See Reed, p. 319, and David Blair, "Wilkie Collins and the Crisis of Suspense," Reading the

Victorian Novel: Detail into Form, ed. Ian Gregor (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1980), p. 48.

⁷ See Marcus, pp. 12-28; note also that Bashwood has the "deplorable infirmity of perspiring at the palms of the hands" (XIII, 395). Collins's description recalls William Acton's, of a boy who habitually masturbates. Marcus says that such descriptions were commonplace, occupying, "therefore, the status of official belief" (p. 19). Bashwood also has fleshless cheeks, a limp shrinking posture, and eyes that look "hither and thither," all of which, according to Acton, were further signs of masturbation. See also Eric Trudgill, Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origin and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976), pp. 50-55.

⁸ Dickens was especially concerned about the potential objections to that scene in the dramatic version of Armada. In his July 9, 1866 letter to Collins, he wrote: "I do not think any English audience would accept the scene in which Miss Gwilt in that Widow's dress renounces Midwinter." The Letters of Charles Dickens, ed. Mamie Dickens and Georgina Hogarth (New York: Walter J. Blank, Inc., 1893), p. 179.

⁹ Julian Symons says that "Collins had a liking for strong, mannish women"--"Introduction," Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White (Middlesex England: Penguin Books, 1974), pp. 14-15.

¹⁰ Quoted in Marcus, p. 31; see also Reed, pp. 34-44; Trudgill, pp. 56-100; Francoise Basch, Relative Creatures (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), pp. 3-74; and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 16-27.

¹¹ Once a Week, Feb. 15, 1862, p. 204; see also Jeanne Fahnestock, "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description," Victorian Studies, 24 (Spring 1981), 325-330.

¹² According to Fahnestock, the large mouths, which became prevalent on the heroines of the 1860's, "brings a tinge of sensuality to their characterizations" (342), while short noses (like Miss Milroy's) suggest characters who follow their "inclinations, or their noses, into misfortune" (345).

¹³ See Reed, pp. 44-58; see also Gilbert and Gubar, p. 29.

14 Collins, The Woman in White, p. 58.

15 Of The Woman in White, Gavin Lambert states that Collins "infers that the only chance for a woman to become independent in Victorian society is to be like Marian, strong but freakish": The Dangerous Edge (New York: Grossman Publishers, 1976), p. 14. Lambert does not note, however, how this inference changes in Armadale. Perhaps he is not totally familiar with the novel, for he describes Armadale as a product of Collins's early experimentation with drugs--as a novel in which "a beautiful young drug addict plans to kill her enemies with a portable contraption that leaks poison gas" (p. 15). Note also that Miss Gwilt's un-freakishness (i.e., her beauty) was a major contemporary objection to the novel because, as the critic for The Spectator complained, her appearance did not suggest either her age or all the sordidness of her life to date. Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography (London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 195.

16 Fahnestock, 340 and 346.

17 Basch, p. 5; see also Trudgill, p. 70; and Gilbert's and Gubar's discussion of the pen as "a metaphorical penis," pp. 3-16.

18 Dutton Cook, The Prodigal Son, Once a Week, May 10, 1862, p. 536. Cook describes the "typical" Victorian heroine in his serialized novel.

19 Robinson calls Miss Gwilt's "half-unwilling love" for Midwinter "strangely real and moving" (p. 192). Winifred Hughes, on the other hand, finds it "somewhat difficult to believe in her strange, unwilling affection for Midwinter": The Maniac in the Cellar: Sensation Novels of the 1860s (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 158.

20 See Hughes, pp. 158-159.

21 Basch, p. 5.

22 Gilbert's and Gubar's linking of writing with sexuality supports my argument. (See note 17 above.) It is significant that Mill Gwilt begins to fight her husband's dominance by resuming her writing.

23 Ironically, that is the very way that Collins describes Allan Armadale--as a man who acts recklessly on first impulses. See the description of him that I quoted earlier.

24 Trudgill, p. 30.

25 According to Martha Vicinus, "The woman who broke the family circle, be she prostitute, adulterer, or divorcee, threatened society's very fabric. The most unforgivable sin . . . was the married woman who committed adultery": "Introduction," Suffer and Be Still: Women in the Victorian Age, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. xiv; see also Helen E. Roberts, "Marriage, Redundancy or Sin: The Painter's View of Women in the First Twenty-Five Years of Victoria's Reign," Suffer and Be Still, pp. 63-76.

26 Vicinus, p. xiv.

tiful applications, of credit; but, by the side of the bank-note, there rests a vacant place, which our obligations are called upon to fill. The principal of these obligations being to be repayable, only at an epoch corresponding to that of the property which they represent in our portefeuille, and to bear interest to the profit of the holder, their issue is exempt from every inconvenience. In accordance with the economy which serves as the basis of our Society, these vouchers are not only pledged (*gagés*) by property of corresponding amount acquired under government control, and whose union offers, by the application of the principle of mutuality, the advantages of the compensation and the division of risks; but they will have moreover the guarantee of a capital which we have raised with this object, to a considerably high figure (sixty millions).

But interested parties may talk till they are tired. An institution of credit, like the *Crédit Mobilier*, useful, even necessary, in respect to its object, has outgrown the proportions and range of action allowed to private companies. An institution which can only exist by the support of the public faith, cannot be made use of for the furtherance of private interests. Such an application of its powers is nothing less than a fraudulent abuse; and the authorities who tolerate it, and the speculators who make it their tool, incur—the one the blame of the nation, the other the censure of honest men. As to buying in now, or at any other time, every one must judge for himself; just as every one must form his own decision whether he will dance a fandango on a cracked tight-rope, whether he will cross an Alpine ravine on a rotten plank, or whether he will plunge his hand into a smooth-surfaced caldron of oil with a brisk fire burning beneath it.

THE DEAD SECRET.

CHAPTER THE FIRST. THE TWENTY-THIRD OF AUGUST, 1829.

"WILL she last out the night, I wonder?"

"Look at the clock, Joseph."

"Ten minutes past twelve! She *has* lasted the night out. She has lived, Robert, to see ten minutes of the new day."

These words were spoken in the kitchen of a large country-house situated on the west coast of Cornwall. The speakers were two of the men-servants composing the establishment of Captain Treverton, an officer in the navy, and the eldest male representative of an old Cornish family. Both the servants communicated with each other restrainedly, in whispers—sitting close together, and looking round expectantly towards the door whenever the talk flagged between them.

"It's an awful thing," said the elder of the men, "for us two to be alone here, at this

dead, dark time, counting out the minutes that our mistress has left to live!"

"Robert," said the other, lowering his voice to a whisper that was barely audible, "You have been in service here since you were a boy—did you ever hear that our mistress was a play-actress when our master married her?"

"How came you to know that?" inquired the elder servant, sharply.

"Hush!" cried the other, rising quickly from his chair.

A bell rang in the passage outside.

"Is that for one of us?" asked Joseph.

"Can't you tell, by the sound, which is which of those bells yet?" exclaimed Robert, contemptuously. "That bell is for Sarah Leeson. Go out into the passage and look."

The younger servant took a candle and obeyed. When he opened the kitchen-door, a long row of bells met his eye on the wall opposite. Above each of them was painted in neat black letters the distinguishing title of the servant whom it was specially intended to summon. The row of letters began with Housekeeper and Butler, and ended with Kitchenmaid and Footman's Boy.

Looking along the bells, Joseph easily discovered that one of them was still in motion. Above it were the words, *Lady's Maid*. Observing this, he passed quickly along the passage, and knocked at a large, old-fashioned oak door at the end of it. No answer being given, he opened the door and looked into the room. It was dark and empty.

"Sarah is not in the housekeeper's room," said Joseph, returning to his fellow-servant in the kitchen.

"She is gone to her own room, then," rejoined the other. "Go up and tell her that she is wanted by her mistress."

The bell rang again as Joseph went out.

"Quick!—quick!" cried Robert. "Tell her she is wanted directly. Wanted," he continued to himself in lower tones, "perhaps for the last time!"

Joseph ascended three flights of stairs—passed half-way down a long arched gallery—and knocked at another old-fashioned oak door. This time the signal was answered. A low, clear, sweet voice inside the room, inquired who was waiting without? In a few hasty words Joseph told his errand. Before he had done speaking, the door was quietly and quickly opened, and Sarah Leeson confronted him on the threshold, with her candle in her hand.

Not tall, not handsome, not in her first youth—shy and irresolute in manner—simple in dress to the utmost limits of plainness, the lady's-maid, in spite of all these disadvantages, was a woman whom it was impossible to look at without a feeling of curiosity, if not of interest. Few men, at first sight of her, could have resisted the desire to find out who she was; few would

A Second Look at The Dead Secret

Robert Ashley

The Dover reprint and a request from Kirk Beetz have prompted this second look at The Dead Secret; my first look occurred in the late forties when I was struggling with a doctoral dissertation on Collins. In re-reading the novel, I purposely refrained from peaking at the pages of the dissertation as well as its subsequent condensation for the English Novelists Series;¹ the second look should, consequently, be an unbiassed one.

As I re-read what I wrote over thirty years ago, it seems that my overall impression of The Dead Secret, whether I realized it then or not, was one of contradictory strengths and weaknesses. The novel opened impressively, but ended lamely. The convergence of the rival "agents" on the "dead secret" hidden in a typically "sinister house" was perhaps Collins' best bit of sustained narrative to date, but the overall pace, especially for Collins, was surprisingly sluggish. The novel was Collins' first serial, but the effect of serialization was not exactly what one would have expected. Since Collins had always ended his chapters or, in his plays, the scenes and acts with "strong curtains," he needed no increase in suspenseful situations to create cliffhanging installments. But his attempt to create unity of tone and effect in each installment might have helped cause the novel's sluggish movement.

Each of the main characters was skilfully conceived to meet the demands of the plot: for example, Mr. Treverton was made a sea captain so that his absence from home could make possible the deception practised upon him; Mrs. Treverton was made an actress so that she could temporarily exchange places with Sarah Leeson when the latter had her illegitimate daughter; Leonard Franklin was given the trait of family pride to heighten the reader's foreboding about the discovery of the secret. Rosamond was the most convincing, lifelike, and attractive of Collins' early heroines, but her blind husband, Leonard, was a stuffy and colorless hero. Furthermore, Collins made no attempt to study the psychological effect of being blind, nor did Leonard's blindness have any impact on the plot. Sarah Leeson was the most elaborately drawn character in the early novels, and in this portrait, Collins attempted to

trace "the influence of a heavy responsibility on a naturally timid woman, whose mind was neither strong enough to bear it, nor bold enough to drop it altogether."² In this attempt, Collins was not entirely successful. But the skill with which the entire plot was made to hinge upon Sarah's character was something new in Collins; furthermore, the study of the effect of the secret's burden upon her revealed an interest in the psychology of character that Collins was often assumed not to possess.

The novel's chief weakness was that the disclosure of the secret, led up to with such fanfare, had virtually no effect on the lives of the main characters. The illegitimate Rosamond ceded her fortune to her uncle, the legal heir, but he promptly gave it back; Leonard toyed briefly with the idea of being righteously indignant, but decided to lose his family pride in his love for his wife; Sarah found peace of mind, but passed on to the next world, as she was about to do anyhow, before she could enjoy her newly found happiness. On the whole, The Dead Secret was Collins' best novel to date, but by a narrower margin than might have been expected. By the time he completed The Dead Secret, he had developed all of the skills, all of the character types, and all the motifs found in his later work. What he had not yet created was a plot complex enough, a secret mysterious enough, a situation serious enough to give full scope to his talents.

Before comparing my first and second "looks" and reaching a final verdict on The Dead Secret, it would be instructive to summarize the reactions of other Collins biographers during the years between the fifties and the eighties. Kenneth Robinson found the novel "strangely deficient in plot" and complained that "Sarah never quite comes to life and her dilemma seems altogether too contrived."³ According to Nuel Pharr Davis, The Dead Secret succeeded as a serial, but not as a novel: "Read at one sitting it was tiresome and repetitive But the instalments when read one at a time each created a sense of chilly interest and creeping excitement."⁴ William Marshall examines The Dead Secret in the context of his thesis that Collins possessed to a limited degree the "talent for literary compromises between the two sensibilities--the intellectual and the popular."⁵ In the character of Sarah Leeson, who can be viewed either as "a truly pathetic character" or as a guilty sinner, Marshall believes that Collins came closer than in his previous novels to reaching the compromise.⁶

Whether one agrees with him or not, Gavin Lambert offered an especially provocative analysis based on his

"dangerous edge" theory about crime writers. For him Sarah Leeson was both a reflection of Collins' mistress Caroline Graves and an anticipation of Anne Catherick in The Woman in White.⁷ One of "two darkly original characters . . . she walked the borderline of sanity, unable to find release. Dostoevsky was not the only novelist who anticipated Freud."⁸ The other darkly original character was Rosamond's uncle, a misanthrope, a hermit, and a drop-out from a privileged family⁹--in the latter respect, an astonishingly twentieth-century figure. Lambert even managed to find something of significance in Rosamond's husband: in one scene he became a blind detective "some seventy years before Ernest Bramah's popular creation, Max Carrados."¹⁰ For Lambert, The Dead Secret was a successful novel which "collapses only in the last chapter."¹¹

At long last, what is the final verdict after a second read? Perhaps to the disappointment of Dover, of Kirk Beetz, who wrote me that The Dead Secret was one of his favorites, and of many devoted Collinsians, I am somewhat less impressed than I was thirty years ago. I still find Rosamond an appealing, early example of Collins' strong-minded heroines, I still find Uncle Joseph an amusing eccentric (he, not Sherlock Holmes, first faced "a three-pipe problem"¹²), I still admire the suspense-filled opening scene, and I still marvel at Collins' skill in prolonging a narrative after it seems to have run its appointed course. However, I am now inclined to agree with Robinson and Lonoff¹³ that the characterization of Sarah Leeson is more successful in conception than in execution. I still find the novel tedious at times and, more often than tedious, somewhat trivial, little more than exercise in ingenuity. But what has struck me most forcibly is the enormous qualitative gap between The Dead Secret and The Woman in White in a time lapse of only two years. Who, after reading Collins' earlier novels, could have predicted such a great leap forward? The Woman in White's almost incredible advance over its predecessors is due not only to the immortal Fosco and the redoubtable Marian or to the skillful adaptation of the epistolary technique to the demands of a mystery story or to the novel's richness of texture, but also to the fact that something vital is at stake and that the resolution of the plot really "matters." What is at stake and what matters in The Woman in White is not only the righting of a terrible moral, let alone legal, wrong, but the happiness and prosperity of the three leading "good" characters. Whereas the discovery of the secret in the earlier novel changes the lives of no one, the discovery of the secret and the defeat of Fosco radically change the lives of several people. The difference between The Dead Secret and The Woman in

White is something like the difference between Golden Age puzzles by Agatha Christie and Raymond Chandler's best work or Lawrence Sanders' "deadly sin" novels. I do not wish to be misunderstood. There are times when there is nothing I would rather read than a Golden Age whodunit, but I don't kid myself that I am reading a serious piece of fiction. Even if one accepts Marshall's and Lambert's interpretations, The Dead Secret does not emerge as a truly serious novel.

For years, scholars and critics rather cavalierly underestimated Collins' later work. Did they at the same time overestimate his early work? Are Hide and Seek and The Dead Secret really superior to Poor Miss Finch and The Law and the Lady?

Notes

¹ Robert Ashley, Wilkie Collins (London: Arthur Barker, 1952 and New York: Roy Publishers, 1952), pp. 52-54.

² Preface to the second edition.

³ Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins (London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 111.

⁴ Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 196.

⁵ William H. Marshall, Wilkie Collins (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1970), p. 21.

⁶ Marshall, p. 39.

⁷ Gavin Lambert, The Dangerous Edge (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975), p. 5.

⁸ Lambert, pp. 5, 6.

⁹ Lambert, p. 6.

¹⁰ Lambert, p. 7.

¹¹ Lambert, p. 7.

¹² Wilkie Collins, The Dead Secret (New York: Collier, 1900), p.

¹³ Sue Lonoff, Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers (New York: AMS Press, 1982), p. 160.

R[ay]. V[ernon]. Andrew. Wilkie Collins: A Critical Survey of His Prose Fiction with a Bibliography. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1979. xi, 358 pp. \$35.00.

Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV

This is an unusual book. Part of a series, "The Fiction of Popular Culture," supervised by E. F. Bleiler, in which the nineteen other titles treat writers of Gothic romance (Radcliffe, Maturin) or crime-detective fiction (Ainsworth, Doyle), it implies one prevalent outlook on Collins's work. Unlike most others in the series, Andrew's book is no reprint of a previously published book; it is a photographically reproduced doctoral thesis for Potchefstroom University (1959). Twenty-four years, however, have not dimmed its luster. Along with Sue Lonoff's book, reviewed elsewhere in these pages, and the never completed study by Dorothy L. Sayers (also lately published), it joins the ranks of significant Collinsiana.

Andrew structures his book such that critiques of writings (fiction, drama, non-fictional prose) leading up to the four "greats"--The Woman in White, No Name, Armada, and The Moonstone--are set forth chronologically. The four major novels then receive critiques. Finally, there are sections outlining the winding down from the great years (1859-1868), chronologically set down, and conclusions. No piece by Collins is too minor to go unnoticed, if tersely, and that feature adds value to this book. Surprisingly, few of Andrew's judgments of the major novels have been surpassed, although Lonoff's chapter on The Moonstone might profitably be read with Andrew's comments on that novel.

Several minuses are evident in Wilkie Collins, let it be boldly stated. Some will object to the ample plot summaries, yet, with Collins's writings being often eclipsed by those of Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, or Trollope, those outlines provide handy guides. The long quotations, principally from Collins's own writings, may be equally worthwhile, although they appear in predictably dissertationesque format that grow fairly mechanical. The vast numbers of typos, and the omission of what in spots are key words (p. 79, 1st par.; p. 92, 4th l. from bottom) or of quotation marks (p. 21) detract from swift perusal. Erratic forms in many notes and the failure to italicize entire titles: these are

just plain sloppiness, of sorts, moreover, that could have been prevented by thorough, and courteous, checking. A minus of different proportions is Andrew's aim to draw biographical inferences from the texts; these are frequently unsubstantiated, and they are the more glaring because of occasional swipes at Nuel P. Davis for offering shaky speculation (p. 217). Davis's The Life of Wilkie Collins (1956) otherwise receives fairly soft-pedalled treatment, perhaps because his method is so like Andrew's. One should read with caution Andrew's attempts to link Collins's life with his fiction, particularly that comment yoking Ezra Jennings with his creator (p. 233). Usually these sections that "see the life" in the works should be approached with the salt box handy. Much concerning Collins's personal life still remains cloudy, alas, and that in despite of biographical labors of Kenneth Robinson, Robert Ashley, and Kirk H. Beetz, whose edition of Collins's correspondence would do much in the way of affording biographical enlightenment.

Now to the plus factors in Andrew's book. Still in biographical regions, we note his sensible corrective to J. G. Millais's sensational record of the genesis of The Woman in White, in his biography of his father (1899). That less-than-reliable story, nevertheless, maintains vitality after many years, as have so many legends connected with Edgar Allan Poe or the biased biographical portraits of George Meredith (I have lately acquired letters by Meredith with which S. M. Ellis obviously tampered before publishing them in his biography of Meredith). Andrew, rightly, laments the absence of an edition of Collins's letters, a lament that is still relevant after nearly a quarter of a century. Nuel Davis projected a published collection of Collins's letters, but that failed to see light. Maybe some enterprising firm will publish Beetz's edition, a feat that would materially assist Collinsians. The plays, to which Andrew devotes more space than any other scholar has done, need similar editorial treatment and publication for convenient availability.

Another merit in Andrew's assessments shows in fairly detailed (or at least lengthier than elsewhere) discussion of Collins's use of dramatic techniques in his fiction. With his own words about the novel and the play as "twin sisters," in the preface to Basil, those cross-currents are important. No other critic, though, gives so much, and so much good, thought to the topic. Collins frequently adapted his novels to the stage, although in Man and Wife he reversed the procedure, failing abominably to bring a play to length and art essential in good fiction. A sister art, painting, with which he had more than passing familiarity, cropped up

functionally throughout Collins's fiction. Thence the "atmosphere" for which he remains well-known. Artist figures, too, continue to be familiar characters in the Collins gallery, and their appearances combine with dramatic aspects to give Collins an odd type of kinship to Henry James, as I see it (and not heretically, I hope), that has previously gone unspoken.

Generally, Andrew's theories concerning the four great novels have weathered well the passage of time. He gives just dues to The Woman in White, then gives like eminence to No Name (shades of Geoffrey Tillotson). With that latter opinion many are bound to disagree, but Andrew's case is well presented. (I except the matter of trying to see Collins's personal circumstances as a mainspring for No Name.) Then, citing Harry Quilter, who to many remains Collins's most astute Victorian critic, Andrew concurs in praising Armadale, another view with which many may find fault (not, however, the present reviewer). It is no small irony to read here now serialized Armadale saved Harper's Monthly from losses it sustained during the run of Our Mutual Friend. Time and John Forster have swayed favor toward Dickens. In this same vein, Andrew's emphasizing how The Woman in White made the reputations of both Collins and All the Year Round is valuable. Indeed the more far-reaching subject of Collins as magazinist is given shrewd soundings, and in line with that his relationship with Dickens on professional levels. That they diverged because of Dickens's jealousy over the success of The Moonstone and because of his preoccupation with Ellan Ternan and his readings: these are matters not trumpeted by John Forster and company. Andrew's readings of The Moonstone is fresh and persuasive after many years. His demonstration of its culminating many earlier Collinsian methods and character types is fine. One might, if wishing to be strict historian, argue that Dickens in Bleak House had beat Collins to the punch, so far as the "first detective novel in English" goes. Nonetheless, Andrew's placement of Collins's novel is a good one, and his later remarks about neglect of Collins in histories of detective fiction is still pertinent. More likely to elicit caveats are Andrew's praises for The Law and the Lady, a novel still much and unjustly passed by. Collins's delineation of abnormal characters never soared so high as it did in Miserrimus Dexter.

Collins's relationships with other writers show well in Andrew's pages. The Dickens-Collins question, on both sides, is handled more dispassionately than it has been in many other chronicles. The debts to Poe are noticed so tersely as to whet one's curiosity about their full significance (on which Earle Davis's The

Flint and the Flame ought also be consulted). Twain, Stevenson, Doyle, Stoker, Bennett, Daphne du Maurier, Graham Greene: most are not commonly associated with Collins, and further investigation may well devolve from Andrew's leads. The name of Dorothy L. Sayers, of course, has often been bracketed with that of Collins, and her writings about him are awarded deserved respect. E. L. Gregory has recently (1977) edited Sayer's unfinished study of Collins and produced an essay in which her literary debts are noted. A name absent from Andrew's list, and one that may ring strangely in some ears, is that of George Meredith. Mr. Phippen in The Dead Secret is a dead ringer for hypochondriacal Hippias Feverel in The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. Other characters and incidents in Collins's novel found their ways to Meredith's second novel, Evan Harrington. Meredith, too, we remember, wrote for Household Words during the very time The Dead Secret ran serially there; therefore, in his apprentice novels what more natural than his turning to established models? Perhaps the meager success of his early fiction led to Meredith's expression of deprecatory opinion about Collins in his correspondence. At any rate, Meredith's name deserves inclusion with others listed above.

In closing I suggest that a long incubation has not rendered valueless R. V. Andrew's study of Collins. It is for the most part cannily critical. The bibliography has been superceded by those of Kirk H. Beetz and Andrew Gasson. This book actually reads (bad typing and all negatives included) like a product of the 1970s or 1980s. It contains information available nowhere else for students of new and old acquaintance with Wilkie Collins. I recommend it as the best introduction to Collins's writings to be had, barring its theories of the writer's personal life entering the works. Andrew's leads (pp. 166-167) may develop into an extended study of Collins's women, a subject approached intermittently by Lonoff. Worthwhile reading awaits those who turn these pages.

Sue Lonoff. Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1982. ix, 298 pp. \$27.50.

Natalie Schroeder

Focusing on Collins's fiction in relation to his reading public, Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship presents some fresh insights into Collins's fiction. Sue Lonoff declares that: "Collins wrote to be read. Whatever inner needs or motives drove him to write and kept him writing through years of ill health, he was always concerned with his effect upon his audience, and that concern permeates his fiction" (p. 15). Her study also examines Collins's apparent ambivalent attitude toward his reading public: "He avidly sought popularity, yet he often attacked his readers' preconceptions and criticized the failings of the English. He tried to win approval but he also tried to shock, not only by thrilling or surprising his readers, but also by introducing characters and issues that were bound to be controversial" (p. 15).

One of the most impressive aspects of Lonoff's book is the comprehensiveness of her scholarship. She obviously began her research years ago (in her "Acknowledgments," for example, she thanks Walter Kendrick for allowing her to see his "forthcoming" article, published in 1977); however she also refers to some of the most recent publications on Collins--articles, books, and journals (i.e., The Wilkie Collins Society Journal). It is also helpful that her partially annotated "Selected Bibliography" indicates which works do not appear in Kirk H. Beetz's Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1889-1976.

While Lonoff's organization leads to a somewhat haphazard and sometimes repetitious treatment of Collins's fiction, it is well suited to her thesis. She begins with a general survey of the Victorian reading public. Then she focuses more specifically on Collins--on how he planned and wrote his novels and on the readers who mattered to him--his family and friends (particularly Dickens), his reviewers, and his "ordinary" reading public. After analyzing Collins's readers, Lonoff illustrates the reciprocal relation of his concern with audience and his writing: "his most effective techniques evolved from his attempts to

maintain the reader's interest and served the purpose of luring the reader into active involvement" (p. 79). She also explores the games Collins played with his plots and characters, with his readers, and with "the text as a text" (p. 117).

The final two chapters of Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers, though, are the most valuable. In the penultimate chapter Lonoff discusses the kinds of things Collins included in his novels when he wrote to please himself rather than his readers: women and deviance. She argues that Collins was most definitely attracted to masculine women, but like "so many Victorian men, he also found female potency a threat, a source of fear and anxiety" (p. 146). Unfortunately, the section on physical deviance is not as well developed as the ones on women and on psychological deviance.

The final chapter on The Moonstone as a reader-oriented work treats the sources of the novel to illustrate how Collins adapted various materials to please his readers. A few points Lonoff makes about sources, though, remain dubious. She admits, for example, that there is no proof that Collins read Confessions of a Thug, but she goes on to imply he did read it because "Queen Victoria herself read the proof sheets, and when the book was published it was widely and favorably reviewed" (p. 178). Similarly, although she admits there is no proof that Collins read "The Spectre of Tappington," because he "certainly" read Bentley's Miscellany (where it was first published), she says, "it [is] very likely that he did" (p. 182).

Lonoff does, however, offer some original insights into The Moonstone. She discusses it as not simply an entertaining detective novel, but as a serious work that indirectly tackles some very controversial Victorian social issues: for example, imperialism and religion: "like knowledge, peception [sic], and reason, faith becomes paradoxical. The professing Christians are un-Christian, true Christians cannot survive in the atmosphere the others have created, and the most profoundly religious people in the novel are not Christian but Hindu" (p. 223). In addition, the Appendix, which presents the serial divisions of The Moonstone, should prove profitable to Collins students and scholars.

While Lonoff's book is certainly an important addition to Collins scholarship, there are some stylistic and mechanical problems that tend to distract the reader. At times the chapters ramble on without clear transitions, and the typographical errors (I

noticed at least four) indicate careless proofreading. Despite those minor problems Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers clearly illustrates that Collins was, indeed, more than an entertaining story teller. Lonoff's book affirms that Wilkie Collins was "proud of his methods and their outcome, that he felt his work would have enduring value" (p. 230).



THANKS TO THE THUNDER.

'Thanks to the Thunder' by W. Thomas in *Cornhill Magazine*, XII, Nov. 1865, fp 576

Notes

The Modern Language Association of America (MLA) has denied the Wilkie Collins Society allied status, asserting that the Society has not enough North American members and too few MLA members. There will be no meeting of the Society at the 1983 MLA Convention. The MLA has indicated its willingness to consider including a special session for the Society in the program of the December 1984 MLA Convention in Washington, D.C. No promises have been made, but the MLA Convention committee will consider a proposal that has a well defined topic, includes a list of speakers and their paper topics, and indicates the speakers' background and expertise in the chosen topic.

Kirk H. Beetz proposes to chair such a meeting. He suggests that the topic be "Wilkie Collins: Father of the Detective Novel." However, Society members are encouraged to suggest alternative topics. Those who wish to present papers should send abstracts (or complete papers) to Dr. Beetz at 1307 "F" Street, Davis, California 95616, USA. All proposals will be considered for publication in the Journal unless their authors specify otherwise. Papers for the proposed meeting should take between 15 and 20 minutes to read. Please try to have the abstracts (or complete papers) to Dr. Beetz by December 1983. Please remember, all this work is for a proposed session at the 1984 MLA Convention; the proposal may or may not be accepted.

Notes on the Contributors

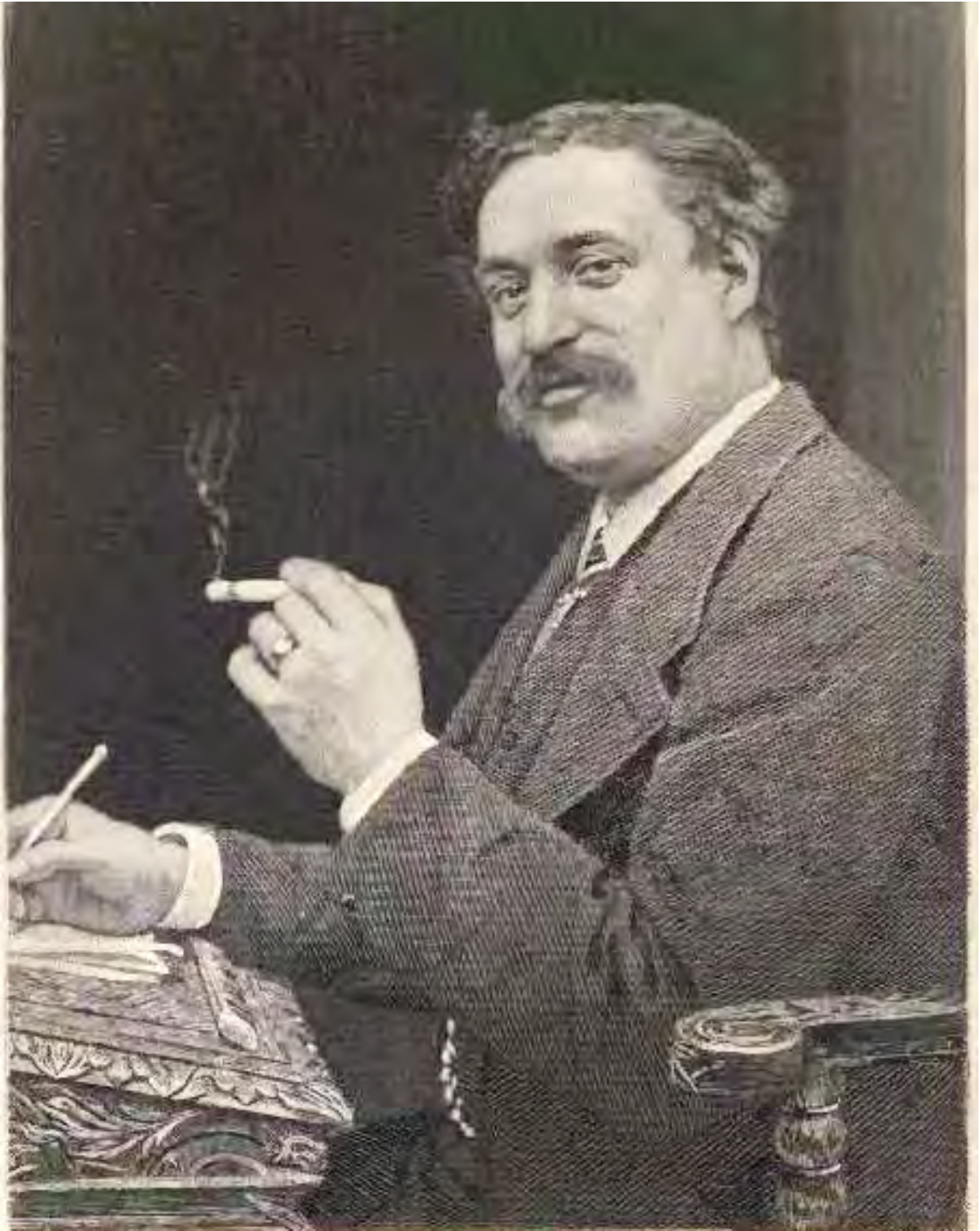
Natalie Schroeder teaches English for the University of Mississippi. Her previous publications include "John Jasper: Hero Villain" (University of Mississippi Studies in English, N.S. vol. I, 1980), an outstanding essay. She is writing a book on sensation fiction.

Robert Ashley is one of the pioneers of modern studies of Wilkie Collins. His 1952 book Wilkie Collins and his essays on Collins have strongly influenced the direction and temper of research into Collins's life and work. His essay "'Within My Experience: An Essay Suggested by the Dover Reprint of Wilkie Collins' Basil" appeared in the 1981 issue of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal. Dr. Ashley teaches English for Ripon College, Wisconsin.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
VOLUME IV
1984



Engraving of Edmund Yates by Joseph Brown, from *Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences* (London: Bentley, 1884)

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £6.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

Volume IV

1984

N O N A M E.

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," "THE DEAD SECRET,"
ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, & CO., 47 LUDGATE HILL.

1862.

*[The Right of Translation is Reserved; and the Privilege of Dramatic Adaptation
has been Secured by the Author.]*

Wilkie Collins Society Journal

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On the cover: Engraving of Edmund Yates by Joseph Brown,
from Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences
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Editor's Note

Each year, the coming together of the disparate parts of the Journal seems like a minor miracle. This year, we may have our most cohesive issue thus far. Speculative, thoughtful, and interesting, the present volume's essays should inspire more thought about the variety of Collins's writings, as well as his own thoughtfulness as a literary artist. Gasson provides insight into Collins's bibliography and career; Clarke adds to the recent speculations about Collins's early journalistic career; Blain presents some of what she has learned in her research for a new scholarly edition of No Name; and as for my own contribution, you will have to judge for yourself whether it has merit. I do not care for self-publication and had planned to send my essay elsewhere when Blain's essay arrived; the two fit so well together that I tried them out on Robert Ashley, and he urged their tandem publication. Hence, still with misgivings, I include a work of my own in the Journal.

I should also like to call your attention to the note by Howard S. Mott, Society member and a dealer in rare literary materials. He has waited approximately twenty months for his recognition by the Society and deserves credit for his bibliographic achievement. I also note that the present volume is the most international we have had, with essays from England, Australia, and the United States. Hello, you folks in Canada, Scotland, and elsewhere! Please note the submission requirements on the inside front cover and then give the Journal a try.

K.H.B.

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Wilkie Collins, Edmund Yates and The World

Andrew Gasson

On June 9th 1883, Wilkie Collins wrote to Edmund Yates the following warmly grateful letter:

My Dear Edmund,

The writer of the letter addressed to me in this week's 'World' has claims on my gratitude, which I am really and truly powerless to acknowledge. Never before has any criticism--English or Foreign--spoken with such generous recognition of all, and more than all, that I describe. That and fearless sympathy--offered at a time when sympathy is especially precious--so completely overpowered me, that I was obliged in certain places, to wait till my eyes were clear again before I could read on. Pray say to this true brother in our art all that your old friend cannot, and dare not, say for himself--and add to your timely kindnesses one kindness more.

Always yours affectionately,

Wilkie Collins¹

Collins penned this letter in response to "Letters to Eminent Persons, No. LXXII, Mr. Wilkie Collins" published in The World on June 6th 1883 under the pseudonym "Kosmos."² It represented the culmination of a friendship of nearly thirty years' standing for two noted figures of nineteenth-century literature.

The careers of Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) and Edmund Yates (1831-1894) in many respects followed a very similar pattern. They both came of artistic families (painting; the theatre); travelled with keen interest on the Continent in their youth (Italy; Germany) and successfully mastered foreign languages (French; German). At school, each was an eager devourer of the "light literature" of the time and in turn narrated tales to his schoolmates. They both accepted, at least initially, the necessity of clerical employ-

ment (tea merchant; and the post office) whilst at the same time succumbing to the twin attractions of Literature and the Theatre. If Collins misspent his time at Mr. Antrobus, then Yates produced his first work during a church sermon in St. John's Wood.³

They both wrote during the span of the major period of Victorian literature, from the early 1850's to the late 1880's. Their first books were nonfiction (Memoirs of the Life of William Collins R.A., 1848; My Haunts, and their Frequenters, 1854); they spent their early years in journalism and progressed to write three-decker novels and plays for the London stage. Their early contributions were to The Leader and Bentley's Miscellany, moving on to Household Words, All the Year Round and The Temple Bar. Their careers diverged in their middle years--with Collins on the one hand creating and mastering his technique of the Sensation Novel, and Yates on the other fulfilling his editorial ambitions--but they appeared to reunite in mutual esteem and friendship during the period of Yates's own journal, The World.

THE DICKENS CONNEXION

Wilkie Collins had been invited to Dickens's home since 1851, whereas Yates records how he first visited Tavistock House during the Summer of 1854.⁴ If the two young writers had not previously met in person, such an encounter is likely to have first taken place at the performance of Collins's drama, The Lighthouse, on June 18th 1855, when Collins was thirty-one and Yates just twenty-four. Yates, many years later, in his obituary of Collins published in The World wrote of "... the dapper little man I had met thirty years before at Tavistock House, when he was already distinguished by Dickens's warm regard; though even then there was something weird and odd in his appearance, something which removed him widely from the ordinary crowd of young men of his age."⁵

Certainly their friendship must have evolved during the next few years and the earliest tangible evidence of Edmund Yates's admiration for Collins occurs in 1857. Yates was the editor of The Train, a literary journal started in 1856 and he wrote as the second in the "Men of Mark" series a highly favourable critical examination of W. Wilkie Collins.⁶ On the strength of the early novels, Antonina, Basil, Hide and Seek and the then currently serialised The Dead Secret, he wrote, "Mr. Wilkie Collins . . . is without doubt the most conscientious novelist of the present day. No barrister or physician ever worked harder at his

profession, devoted more time, or thought, or trouble to it, or was prouder of it, or pursued it with more zeal and earnestness than Mr. Collins has done with regard to literature." Having placed him in his estimation "as the fourth in rank among the British novelists" of the day (behind Dickens, Thackeray and Charlotte Bronte), he contended that "as a story teller he has no equal, that he possesses the art de conter above all living writers." He dealt cautiously with Basil as possibly "objectionable to many . . . and not particularly defensible," noting that "the concluding portion may be condemned as too highly coloured, too melodramatic and unnatural," but stating unequivocally "that it is the work of a master of his art."

Turning to The Lighthouse and The Frozen Deep, Yates wrote in his almost completely laudatory essay, "Both are full of powerful interest. Both were received with enthusiasm by those who had the good fortune to see them." It is interesting to compare this youthful praise with the more sober comments in his obituary of Collins when he wrote with the benefit of hindsight, "As a dramatist Wilkie Collins cannot be considered to have been successful . . . even with the aid of Robson's genius, the former [The Lighthouse] made no effect on the stage; while the latter [The Frozen Deep] was not, I think, ever publicly played."⁷

It did, however, play before Queen Victoria at a command performance in London on July 7th 1857, and it drew an audience of 3,000 in Manchester the following month.⁸ These performances--occasioned by the death of Douglas Jerrold and Dickens's desire to raise a fund for the benefit of his widow⁹--should provide a further link between Collins and Yates, since the latter was closely involved in the fund's organisation. The various contributions, including Dickens's reading and Thackeray's lecture, are described in his Recollections, but curiously there is no mention of Jerrold's other old friend, Wilkie.

A year later, however, Collins was prepared to give his public support to Yates in the Garrick Club affair. Following his indiscreet description of Thackeray in Town Talk, Yates appeared before the committee in the ensuing row. His prime defender and advisor in this matter was Dickens, but Collins also strongly supported him at the meeting "influenced by personal friendship."¹⁰ In September 1858, Yates was finally expelled from the Garrick and both Dickens and Collins resigned in protest.

Their close association with Dickens continued after this. By April 1859 Yates was invited to emulate

Collins and extract items of current news interest for All the Year Round¹¹ and contributed to the Christmas Number in 1863. In 1860 Yates was a guest at the wedding of Charles Collins to Dickens's daughter, Kate, and in November 1867, in the company of Collins and others, he accompanied Dickens to Liverpool to see him off on his voyage to New York.

By this time Yates had just ceased to be editor of The Temple Bar, on its sale to Bentley. It is notable that Collins, who published in this same magazine The New Magdalen in 1872, The Frozen Deep in 1874, and The Two Destinies in 1876, contributed nothing during the actual period of Yates's editorial responsibilities. He particularly records in his Recollections that in 1864 "We were in a tolerable state at Temple Bar . . . We wanted a novel badly."¹² Whether he felt unable to offer Collins a suitable fee after the success of The Woman in White and No Name (although he states "the proprietor offered extremely liberal terms"); or whether he knew of George Smith's offer of £1500."¹³ During his trip he was entertained by Harpers and became a close friend of Col. William A. Seaver, a famous raconteur who also conducted for a while the "Editor's Draw" in Harpers New Monthly Magazine.¹⁴ When Collins sailed for the United States in September 1873, he carried with him a letter of introduction from Yates to Seaver.

If £1500 proved a rewarding sum for Yates, the author of The Woman in White and The Moonstone would have felt his own return of £2500 fairly modest. Nevertheless, he was also favourably impressed by American hospitality, stating "a kinder warmer-hearted set of people surely does not exist--only their ways are queer."¹⁵

THE WORLD

The World: A Journal for Men and Women was the fulfilment of Yates's lifelong ambition to own and edit his own magazine. The first weekly number appeared on 8th July 1874, and although it was started in partnership with Grenville Murray, disagreements in policy left The World as Yates's sole property and under his sole management from the beginning of 1875.¹⁶ This period also represented a time of closer co-operation between Collins and Yates. March 1875 saw the publication in book form of The Law and the Lady as well as the final episode of its serialisation in The Graphic. Collins was at odds with the editor of this journal because his lawyer had prevented an unauthorized attempt to alter and abridge the text. The

Graphic had published its own disclaimer ". . . in justice to ourselves, as the story is not one which we should have voluntarily selected to place before our readers." Yates strongly supported Collins in this matter in The World of March 17th,¹⁷ and published a long letter from Collins in the subsequent issue of March 24th, allowing him to give his side of the dispute in detail and to thank the editor of The World for ". . . a service rendered to Literature, as well as a service rendered to me."¹⁸ Notwithstanding Yates's defense of Collins on this point of principle, The World had already published a lengthy but not wholly complimentary review of the novel. "The Law and the Lady will be read with avidity by all who delight in the romances of the greatest master the sensation novel has ever known. Nor, we think, will it much militate against its attraction, that it is, as we have said, a kind of burlesque upon Mr. Collins's manner and style, and destitute from beginning to end of anything like human interest."¹⁹

Later that year, Yates requested Collins to write a short story for The World as the first in a series of "Feuilletons." Entitled The Clergyman's Confession, it was published in three weekly parts, commencing on August 4th 1875. This same story was published through Hunter, Rose & Co. in The Canadian Monthly (August-September 1875) and was subsequently included in Little Novels (1887) as Miss Jeromette and the Clergyman.

Yates prided himself on the "Celebrities at Home" series of which No. LXXXI (in 1877) was "Mr. Wilkie Collins in Gloucester-Place."²⁰ "A short man, with stooping shoulders and tiny hands and feet, with a bright pleasant face looking out of a forest of light gray, almost white, hair, greets us as we enter the big double-fronted drawing room." Collins is described as "a rapid inventor and a slow producer, constantly revising his work until he has reached something approaching his ideal of a simple natural style," emulating, as Collins, himself, is quoted, "'Lord Byron's letters . . . the best English I know of--perfectly simple and clear, bright and strong.'" The piece continues with details of Collins's early years, his association with Dickens, and a brief assessment of his first novels, including Basil, "in which are visible traces of that weird imagination which afterwards became one of his most marked characteristics."

The Woman in White receives much fuller attention as "a book that at once placed the author in the front rank of European novelists." It is used to illustrate Collins's own method of working "almost in the words in

which we have heard it described by Mr. Collins's own lips.

"The first step in the methode Collins is to find a central idea, the second to find the characters, the third to let the incidents bring themselves about from the nature of the characters, the fourth to begin the story at the beginning . . ."

The article also describes Collins's great difficulty in finding a title for The Woman in White. This eventually emerged only after taking himself down to Broadstairs and "much cudgelling of his brains." (See also Virginia Blain's "The Naming of No Name" in the present issue of the WCS Journal.)

In August 1877, The Dead Secret was adapted for the stage, not by Collins, himself, but by E. J. Bramwell²¹ with, as the Theatre Programme states, "the author's express permission from the Popular Novel." The World's review of the play, whilst extending praise for both Collins and the original novel, was far from favourable.²² "Altogether this must be pronounced a very poor adaptation; the book interests, the play wearies; the author's characters are far more vital, real, and solid as he presents them to us in print than when they appear upon the scene A clumsy melodrama . . . it was received with considerable indifference." This fairly harsh review is unsigned, but may have been written either by Yates himself or by Dutton Cook who became the dramatic critic of The World some time after its first twelve months.

Certainly Cook wrote the review of the ill-fated Rank and Riches in the issue of June 13th 1883²³ and, considering the complete failure of the play, which was laughed off the stage of the Adelphi, his criticism is almost surprisingly respectful.

Mr. Collins's art as a narrator and romancist is so prodigious that he could probably make the uninviting subject of his Rank and Riches available for a novel of singular interest. But the magic of the novelist loses its potency in the theatre, where literary skill and descriptive powers cannot be employed to screen defects or to strengthen weak places, to hide gaps or to bandage wounds. Subjected to the "boiling down" processes of the stage, the story of Rank and Riches emerges very pale and thin and infirm, unlikely, unlikelike, and, worst of all, uninteresting.

As Cook deftly put it, "The new play . . . by no means contented the audience" and "on such occasions there are always wilder spirits present who stay to ridicule what they came to enjoy." In any event, Rank and Riches represented Collins's last real attempt at the theatre.

THE FALLEN LEAVES

The Fallen Leaves was serialized in The World from January 1st to July 23rd 1879. The printers responsible for The Fallen Leaves were Messrs. Robson & Sons, whom Yates had known as early as 1860 during his years with the Temple Bar.²⁴ Collins, himself, corresponded directly with Charles Thomas of Robson's, who seems to have later become closely involved with the day to day editing and publishing of The World. There is evidence of Collins sending Thomas copy slips and corrected proofs from October 1878 until the middle of June 1879.²⁵ Thus he notes on June 10th: "30th weekly part. 3 more slips 260, 260-261. The conclusion, tomorrow, Wed morning"; and on June 11th he writes to Thomas, with his customary courtesy:

The two concluding slips of copy for the 30th and last, weekly portion of The Fallen Leaves were posted to you this afternoon. I enclose the corrected proof of part 29.

I am much obliged to you for correcting my mistake in numbering the chapters. While I am writing, let me thank you for your kind attention to the requests with which I have troubled you during the progress of this story through the press--and let me also congratulate you on the admirably correct manner in which the proofs have been read before they reached my hands.²⁶

The Fallen Leaves was also serialized in The Canadian Monthly from February 1879 to March 1880, and on February 15th 1879 Collins wrote to George Stewart of the Rose Belford Publishing Company in Toronto:

Pray accept my thanks for your kind letter. I accept the explanations which you are so kind as to send me in the same friendly spirit in which they have been offered. By last Thursday's Canadian packet, I sent to you revises in advance (to 26th March) by registered post.

I accept the terms, offered in your letter, in this Canadian publication of "The Fallen Leaves"--viz!--£40-0-0 for the serial right, and £60-0-0 for the book right--payment to be made on receipt of the concluding proof of the story, by a bill of exchange for £100 at thirty days sight.

In the case of "The Haunted Hotel", I was kept waiting for the Canadian payment, for more than two months after publication--and when the Bill arrived it was at sixty days sight. In the case of "The Fallen Leaves", I am paid for the periodical right, in England, in cash, every month. And Mr. Frank Leslie has paid his half payment, for the first half of the advance sheets, in a Bill at sight. Under these circumstances, I hope my conditions of payment will be found both just and moderate."²⁷

The reference to Frank Leslie indicates the story's additional publication in Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper for the sum of £100.²⁸ It represented a significant departure for Collins because of his very strong previous ties with Harpers, but with whom he had recently had a disagreement over the publishing of The Haunted Hotel.

It is a great pity that Collins's only full length novel published under Yates's editorship should be the one book which is often regarded as his worst failure.

On June 6th 1883, no doubt prompted by the recent publication of Heart and Science (on April 16th), The World published the already mentioned No. LXXII in the series of "Letters to Eminent Persons." This tribute to Collins, written under the pseudonym of Kosmos, opens with a general lament at the decline of fiction, by reader and novelist alike, but singling out Collins by contrast for especial praise:

You, my dear sir, have a skill in literary workmanship, a breadth and grip, a faculty of insight and a triumphant mastery of construction You have just completed a novel which in its way is equal to anything that has ever come from your pen. Heart and Science is a thoroughly fine

romance, and there is no man living, in this country at any rate who could produce its superior or its equal . . . Your English, too, is immeasurably better than that of the competitors in your craft. It is clear, nervous, incisive; your sentences are well balanced, well constructed, and perspicuous.

You lift your readers out of the region of the commonplace. You introduce them into an atmosphere full of strange coincidences and mystic sounds. The footsteps of Fate sound audibly through your pages Thus it is that you cast a certain eerie and fantastical glamour over the commonest objects and incidents of the most ordinary lives.

. . . But though you may give now and then unnecessary prominence to the grotesque and bizarre, you never fail to show that even without those expedients you would be a great writer.

Little wonder that Collins in his letter to Yates was moved to tears by nearly 2000 words of adulation and praise for his past and present work.

Not long after this, in 1883, Yates committed the criminal libel of which he was convicted the following year, and for which, after losing an appeal, he served seven weeks of a four months prison sentence from January 1885. During this same period he published his Recollections, in October 1884. The most puzzling aspect of this work of detailed personal reminiscences is the scant mention accorded to Collins. By contrast, for example, J. M. Bellew receives much fuller treatment--except that his use of Collins's humorous essay Pray Employ Major Namby for public reading is not discussed. This fact only emerges in Yates's 1889 obituary in The World.

The Dictionary of National Biography entry for Yates, by Thomas Seccombe, suggests that Collins was on the staff of The World, although this is not substantiated by the Recollections, which discusses other members in some detail. There exists, however, one example of Collins's initials on a sheet of verse copy with instructions for printing. That Collins worked regularly on The World seems unlikely, in view of both his failing health and his other writing commitments. It is also most unlikely that he would contribute anonymously when the editor, Dutton Cook,

and others are identifiable from their initials. It is possible, however, to speculate that for the sake of their long established friendship he may have been prepared to assist Yates in an occasional editorial capacity.

THE OBITUARIES

The tribute for which Yates is best known is that published in Temple Bar in 1890.²⁹ He had, however, already written an earlier obituary two days after Collins's death for the issue of The World of Wednesday September 25th 1889. This piece describes, of course, his literary success, mentions his relative failure as a dramatist and narrates how "during the progress of The Moonstone . . . he first acquired the baleful habit of taking sedatives" with his finally taking "more laudanum . . . than would have sufficed to kill a ship's crew or a company of soldiers." Indeed, the significance of this obituary remains that it is written throughout with a warmth of personal feeling and detail which both his earlier essays and his autobiography strangely lack. ". . . I am robbed of a friend with whom, though he was some years my senior, I was closely associated in the early days of my literary career, and with whom I had ever maintained a warm and pleasant intimacy." Yates concludes by writing of "that little coterie which used to meet at Mrs. Collins's house . . . All, all are gone, the old familiar faces." "Dear good staunch Wilkie, who has now gone to rejoin them!"³⁰

We now return to the Charles Thomas, mentioned earlier in connexion with The Fallen Leaves, who by this time seems to have become closely involved with the day-to-day production of The World. He wrote in a coldly business-like style a memo to Yates dated October 1st 1889: "I left over a couple of A.F.C.'s Wilkie Collins paras for next week: there seemed, I thought, with your own article, a little too much W.C." We must conjecture over whether it is the friend or editor replying, since Yates has returned this note to Thomas, having written over it in his distinctive violet ink "Yes, but it is a necessary evil!"³¹ The issue of October 2nd in fact contains a further article by Yates entitled "One Who Knew Him" which is strongly critical of "the obituary-ghouls of journalism" who come to buy or beg the number containing the "celebrity of which the moribund was the subject," and then embroider the information to suggest proof of their friendship with the deceased. "In the present case of Mr. Wilkie Collins there have, since his lamented

death, been so many extraordinary personal revelations made in various journals, and in nearly every case 'By One Who Knew Him' as to create astonishment, and something more, among his old friends." Yates gives several examples of such distortions of the truth including fabricated descriptions of Collins's funeral, which Yates, himself, writes of with great feeling.³²

The other paragraphs, written under the pseudonym of Atlas³² refer to Walter Besant and Blind Love; Collins's reluctance to write personal reminiscencies; the European reputation of The Woman in White; Millais's portrait of Collins; and the French edition of The Woman in White. Some of the left-over paras by A.F.C. were also published the following week³⁴ under the name Atlas and concern Armada, the executors to Collins's will, and a protest at Harry Quilter's proposed public memorial to Collins. The final Atlas item appeared on October 16th³⁵ and took the form of a correspondent correcting a personal recollection of Collins by Hall Caine which had been published in a number of provincial journals.

Collins was in fact the senior by only seven years and as is well known continued writing novels right up to the time of his death. Yates himself died just five years later in 1894 but his last book, Recollections, was written ten years before in 1884. If Collins is remembered in the main only for The Woman in White and The Moonstone, Yates's seventeen novels, written between 1864 and 1875, now seem to be lost in complete obscurity.

Collins and Yates had known each other for some thirty-four years during which time they had established a long-standing friendship following the early days in which their careers were similarly influenced and followed parallel paths. Nevertheless, there remains apparent inconsistencies in their relationship. On the one side, Collins's actions such as the Garrick Club affair appear to be motivated purely by friendship and loyalty. The dearth of his own personal reminiscencies leaves no opinion of Yates's literary merit. He did not see fit to dedicate any of his thirty-four books to Yates, as he had to many of his closest friends. The sale catalogue³⁶ of his personal library indicates no individual title of Yates nor, for the matter, any dedication copies which might have been expected from a close friend.

Yates, on the other hand, with the exception of the 1889 obituary, wrote of Collins with an almost exaggerated esteem for his more gifted senior rather than in terms of obvious friendship; however, he seems

to have been the first consistently to apply terms such as "weird," "eerie," "grotesque," and "fate" to Collins and his works. There is still the question of why The Fallen Leaves was the only full length novel and "The Clergyman's Confession" the only short story that has been traced that Yates published either in The World or throughout his editorship of several earlier journals. Yates's Recollections would have been the natural place for friendly personal narrative but, as has been mentioned, Collins receives remarkably scant mention by comparison with so many other acquaintances of Yates of far lesser repute and who certainly never merited the label of "Eminent Person" or "Celebrity at Home." The reason for the apparent disregard (in two volumes and nearly 700 pages) of Collins, with whom he had "ever maintained a warm and pleasant intimacy" is a mystery almost worthy of Wilkie himself.

NOTES

- 1 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 2 The World, June 6th 1883, pp. 5, 6.
- 3 Edmund Yates: His Recollections and Experiences. London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884. Vol. I, p. 220.
- 4 Recollections. Vol. I, p. 256.
- 5 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 6 The Train, June 1857, p. 354.
- 7 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 8 Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins. London: The Bodley Head, 1951. p. 112.
- 9 Recollections. Vol. I, p. 293.
- 10 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 27.
- 11 R. C. Lehmann, Charles Dickens as Editor. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1912. pp. 265, 268.
- 12 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 83.
- 13 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 276.

- 14 N. P. Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins. Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1956. p. 279.
- 15 Robinson, p. 274.
- 16 Recollections. Vol. II, p. 330.
- 17 The World, March 17th, 1875, p. 15.
- 18 The World, March 24th, 1875, p. 21.
- 19 The World, Feb. 24th, 1875, pp. 20-21.
- 20 The World, December 26th, 1877, pp. 4, 5.
- 21 Robinson, p. 286.
- 22 The World, September 5th 1877, pp. 10, 11.
- 23 The World, June 13th 1883, p. 9.
- 24 Recollections, p. 316.
- 25 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 26 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 27 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 28 Davis, p. 290.
- 29 Temple Bar, August 1890, LXXIX, pp. 528-532.
- 30 The World, September 25th 1889, p. 12.
- 31 MS Andrew Gasson.
- 32 The World, October 2nd 1889, p. 13.
- 33 Ibid. p. 21.
- 34 The World, October 9th 1889, p. 21.
- 35 The World, October 16th 1889, p. 21.
- 36 Puttick and Simpson, Sale Catalogue. January 20th 1890.

THE STUDIO OF VAN DE VELDE.

E. Le Poittevin, Painter.

C. W. Sharpe, Engraver.

THE name of Eugene Le Poittevin is not unfamiliar to the earlier readers of the *Art-Journal*, nor are his works altogether unknown to them, as exhibited in two engravings we published prior to the introduction of the "Vernon Gallery," "The Studio of Paul Potter," and "The Fisherman's Return."

All who have read the history of the two celebrated Dutch painters, the Van de Velde, will recollect that "Mr. William Van de Velde, senior, late painter of sea-fights to their Majesties King Charles II. and King James," as his tombstone in St. James's Church set forth, was on terms of intimacy with the distinguished Dutch Admiral, De Ruyter; and it is related that, on one occasion, the artist being desirous of studying the effect of a cannon fired from a ship, begged his friend to afford him such an opportunity from one then under the command of De Ruyter. It is this scene which M. Le Poittevin has made the subject of his picture, and most picturesquely it is represented; the figures in the foreground are, if the term may be applied to a group of such a character, most elegantly composed, the eye being carried up, by a well studied arrangement of forms and lines, from the base of the pyramid to the apex, the principal figure being at once the central and chief point of attraction, and is in the act of "touching in" the smoke. Almost immediately behind him are a stalwart man and a delicate-looking young female, watching the progress of the sketch, and below him are some peasant children, and a man having the appearance of a sailor, who are curiously scanning the contents of the painter's sketch-box.

The picture is rather low in tone, but is charming in richness and harmony of colour, and is most carefully finished; it is a *replica*, in every way equal to the original, of one that has always been considered among the best of this artist's works. The copy from which our engraving is taken was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1852.

A WALK THROUGH THE STUDIOS OF ROME.

I AM neither an artist nor a critic; I simply profess to give my own impressions, formed on the spot, during a walk through the various studios of Rome, in the hope that my account may interest those who are unable to see the interesting works by living painters and sculptors to which I am about to refer with their own eyes.

The day on which I started for the studios was a "festa;" rain and mist marking it especially as a holiday from all work dependent on light and sun. My companion—a well-known artist—long resident here, had undertaken to lead me through the principal studios, not the easiest places to find unaided, in such a labyrinth as Rome. We drove first into a miserable side street, suggestive of nothing, opening from the Via Babuino, and stopped before a dirty wooden door, much resembling the door of a stable. It opened, and we stood in a workshop filled with statues. A delightful warmth of atmosphere was instantly perceptible; which, coming as we did from the damp cold streets into this fresh land of grace and beauty, gave the notion of a transition from Purgatory to Paradise. A young man was chiselling a marble head when we entered, but he was only a neophyte, a catechumen in Art, as yet admitted but to the outer temple.

"Where in the world are we?" said I, as we emerged into a pretty garden redolent of sweets, and passed under verdant arcades into a larger apartment on the opposite side. "You are in Mr. Gibson's studio," replied my companion. Before I could ask any questions I saw Mr. Gibson himself—a middle-sized man of prepossessing appearance, with greyish hair, and a peculiarly grave, immovable expression of

countenance. For a moment he removed a cap which he habitually wears, and greeted us frankly, his manners being particularly simple and unaffected. He invited us, after showing a few of his less important works, to look at his "Venus." This was exactly what I was longing to do. In the centre of a large studio we saw that remarkable statue, which, when exhibited to the world, will create a new era in sculpture. It met our view as a pale delicate vision of the softest beauty, the eyes turned towards us, full of sweet, lucid gentleness, the limbs moulded in the most perfect proportions.

The statue is entirely coloured of a pale flesh-tint, looking more like wax than marble. The eyes are blue, with the pupils marked, and the hair faint flaxen. The only part of the marble left white, is the drapery thrown over the left arm, which, by the contrast, produces a brilliant effect; the edge also of this portion is finished with a coloured border of pink and blue. The apple in her hand, which she has just received from Paris, is of gold, as well as the armlet (an attribute of Venus, which Raffaele has, by the way, borrowed for his *Fornarina*). Acherfeet lies a tortoise. I infinitely prefer this statue as a work of Art both in form, figure, and expression, to Canova's "Venus" in the Pitti Palace at Florence, where, from the faulty arrangement of the hair, the head appears large out of all proportion. Gibson, on the contrary, has gathered the locks of his "Venus" into close blue fillets, which produce the most charming lines imaginable. To me the figure appeared perfect. I should be sorry to criticise a statue so enchanting; sorry to undertake to decide whether colour or no colour is the thing. I am quite contented to gaze and admire.

This is evidently a favourite work with Gibson, who has been engaged on it for six years. "I do not know when I shall part with it," said he; "certainly not for a long time. It is destined for a public hall at Liverpool, but I would not take any of the money usually paid beforehand, so that I might remain free: I shall not part with it for years. If they offered me a good room in London I might exhibit it there, —I should not object to that."

I asked him what first led him to think of colouring a statue. "My reverence," replied he, "for all the Greeks did in Art. It was their ancient practice to colour marble—a practice they learned from the Egyptians. Remember, continued he, growing more and more earnest as he entered on his favourite theme. "Remember, they were our superiors in the Fine Arts; and, as the church cherishes its saintly legends, so should sculptors study and follow those great examples of classical antiquity which time has handed down to us. On what else can we depend? It is often remarked by the English that sculpture is cold and inexpressive, and that effect is much lost by the sightless marble eyes. This is quite true; the Greeks had the same idea; and therefore they had their *statue painters*, which explains what Pliny says of Praxiteles, who, when asked which he considered his best works, replied, 'My best works are those painted by Nicias.'"

"I am aware," continued Mr. Gibson, "that it would be a very easy thing to produce a vulgar effect by painting a statue; but that is no argument against a judicious use of colour, which, when applied with prudence is, in my opinion, essential to sculpture. Far from hiding any defects, it renders them only more evident and unsightly."

I could not enumerate half the works in this room; I can only mention such as struck me particularly. There was a repetition of a statue of Sir Robert Peel, now just erected in Westminster Abbey, clothed in the rich mantle which has given so much offence to our English realists, who, I suppose, wished to see Sir Robert done into marble, in the very identical blue coat and gold buttons of the English gentleman,—his habit when he lived." Speaking of this statue, Gibson said:—"When I received the order, I studied over-much in my own mind an appropriate attitude. I thought of one and another statue, with this hand up and that down; one leg forward and one arm raised. I wanted to strike out something new. I always,"

continued he, "practise over everything I model myself, go through every attitude I conceive, and make my statues live and move before me, as it were. I put myself into those positions I most fancy, and satisfy myself that they come naturally. Were any one to see me at such times," added he, with a smile, "they would think I was mad for a certainty."

It was very interesting to hear him talk, he was so simple and unaffected.

He is very fond of representing the allegory of Cupid and Psyche, which he says appears to him the most elegant of all pagan fables. One basso-relievo on this subject was in the room, Psyche lying on a couch embracing Cupid, who stands beside her. There is the utmost purity and grace in her up-turned face, full of innocent fondness. Then we saw a lovely group of figures, "Psyche carried in the arms of two Zephyrs," of life-size. It is the same idea as that in Mulready's picture of "Crossing the Brook," but with all the elevation proper to the different characters of mortals and of gods.

Gibson pointed out also a basso-relievo of earthly desire and heavenly love under the form of two Cupids struggling; one is all ideality, while the expression of the other indicates a grosser nature: indeed this character of Cupid, as the god of ideal love, is everywhere beautifully illustrated in Gibson's studio, and seems to be a subject the sculptor dwells on with delight.

We passed into another room to see the great work on which Gibson is at present employed, "a monument," as he called it, "to commemorate a living personage," consisting of three statues, heroic size, in marble. This monument is to be erected to Queen Victoria, and will be placed in the "Princes' chamber," in the New Palace of Westminster.

After seeing many more works we left Mr. Gibson, delighted with his unaffected cordiality and kindness, and proceeded to the studio of the celebrated American sculptor, Mr. Crawford. He lives in the Piazza dei Termini, a great out-of-the-way square, close to one of the Gates of Rome, where stands the superb fountain of "Moses striking the Rock." Opposite Mr. Crawford's abode are the massive walls of Dioclesian's baths, built of the same deep red stone that lends so rich a colouring to the Colosseum.

The studio door (most unpromising like all studio doors) looks precisely as if it were the entrance to a coach-house, but on opening it we soon discovered that we had made no mistake, for we saw opposite to us the gigantic statue of "Washington," on which the artist is now engaged. The enormous horse in clay which we now beheld, was bestrode by a man without a head, that part of the hero's person being placed in another apartment. The floor was strewn with mighty fragments of horses' heads, and great legs, and hoofs, besides a Brobdignag hand of Washington and his great boot which looked for all the world like the ruins of the statue of "Dagon" in the picture books. This last article, I mean the boot, reminded me of the nursery story of the "old woman who lived in a shoe, with so many children she didn't know what to do," for really a whole generation of little people might live quite harmoniously in General Washington's boot. It looked odd and suspicious lying against the wall—what the Scotch call "no canny." I am sure it gets up in the night and walks hither and thither in the studio with more noise than ever the ghostly helmet made in the Mysteries of Udolpho!

Mr. Crawford took us into another room, one of three of the largest Italian proportions, forming a magnificent studio, to show us his design for the great monument to Washington, with the boot part of which I have been making so free. Nothing but the bold, youthful freshness for which American genius in sculpture is remarkable, could ever have conceived so stupendous an undertaking, to be executed solely by one man. The monument is to be fifty feet high, surmounted by the colossal equestrian statue of Washington. Below, on different pedestals projecting from the centre, stand four gigantic statues of patriots, endeared to the recollection of Virginians, as having all been born in their province, and as being connected with the liberation of America from English

The Mystery of Collins's Articles on Italian Art

William M. Clarke

Fresh light has recently been thrown on the mystery of what may have happened to a series of articles Wilkie Collins prepared for Bentley's Miscellany, based on his extended visit to Italy with Charles Dickens and Augustus Egg in the second half of 1853. There is now evidence that they may have turned up in the Art Journal, the magazine edited by S. C. Hall. But it remains a matter of judgment whether Collins was the author of them all.

Collins had interrupted his novel Hide and Seek to go off to Rome and Naples, but was clearly determined to pay for a good part of the trip with a series of travel articles, and he wrote to George Bentley, accordingly: "Any picturesque material for short articles which I may pick up on my way I shall be very glad to give you the refusal of for the magazine."¹ Collins plainly had it in mind to write a combination of travel and art articles, reflecting the visits he and Egg made throughout their journey. Dickens deliberately avoided such artistic forays. "The Fine Arts," he wrote home, "afford a subject which I never approach; always appearing to fall into a profound reverie when it is discussed. Neither do I ever go into any gallery with them . . . I keep out of the way when pictures are in question and go my own path." There seems little doubt that, as they moved along, from Genoa to Rome and Naples and then on to Florence and Venice, Collins was accumulating background material for his promised articles and, just over a month after their return (in mid-January, 1854) he sent George Bentley the first article, along with a detailed outline of the other five. They would, he explained,² cover his travels in Italy, describe various Papist ceremonies and include a true love story.

So much for his hopes. Bentley, in turn, quickly explained why the Miscellany could not accept them. The journal was actually in the middle of a similar series of articles covering travel in Italy.³ The question is what Collins did with the finished article and the rest of the series he had prepared. He still had bills to pay for the trip to Italy and a novel only partially completed. Nuel Pharr Davis has hazarded that George Bentley may have taken parts of the completed articles and published them later in 1854, suggesting that the anonymous article "Teresa Bandittini" in the August issue may have been one of them. He has also suggested that the essay "The Marriage of Cana," now in the Yale

University Library, may have been intended as another part of the series. "It is possible," Dr. Davis has concluded, "that Wilkie succeeded in getting the entire project printed in some magazine that has not come to notice, but this seems unlikely."

It is the possibility that they found their way into the Art Journal that now needs to be assessed. Jeremy Maas, the London art-dealer and writer (he is author of Gambert, Prince of the Victorian Art World and of Victorian Painters) told me privately four years ago that he had discovered a letter of Wilkie Collins to the editor of the Art Journal, dated June 1, 1854, among a mass of correspondence he had acquired in London relating to the Art Journal. This was the journal which Hall had founded in 1839, under the original title of the Art Union, and which he edited for the next forty years. Jeremy Maas has now confirmed the discovery and printed the relevant letter in his latest book, The Victorian Art World in Photographs (Barrie and Jenkins, London, 1984).

The letter itself was brief. It simply stated: "May the bearer have a copy of the Art Journal of this month (June, 1854) to be sent to the writer of the Article on the 'Studios of Rome'?" and was signed W. Wilkie Collins. The first impression was that Collins was the writer and that the puzzle of the lost articles had been solved. Jeremy Maas is in no doubt, and describes the articles as a "substantial addition" to Collins's works, bearing the "hallmarks of Collins' style."

The contents of the articles, however, and the subsequent discovery of a second, and earlier, letter to S. C. Hall have made a re-assessment necessary. The article referred to is signed Florentia, as are several subsequent articles in the Art Journal. These were published in issues stretching from June 1854, through to the following year. There were five articles entitled "A Walk through the Studios of Rome," parts I to V, between June, 1854 and August 1855, and others entitled "The Artists' Festa: Rome" and "Visit to the Catacombs of San Calisto."

The second letter is quoted in Professor E. R. Gregory's Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Biographical Study, the edited manuscript of Dorothy Sayers,⁵ now in the Humanities Research Center, Austin, Texas. It is addressed to S. C. Hall at the Art Journal and is dated May 3, 1854. It begins:

The article which this letter accompanies has been written by a friend of mine now resident in Rome, and has been sent to me to be offered for publication in England. As it treats of a subject of some Art-interest, I take the liberty of sending it to the Editor of the Art Journal⁶

Within a short time, it is clear that "the article" became a series and although Collins suggests that the first had been written by a friend in Rome, there is no direct evidence about the rest of the articles. The thought that Collins, having been rebuffed at least once, might be rather wary of claiming direct authorship is also not to be ignored. What we are left with are the articles themselves and the knowledge that Collins had prepared just such a series and had in fact visited the studios of Rome with Augustus Egg. Are we justified, on such circumstantial evidence, in assuming that he was the author (though nicely disguised)?

The evidence of the articles is tempting but not fully conclusive. The first article begins: "I am neither an artist nor a critic" The author is accompanied by a "well-known artist" and begins by a visit to "Mr. Gibson's studio, the well-known sculptor." Then on to "Mr. Crawford, the celebrated American sculptor" and to the studios of other successful painters and sculptors. Gibson, of course, was a friend of Wilkie's father, Williams Collins, and helped the Collins family when they visited Rome in 1837. He joined William as a full member of the Royal Academy in 1838. It is most likely that Wilkie (and Augustus Egg) called on him and renewed their acquaintance during their visit. The same is true of several of the other English, American, German and Italian painters and sculptors mentioned in the succeeding articles.

In the middle of these artistic visits, in contrast to the general fame and prosperity, the author and his companion stumble on a human tragedy. "A sad change was now to meet us as we picked our steps along an utterly broken-up, dirty lane, and then grasped our way up a dark winding staircase to the next studio on our list." They were greeted by a pretty woman (evidently the painter's wife) who received them and then instantly withdrew. The artist himself ("one of the best animal painters alive, after Landseer") was "pining, old and broken-hearted." Why? In a corner of the studio stood a lovely female face, just sketched in. "I shall never finish that portrait, begun twenty

years ago now" the artist sighs. It had been started when he was young and when his present wife had been the beautiful model, whom he had regarded "with the lover's as well as the artist's eye."

He had just begun to be accepted in the noble society of Rome; he married his model; and then made the fatal mistake of introducing her to his new society friends. They quickly recognised her.

A buzz went round the room of wonder and admiration, but with these mingled gradually a whisper that the beauty had been a model. Both husband and wife were desired to withdraw and from that day the painter's fate was sealed; no-one employed him, no-one received him; solitary and poor he worked on, and children were born, and debts contracted, and misery gathered like a dark cloud around his household, until he became the poor, pinched, faded man whom I now saw. It was his beautiful wife who had opened the door and had then quickly left us. Time had laid his heavy finger on her too. We had no opportunity of seeing more of her, for she never showed herself again at our departure. What a world of wretchedness there is in all this, even as I write it, and yet every word is strictly, positively true.

Is this then the "true love story" Collins had promised Bentley? One rather suspects so, for it may be stretching coincidence too far to suggest that Collins may have a friend in Rome, conversant with artists, who had his own eye and ear for such a story, as well as his own way with words. Critics more familiar than I with the details of Collins's style may also find similar pointers throughout the other articles: references to "a transition from Purgatory to Paradise"; allusions to Dickens ("what Dickens so truly describes as 'breezy maniacs'"; and again "his department beautiful like Mr. Turveydrop in Bleak House"); references to "Fat old Cardinals and Monsignores habited in purple and red"; and the descriptions of fear, anxiety and awe inside the Catacombs.

All persuade one to regard Collins as the possible author. There are, however, several difficulties to overcome. The third of the "Walks in Rome" series refers to "the weather early in March" being as "warm and genial as an old-fashioned English day in what used to be called the merrie month of May." Collins was in

Rome in mid-November. Secondly, the fourth article refers to "my companion Miss Shaw, herself an accomplished artist." Thirdly, did Collins have the critical knowledge to write assessments of painters and sculptors? Finally, could Collins have visited over forty artists and sculptors, described in the articles, during his six day visit to Rome?

There could, of course be a simple explanation. Collins could have prepared and planned the articles and encouraged a local friend in Rome to complete the visits and send him notes from which he wrote up the final versions in London. This is no more than conjecture, but it would help to explain the detail of the articles, the reference to a friend in Rome and the oddity of the dates. Doubts that Collins did not have the artistic knowledge to assess the work of the artists he ostensibly visited can be answered not only by reference to his biography of his father and his detailed appraisal of his paintings but by the views of his contemporaries. According to Holman Hunt, Collins "had knowledge of the interest of art for more than one past generation; he spoke with authority on the matter."

To sum up: We know that Collins had spent his Italian visit preparing a series of articles for Bentley's Miscellany. We have evidence that he had completed one article and part of another by the following January and that he had planned others in the same series. We have evidence that he visited studios and galleries in Rome with Augustus Egg. And we now know that, having been rebuffed by Bentley's Miscellany, he offered and provided a similar series of articles, including a "true love story," to the Art Journal. We have no direct knowledge of authorship, though parts of the contents could have been written by him. Some of the writing itself points directly to him. The rest is circumstantial and conjectural. My conclusion is that, while there is no direct proof of authorship, the circumstances strongly suggest that Jeremy Maas is right and that Collins may have been at least part author of the series in the Art Journal.

Bibliographic Note

Details of the articles, signed "Florentia," published in the Art Journal in 1854 and 1855, are as follows:

"A Walk through the Studios of Rome," June 1854, pp. 184-188.

"Visit to the Catacombs of San Calisto and the Church of St. Sebastiano," 1854, pp. 224-226.

"The Artist's Festa: Rome," 1854, pp. 271-274.

"A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part II," 1854, pp. 287-289.

"A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part III," 1854, pp. 322-324.

"A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part IV," 1854, pp. 350-355.

"A Walk through the Studios of Rome, Part V," 1855, pp. 225-228.

NOTES

¹ Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

² Letter dated January 14, 1854, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

³ From May 1853 to February 1854. See Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: U. of Illinois P., 1956), pp. 152 and 320.

⁴ Toledo: Friends of the University of Toledo Libraries, 1977.

⁵ Sayers, Wilkie Collins, p. 110.

The Naming of No Name

Virginia Blain

It is well known that Collins found difficulty in settling on the right title for more than one of his novels. The Moonstone was originally intended to be called The Serpent's Eye,¹ a title more sensational but less subtly suggestive than the final choice. The problem Collins had in naming The Woman in White is well documented. Robinson relates the story of its resolution:

It was at Broadstairs that a solution was found to the problem of a title. He had thought of many possibilities, many more had been suggested by helpful friends such as Dickens and Forster; all were discarded . . . [Collins] has described how, one moonlight night, he wandered over the cliffs towards the North Foreland, smoking cigar after cigar, racking his brains for the right title. In the vicinity of what is said to be the original Bleak House, he threw himself on the grass. Looking across at the white shape of the North Foreland lighthouse, he thought: "You are ugly and stiff and awkward; you know you are as stiff and as weird as my white woman . . . White Woman . . . Woman in White . . . the title, by Jove!" A roundabout way to the obvious, perhaps, but at least the story carries, in its very inconsequence, the ring of truth.²

In the case of No Name, we have the evidence of Dickens's letter to Collins of 24 January 1862, in which he proffers twenty-seven possible titles, to tell us that this time Collins was sailing even closer to the wind. For he accepted none of Dickens's helpful suggestions, even at this eleventh hour: the serial was due to begin on March 15 in All the Year Round. Writing to his mother on 12 December 1861 that he was "putting into this new book all that I have got in me to put," and that he thought it was his "best work, so far," Collins had been sanguine about his recalcitrant title: "No title fixed on yet. I have several to choose from--but I think better may be found."⁴ A letter dated 8 January 1862 (from Collins to the printer) reveals that certainly eight numbers, and possibly eleven, were to

be set in type by the date of Dickens's letter above (24 January)--and still no title.⁵

W. H. Wills, Dickens's business manager for All the Year Round, although delighted with the new story (his eyes had "rolled in his head with astonishment"⁶ when he first saw Collins after hearing about it) was adding his weight to the growing pressure: "Wills clamours for the name," wrote Dickens in the same letter. By 27 January, Collins had heard from Wills himself, for he replied to him on that date in a letter which forms a crucial and hitherto unnoticed link in the chain of events leading up to the naming of this novel:

My dear Wills,⁷

Many thanks for your kind note, and for the returned book [No Name]. I am inhumanly rejoiced to hear of that midnight sitting. Dickens too writes me word that he likes the story and feels certain of its success. It is a great relief to find that my work has not been thrown away.

The Title: "Under a Cloud" (which would have been a very good one) has been used by some miscreant or other who has "said some good things before us." Dickens sends several titles--some very good--but I hardly think the title has been found yet. I am going to Forster tomorrow to see if he is in town and can help us. Anyhow, the question must be decided on, as soon as Dickens gets back. We will only consider it now deferred, until we three can get together and finally appoint the day. On Saturday, Sunday, and Monday next, I am disengaged.

Ever yours
W:C

It was in my research for the edition of No Name that I am preparing for the Oxford World's Classics series that I came across this important letter. Not only does it contain Collins's reaction to Dickens's cornucopia of titles--a reaction distinctly tepid--but it also reveals that another title had been canvassed: Under a Cloud. This may well have been Wills's own suggestion; at any rate, Collins's rejection of it was not merely tactful, for the title had indeed been used before, and quite recently. Frederick Greenwood, who in 1865 was to found the Pall Mall Gazette, had published a three-volume novel called Under a Cloud in 1860, with his brother James as co-author, and Collins must have heard

of it either in this version, or in its earlier serial run in The Welcome Guest. So Under a Cloud was out--and "the question must be decided on."

At this point one might possibly be excused for wishing to imagine the scenario of the "next sitting" of Collins, Wills and Dickens. John Sutherland has referred to the fact that at this period "All the Year Round enjoyed the atmosphere of what we might call a writing workshop,"⁸ and this is certainly what is evoked by Collins's letter to Wills. We can easily imagine the three of them--or four if Forster came too--gathered around the table, suggesting more and more titles in increasing desperation, only to have them all turned down by the exacting author of the novel. Finally Wills, man of business, might have said: "One thing is sure: it cannot go to press with NO NAME!" "NO NAME!" Collins would have cried--"that's it! The title!" Cheers all round.

Whether or not any such scene took place we shall never know, but it is safe to assume that Collins was pleased with the title for a better reason than that of the pun in its delayed discovery. For it is, of course, a title especially apposite to his material. As the novel makes plain, Magdalen Vanstone, the heroine (or anti-heroine), being illegitimate, does not have the legal right to bear her father's name; she is, in the eyes of the law--like Esther Summerson in Bleak House--"Nobody's Child" (filius nullius). When we look up the section of the book that treats Magdalen's running away from her remaining family, presumably under the trauma of this wrong and in the desperate determination of righting it, we find the very words of the title echoed in the text. It is Miss Garth, the trusty old governess, who coins the phrase, although she attributes it elsewhere. Writing to the lawyer Mr. Pendril, she says:

"The last time you were so good as to come to this house, do you remember how Magdalen embarrassed and distressed us, by questioning you about her right to bear her father's name? Do you remember her persisting in her inquiries, until she had forced you to acknowledge that, legally speaking, she and her sister had No Name?"

Following this, Magdalen's letter to her sister Norah reiterates the phrase and underscores her own reckless sense of alienation:

"Whether I succeed, or whether I fail, I can do myself no harm, either way. I have no position to lose, and no name to degrade."⁹

On this evidence, it appears that Collins would have welcomed the suggestion (and it may of course even then have been entirely his own idea) of "No Name" for a title not only because of its thematic aptness, but also because of its significant existence already in the discourse of his novel. But when we turn to the manuscript to check our surmise, we discover a lacuna. The significant phrase is not there. Instead, the relevant passages read as follows:

"The last time you were so good as to come to this house, do you remember how Magdalen embarrassed and distressed us, by questioning you about her right to bear her father's name? Do you remember her persisting in her enquiries, until she had forced you to acknowledge that she had, strictly speaking, no such right, and that you had yourself registered her birth in her mother's name?"

"You will not give me up for lost? you will not let Miss Garth give me up? Don't let appearances condemn me."¹⁰

When we ask ourselves what this difference betokens, the answer is clear. The idea for the novel's title, while it certainly germinated from seeds contained within the story, did not spring fully formed from a verbal cue in the text. Rather, what we have uncovered here is one of Collins's craftier secrets: we glimpse the novelist, taking off his shoes, as it were, when he thinks no-one is looking, and carefully placing footprints in the midst of his existing text so cleverly that it could never be guessed that the clue was planted after the event.

NOTES

¹ See Nuel Pharr Davis, The Life of Wilkie Collins (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 249.

² Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography

(London: The Bodley Head, 1951), p. 141.

³ Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins 1851-1870, selected by Miss Georgina Hogarth, edited by Laurence Hutton (London: James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1892), pp. 119-22. Some examples of Dickens's suggestions are: The Twig and the Tree; Behind the Veil; Working in the Dark; Magdalen Vanstone; The Combe Raven Tragedy.

⁴ From a letter in the Pierpont Morgan Library, quoted here with the kind permission of the Trustees.

⁵ This letter is printed in the catalogue to the Wolff collection, Nineteenth-Century Fiction (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), I, 268, [1371c].

⁶ Robinson, p. 162.

⁷ This letter is reproduced here with the kind permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, UCLA.

⁸ John Sutherland, Victorian Novelists and Publishers (London: The Athlone Press, 1976), p. 186.

⁹ No Name (London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1862), I, 258; 260. The All the Year Round version gives the same text here.

¹⁰ No Name MS p. 145. The holograph manuscript is in the possession of the King's School, Canterbury, and I should like to thank the Walpole Librarian, Mr. D. S. Goodes, and the School for permission to quote from it.

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Plots Within Plots: Wilkie Collins's After Dark

Kirk H. Beetz

In 1827, painter William Kerby's eyesight began failing him. An itinerant artist who made his living by painting the portraits of people and their pets, Kerby sought cures for the disease that threatened not just his eyes but his livelihood. Under doctor's orders, he covered his eyes and resigned himself to what might have been perpetual darkness. He and his family were quickly in financial straits and would soon have used up their savings and have been unable to pay rent to the farm family that had taken them in. A remarkably good story teller, Kerby regaled his hosts with tales he had picked up from some of his many clients; his wife, Leah, persuaded him to recite some of his best stories to her, which she compiled in a collection titled After Dark. Notes from her diary and prologues by her husband linked the stories together. The book was published by the friend of a friend, and its sales earned enough money to support the Kerbys until William could be cured.

Two decades later, Wilkie Collins, who would someday become famous as the author of The Woman in White, had a painting hung in the Royal Academy.¹ His eyesight was deteriorating; in the latter half of his life, he would suffer periodic blindness and excruciating pain from his affliction. In 1849, however, he was simply forced to wear thick glasses and to give up his potential career as a painter. Writing was a natural alternative for him; he had tried before to become a novelist, and fiction became his principal creative outlet and his principal source of income. He wrote a travelogue,² an historical novel,³ a novel in the French manner⁴ and moved into the realms of intrigue that typify his later great novels.⁵ During the 1850's, he wrote fiction for Charles Dickens's Household Words; five of the resulting short stories and one new one were gathered together and published in 1856 as After Dark.⁶

The lives of William Kerby and Wilkie Collins would seem to be only superficially similar, except that Kerby is a fictional creation used by Collins as part of a literary device to bind together the stories of After Dark. Collins was a tidy writer who liked to keep his works neatly organized. In After Dark, he calls upon a technique that would later typify the novels on which his reputation rests--characters speak for themselves through diaries, journals, and notes.

"Leah's Diary" and William Kerby's "Prologues" serve to flesh out what would otherwise be a small book and provide continuity throughout After Dark. The unifying narrative for the story collection shows Collins's penchant for intricate plotting, the versatility of his narrative form, and his good sense as a young writer.

The title itself is symptomatic of Collins's gamesmanship. William Kerby dictates to his wife Leah "after dark," a phrase that their physician friend seizes:

"You [Leah] said just now that you would not have leisure to write from Mr. Kerby's dictation till after dark. What can we do better than name the book after the time when the book is written? Call it boldly, After dark."⁷

Simple enough: William and Leah Kerby ostensibly composed the book after nightfall, hence the title. Also, the book was written when William Kerby's eyes darkened; within the context of "Leah's Diary" there would be no book without Kerby's affliction, making the stories a product of one character's darkness. In the greater world, inhabited by Collins and his audience, After Dark implies that the stories are for nighttime; they are scary and suspenseful and well suited to spooky nighttime reading. Further, if one follows the autobiographical elements of the narrative, After Dark is a product of Collins's own darkness which forced him to abandon painting.

One should be careful when reading autobiographical themes into Collins's works. The seeming mysteriousness of Collins's own life can lead critics too far afield in searching for clues to the author's life and character in the novels and stories. In the case of After Dark, however, the autobiographical themes are identifiable from independent sources--letters, memoirs of friends, and other traditional biographical references. Collins did, in fact, exhibit a painting at the Royal Academy, he did suffer from failing eyesight, and his full name was William Wilkie Collins (as opposed to William Kerby); he did not drop the use of his first name until the mid-1850's. His father was a prominent landscape painter who had struggled from poverty to success and who had traveled extensively, sometimes bringing Collins with him. The young Collins met some of the best artists of the early nineteenth century, and his research for his 1848 biography of his father would have enhanced his understanding of the

lives of the itinerant painters of the 1820's, his father's generation. Further, Collins had many artist friends, including John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, and E. M. Ward. Coupling Collins's knowledge of artists with Collins's own practical experience as a painter, one can understand that using an artist and his family as the subjects of the unifying narrative of After Dark was a sensible choice for a young writer who wanted a neatly organized collection of stories. Collins followed a straightforward rule for writers: He wrote about what he knew.

The use of a diary or of more than one diary to tell a story is a trademark of Collins's novels. The Woman in White, Armada, and The Moonstone, each make extensive use of this narrative device, which adapts well to Collins's purposes in After Dark. When gathering his stories together for publication, Collins faced at least two major problems. One was the need to satisfy lending libraries by fleshing out the collection so that it would fill two volumes instead of one. The other problem was more of Collins's own creation: He liked his books to be neatly organized. His obsessive pursuit of facts and veracious details that is revealed in nearly all his works seems to have also involved a pursuit of literary tidiness: He wanted every element of a book to have a proper place. This pursuit of organizational perfection makes for tightly written short stories, each a small gem that is a world to itself, not easily bound to others. By creating a diary in which Leah may tell of the composing of each individual story, Collins is able to organize his book without compromising the individuality of any of the stories.

"Leah's Diary" and William's "Prologues" serve another important purpose: They give Collins distance from his writing. The stories themselves contain elements from Collins's experiences. His travels and penchant for carousing may have provided him with background for "A Terribly Strange Bed," for instance, or his legal training (he was called to the Bar in 1851) might have provided some background for "The Stolen Letter." His unifying narrative lends a sense of objectivity to the stories; it helps Collins evade the tone of intense personal involvement that mars the preface to his early novel Basil, which seems to challenge readers to deny the sincerity of Collins's writing. In After Dark, sitters for portraits tell the painter William Kerby their stories; he in turn tells them to Leah, who writes them down; William and Leah, in turn, are but creations of Collins. The plot within plot within plot approach leaves Collins three, even four, steps removed from his stories.

After Dark presages the literary achievements for which Collins is today best known: his tight plots and narrative style. It also reveals something of Collins's character as a writer. If Collins seems to be saying more than is first evident, he probably is; his fondness for plotting creates complexities of meaning even for the title of a gathering of his stories: After Dark. The story collection shows how the maturing Collins satisfied his own desire for structural unity in his books, and how he used his still growing knowledge of his craft to literary advantage.

NOTES

- ¹ The Smugglers' Refuge, 1849.
- ² Rambles Beyond Railways: or, Notes in Cornwall Taken A-foot. London: Bentley, 1851.
- ³ Antonina: or, The Fall of Rome. London: Bentley, 1850.
- ⁴ Basil: A Story of Modern Life. London: Bentley, 1852.
- ⁵ Hide and Seek: or, The Mystery of Mary Grice. London: Bentley, 1854; and The Dead Secret. London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857. Collins's biography of his father, Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R. A. (London: Longman, 1848) was written as a duty, not for money.
- ⁶ London: Smith and Elder.
- ⁷ After Dark (The Works of Wilkie Collins, volume XIX). New York: Collier, [1900]. p. 31.

Notes

Dear Mr. Beetz:

Through the courtesy of a friend I was sent a copy of the Wilkie Collins Newsletter containing Mr. Gasson's article about The Woman in White.¹ He seems to have dethroned the American edition from its priority as the first edition, but at least it is simultaneous and, as the first illustrated edition, of some importance.

I sent you a photocopy of my note to the PBSA Papers of 1942 (volume 26, page 232) clarifying the priority of the three states. Indeed it had not been published previously that there were three. Parrish, who was once a penurious customer of ours, had listed the first and third states, in the wrong order.

In a couple of our catalogues (one noted by Mr. Gasson), we elaborated our description by pointing out that the advertisements at the back were very significant because they were part of the collation. It becomes apparent that these were three different impressions. The book was immediately popular.

Sincerely yours,

Howard S. Mott

[Editor's Note: Mr. Mott was the first to set in order the variants of the American first edition of The Woman in White. This he did in Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America, 26 (3rd quarter 1942), p. 232.]

¹ Wilkie Collins Society Journal, 2 (1982), 5-14.

Notes on the Contributors

Andrew Gasson contributed "The Woman in White: A Chronological Study" to the Volume II, 1982 edition of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal. He is the author of several articles on Collins and is presently writing an analytical bibliography of Collins's works. As cofounder of the Wilkie Collins Society and as its secretary, he has played a significant role in the promotion of Collins studies.

William M. Clarke lives in Greenwich, England, and is just completing a brief biographical study of Wilkie Collins's private life. He is the author of Private Enterprise in Developing Countries, Inside the City, and Britain's Invisible Earnings.

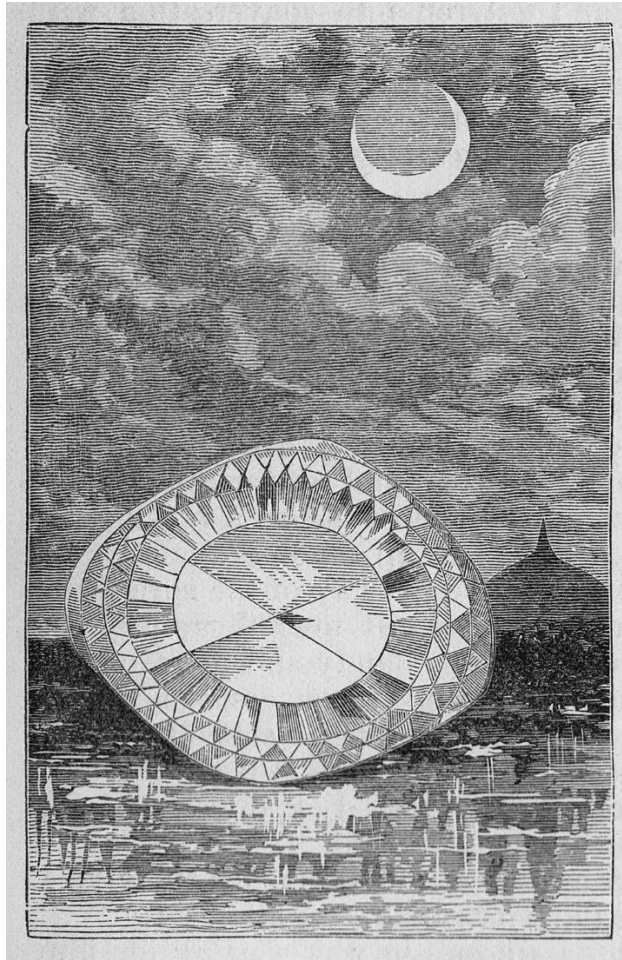
Virginia Blain is a senior lecturer in English at Macquarie University in Australia. Her publications include an edition of Robert Smith Surtees's Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour (Queensland U.P., Victorian Texts series, 1981; and London: Batsford, 1982), and The Woman Writing: A Feminist Companion to Literature in English (forthcoming from Batsford), which she co-authored with Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements. She has also published on Dickens, E. M. Forster, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf. At present, she is preparing an edition of No Name for the World's Classics series of Oxford University Press.

Kirk H. Beetz is editor of the Journal and president and cofounder of the Wilkie Collins Society. His publications include books on Tennyson, Swinburne, and Ruskin, as well as Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1889-1976 (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978). He is also author of numerous articles on various literary topics. For several years, he has worked on a collected edition of Collins's letters; he has just completed a selected edition.

He received his doctorate in English from the University of California, Davis.



WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL
VOLUME V
1985



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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £7.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

The Society's officers are:

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The Wilkie Collins Society Journal is published once a year by the Society for its members. Submissions should follow the guidelines of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (1977). Query first for reviews. Send submissions to Kirk H. Beetz, Editor, 1307 F Street, Davis, California 95616, USA. Be sure to include a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of a submission. Submissions from outside the United States should include international reply coupons with the addressed return envelope.

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Kirk H. Beetz, Editor

On the cover: Illustration from The Moonstone. New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1874 (Collected Edition). p. 90.

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Editor's Note

The present volume of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal has character; its contents are eccentric. It begins with a strikingly original essay by Robert Ashley, who compares characters from The Mystery of Edwin Drood and Man and Wife and argues for the continuing importance of Man and Wife's major themes. Ashley's approach to his subject and his aggressive style elevate his essay above the usual literary treatise. A short piece by Muriel Smith follows that of Ashley. It is packed with ideas and information, and its topic is one that interests and sometimes puzzles nearly all who read The Moonstone.

The review in the present volume is more an article than a traditional recounting of the contents and merits of a television show. Julie A. Karsten takes a close look at The Woman in White as novel and television series and through comparison offers insight into Collins's narrative methods, as well as into the difficulty of translating a novel into a performance. Karsten's effort is followed by an article by Collins that is likely to be unfamiliar to most of the Journal's readers. Collins takes a backwards approach to creating a list of books necessary for a liberal education and in the process tells something of his own tastes and interests.

K.H.B.



Illustration from *Man and Wife*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1870. p. 188

Man and Wife: Collins, Dickens, and Muhammad Ali

Robert Ashley

In the blue corner, wearing white trunks and weighing 190 pounds, the Reverend Septimus "Sept" Crisparkle:

The most striking anomaly in The Mystery of Edwin Drood is Dickens' favorable portrayal of professions usually the butt of his most withering scorn: the law (Grewgious), the military (Lt. Tartar, R.N.; fishermen like Peggotty and merchant mariners like Captain Cuttle are ineligible), and the clergy (Crisparkle; the Dean and Honeythunder are more in Dickens' usual style, though Honeythunder represents philanthropy rather than religion). Crisp, sparkling, and genuinely Christian, Sept is described as "fair and rosy. . . musical, classical, cheerful, kind, good-natured, social, contented, and boylike" (Dickens 13). A physical fitness buff, he is an early riser, a swimmer and boxer, who skinny-dips in the local river even when it is thinly iced, and shadow-boxes in front of his mirror, "feinting and dodging . . . and hitting out from the shoulder with the utmost straightness, while his radiant features teemed with innocence, and soft-hearted benevolence beamed from his boxing gloves" (51). He is no mere muscle-bound athlete, but has received his present position through the influence of "a patron . . . grateful for a well-taught son." Throughout the novel he undertakes with both tact and firmness the difficult task of curbing the wild impulses and improving the mind of the fierce-tempered Neville, serves as peacemaker between him and Edwin Drood, and stoutly defends him against the charge of Jasper and others that he is Drood's murderer. Even the formidable, bullying Honeythunder cannot penetrate the minor canon's calm self-assurance and spirit of Christian charity; in their final meeting Honeythunder is a badly beaten disputant. Sept treats his mother with tender affection and is in turn beloved by her. Apparently, he was to be rewarded by marriage to the most attractive young woman in the novel. In short, he is the ideal muscular Christian, the athlete as gentleman, the very model of a modern (i.e., Victorian) minor clergyman.

In the red corner, wearing black trunks and weighing 210 pounds, the "honorable" Geoffrey "Geoff" Delamayn:

Except for a belief in physical fitness and a fondness for cold water, Crisparkle and Delamayn of Man and Wife are the antithesis of each other, and even in attitudes toward physical fitness they differ: for Crisparkle it is a means to good health and a way to start the day off right; for Delamayn it is an obsession and a way to achieve popularity with British sporting fans and adoration from silly women. Outwardly, Delamayn is "a magnificent human animal, wrought up to the highest pitch of physical development" (Collins I 67), but actually he is a hollow shell; entirely lacking Crisparkle's healthiness, he has "muscular power" but no "vital power." His rigorous training routines have ruined his heart and lungs; consequently, he collapses during the great race between North England and South England and suffers a paralytic stroke at the end of the novel. His only chance of besting Crisparkle in the boxing ring would be to score a quick knockout; he couldn't go the distance.

Delamayn's sole virtue is that he pays his betting debts promptly; otherwise, he is completely without moral sense. Having seduced Anne Sylvester, he attempts to trap her into a "Scotch marriage" with his best friend, Arnold Brinkworth, so that he (Geoffrey) can marry a wealthy heiress; failing in this scheme, he then tries murder, again unsuccessfully. His mental powers are no higher than his moral sense: the only thing he has ever read is a newspaper, the only Dryden he has ever heard of is a fellow oarsman, and his solution to any problem is to "sweat it off." He is a failure as a son: his father has disowned him, and his mother's sole concern is to get him safely married to a woman of wealth and social position. It would be a little inaccurate to describe Delamayn as a caricature of the muscular Christian, for he has as little religion as mind or morals. What he really represents is the athlete as brute.

Both Man and Wife and The Mystery of Edwin Drood were published in 1870; the former was serialized between January and September of that year, the latter between April and September. This simultaneousness raises interesting questions about similarities between the two novels as well as the larger question of mutual influences. Although some critics, mostly Dickens scholars, tend to downplay them, parallels and echoes between the work of the two novelists abound. Dickens frankly admitted that he "conceived the main idea" of A Tale of Two Cities while "acting, with my children and friends, in Mr. Wilkie Collins' drama of The Frozen Deep" (Dickens' Preface to A Tale of Two Cities). There are circuses in Hide and Seek and Hard Times, each

published in 1854, and dust heaps in both Our Mutual Friend (1865) and The Law and the Lady (1875). After Collins' The Woman in White (1860), Dickens put his own white woman in Great Expectations (1861). The all-pervasive Oriental atmosphere of The Moonstone (1868) is repeated in The Mystery of Edwin Drood (1870); so are such motifs as drugs, roses, seizures and trances, racism and imperialism, satire on religion and philanthropy, abnormal states of consciousness, and "imps" (Gooseberry and Deputy). The evidence suggests strongly that Dickens had determined to mix the ingredients of The Moonstone and bake a better cake. Not only are there athletes in both Man and Wife and Drood, but there are also striking minor parallels: in the former novel, Geoffrey Delamayn has saved Arnold Brinkworth from drowning; in the latter, Tartar has performed the same service for Crisparkle. Further, Captain Nevenden, a naval officer and the father of the heiress Delamayn wishes to marry, is called "The Tartar"; the juvenile leads in both novels (Brinkworth and Tartar) are seamen. The dates of serialization could be significant. Man and Wife was well on its way in Cassell's Magazine and the characterization of Delamayn was well established before the instalments of Drood began appearing. Could the vigorous and energetic Dickens have introduced Crisparkle as an antidote to the sedentary Collins' Delamayn? The same chronology would suggest that the drowning motif and the name Tartar, unless purely coincidental, also traveled from Collins to Dickens.

In Collins' view, Geoffrey Delamayn is the inevitable product of the British educational system and of British athletic fandom, both of which absurdly glorify physical prowess and belittle or ignore the artistic, the ethical, the social, and the intellectual. Collins' mouthpiece, the club-footed lawyer Sir Patrick Lundie, states that "'muscular education'" and "'public feeling'" have led to a growing "'coarseness . . . [in] our national manners'" and "'our national tastes'" (292). "'We are readier than we ever were to practise all that is rough in our national customs, and to excuse all that is violent and brutish in our national acts. Read the popular books--attend the popular amusements; and you will find . . . a lessening regard for the gentler graces of civilized life, and a growing admiration for the virtues of the aboriginal Britons!'" (78-79).

As for the individual athlete, "'There has been nothing in his training to soften the barbarous hardness in his heart, and to enlighten the barbarous darkness in his mind. . . . he is, to all moral intents and purposes, an Animal, and nothing more'" (297). When

faced with temptation or a moral choice he is absolutely "defenseless."

Muscular education has also destroyed individuality, as demonstrated by Geoffrey's Tweedledum and Tweedledee friends Smith and Jones: "The manhood and muscle of England resemble the wool and mutton of England. . . . there is about as much variety in a flock of athletes as in a flock of sheep" (251).

To make his presumably most devastating indictment Collins introduces a famous surgeon, who states: "There are households in England . . . in which there are young men who have to thank the strain laid on their constitutions by the popular physical displays of the present time, for being broken men, and invalided men for the rest of their lives" (303).

Few, if any, of Collins' readers yesterday or today have been overly impressed by his diatribes against muscular education. His attack on public tastes and manners seems valid enough, but he has not demonstrated that the schools and universities, with their emphasis on athletics, are to blame. Furthermore, Geoffrey Delamayn, the embodiment of Collins' attack, is not a particularly convincing character, and Collins offers no proof that his evil qualities are due to his being an athlete. To make his point, Collins would have to show an initially amiable youth gradually worsened and brutalized by athletics; in other words, he would have had to write a biographical novel, something he never attempted. An inherited tendency to evil is ruled out by Geoffrey's older brother Julius, the antithesis of Geoffrey in every way. So we simply have to take Collins' unsupported word in order to accept his thesis; his word is not enough.

Paradoxically, although it would be foolish to label Man and Wife a tract for our times, nonetheless the novel is surprisingly relevant to the role of athletics today. On the ethical and moral level, we have pointshaving by basketball players at such reputable institutions as Boston College and Tulane, the violation of NCAA regulations on recruitment by colleges and universities too numerous to name, the tampering with secondary school academic records, and so forth. On the coarsening of taste and manners, we have the prevalence of locker room language on stage, screen, and television; in fiction; and even in the conversation of presumably educated and cultured people. Musical taste must be the worst in history, with the volume and motion substituted for melody and harmony. On the inadequacies of collegiate education, we have the proliferation of "basket-weaving" courses

in order to keep athletes eligible and the multitudes of athletes who never get their degrees. On the reversion to savagery, we have the violent behavior of soccer fans, of which the recent incident in Belgium is but the latest example. On physical fitness, we have widespread use of drugs by both intercollegiate and professional athletes, the at least occasional deaths in the ring and on the football field, the semi-crippled football players, the punchdrunk boxers, and the pitiful spectacle of a great boxing champion suffering from a speech impairment. And the relationship between muscles and religion? Well, three of the four semi-finalists in the NCAA Basketball Tournament were Roman Catholic institutions. In fact, one might easily conclude that the situation today is worse than it was in Collins' time.

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The Jewel Theme in The Moonstone

Muriel Smith

By his own account, Collins derives the Moonstone from two historic crown jewels.¹ Many jewels in English-language fiction probably derive from the Moonstone, but the complex jewel theme as used by Collins has in general produced two lines of simple progeny.

In an introduction to The Sign of Four,² Graham Greene makes Conan Doyle simply copy The Moonstone for his stolen jewels. The Agra Treasure, however, is in no way sacred: it is a rajah's reserve fund. The Sign of Four is closer to The Rajah's Diamond,³ and not only because both treasures finish at the bottom of the river. Each has the theme of the Eastern treasure so tempting that Westerners stick at nothing to possess it. This is one element, also, of The Moonstone's theme, but there it is compounded with another. When Betteredge feels inclined to shy the Moonstone into the Shivering Sands,⁴ it is for fear that the wicked Colonel's bequest to his niece entails a legacy of vengeance.

The Moonstone, however, if ancestor to the many sacred jewels which bring down a supernatural vengeance on the sacrilegious, is not itself one of them. To the Indians, the great yellow diamond is sacred: it is the eye of the Moon God, which they want to return to its proper place in the city of Somnauth. On the whole, we are to be glad when they accomplish their mission, but we need not take their religion seriously, and no willing suspension of disbelief is required. They get the stone back by simple everyday means.

The true heir to Collins is Frederick Irving Anderson; in The Infallible Godahl,⁵ when the White Ruby is stolen to be a collector's piece, a Westerner who has no belief in its sacredness gets it back for the Oriental ruler to whom it is sacred. Here as in The Moonstone is the respect for other people's superstitions as superstitions, the recognition that Orientals do take those odd religions of theirs seriously.

The Moonstone appeared in 1868: the story runs from 1848 to 1850. It all happens before the Indian Mutiny but, writing after the Mutiny as he is, Collins surely intends to criticize the East India Company. What triggered off mutiny in 1857 was that the Company

tried to introduce the new Enfield rifle and handled the matter insensitively. The greased cartridges had to be bitten. Rumour went round that they were greased with cow and pig fat: the cow sacred to Hindus, the pig unclean to Moslems. Hence when the Hindu sepoys rose in arms at the threatened loss of caste, they had the Moslem sepoys with them.

Collins is also surely indicating his opinion of conventional English education. Franklin Blake's miscellaneous education abroad had perhaps its demerits,⁶ but he can make the effort of imagination required for understanding an alien culture as the average Englishman of the time cannot or will not. Mr. Blake, Senior, brushes aside an Indian plot in the name of commonsense, but what is nonsense to us can be vitally important to a Hindu.⁷

In 1868, the British reading public was aware of the Hindu caste system, forced on its notice eleven years earlier. Collins is trusting it to pick up the references when that expert on India, Mr. Murthwaite, talks things over with Franklin Blake. What proves the overwhelming importance of the Moonstone to the Indians is not that they would kill anyone standing in their way but that, being Brahmins, they are willing to sacrifice their caste. They are sacrificing it doubly, by crossing the sea and by pretending to be jugglers, and the sacrifice of caste is a serious thing: the sacrifice of life is nothing at all.⁸

Collins, never timid in the face of his public, has here chosen a theme boldly: he asks for a sympathetic understanding of Indians who murder in defence of their faith at a time when horrors like the cold-blooded massacre of women and children at Cawnpore were still vividly present in the public consciousness. Dorothy Sayers, in her introduction, rightly praises him for being "sane and sincere" about sex;⁹ his essential sanity and independence of mind can be seen in this matter also.

NOTES

For so frequently reprinted a novel as The Moonstone, I include chapter references: page references are to the Everyman's Library edition, with Introduction by Dorothy L. Sayers, London: J. M. Dent & Sons: New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. (1944), cited as "EL."

¹ EL, p. xv: Author's preface 30 June 1868; the stones are the Koh-i-Noor, presented to Queen Victoria in 1849, and the culminating stone of the Russian Imperial Sceptre.

² London: John Murray & Jonathan Cape (1974); first publication 1890.

³ R. L. Stevenson, The New Arabian Nights, 1882.

⁴ EL, p. 36: First Period, The Loss of the Diamond, Betteredge's Narrative ch. 6.

⁵ Adventures of the Infallible Godahl, N.Y.: Thomas V. Crowell, 1914; anthologized in e.g. The American Rivals of Sherlock Holmes, ed Hugh Greene, London: The Bodley Head (USA: Pantheon Books), 1976.

⁶ EL, p. 13: Betteredge ch. 3.

⁷ EL, pp. 32, 34-35: Betteredge ch. 6.

⁸ EL, pp. 65-67: Betteredge ch. 10.

⁹ EL, p. xi.

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From Novel to Film: Wilkie Collins's
The Woman in White

Julie A. Karsten

A television version of Wilkie Collins's The Woman in White* was aired as a five-part series on "Mystery" for May 5, 12, 19, 26 and June 2, 1985. The "Mystery" series is hosted by Vincent Price and appears Sunday evenings on the Public Broadcasting Service channels. "The Woman in White"* was dramatized by Ray Jenkins, directed by John Bruce, and produced by Jonathan Powell.

Although not entirely faithful to the novel from which it sprang, "The Woman in White" television series managed to capture the spirit of Wilkie Collins's famous novel. The television version contains most of the characterization and suspense, and all of the tension, found in the novel.

Each character was well represented by the actor chosen for the role, both in physical attributes and demeanor, with two exceptions: Count Fosco and Walter Hartright. My only quarrel with the selection of an actor to portray Count Fosco is his lack of flesh. Marian describes Fosco as "immensely fat," a man of "odious corpulence." He describes himself as having "big elephant's legs." Walter jogs the memory of a cabbie by describing the Count as "remarkably fat." The cabbie remembers Fosco as being the "fattest gentleman as ever I see, and the heaviest customer as ever I drove." Surely the moderately heavy actor chosen to play Count Fosco does not fit Collins's description insofar as girth goes. With respect to physical characteristics (other than weight), voice, poise, and delivery, however, no actor could have done more justice to the part than did Alan Badel. Fosco's continental flair, massive head, Napoleonic features, startling eyes, and rich voice have the same effect upon the viewer of the series as Collins's original character had had upon readers for over 125 years.

The character of Walter Hartright is given a new dimension by Daniel Gerrol. In Collins's The Woman in

*The Woman in White refers to the novel by Wilkie Collins, and "The Woman in White" refers to the film version of the novel.

White Hartright is determined to avenge the wrongs suffered by Laura Fairlie, filled with a sense of honor, and possessed of some will to accomplish his purpose. But the Walter Hartright of the novel also tends to be weak-willed at times, and he must gain strength from Marian. A specific instance of this infirmness is Walter's confidence to Marian that he wishes to marry Laura. Rather than take control of the situation himself, he places Marian in the role of mediator. The Walter Hartright of the television series is a shade stronger and more confident. This aura of self-possession comes mainly from the poise of the actor and the delivery of his lines. His manner is much different from that of Collins's Walter Hartright. The strengthening of Hartright's character may be a concession to modern audiences, who prefer tough heroes over the genteel ones of the Victorian era.

The dark, somewhat mannish, Marian Halcombe is played by Diana Quick, who has the dark hair and dark complexion of Collins's character. She is able to capture Marian's strong-willed, self-denying, and self-disciplined personality, as well as Marian's sensitivity. Especially well-done are her scenes with Fosco and Laura.

Ian Richardson's portrayal of Frederick Fairlie, Esq., adds a humorous dimension to "The Woman in White." Richardson is so adept at capturing Collins's idea of the wretched, irresponsible, and lazy aristocrat found in Victorian society that one cannot help but laugh outright at Fairlie's incessant demands for the utmost in physical comfort (and self-indulgence) and at his whining voice. Right down to his twinging and cowering, the Frederick Fairlie of "The Woman in White" is identical with the Frederick Fairlie of The Woman in White.

Although Fosco, Hartright, Marian, and Fairlie stand out as the most colorful characters in "The Woman in White," Sir Percival Glyde, Laura Fairlie, and Madame Fosco also deserve attention. Glyde's temper is one of the main causes of tension both in the novel and in the movie. John Shrapnel creates and maintains such a great sense of tension in "The Woman in White" that one almost wants to leap to Laura's rescue and shelter her from Percival's violent demeanor. Only a skilled actor can create and sustain intense emotion in this manner. Examples of the tension developed by Percival are found in the scenes involving Laura's refusal to sign the required documents, the episode of the wounded dog's blood in the summer house, and Laura's discovery of Marian's supposed departure from Blackwater.

The part of Laura Fairlie, other than her role as a wronged and rather delicate lady, is a small one. Jenny Seagrove, however, has managed to make Laura more than a stereotypical damsel in distress. In "The Woman in White" Laura comes to life as a fragile, sensitive woman, one who has feelings and a mind of her own. She is not merely "a cause" for Walter Hartright or a doll to be attended by Marian. Laura displays a strong mind when she refuses to sign the documents Percival places before her. In The Woman in White, Laura looks constantly to Marian for guidance. The Laura of the television series, however, acts more independently. She comes to life as a living, breathing character instead of remaining a cardboard figure, filling space.

The part of Madame Fosco is also a small one, but in "The Woman in White" Georgine Anderson is every bit as full of fire and bedecked, no less, with odd, stiff curls as Collins's original character. Ms. Anderson's Madame Fosco is the perfect compliment to Alan Badel's Count Fosco.

The most significant difference between "The Woman in White" and The Woman in White is in the manner of narration. Narration in The Woman in White is multiple first-person, with several characters delivering their versions of the events they witnessed. "The Woman in White" uses the omniscient narrative mode. Collins's original style allows for revelation of character through the "statements" of the characters. For example, we discover Marian's frustrated desire for the freedoms and privileges of a man. We also learn of Mrs. Michelson's respect for and trust of the Count, the basis for which is the count's seeming treatment of her as an equal. The narrative technique in The Woman in White also allows us to explore Hartright's motives for bringing Laura's enemies to bay.

Much humor in the novel is lost in the transition from multiple to omniscient narration. The few pages allotted to Mr. Fairlie are very funny, as they allow us to see just how ridiculous his health complaints are. Mr. Fairlie's narrative also includes a statement concerning the nature of relations between single persons and their married relatives which is highly entertaining. "The Woman in White" lacks the clarification given the novel by Count Fosco's point-by-point narrative. Fosco's narrative has its own kind of humor, too. In the pages given over to the Count we see his genius, his pomposity, and his charm.

The television version suffers another blow in the elimination of the "presentation of evidence" style achieved by Collins in his novel. As each character

relates his portion of the story, the plot emerges, much as the case emerges in a court of law. Because each character relates only what he knows first-hand, the forward movement of the plot is stopped as one character leaves off and another begins, usually going backward in time and then moving forward. The effect is a "two steps back and three steps forward" one. In this way we obtain the story from several different perspectives and are allowed to see all of the important events first-hand. We are also kept in suspense for longer periods because Collins stalls the narrative of the novel just prior to climactic scenes.

Whatever the concessions involved in transferring the story from a multiple narrative to that of an omniscient one, the change is probably necessary. The multiple narrative technique found in the novel would have considerably lengthened the television series and would have necessitated long passages of monologue for each character. In essence, each character's narrative would have become his script.

Some of the nicer touches in "The Woman in White" are the scenery, period costumes, and photography. The nature of film, versus that of novel, allows each of these items to enhance the story. The scenery and props, complete with horse-drawn carriages and London fog, transport the viewer to nineteenth-century England. Fosco's dress makes him readily identifiable as a foreigner. Costumes also make the differences in Laura's and Marian's characters' glaring variances. Laura is always dressed in light colors and rich materials, while Marian is always dressed in dowdy clothing.

Where narrative technique hath taken, photography hath given. Laura's fragility of mind is pointed up in a superbly photographed scene--the one in which she is told by Glyde that Marian has already departed from Blackwater. As we see Laura from a quickly changing series of bizarre photographic angles, we realize just how delicately balanced her mind is and just how greatly Marian's illness has affected her. Laura's confusion is related to us in the confusion produced by the photography. Other scenes notable for good photography are Fosco's death and the first appearance of the woman in white. Anne Catherick's meeting with Walter Hartright is done in just the right way to whet our appetite for mystery. Shifting light and fog combine with echoes and horses' hooves to arouse curiosity and excitement. "The Woman in White" ends just as definitely as it begins. The appearance of Fosco's corpse, his treasured pets weaving in and out

of his clothing, ends the film on an appropriately eerie note.

All films derived from novels have their bad points, and "The Woman in White" is no exception. The plot of The Woman in White is very intricate, one in which every detail is important. In "The Woman in White" deletion of scenes which are, initially, of little interest or value, causes confusion later on in the film. A good example occurs in the scene in which Madame Fosco drugs Fanny's (Laura's maid) tea at the inn near Blackwater. Once she is unconscious, Madame Fosco proceeds to remove one of Marian's letters from the girl's bosom (the one to Mr. Kyrle) and replaces it with a blank piece of paper. The letter to Frederick Fairlie, which Madame Fosco deems harmless, is allowed to remain on the servant girl's person. This scene is deleted from the film. Consequently, when the servant girl appears at Limmeridge and speaks to Mr. Fairlie, we are confused about just what happened to the letters. We do not know if the letter the girl does deliver is the one Marian has written or one substituted by Madame Fosco. And what happened to the letter to Mr. Kyrle? Another example of deletion/confusion is the scene in which Fosco goes with Mrs. Clements to attend the ailing Anne Catherick. This scene reveals how Fosco manages to switch Anne and Laura so easily. The telescoped ending of "The Woman in White," where Laura returns to Limmeridge for her reinstatement is also confusing. We are never shown how Laura's identity is restored to her.

Other not-so-well-done portions include Marian's illness and recovery and her daring eavesdropping on Glyde and Fosco. Marian's illness and recovery are too telescoped. One moment she has a cold, the next typhus, and the next she is completely well. This suddenness rushes the film too much and so causes confusion in the time element of the story. Marian's eavesdropping on Glyde and Fosco is done too easily in the film. Marian must move very carefully in constricted surroundings to overhear the men. The easy walk on a balcony-like structure detracts from the suspense of the film version.

"The Woman in White" also has many very well constructed scenes. The scenes that contrast Marian and Laura are particularly good. These include Laura's and Marian's discussion about Laura's upcoming marriage, Marian greeting Laura upon her arrival at Blackwater, Laura and Marian conferring at the summer house at Blackwater, and Marian finding Laura at the asylum. In each of these scenes the contrast between the half-sisters is readily apparent: Marian is dark and always

dressed in dark colors, and Laura is fair and always dressed brightly. The color contrast obviously represents the contrast in their personalities. Each scene has the two women close together, usually hugging. This close contact goes on in the novel, too, and has led some readers to hypothesize that lesbian attractions are at work. The closeness serves to emphasize the differences in the sisters and is a nice touch in the film.

Mr. Gilmore's comic taking to task of Mr. Fairlie, Anne's emotional meeting with Laura, Fosco's and Percival's conversation in the library, and Walter's meeting with Mrs. Catherick are also well done, as are the circumstances at the opera, Pesca's revelation to Walter, and the final confrontation between Walter and Fosco. This last scene is exceptional in its intensity and suspense. Each of the scenes I have mentioned is crucial to the story in one way or another, and each depends upon the ability of the actors involved. Dialogue taken directly from the novel lent power to each scene.

Examination of the film version of "The Woman in White" is particularly interesting in view of the fact that Collins was involved not just with writing novels, but also with writing plays. In his preface to Basil, Collins wrote that "the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the family of Fiction; that the one is a drama narrated, as the other is a drama acted." Collins developed dramatic versions of several of his novels, including one of The Woman in White, which was produced in 1871 and 1872, and ran for nineteen weeks. The novel lends itself to drama because of the many dramatic climaxes found in the plot. Around every bend looms a confrontation or an unexpected twist in events. In the film version of The Woman in White the dramatic elements are used to advantage, just as Collins used them advantageously in the serialization of the novel. Although "The Woman in White" does not make use of the same breaking points Collins used in his weekly-installment novel, the weekly television episodes do end at climactic points. Good examples are Parts 3 and 4, concluding respectively with Fosco's diagnosis of typhus as Marian's ailment and Walter Hartright's discovery of Percival's forgery. "The Woman in White" takes the dramatic scenes of Collins's novel and links them with a minimal number of quiet, albeit necessary, scenes to form a fast-paced television series. The theatre of Collins's time is today's television.

As mentioned previously, "The Woman in White" is not entirely faithful to Collins's novel. These very differences, however, could make the movie a valuable

aid in the teaching of Collins. A comparative study could help students to comprehend the complexities of Collins's novel and to understand the novel form itself. An inspection of the characterization and narrative in each medium would also be of use in learning about Collins's writing techniques. Because The Woman in White originally appeared in serial form, the five-part series would allow students to see first-hand what serialization is like in using a modern medium.

"The Woman in White" would be of service in a study of the "sensation" novel too. Sensation novels became popular in the middle 1800's. They employed, in Thomas Hardy's words, "mystery, entanglement, surprise and moral obliquity" to entertain readers; Wilkie Collins included plenty of each in The Woman in White. These characteristics have survived the transition from novel to film. The Victorian fascination with crime, evident in Collins's novel, has also carried over to the television version. A preoccupation with criminal activity is something twentieth-century society shares with the Victorians. Essentially, The Woman in White was to nineteenth-century readers what "Miami Vice" and "Hill Street Blues" are to modern television viewers.

Whether the viewer is a new student of Collins or an old admirer, "The Woman in White" is sure to charm. A host of colorful characters, an intricately woven plot, beautiful scenery, and high drama combine to make this television series a success.

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Books Necessary for a Liberal Education

Wilkie Collins

[The following article was first published in the Pall Mall Gazette, February 11, 1886, page 2. The Pall Mall Gazette's reviewers had generally taken negative views of Collins's books; some of the reviews were the nastiest some of the novels received. Nonetheless, when the Pall Mall Gazette polled its readers for their favorite writer in 1884, Collins won by a wide margin. Given that Collins was the readers' favorite author, and the Pall Mall Gazette was meant to make a profit, it seems logical that despite the misgivings of the reviewers the publication's editors would ask Collins to respond to John Lubbock's earlier list of books necessary for a liberal education.

Collins has some fun with the idea of compiling such a list; while asserting that his tastes are less than highbrow, he presents a list that is both literarily respectable and likely to appeal to the Pall Mall Gazette's middlebrow readership. It reflects his interests in fiction and French literature and reveals a strong interest in travel writings. Not surprisingly, Collins values many of their works for their ability to convey images of their subjects; as a follower of Dr. Johnson's dictum that literature must first please if it hopes to instruct, Collins makes entertainment one of his important criteria for recommending books, and he quotes Johnson--as he was wont to do when defending his own writings.]¹

You have proposed that I should recommend to inexperienced readers some of the books which are necessary for a liberal education; and you have kindly sent a list of works drawn out by Sir John Lubbock with this object in view, and recently published in your journal.²

I am sincerely sensible of the compliment to myself which is implied in your suggestion; but I am at the same time afraid that you have addressed yourself to the wrong man. Let me own the truth. I add one more to the number of reckless people who astonish Sir John Lubbock by devoting little care to the selection of what they read. I pick up the literature that happens to fall in my way, and live upon it as well as I can--like the sparrows who are picking up the crumbs outside my window while I write. If I may still quote my experience of myself, let me add that I have never got any good out of a book unless the book interested me in

the first instance. When I find that reading becomes an effort instead of a pleasure, I shut up the volume, respecting the eminent author, and admiring my enviable fellow-creatures who have succeeded where I have failed. These sentiments have been especially lively in me (to give an example) when I have laid aside in despair "Clarissa Harlowe," "La Nouvelle Heloise," the plays of Ben Jonson, Burke on "The Sublime and Beautiful," Hallam's "Middle Ages," and Roscoe's "Life of Leo the Tenth."³ Is a person with this good reason to blush for himself (if he was only young enough to do it) the right sort of person to produce a list of books for readers in search of a liberal education? You will agree with me that he is capable of seriously recommending Sterne's "Sentimental Journey" as the best book of travels that has ever been written, and Byron's "Childe Harold" as the grandest poem which the world has seen since the first publication of "Paradise Lost."⁴

After this confession, if I nevertheless venture to offer a few suggestions, will you trust my honesty, even while you doubt my discretion? In any case, the tomb of literature is close by you. You can give me decent burial in the waste-paper basket.

To begin with, What is a liberal education? If I stood at my house door, and put that question to the first ten intelligent-looking persons who passed by, I believe I should receive ten answers all at variance one with the other. My own ideas cordially recognize any system of education the direct tendency of which is to make us better Christians. Looking over Sir John Lubbock's list from this point of view--that is to say, assuming that the production of a good citizen represents the most valuable result of a liberal education--I submit that the best book which your correspondent has recommended is "The Vicar of Wakefield"--and of the many excellent schoolmasters (judging them by their works) in whose capacity for useful teaching he believes, the two in whom I, for my part, most implicitly trust, are Walter Scott and Charles Dickens.⁵ Holding these extraordinary opinions, if you asked me to pick out a biographical work for general reading, I should choose (after Boswell's supremely great book, of course) Lockhart's "Life of Scott."⁶ Let the general reader follow my advice, and he will find himself not only introduced to the greatest genius that has ever written novels, but provided with the example of a man modest, just, generous, resolute, and merciful; a man whose very faults and failings have been transformed into virtues through the noble atonement that he offered, at the peril and the sacrifice of his life.

Let me not forget that the question of literary value must also be considered in recommending books, for this good reason, that positive literary value means positive literary attraction to the general reader. In this connection I have in my mind the most perfect letters in the English language when I introduce the enviable persons who have not yet read it to Moore's "Life of Byron."⁷ Again, if any voices crying in the literary wilderness ask me what travels it may be well to read, I do justice to the charm of an admirable style, presenting the results of true and vivid observation, when I mention the names of Beckford and Kinglake. Get Beckford's "Italy, Spain, and Portugal;" and, beginning towards the end of the book, whet your appetite by reading the "Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha."⁸ In Kinglake's case, "Eothen" is the title, and the cheap edition of the book is within everybody's reach.⁹ Dr. Kane (in "Arctic Explorations") and Mr. George Melville (in "The Lena Delta") are neither of them consummate masters of the English language; but they possess the rare and admirable gift of being able to make other people see what they have seen themselves.¹⁰ When you meet with travellers who are unable to do this, you will get nothing out of them but weariness of spirit. Shut up their books.

Keeping clear of living writers, may I recommend one or two works of fiction, on the chance that they may not have been mentioned, with a word of useful comment perhaps, in other lists?

Read, my good public, Mrs. Inchbald's "Simple Story," in which you will find the character of a young woman who is made interesting even by her faults--a rare triumph, I can tell you, in our Art.¹¹ Read Marryat's "Peter Simple," and "Midshipman Easy," and enjoy true humour and masterly knowledge of human nature.¹² Let my dear lost friend, Charles Reade, seize on your interest, and never allow it to drop from beginning to end in "Hard Cash."¹³ Let Dumas keep you up all night over "Monte Cristo," and Balzac draw tears that honour him and honour you in "Père Goriot."¹⁴ Last, not least, do justice to a greater writer, shamefully neglected at the present time in England and America alike, who invented the sea-story, and created the immortal character of "Leather Stocking." Read "The Pilot" and "Jack Tier"; read "The Deerslayer" and "The Pathfinder," and I believe you will be almost as grateful to Fenimore Cooper as I am.¹⁵

It is time to have done. If I attempted to enumerate all the books that I might honestly recommend, I should employ as many secretaries as

Napoleon the Great, and I should find nobody bold enough to read me to the end. As it is, some critical persons may object that there runs all through this letter the prejudice that might have been anticipated in a writer of what heavy people call "light literature." No, Sir; my prejudice is in favour of the only useful books that I know of--books in all departments of literature which invite the general reader, as distinguished from books that repel him. If it is answered that profitable reading is a matter of duty first and a matter of pleasure afterwards, let me shelter myself under the authority of Dr. Johnson. Never mind what I say--hear him (Boswell, vol. ii., page 213, ed. 1859):--"I would not advise a rigid adherence to a particular plan of study. I myself have never persisted in any plan for two days together. A man ought to read just as inclination leads him; for what he reads as a task will do him little good."

I first read those admirable words (in an earlier edition of Boswell) when I was a boy at school. What a consolation they were to me when I could not learn my lesson! What consolation they may still offer to bigger boys in the same predicament among books recommended to them by the highest authorities!

NOTES

¹ All notes and commentary are by Kirk H. Beetz

² John Lubbock (1834-1913) was a brilliantly versatile man. Although a banker by trade, he made important contributions to the study of physics, anthropology, geology, and entomology. He was noted for Prehistoric Times, 1859; The Origin of Civilization and the Primitive Condition of Man, 1870; and The Origin and Metamorphosis of Insects, 1873. He was a significant interpreter of Darwin's evolutionary theories. In addition, he helped to popularize the making of reading lists, such as ones of books necessary for a liberal education. A learned intellectual, Lubbock created lists of high-minded books. In his response, Collins (who himself enjoyed reading sophisticated works, including science books) has some fun with Lubbock's relentless high-mindedness and reminds his readers of the importance of engaging a reader's interest before endeavoring to instruct.

³ Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Clarissa: or The History of a Young Lady, 7 volumes, 1747-1748. Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), La Nouvelle Heloise,

1760. Ben Jonson (1573?-1637), playwright and poet. Edmund Burke (1729-1797), A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, 1757. Henry Hallam (1777-1859), A View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages, 1818. William Roscoe (1753-1831), The History of the Life and Pontificate of Leo X, 1805. In Collins's day, as in our own, some literary scholars regarded Clarissa as a classic of English literature; in Collins's day, as in our own, it was rarely read. Much the same may be said of the others in this note, although Burke was commonly taught in schools in the Victorian era, and Jonson's works are now undergoing a small revival.

4 Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, 1768. George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I and II, 1812, III, 1816, and IV, 1818. John Milton (1608-1674), Paradise Lost, 1667. Sterne's work is an engaging companion. As with many of his generation, Collins was enamored of Byron's poetry; that he would select Childe Harold's Pilgrimage as a great poem indicates that he went along with the popular sentiments about poetry of his day (although the present editor confesses that he, too, is enamored of the poem).

5 Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), The Vicar of Wakefield, 1766. Walter Scott (1771-1832) was admired by Collins as the greatest of all novelists. One need not look hard to discover many similarities between the two authors. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was Collins's closest friend in the 1850's and 1860's. Although Collins admired Dickens, he never placed Dickens on his short list of greatest novelists (Scott, Cooper, and Balzac).

6 James Boswell (1740-1795), The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1791. John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), Life of Scott, 1837-1838. Given Collins's esteem for Scott, one should not be surprised that Collins would recommend a biography of him. However, Lockhart's work was highly regarded in those days, and although modern biographers caution that it contains inaccuracies, it still stands as a notable biographical and literary achievement.

7 Thomas Moore (1779-1852), Life of Byron, 1830. As a young man, Collins seems to have read just about everything Moore wrote.

8 William Beckford (1759-1844), Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha, 1835.

9 Alexander William Kinglake (1809-1891), Eothen, 1844. Eothen describes Kinglake's travels in Egypt and the Levant. Both Beckford and Kinglake's travel-books retain small audiences, and modern critics generally regard Eothen as a minor classic.

10 Elisha Kent Kane (1820-1857), Narrative of the Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1854; and Second Grinnell Expedition in Search of Sir John Franklin, 1856. Dr. Kane was an American physician from Philadelphia. George Wallace Melville (1841-1912), In the Lena Delta, ed. Melville Philips, 1885 (c. 1884). The Melville reference was located with the invaluable assistance of Theodore F. Gould.

11 Elizabeth Simpson Inchbald (1753-1821), A Simple Story, 1791.

12 Captain Frederick Marryat, R.N. (1792-1848), Peter Simple, 1834; and Mr. Midshipman Easy, 1836.

13 Charles Reade (1814-1884), Hard Cash, 1863. Reade was a close friend of Collins. Wilkie Collins Society member Thomas D. Clareson has written a detailed biography of Reade.

14 Alexander Dumas, père (1802-1870), Le Comte de Monte-Cristo, 1844. Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Le Père Goriot, 1835. Collins regarded Balzac as one of the world's three greatest novelists, along with Scott and Cooper.

15 James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851), The Pilot, 1824; Jack Tier, 1848; The Deerslayer, 1841; and The Pathfinder, 1840. Collins regarded Cooper as one of the world's three greatest novelists, along with Scott and Balzac.

Notes on the Contributors

Robert Ashley is a familiar name to readers of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal. He has published numerous articles on Collins and was an important contributor to the revival of interest in Collins during the 1950's. His book Wilkie Collins (c. 1952) is still a standard reference for those interested in Collins's life and work. Ashley was a professor at West Point and later at Ripon College; he has retired but continues to take an active interest in Collins studies.

Muriel Smith has previously published articles on Jane Austen and lives in Maidenhead, England.

Julie A. Karsten is a graduate student at the University of Delaware.

Wilkie Collins is best known for his complex and suspenseful novels. He also worked as a journalist in his early years and was the author of many articles intended for general audiences. "Books Necessary for a Liberal Education" is a rare example of a journalistic essay from the 1880's. The Society is devoted to the study of Collins and related topics.

Kirk H. Beetz is president of the Wilkie Collins Society and one of its cofounders. He has published numerous articles on literature, including several on Collins. Among his several books is Wilkie Collins: A Bibliography, 1889-1976 (c. 1978). He is editing Collins's letters for publication. Additionally, he edits the present journal.

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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £7.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

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Editor's Note

Laurence Ince's "Wilkie Collins: The Intimacies of the Novels" is sure to be controversial. By researching records of births, deaths, and marriages, Ince tracks down Collins's mistresses Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd, with surprising results. His evidence calls for a re-examination of Collins's love life and will send some back to the novel Basil for a reconsideration of the biographical implications of Collins's declaration that "I have founded the main event out of which this story springs, on a fact within my own knowledge." Robert Ashley returns to these pages with an evaluation of one of Collins's novels recently reprinted by Dover Publications: A Rogue's Life. It is a novel worthy of more comment than it has heretofore received. Steve Farmer rounds out this issue of the WCSJ with an edition of one of Collins's harder-to-find writings. Collins provides a candid discussion of the Victorian theater from the theatergoer's point of view.

This issue of the Wilkie Collins Society Journal is dreadfully late, and I beg your forgiveness and thank you for your patience. Promised articles were not delivered and your editor was slow to deal with the problem.

K.H.B.

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Wilkie Collins: The Intimacies and the Novels

Laurence Ince

The Woman in White, remarkable for its power and immediacy even a century after its creation, may mirror the experiences of its author more than has previously been thought. Skilled in hiding clues and maintaining dramatic credibility and consistency in his two most famous books, Wilkie Collins seems to have displayed an equally remarkable skill in developing and hiding secrets in his own life. So successful was he at this that it has taken much research to trace and verify several important strands of his private existence.

Wilkie Collins was 36 when his fifth major novel, The Woman in White was published in 1860. The haunting central experience of the book is a meeting that occurs between the artist Walter Hartright and a strange woman. The meeting is thus described:

I had now arrived at that particular point of my walk where four roads met--the road to Hampstead, along which I had returned; the road to Finchley; the road to West End; and the road back to London. I had mechanically turned in this latter direction, and was strolling along the lonely highroad--idly wondering, I remember, what the Cumberland young ladies would look like--when, in one moment, every drop of blood in my body was brought to a stop by the touch of a hand laid lightly and suddenly on my shoulder from behind me.

I turned on the instant, with my fingers tightening round the handle of my stick.

There, in the middle of the broad bright highroad--there, as if it had that moment sprung out of the earth or dropped from the heaven--stood the figure of a solitary woman dressed from head to foot in white garments; her face bent in grave inquiry on mine, her hand pointing to the dark cloud over London as I faced her.

("The Narrative of Walter Hartright," III)

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The story of the artist Walter Hartright and his attempts to unravel the mystery of the strange woman in white hit the right note with the Victorian reading public. The novel first appeared as instalments in Dickens' magazine All the Year Round with the first chapters being published in November 1859. The serial was an immediate success and in one particular month 35,000 back numbers of the magazine were sold. The mystery of Anne Catherick's secret became a favourite topic of conversation at Victorian dinner tables and when the complete volume appeared it went through seven impressions in six months. After twelve years of writing Wilkie Collins was now a popular public figure.

The novel is full of the melodrama that the Victorians relished: the appearances and disappearances of the woman in white, her strange connections with the heroine Laura Fairlie, the machinations of Count Fosco and the key to the mystery--the secret held by the dastardly Sir Percival Glyde. The plot and ideas for the novel came to Wilkie Collins from various sources but the initial meeting of Walter Hartright and Anne Catherick is based on a strange meeting that happened to Collins himself. The following account of the meeting appears in The Life of John Everett Millais written by his son J. G. Millais and published in 1899:

One night in the '50s Millais was returning home to 83 Gower Street from one of the many parties held under Mrs. Collins's hospitable roof in Hanover Terrace, and, in accordance with the usual practice of the two brothers, Wilkie and Charles, they accompanied him on his homeward walk through the dimly-lit, and in those days semi-rural, roads and lanes of North London . . . It was a beautiful moonlight night in the summer time and as the three friends walked along chatting gaily together, they were suddenly arrested by a piercing scream coming from the garden of a villa close at hand. It was evidently the cry of a woman in distress; and while pausing to consider what they should do, the iron gate leading to the garden was dashed open and from it came the figure of a young and very beautiful woman dressed in flowing white robes that shone in the moonlight. She seemed to float rather than run in their direction, and, on coming up to the three young men she paused for a moment in an attitude of supplication and terror. Then suddenly seeming to recollect herself, she suddenly moved on and vanished in the shadows cast upon the road.

"What a lovely woman!" was all Millais could say. "I must see who she is, and what is the matter," said Wilkie Collins, as, without a word he dashed off after her. His two companions waited in vain for his return, and next day, when they met again he seemed indisposed to talk of his adventure. They gathered from him, however, that he had come up with the lonely fugitive and had heard from her own lips the history of her life and the cause of her sudden flight. She was a young lady of good birth and position, who had accidentally fallen into the hands of a man living in a villa in Regent's Park. There for many months he kept her prisoner under threat and mesmeric influence of so alarming a character that she dared not attempt to escape, until, in sheer desperation, she fled from the brute who with a poker in his hand, threatened to dash her brains out. Her subsequent history, interesting as it is, is not for these pages.¹

In fact, the subsequent history of the woman was that she became Wilkie Collins' mistress living with him at various addresses in London. This story is repeated by Kate Dickens who married Wilkie Collins' younger brother Charles. In her volume of recollections she was to add the facts that the woman was named Caroline and that she was of gentle birth.² Collins' biographers have accepted these stories and have been able to identify the woman as Caroline Elizabeth Graves, widow of George Robert Graves. Mrs. Graves was born in around 1834 and at the time of meeting Collins she had an infant daughter named Elizabeth Harriet.³

However, using birth, death and marriage certificates and also Victorian directories for London, a clearer picture of Mrs. Graves and the strange relationship that she shared with Wilkie Collins can be uncovered. The woman in question was born Elizabeth Compton in around 1834 in Bath. The story of her gentle birth appears to be a fabrication that Wilkie Collins was certainly more than happy to let circulate. She was, in fact, the daughter of a mason. On the 31st March 1850 Elizabeth Compton married Robert Graves, the son of a carpenter.⁴ The marriage took place at Walcot Parish Church, Bath, and the husband's occupation was given as an accountant, with his residence being registered as situated in the parish of St. James, Clerkenwell, London.

After the marriage celebrations the couple took up residence at 11 Cumming Street, Clerkenwell. Graves had now taken up a position as a shorthand writer and solicitor's clerk and on the 3rd February 1851 his daughter Elizabeth Harriet was born in Clerkenwell.⁵ Unfortunately Graves was not to see his daughter's first birthday for he was soon seriously ill with tuberculosis. He travelled back to his native Bath to recuperate but died on the 30th January 1852 at Moravian Cottage, Weston.⁶

Perhaps there had been a rift between Mrs. Graves and her family for she did not return home to Bath but continued to live in London until that fateful evening when she mysteriously met Wilkie Collins. This meeting must have taken place before 1855 for in Millais' account of the meeting he mentions that he was walking back to his residence in Gower Street, a home he occupied only until his marriage to Effie Ruskin in 1855. From Collins' own writings it appears that Mrs. Graves was conducted to lodgings in the area around Howland Street where Collins was to be a frequent visitor. A few years later in 1859 Collins moved out of his family home to take up residence with Mrs. Graves at 124 Albany Street, then at 2A New Cavendish Street and then to 12 Harley Street which is where he was living when he wrote The Woman in White.

Perhaps to hide her true identity Mrs. Graves adopted the name Caroline when she went to live with Collins. Certainly there appears to have been an attempt to cover up her early life, for her daughter, when she married in 1878, was convinced that she had been born in around 1854 and not as the certificates testify in 1851.⁷

For the next nine years Collins and Mrs. Graves lived together. During this period Collins successfully published more novels, including No Name and Armadale. It was not until 1868 that he produced a work of equal merit to the Woman in White, when The Moonstone was published. 1868 was therefore a year of significance in Collins' public life and it was also important in his personal life, for in that year Mrs. Graves left him to marry another man. In 1867 Wilkie Collins had taken out a lease on 90 Gloucester Place and Mrs. Graves' name had appeared in directories as the occupant, but on October 4th 1868 Caroline Elizabeth Graves left the residence to marry Joseph Charles Clow at St. Marylebone Parish Church.⁸ The register informs us that Clow was the son of a distiller, but an examination of directories for the late 1860s tells us a slightly different story. Joseph Charles Clow was the son of Leonard Clow, who kept the Western Counties Hotel at

the corner of London Street and Whitfield Street. Here Clow operated as an agent for Dublin stout, ale and whisky. Wilkie Collins attended the wedding and later reported the happenings to his sister-in-law Kate. Kate recorded the conversation in her volume of recollections. The conversation was curtailed with Collins stating, "I suppose you could not marry a man who had _____," whereupon Kate broke in, "No I couldn't."⁹

What was it that Kate Collins could not bear to hear and why had it caused a rift between Mrs. Graves and Collins? The biographers of Collins have not deeply investigated the matter and have also been prepared to suggest that at this time Wilkie Collins transferred his affections from Mrs. Graves to a woman named Martha Rudd. Collins recognised in his will that he had three children by this woman who adopted the name Martha Dawson, namely Marian born at 33 Bolsover Street in 1869, Harriet Constance born at the same address in 1871, and a son William Charles Collins Dawson born on Christmas day 1874. Only the boy's birth was registered, the informant being Martha Dawson, and the father's name was given as William Dawson, Barrister-at-Law.¹⁰

However, the accepted version of events does not explain a sentence in Thomas Seccombe's article on Wilkie Collins in the Dictionary of National Biography, namely that, "intimacies formed as a young man led to his being harassed after he became famous, in a manner which, proved very prejudicial to his peace of mind." It is the present author's considered opinion that Wilkie Collins had first become involved with Martha Rudd in the early 1850s, this friendship and the one with Mrs. Graves being the so called intimacies formed as a young man. I would suggest that Collins' early association with Martha Rudd was a confusing and unhappy experience for him and that it resulted in the writing of the novel Basil which was published in 1852. Basil is the story of a young man's love for a girl of inferior social position. The hero, Basil, bears some similarity to Collins, one example being that he is trying to complete the writing of an historical novel, which is something achieved by Collins in 1850 with the publication of his first novel Antonina, or the Fall of Rome. Even in the dedication to Basil, Wilkie Collins goes to some pains to explain to the reader that the volume contains autobiographical information:

I have founded the main event out of which this story springs, on fact within my own knowledge. In afterwards shaping the course of the narrative thus suggested, I have

guided it, as often as I could, where I knew by my own experience, or by experiences related to me by others, that it would touch on something real and true in its progress.

Basil, the younger son of a member of the landed gentry, falls in love with the daughter of a linendraper. At first the social position of the girl is unknown to him but when he makes the discovery of the girl's background he is horrified:

A linen-draper's shop--a linen-draper's daughter! Was I still in love?--I thought of my father; I thought of the name I bore; and this time, though I might have answered the question, I dared not.

In the novel the girl's name is Margaret Sherwin; in Collins' own life the girl was named Martha Rudd. In the novel Mr. Sherwin is described as keeping a large linendraper's shop in one of the great London thoroughfares. Rudd is not a common name in the directories of Victorian London but a Thomas Rudd kept a linendraper's shop in Newcastle Place just off the Edgeware Road.¹¹ Martha Elizabeth Rudd was born around 1830 and so this gives her a similar age (early twenties) to Margaret Sherwin in Basil (1852).

It is obvious from a reading of Basil that Wilkie Collins was besotted by this lady in the early 1850s. Yet the relationship did not develop at that stage. We must remember that Collins was an aspiring writer and was also at that time courting the friendship of the Dickens circle. In the status conscious Victorian society a connection with a linendraper's daughter might well have cast a shadow over the novelist's progress. This affair was ended by Collins and we must view his actions at this time as fitting in with the Victorian code of morals and not take a too serious view of those who would hold Collins up to be a moralistic revolutionary.

However, by the mid 1860s Collins was a wealthy man and a novelist of repute. He reformed his association with Martha Rudd and it was this action that upset Mrs. Graves and prompted her to marriage to Joseph Clow. The whole business greatly upset Collins for he had great affection for both women. From a reading of Kate Collins' recollections it appears that Wilkie Collins proposed marriage to Mrs. Graves to keep her with him and perhaps we can add those final words that Collins was unable to utter to his sister-in-law:

"I suppose you could not marry a man who had already a mistress."

The whole affair was traumatic and did nothing but harm to Collins' health. His nervous afflictions worsened and his use of laudanum increased. He continued to live at his home in Gloucester Place while Martha Rudd, alias Mrs. Dawson resided at a few minutes walk away in 10 Taunton Place.¹²

There was another change in Collins' domestic arrangements when Mrs. Graves returned to Gloucester Place in the 1870s, possibly in 1876 when Joseph Clow died. Mrs. Graves continued to live with Collins up to his death in 1889. In his will Wilkie Collins left his estate to be shared out equally between Mrs. Dawson (Rudd) and their children and Mrs. Graves and her daughter.¹³

Although Wilkie Collins did as much as he could to cover up his far from normal private life, his intimacies were revealed in one important and very public way, and that was in his novels. It has already been demonstrated how some of Collins' own experiences are chronicled in Basil and The Woman in White, but his own problems, relationships and prejudices are to be found sprinkled through many of his other works. Wilkie Collins had been frustrated in the 1850s in his relationship with Martha Rudd because of her social standing, and later when he took up again the relationship it was to mean the loss of Mrs. Graves, the woman he had saved, looked after and fallen in love with after the rejection of Martha Rudd. This incident even moved Collins to propose marriage and the turning down of his suit merely reinforced his own beliefs in the futility of marriage. It is the futility and frailty of marriage that often occupy the characters in many of Collins' major novels.

In No Name (1862) the heroine, Magdalen Vanstone, is disinherited on the death of his parents when it is discovered that they were not legally married at the time of her birth. Attempting to recover the fortune she enters into marriage with her cousin Noel Vanstone, a loveless match that does not achieve her aims. The labyrinthine novel Armada (1866) also explores the pitfalls of marriage with the villainess Lydia Gwylt trying to marry into the Armadale fortune. The intricacies of the Irish and Scottish marriage laws are examined in Man and Wife (1870) when the luckless Arnold Brinkworth finds himself married in the eyes of Scottish law because to save embarrassment at an inn he declares himself, when he visits Anne Vanborough, to be her husband. In this particular volume Collins summons

up all his hostility to the matrimonial state in the following description of a marriage ceremony:

Then the service began--rightly considered, the most terrible surely of all mortal ceremonies--the service which binds two human beings who know next to nothing of each other's nature to risk the tremendous experiment of living together till death parts them--the service which says, in effect if not in words, take your leap in the dark: we sanctify but we don't ensure it.

The theme of the frailty of marriage is dealt with in some of Wilkie Collins' later novels, particularly in The Evil Genius (1886) when the collapsing marriage of Herbert and Catherine Linley is examined in some detail.

We must recognize that Collins' entangled private life had a major bearing on his writings and it is hoped that some of these threads have at last been traced and understood.

NOTES

¹ John G. Millais, The Life and Letters of John Everett Millais (London: Methuen, 1899), vol. I, pp. 278-279.

² Gladys Storey, Dickens and Daughter (London: Muller, 1939), p. 213.

³ Kenneth Robinson, Wilkie Collins: A Biography (London: John Lane, 1951), p. 132.

⁴ General Register Office, Kingsway, London, marriage certificate of George Robert Graves and Elizabeth Compton, Bath, 31st March, 1850.

⁵ General Register Office, Kingsway, London, birth certificate of Elizabeth Harriet Graves, 3rd February, 1851.

⁶ General Register Office, Kingsway, London, death certificate of George Robert Graves, 30th January, 1852.

⁷ Robert Ashley, Wilkie Collins (New York: Roy, 1952), p. 74.

⁸ Robinson, p. 134.

9 Story, p. 214.

10 Robinson, p. 134-135.

11 Post Office Directory for London, 1854. Thomas Rudd is listed as a linendraper at Addison & Rudd, Linendrapers, 6, Newcastle Place, Edgware Road. In the 1869 Post Office Directory Thomas Rudd is in business on his own at 141 Praed Street, Paddington.

12 Post Office Directory for London, 1876.

13 Robinson, p. 324.

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A Rogue's Life: Who Ever Heard of Frank Softly?

Robert Ashley

When Kirk Beetz asked me to write a review of Collins's novella A Rogue's Life, recently reprinted by Dover, my heart sank. Not only could I remember nothing about the book, but even the title failed to ring a bell. In my diligent graduate pursuit of Collins, could I have overlooked the Rogue? Somewhat panic-stricken, I reached for my biography of Collins and checked the "R" section of the index. No Rogue's Life. Perhaps, I reasoned hopefully, I had indeed read it, but dismissed it as unworthy of mention in a biography only one hundred pages long--you can't include everything. Next step: Consult your Ph.D. thesis since a doctoral dissertation, especially a ponderous two-volume tome like mine, does include everything. Apparently not mine, however. There being no index, I ran through the Table of Contents. Several novellas, and even a couple of short stories, were listed in the lengthy, descriptive chapter titles, but no Rogue. Thoroughly shaken (Dover had thought worth reprinting a work of which I was seemingly ignorant!), I took another look at my biography. There halfway down the list of "Novels and Novelettes" appeared the entry "1879. A Rogue's Life." So I was at least aware that Collins had written something called A Rogue's Life, though evidence still suggested I had never read it, a fact I found distressing to say the least. Then fate, in the most approved Collins manner, came to my rescue. The last page of the section entitled BOOKS BY COLLINS slipped through my fingers and my eyes rested on the first page of the INDEX. There, as the fourth entry under the A's, was A Rogue's Life, followed by three page references. The first of these informed me that the novella had made its debut as a five-part serial in the 1856 volume of Dickens' periodical Household Words. This gave me a hint. Back to the dissertation. At the very bottom of the first CONTENTS page I saw "Chapter XIII Contributions to Household Words"; with logic that would have delighted Wilkie, to say nothing of Sherlock, I deduced that in Chapter XIII I would find the Rogue. I did find him, and I also discovered that I had found him entertaining. With my self-esteem somewhat restored, I still faced a question or two: Why, if I had found the Rogue amusing, was he so forgettable? Why, if he was so forgettable, did Dover decide to reprint the novella, of which he was the central character? Re-reading A Rogue's Life only partially answered these questions. I felt as if I were

reading it for the first time; none of the characters, incidents, or scenes struck a responsive chord. Except for "A Terribly Strange Bed," The Woman in White, and The Moonstone, which I used in courses; and Basil, A Dead Secret, and Man and Wife, which I reviewed for this journal, I have re-read nothing by Collins in nearly forty years. Yet I felt that even his most trivial short stories would have produced the reaction, "Oh, yes, I remember reading that."

A Rogue's Life is a first person, somewhat picaresque narrative of the life of Frank Softly "From His Birth to His Marriage." An impudent, irresponsible scion of a genteel, but impecunious family which disowns him, Frank is successively medical student, caricaturist, portrait painter, copyist of Old Masters, secretary to the Duskydale Literary and Scientific Institute, counterfeiter, jailbird, disguised clergyman, transported convict, and, like Magwitch, winner of fame and fortune in Australia. Unlike Magwitch, however, he gets a girl, too. In one of the neater touches in the novella, she has followed him to Australia and he fulfills part of his indenture as her servant.

The most notable features of A Rogue's Life are its gay, bantering tone, rarely a characteristic of Collins's work, and the use of several Collins plot devices and motifs for comic rather than melodramatic purposes. The fifty-five year old Collins felt obliged to apologize, somewhat wistfully, for his youthful exuberance:

The critical reader may possibly notice a tone of almost boisterous gaiety in certain parts of these imaginary Confessions. I can only plead, in defence, that the story offers the faithful reflection of a very happy time in my past life. It was written at Paris, when I had Charles Dickens for a near neighbour and a daily companion, and when my leisure hours were joyously passed with many other friends, all associated with literature and art, of whom the admirable comedian, Regnier, is now the only survivor. The revising of these pages has been to me a melancholy task. I can only hope that they may cheer the sad moments of others.

(Collins, iii)

This gaiety of tone, perhaps due, as Collins implies, to the presence and influence of Dickens,

pervades the entire novel. The reader is neither shocked by the peccadilloes of the hero nor concerned over his troubles, any more than is the hero himself. The villain, Dr. Dulcifer, is a "master criminal," omniscient, suave, mannerly, and mysterious, but he is a gay, good-natured, benevolent criminal, who cheerily waves good-bye to his frustrated captors as he disappears through a trap door. In temperament and physique, he is the closest approach in the early stories to Fosco. His house, with its barred windows, iron doors, peep-holes, speaking tubes, and trapdoor, is a "sinister house," but it is a gaily sinister house reflecting the personality of its chief inhabitant. Similarly, an anomalous will helps advance the comic plot, and Scotch marriage laws benefit rather than frustrate the hero and heroine. Other typical features are love-at-first sight, the author's use of his knowledge of art, hide-and-seek, and the resolute heroine. Throughout the novel Collins writes in a bantering, gently ironic tone, good-naturedly poking fun at a variety of people and things--English public schools, the Old Masters, the ridiculous pretensions of genteel but impecunious families. At one point Collins even makes fun of himself:

When I rang the bell at No. 1, did I feel no presentiment of the exquisite surprise in store for me? I felt nothing of the sort. The fact is, my digestion is excellent. Presentiments are more closely connected than is generally supposed with a weak state of stomach. (67)

Usually, Collins's weak-stomached characters are experiencing presentiments all over the place.

At least two Collins biographers find "significance" in A Rogue's Life. Nuel Pharr Davis considers it Wilkie's "final farewell to the ghost of William Collins. With the detachment of a man looking into a monkey cage, he reviewed all the little currying tricks his father had used to get on with patrons. Father-son conflict . . . was presented at the level of low comedy" (182). William Marshall, on the other hand, calls it "the first full instance of Collins' fiction of social purpose In the manner of Thackeray's The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon Esq. (1884), the outlaw tells his own story, thereby passing significant judgment upon the society that has superficially judged him" (46). Sue Lonoff has made the point that Collins was very adept at concealing his criticism of the Victorian world from all except his most perceptive readers. I must be among the less perceptive, since A Rogue's Life was, forty years ago, and still is merely

a forgettable piece of fluff, though entertaining and even suspenseful. As Collins himself said, the Rogue has two merits: "He is never serious for two moments together; and he 'doesn't take long to read'" (iv). In his "Introductory Words" Collins states that his "old friend, Mr. Charles Reade" urged him "to enlarge the present sketch of the hero's adventures in Australia. But the opportunity of carrying out this project has proved to be one of the lost opportunities of my life" (iii). Consequently, he settled for republication with only minor changes. No one need shed any tears over the lost opportunity.

Why did Dover select the Rogue for reprinting? I can only guess: 1) It is short and consequently inexpensive to reproduce and to purchase, and 2) it reveals Collins in an uncharacteristic guise. Was it worth reprinting? Definitely. Almost anything by Collins is worth reprinting and A Rogue's Life is unique among Collins's works. I still hope that Dover will take a chance on one of Wilkie's undeservedly neglected later novels.

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"The Use of Gas in Theatres"
or
"The Air and the Audience: Considerations on the
Atmospheric Influences of Theatres"

Wilkie Collins

Edited with Notes and Commentary by Steve Farmer

Wilkie Collins wrote the following rarely mentioned article in 1881. It was first published in 1885 by Allen Thordike Rice and was reprinted in 1924 in The Mask: A Journal of the Art of the Theatre.¹ Though Collins casually dismisses it as "harmless gossip," the article actually offers its readers a brief look at the writer's views of two issues which concerned him mightily for much of his adult life: his health and the state of English drama in the mid and late nineteenth century.

Much has been written about Collins's health. Rheumatic illnesses plagued him by his thirties, and chronic gout and a subsequent addiction to pain-deadening laudanum followed soon thereafter and stayed with him the rest of his life. Reminded of these health problems by the very issue at hand in "The Air and the Audience," the reader easily sees Collins's intended lightheartedness disappear when he shifts from a somewhat flippant discussion of lucky American theatergoers (with their "ozoned air") to a concerned examination of the possible problems caused by unventilated English theaters. The description of "minute particles . . . charged with disease" and the thought that "playgoers of consumptive tendency . . . may sow the seeds that results in the future on which . . . we had better not dwell" suggests a horrified and hypochondriacal Collins, not a Collins who had intimated at the start that his article was designed to amuse.

About Collins's concern for the stage, less has been written, although he always maintained that "if I know anything of my own faculty, it is a dramatic one."² As early as 1858, Collins used the pages of Dickens's Household Words to discuss, in unfavorable terms, the state of the English stage. "Dramatic Grub Street (Explored in Two Letters)" examines possible reasons for the utter lack of good English drama; drama so bad, Collins claims, that it delighted only "a fast young farmer from the country, or a convivial lawyer's clerk who has never read anything but a newspaper in

his life."³ Collins returns to the state of the English stage again in "The Air and the Audience," but by 1881 he had either been mellowed by the years, or he had witnessed a change for the better, for in this article he attacks those who condemn English drama and uses as ammunition several "notorious examples of good dramatic writing." Though his argument comes in an infrequently discussed article, it nevertheless serves to remind the reader that Collins's interest in the theater was as important to him late in life as it was during his youth.

I

The treatment of this immense study is perhaps a little irregular. It assumes the form of a question, in the first place.

Is it in the pecuniary interests of a manager to consult the health and comfort of his audience, by improving the atmosphere of his theatre? or, to put it in plainer language still: If the announcement of two theatres--one of which is cool and clean, and the other hot and dirty--happen to present nearly equal dramatic attractions, how many persons, in doubt which place of amusement to prefer, will allow the consideration of sitting at ease, in breathable air, to influence their decision? Not one in one hundred.

On the sixth of April last, (1881) Mr. Steele Mackaye, author of the most popular play thus far written by an American dramatist ("Hazel Kirke") opened a new theatre in New York.⁴ Already indebted to this gentleman's exertions, not only as a writer but as an actor, his countrymen have now to thank him for a public service of another kind. He is builder and manager of one of the most luxurious places of public amusement in the world.

Among other ingenious inventions, which it is not necessary to mention in this place, he has contrived to associate an evening at the theatre with the sanitary results of a visit to the seaside. This lucky audience breathe "ozoned air"; and are helped to enjoy it by means of folding chairs, arranged for them in groups of three or four so that they cannot be troubled by persons pushing by, on the way to vacant seats.⁵ Have these novelties, and many more all directly contributing to public health, public comfort, and public pleasure, helped to draw large audiences on their own merits? The last accounts which have reached

England state that the new play written by Mr. Mackaye for the opening of his theatre has not yet met with the appreciations which it deserves.⁶ What has the new ventilation (not forgetting the comfortable seats and the beautiful theatre) done towards tempting the public to judge for themselves of the merits of the play? Little or nothing. Pure air has not, as it seems, sufficiently interested the audience to make them talk about it. The friends of the manager urge him to increase his number of advertisements, and to mention particularly that he is the author of "Hazel Kirke". In short he appears to be in just as much need of getting all the help to notoriety that money can buy, as if he was proprietor of the hottest and dirtiest theatre on the face of the civilized earth.

In a city on the other side of the Atlantic--let me not say particularly in what part of Europe that city may be found--is a theatre which makes no new concession of any sort to public comfort. This place of amusement has been crammed from floor to ceiling for hundreds of nights more. Nobody who wants to see the popular play of the moment is kept away by the horrid atmosphere or the uncomfortable seats. No cries for more air or more room rise from the perspiring and aching audience. While they have got what they want on the stage, the manager is at perfect liberty to deprive them of the blessing of ventilation in the theatre.

And what is the moral of this?

The moral is, that we must consider the existing case of our lung and our skins, in the air of the theatre, without much hope of any general change for the better. The truth is that we offer no encouragement to reform. Do the two or three theatres in London which have generously given us the pure electric light, empty the other theatres which economically persist in poisoning us with gas? Only let those other theatres provide us with our favorite laugh and our delightful vulgarity--and they may give us any air or no air just as they like.

II

The prospects of improvement in ventilation being now disposed of, consideration of the theatrical atmosphere, as it is at present, claims its turn next.

Sensible invalids who have to take a dose of physic never add to the terrors of the prospect by dallying with the bottle, and thinking how nasty it looks. They spare themselves an interval of disgust--

and swallow the detestable mixture before they have time to feel sick.

What scientific knowledge has to say about the air that we breathe in theatres is our moral dose of physic, at the present moment. Let us get rid of it at once--as pleasantly as possible.

You and I are at the theatre. Towards the latter part of the performance, we wipe our streaming face; and you say to me, "Hot, isn't it?" and I cordially agree with you. If we were not two ignorant playgoers, we should express ourselves more accurately. You would remind me that we want a certain quantity of oxygen in the air that we breathe. And I should reply, "Yes indeed, my friend. For the last two hours we have been engaged (assisted by the gaslights) in madly exhausting our oxygen, and in supplying its place with a vile infusion of carbon, which would end in suffocating us if the performance only lasted long enough." And if--appalled by the prospect--I happened to stop there, who would be happier to reflect the scientific side of my memory than my companion. "Don't forget", this intelligent person would add, "that there is another, and a more horribly vitiated atmosphere, which we are also making for ourselves. Minute particles, dear boy, are being 'given off' by us and by our perspiring fellow creatures. We are inhaling, each other's particles. And, worse still, if there happen to be any playgoers of consumptive tendency present, their particles may be actually charged with disease, and may sow the seeds that results in the future on which (as we are here for our pleasure) we had better not dwell. Shall we stay for the last piece? or shall we adjourn--?"⁷

I take my friend's arm, and hurry away with him before he can finish his sentence. I know what he means.

The system of Nature is a system of compensations. All mortal evils have their attendant remedies. In the horrid tropics, the venomous serpent glides to attack us over the very herbs which preserve our lives from the poison of his fangs. In our happier temperate zone, the theatre (and its destructive atmosphere) is the near neighbor of the preservative shell-fish shop, and the remedial public house. Does the man live who can honestly say that he has never enjoyed oysters and stout as he enjoys them after leaving the theatre? How does the great master of fiction write of his visit to his friend Terry at the old Adelphi? "I was glad to see Dan's theatre as full seemingly as it could hold. The heat was dreadful We had rare good porter and

oysters after the play". Rare and good Walter Scott!⁸ Happy, thrice happy provisions of Nature, which poisons us in the theatre, and brings us to life again by the genial agency of an oyster knife and a pewter pot!

III

Is this flippant? In that case let us go to the other extreme, and make a few sensible remarks.

Experienced playgoers have often observed the curious difference in the effect produced on the temper of an audience, when a theatre is too hot and when a theatre is too cold. In the first case--infinitely the worst case of the two--the semi-suffocated public not only submits with admirable resignation, but if the play happens to present an interesting story, becomes absolutely insensible to discomfort, and utterly oblivious of the small maladies under which it suffers at home. On these occasions, the tremendous silence of a crowd of human beings mastered by one supreme interest which holds them in thrall, is never disturbed by the cough which certain members of the assembly have brought with them into the theatre, and have indulged in freely while the proceedings have been opened by the performance of the overture. But the play has begun; the story is rising, through an artful succession of scenes, to its climax of interest. The ladies, who have been looking disparagingly at each others dresses, are all looking at the stage now; and the people in the pit, without room to sit in, sit contented nevertheless. Under those conditions the author carries his sweet-tempered public with him; and the actors increase the enormous circulation of their photographs when the shops open the next morning.

But let the circumstances be completely altered; let the season be late in the autumn, and the theatre be subject to a cool flow of air. If they feel the blessed change disagreeably, the women have their mantles, the men have their great coats. Protected in this way, do they appreciate the reviving purity of an atmosphere which deodorizes the emanations from gas and from the not universally-washed public that sits in its light. Far from it. With rare exceptions, the audience is out of temper. Nothing will rouse their interest; nothing will win their applause. No excellence of dramatic writing, no exhibition among the actors of perfect art, will charm away the ungrateful distrust of fresh air, the meanly needless dread of catching cold, which has got possession of men and women alike. The theatre which prospers, at the cool period of the year, must be heated to the summer temperature; and be rigorously careful never to have a door open, from top

to bottom of the building, while the performance is in progress. Is this exaggeration? When you are out in the streets, at a late hour look up at the bedroom windows, and see for yourself how many of them are raised, even by an inch or two, to let in the favourite object the public dreads--night air.

IV

Among other curious influences exercised by the theatrical atmosphere, want of sufficient oxygen seems (in certain remarkable cases) to end in want of sufficient memory.

For example, those distinguished playgoers who use their pens to lament over the condition of the modern English Drama, appear to be all affected by that melancholy object of contemplation in one and the same manner. Condemning with excellent reason, the wretched average of theatrical entertainments offered to our public, they are all unable to remember the production--say, during the last thirty years--of a single genuine English work which has been a creditable example of the art of dramatic writing. Setting aside living names, is it just, is it even honest--after venting righteous indignation on loathesome burlesques and idiotic adaptations from the French--to pass over the hopeful signs in the past which justify hope in the future; and to leave without a word of notice such original English plays as the "Masks and Faces" of Charles Reade and Tom Taylor--the Comedies of Robertson--and the "Our Boys" of Mr. Byron, which has lived through the longest "run" on record, and has achieved the rare honours of foreign translation and foreign performance?⁹ It is impossible to imagine that men, bound in justice to present both sides of the question fairly, can have wilfully suppressed notorious examples of good dramatic writing which speak for themselves. The one other alternative is to suppose a remarkable failure of memory, and to hold the absence of oxygen accountable for it.

V

The end that comes to all things, big or little, must come even to such harmless gossip as this. Having shown that the air of theatres is decidedly injurious to people who breathe it, have I in conclusion any further suggestions to make? Only one--which is sure to please you. Let us go to the play.

NOTES

¹ Kirk Beetz, Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1889-1976 (Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1978), p. 65.

² Wilkie Collins, "Memorandum, Relating to the Life and Writings of Wilkie Collins," in Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade: First Editions (with a few exceptions) in the Library at Dormy House, Pine Valley, New Jersey, ed. M. L. Parrish and Elizabeth V. Miller (London: Constable and Company, 1940), p. 5.

³ Wilkie Collins, "Dramatic Grub Street (Explored in Two Letters)," in Household Words, 17 (March 6, 1858), p. 266. Collins also discusses the stage, good and bad performances, and theaters, comfortable and uncomfortable ones, in the following articles from The Leader: "La Promise," 5 (June 17, 1854), p. 572; "The Courier of Lyons," 5 (July 1, 1854), p. 619; "The Arts," 5 (July 8, 1854), pp. 644-645; "Les Diamans de la Couronne," 5 (July 15, 1854), p. 668; and "Theatres," 5 (July 29, 1854), p. 717. And of particular interest to readers of "The Air and the Audience" is "A Breach of British Privilege," Household Words, 19 (March 19, 1859), pp. 361-364, an article in which Collins assumes the role of J. Bull to complain, with tongue firmly in cheek, of the mollycoddle British theatergoers who were unashamedly allowing themselves to watch drama in the comfort of T. H. Wyatt's (1807-1880) New Adelphi Theatre (1858).

⁴ Steele Mackaye (1842-1894) was an American playwright whose most successful play, "Hazel Kirke" (1880), ran for over 500 nights without interruption at The Madison Square Theatre, which featured a double stage and folding theater chairs, both invented by Mackaye. The parenthetical date seems to be incorrect; the Madison Square Theatre opened in 1880.

⁵ "Ozoned air" refers to a rudimentary artificial ventilation (air conditioning) system dependent on compressed ozone, whose subsequent expansion leads to a cooling of the surrounding air.

⁶ Mackaye's "new play" was probably a dramatization of Albion Winegar Tourgee's (1838-1905) A Fool's Errand, a piece written in 1879 and produced in the Madison Square Theatre by Mackaye in 1881.

⁷ Not only does this passage suggest a real fear of illness on Collins's part, but it also shows his fascination with the details of science. It was a

fascination that worked its way into much of his fiction.

⁸ Walter Scott (1771-1832), much admired by Collins, had reason to relish seeing "Dan's theatre as full seemingly as it could hold." Dan is Daniel Terry (1780-1829), who, in 1825, used his friendship with Scott to secure a £1250 pledge from the author for the purchase of the Adelphi Theatre, London. Terry later encountered financial problems, and Scott ultimately had to make good on the pledge.

⁹ Charles Reade (1814-1884), a close friend of Collins, wrote "Masks and Faces" (1852) with Tom Taylor (1817-1880), a dramatist and editor of Punch. Robertson is Thomas William Robertson (1829-1871), an actor and dramatist. Robertson is noteworthy as a writer of several comedies and for having created stage adaptations of Dickens's "The Battle of Life" and "The Haunted Man." Mr. Byron is Henry James Byron (1834-1884), whose domestic drama "Our Boys" (1875) enjoyed a record four year run at the Vaudeville Theatre.

Notes

Gothic has begun a new series, with volume one appearing in 1986. The first issue includes Karen McGuire's "The Artist as Demon in Mary Shelley, Stevenson, Walpole, Stoker, and King" and Kenneth Gibbs's "Stephen King and the Tradition of American Gothic," as well as reviews. A handsomely presented journal, Gothic is published annually. Subscriptions are \$6.00 (U.S.A.) for two issues. To subscribe or query for more information, write to the editor, Gary William Crawford, P.O. Box 80051, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

Oxford University Press plans to publish Wilkie Collins: Selected Letters, edited by Kirk H. Beetz, in 1989. Dr. Beetz continues to prepare a collected edition of the letters and would be delighted to learn of letters in libraries or other collections. Please write to him at: 1307 "F" Street, Davis, CA 95616-1101 U.S.A.

Notes on the Contributors

Laurence Ince is a resident of Olton, Solihull, West Midlands. He writes: "I became interested in Collins after reading The Woman in White, which I was unable to put down until the final page. I then set out to try to find out more concerning the woman in Wilkie's life which the novel was based on. I pursued Wilkie and his women by using directories of London for the Victorian period and registry certificates."

Robert Ashley's work has appeared often in the WCSJ. Dr. Ashley was a professor of English at West Point and later at Ripon College in Wisconsin. Now retired, he continues to take a lively interest in Wilkie Collins. His many articles and his 1952 book Wilkie Collins are familiar to nearly all Collinsians.

Steve Farmer is a graduate student at the University of Kansas. His dissertation, in progress, discusses Collins's nonfiction.



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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £7.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

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The Wilkie Collins Society Journal is published once a year by the Society for its members. Submissions should follow the guidelines of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (1977). Query first for reviews. Send submissions to Kirk H. Beetz, Editor, 1307 F Street, Davis, California 95616, USA. Be sure to include a stamped and addressed envelope for the return of a submission. Submissions from outside the United States should include international reply coupons with the addressed return envelope.

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Editor's Note

This issue features some fine criticism that is sure to be of interest to members of the Wilkie Collins Society. "A Terribly Strange Bed" is the most often discussed of all of Collins's short stories, yet its themes can seem impenetrable. Dr. Rance's approach to illuminating the story's is welcome and should be of interest to those who are interested in Gothic literature in general, as well as to those of us who have a special interest in Collins. Muriel Smith again graces the Journal with a critical study, this time with a daring comparison of how Jane Austen and Collins handle the same theme. In his review of Twelve Englishmen of Mystery, Robert Ashley calls into question the practice of treating Collins as a "serious" writer, thereby suggesting that an increasingly popular critical approach to Collins's achievements may be misdirected. To round out this issue, Nick Rance calls to our attention the significant publication of a new critical edition of the novel No Name.

K.H.B.

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"A Terribly Strange Bed": Self-Subverting Gothic

Nick Rance

The sensation novel recurrently alludes to Gothic fiction, the preceding literary sensationalism, to mark a distinction. In The Woman in White, the Limmeridge schoolboy mistakes the figure who transpires to be Anne Catherick for a ghost and is rebuked by the schoolmaster:

If I hear another word spoken about ghosts in this school, it will be the worse for all of you. There are no such things as ghosts, and therefore any boy who believes in ghosts believes in what can't possibly be . . .¹

Anne Catherick is more disturbing than any mere ghost. The suspense of the famous first "sensation scene" of The Woman in White derives from the challenge which she presents to the early Victorian orthodoxy which Hartright has imbibed at his mother's cottage in Hampstead and from his late father: "Thanks to his admirable prudence and self-denial, my mother and sister were left, after his death, as independent of the world as they had been during his lifetime."² Prudence, self-denial, independence: these were the characteristic bourgeois virtues. Hartright sounds like a character in a morality play, and as such in the mid-nineteenth century society was conventionally perceived. Those with a right heart succeeded, while others failed. Hartright accordingly assumes the worst of Anne, meeting her "at that suspiciously late hour and in that suspiciously lonely place"³ in the course of his walk back from Hampstead to Lincoln's Inn.

Anne, on the other hand, protests the innocence which her wearing of white symbolically asserts:

You don't suspect me of doing anything wrong, do you? I have done nothing wrong. I have met with an accident--I am very unfortunate in being here alone so late. Why do you suspect me of doing wrong?⁴

Provisionally almost convinced that Anne's misfortune is not symptomatic of a wrong heart, Hartright is traumatized.

It was like a dream. Was I Walter Hartright? Was this the well-known, uneventful road, where holiday people strolled on

Sundays? Had I really left, little more than an hour since, the quiet, decent, conventionally-domestic atmosphere of my mother's cottage?⁵

If ghosts in Gothic fiction signified a past as liable to erupt into an enlightened present, Collins substitutes the present for the past as a source of dread.

One may then look again at some of the apparently straightforwardly Gothic short stories of Collins, or at least some of the earlier ones, keeping in view the insistence in the sensation fiction of the 1860's on the distinction between its own and the Gothic mode of sensationalism. As was typical of the Victorian short story, several of Collins's stories involve the supernatural, while some which do not, like "A Terribly Strange Bed," to be taken as the exemplary Gothic-seeing story here, have a pronouncedly Gothic flavour.

Amid a dread and awful silence I beheld before me--in the nineteenth century, and in the civilized capital of France--such a machine for secret murder by suffocation as might have existed in the worst days of the Inquisition, in the lonely inns among the Hartz Mountains, in the mysterious tribunals of Westphalia!⁶

One might assume that in the short stories we have a Collins bowing to rather than reconstructing popular taste, or a Collins at play, or note that "A Terribly Strange Bed" appeared as early as 1852, the year of Basil, which has its Gothic moments, with Mannion in the closing scenes as mobile among the Cornish elements as Frankenstein's monster at the North Pole. What is intriguing about "A terribly Strange Bed," however, is the degree to which it prefigures the break between the sensation fiction of the 1860's and preceding merely sensational fiction.

What would seem the transplanted Gothic prop of the title is situated above a gambling-den in modern Paris. As well as being in Paris, the bed has an origin more homely than the Hartz Mountains:

a four-post bed, of all things in the world to meet with in Paris--yes, a thorough clumsy British four-poster, with the regular top lined with chintz--the regular fringed valance all round--the regular stifling, unwholesome curtains⁷

Like the narrator and near-victim of the bed, who is an Englishman in Restoration Paris, the bed is British. Although adapted by an "infernal ingenuity"⁸ which might be referred to the Hartz Mountains or even merely to foreign parts, and the title of the story would seek to isolate the foreign aspect of the bed, the bed has not been transformed. "The regular stifling, unwholesome curtains" always have been suffocating.

The narrator has put himself in danger by breaking the bank in the shady gambling-den. In Restoration Paris, however, gambling is not restricted to the disreputable.

My friend proposed a visit to Frascati's; but his suggestion was not to my taste. I knew Frascati's, as the French saying is, by heart; had lost and won plenty of five-franc pieces there, merely for amusement's sake, until it was amusement no longer, and was thoroughly tired, in fact, of all the ghastly respectabilities of such a social anomaly as a respectable gambling-house.⁹

The disreputable gambling which is favoured by the narrator and implied to be less anomalous is within the confines of the Palais-Royal. Until 1780, when the duc de Chartres, the future Philippe Egalité, inherited, the palace was exclusive to the aristocracy. In cooperation with the big-businessmen and financiers who had undertaken to transform Paris, the duc de Chartres converted the Palais-Royal into a meeting-place for all classes. From 1787, the Palais-Royal became a focus of popular agitation. In 1789, Arthur Young noted that the coffee-houses

are not only crowded within, but other expectant crowds are at the doors and windows, listening à gorge déployée to certain orators, who from chairs or tables harangue each his little audience; the eagerness with which they are heard, and the thunder of applause they receive for every sentiment of more than common hardiness or violence against the present government, cannot easily be imagined. I am all amazement at the ministry permitting such nests and hotbeds of sedition and revolt . . . ¹⁰

In the story's title, the English colloquialism, "terribly strange," may be perceived as evoking foreign or French terror. But what is then "terribly strange" about the bed is that it is British.

In the story, England persists in intruding on or merging with France. The ex-grenadier with whom the narrator celebrates his winnings by drinking champagne flatters him as "the amiable, gracious Englishman, in whose veins circulates the vivacious blood of France!"¹¹ Feverishly lying awake in the bed the top of which he will shortly observe to be descending on him, the narrator is thinking of England. "The moonlight shining into the room reminded me of a certain moonlight night in England--the night after a picnic party in a Welsh valley."¹² He is struck by the association of ideas. "And what cause had produced in a moment the whole of this strange, complicated, mysterious effect?"¹³ He can think only that the scenes have moonlight in common, which leaves the matter where he found it.

The narrator's gambling acquaintances are not dismissible as so many blackguards. They are reminiscent in their destitution of the revolutionary sans culottes. "I had entered the place to laugh, but the spectacle before me was something to weep over."¹⁴ The narrator, however, is not to be deterred from his winning streak at the evocatively-named rouge et noir.

At first some of the men present ventured their money safely enough on my colour; but I speedily increased my stakes to sums which they dared not risk. One after another they left off playing, and breathlessly looked on at my game.¹⁵

Finally, "the whole floating capital of the gambling-house was waiting to pour into my pockets!"¹⁶ The disreputable gambling-den on the particular evening might be Restoration society in miniature: witness that society as rendered by one of Collins's literary heroes, Balzac.

E. J. Hobsbawm has remarked on how analogous were the histories of England and France in the early 1830's.

The Reform Act of 1832 corresponds to the July Revolution of 1830 in France, and had indeed been powerfully stimulated by the news from Paris. This period is probably the only one in modern history when political events in Britain ran parallel with those on the Continent, to the point where something not unlike a revolutionary situation might have developed in 1831-2 but for the restraint of both Whig and Tory parties.¹⁷

An English revolutionary of the beginning of the seventeenth century is elliptically introduced into the story. Over the bed is a portrait of

a swarthy, sinister ruffian, looking upward-- it might be at some tall gallows at which he was going to be hanged. At any rate, he had the appearance of thoroughly deserving it.¹⁸

Actually, the gaze is directed at the bed-top which is about to descend on the narrator. The ruffian in the portrait wears a hat "of conical shape, according to the fashion supposed to have been favoured by Guido Fawkes."¹⁹ The name of the narrator is not revealed until the second from last paragraph of the story, when he is addressed by a policeman as "Monsieur Faulkner."²⁰ Thus the narrator himself does not escape the revolutionary taint. Carlyle, in The French Revolution, to be followed by Dickens in A Tale of Two Cities, began by blaming those who had provoked revolution no less than those who were committing atrocities in the streets. When the narrator reports to the police, he is at first taken to be not a victim but a criminal: "a drunken Englishman who had robbed somebody . . ."²¹

If capitalists and careerists dominated Balzac's France, the principles of laissez-faire capitalism in the first third of the nineteenth century in England had the status of a religion. In Shirley, her novel of the Luddite era, the mill-owner, Robert Moore, is depicted by Charlotte Brontë as one of the worshippers. Having narrowly avoided suffocation, Faulkner in "A Terribly Strange Bed" is thereafter a sadder and wiser man, who forswears playing at rouge et noir. "The sight of a green cloth, with packs of cards and heaps of money on it, will henceforth be for ever associated in my mind with the sight of a bed canopy descending to suffocate me in the silence and darkness of the night."²²

"A Terribly Strange Bed" is not a puzzle or allegory. The Gothic facade of the story is integral. Gothicism corresponds with the relatively optimistic perspective which would ascribe revolution to "infernal ingenuity," as the modified bed is ascribed, rather than to pre-existing social tensions. The technique of Collins in the story is to embroil Gothic motifs with those of sensation fiction, which will induce terror not through supernaturalism but by assigning to unrest or revolution specific historical causes which the Gothic albeit current Victorian concept of "infernal ingenuity" would merely seek hysterically to evade.

Infernal hints notwithstanding, "A Terribly Strange Bed" eschews supernaturalism. Alternatively, in some of the early tales of the supernatural by Collins, as in, for example, "The Dream Woman" (1855), the supernatural element is "framed" and the fears precipitating the demonology implied. Such tales are not different in kind from "A Terribly Strange Bed." Self-conscious and self-subverting Gothicism is not confined in the period to the fiction of Collins. James Malcolm Rymer's popular and not quite interminable serial, Varney the Vampire, concludes with an orgy of vampires on Hampstead Heath, which includes one Brooks, who "was known to have been such a respectable man."

He went to the city every day, and used to do so just for the purpose of granting audiences to ladies and gentlemen who might be labouring under any little pecuniary difficulties, and accommodating them. Kind Mr. Brooks. He only took one hundred pounds per cent. Why should he be a Vampyre? Bless him! Too severe, really!²³

Here Rymer is using the metaphor of the vampire in precisely the same sense as Marx, who wrote that "Capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks."²⁴ The Gothic metaphor is deconstructed, since what is purportedly a threat to society from outside and from the aristocratic past (Varney is a baronet) turns out to be merely a projection of the ruling capitalist economy.

Varney the Vampire appeared in original serial form in 1847, and it is in the late 1840's and beginning of the 1850's that the plots of all four of Collins's sensation novels completed in the 1860's are set. Hartright's crisis of faith in the ideology of self-help would be alleged to have occurred in 1849. The consensus among modern historians of the Victorian period has been to concur with Collins in his dating of the first significant stirrings of doubt. Thus J. F. C. Harrison remarks that

It was clear to many middle-class sympathisers before 1850 that self-help as a means of raising the labouring classes as a whole had severe limitations. A minority of exceptional working men could be relied on to respond to such opportunities; but for the vast numbers of the labouring poor the suggestion of self-help was simply advice to lift themselves by their own bootstraps.²⁵

Samuel Smiles and vampires are liable to seem strange bedfellows. The tendency alike of the creed of self-help and the literary vogue of the vampire would be, however, to exculpate the mid-Victorian social system. Properly social anxieties may either be rendered in terms of the lack within the individual of the requisite prudence, self-denial and independence, or projected on to demonic forces outside society. Eschewing the vampires, infernal devices and ghosts discredited in Collins's shorter fiction, the new sensation fiction would then unmask a more domesticated kind of evasiveness.

NOTES

¹ The Woman in White (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 108.

² Ibid., p. 34.

³ Ibid., p. 48.

⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

⁵ Ibid., p. 50.

⁶ Tales of Terror and the Supernatural (London: Dover, 1972), p. 34.

⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

⁹ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁰ Travels in France during the years 1787, 1788, 1789, Dublin, 1793; ed. C. Maxwell, Cambridge, 1929. Quoted in Jacques Godechot, The Taking of the Bastille (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 59.

¹¹ Tales of Terror and the Supernatural, p. 27.

¹² Ibid., p. 32.

¹³ Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

- 16 Ibid., p. 27.
- 17 The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (London: Mentor, 1962), p. 139.
- 18 Tales of Terror and the Supernatural, p. 31.
- 19 Ibid., p. 32.
- 20 Ibid., p. 38.
- 21 Ibid., p. 36.
- 22 Ibid., p. 39.
- 23 Varney the Vampire (London: Dover, 1972), p. 756.
- 24 Capital Volume 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 342.
- 25 The Early Victorians 1832-51 (London: Panther, 1973), p. 172.

"Everything to My Wife": The Inheritance Theme
in The Moonstone and Sense and Sensibility

Muriel Smith

"Everything to my wife": these are Sir John Verinder's instructions to his lawyer, who has the will drawn and signed within ten minutes. He sees no reason to ask Sir John to reconsider it. Lady Verinder is not only worthy of unreserved trust, as all good wives are, but is capable of properly administering the estate.¹ Julia Herncastle, as she was, nobly born but with nothing much of a fortune, and well past her girlhood when she settled for a Yorkshire baronet, has been managing him since the day they married.²

Collins here indicates his preference for a strong capable woman, but Sir John's will is also essential to the story. Had Sir John made an elaborate settlement for his daughter's protection, Rachel Verinder's cousin Godfrey Ablewhite would know all about it and would not need to make the enquiries about Lady Verinder's will that reveal him to Mr. Bruff as a mercenary scoundrel.³ Lady Verinder's will, tying up Rachel's fortune to give her and any man that she marries a handsome income but no power over the capital, is again essential to the story, but not a mere plot device. It is a necessary precaution. Rachel is an intelligent and determined young woman, but she is very young and we know that she is financially an innocent from her misjudgment of her cousin Franklin Blake.

Though heavily in debt, Blake is not in difficulties about money because most creditors are content to wait and charge interest: he is a rich man's only child. The French creditor, whose lawyer arrives at Lady Verinder's demanding repayment of money without which his client will be ruined, is quite an exception. Lady Verinder instantly pays the money and is furious. Rachel is deeply and understandably shocked.⁴ But, at not quite eighteen and with a mother who sees to everything, she gets the general situation quite wrong. Everyone else realizes that Blake has no financial motive for stealing the Moonstone: Rachel does not. Otherwise, when she sees him take it, she might reasonably conclude that he is worried about its safety and is transferring it to a better place. This is indeed the truth, though he is acting unconsciously under the influence of opium. Without Rachel's misconception there would be no story, but the mistake arises from her situation and subsequent developments

from her character, with nothing arbitrarily contrived purely to keep the plot going.

Mr. Ferrars is another gentleman who has left everything to his wife.⁵ Possibly she has only a life interest with reversion to the children, but she has unrestricted power to apportion money and real estate between them. Unfortunately, and unlike Lady Verinder, she is not fit to be trusted. Lady Verinder is a benevolent despot, but Mrs. Ferrars is a petty-minded tyrant. She can disinherit for any reason or none the natural heir, her elder son Edward, and disinherit him she will should he persist in an imprudent engagement, meaning an engagement to a girl without fortune: this is her only criterion. As it happens, Edward's youthful entanglement with Lucy Steele really was foolish: he has no wish to marry her but stands by his engagement from a sense of honour. His mother, a fundamentally stupid woman, endows his brother Robert with an estate that she had meant for Edward, had he married to please her. Lucy thereupon grabs Robert and his independent income, and Edward is free to engage himself to Elinor Dashwood. A grudging ten thousand pounds from his mother⁶ enables them to marry, but they are never insulted by her real favour and preference.

It must be said that, taking the basic idea of the masterful widow, Collins has incorporated her more deftly into the plot in The Moonstone than Austen in Sense and Sensibility, where the situation is in fact arbitrary. So fundamental an idea could not be eliminated by any rewriting, but there are signs that Austen was not satisfied with it. The dragon of Pride and Prejudice, the fire-breathing Lady Catherine de Bourgh, has no power over Mr. Darcy's income. Nor in the other novels that she published or left in a publishable state did Austen use the disinheritance theme. It was only when she was into her forties and dying of Addison's disease that she created another dragon armed with money power. She began in January 1817 and died in July leaving only the beginnings of a novel, but the disposition of Lady Denham's money is obviously to be a major theme of Sanditon.⁷ This time everything is accounted for. The rich Miss Brereton married firstly the rich and elderly Mr. Hollis who left her everything; her second marriage gave her nothing but the title of Lady Denham, but she gave nothing in return. Everything remained and remains in her own power, and the Breretons, the Hollises and the Denhams all live in hope.

For Sense and Sensibility it can be pleaded in mitigation that it is early work. Austen was nearly thirty-six when she published it in November 1811, but

it had been long in preparation. Cassandra Austen's note on her sister's novels⁸ gives First Impressions, later retitled Pride and Prejudice, begun October 1796 and finished August 1797, and Sense and Sensibility begun November 1797 but with the same story and characters as an earlier Elinor and Marianne.

There is material in Sense and Sensibility dating from the 1797 writing, notably the duel between Colonel Brandon and Willoughby over Willoughby's seduction of Brandon's ward. This strongly resembles the duel, on Sunday October 1, 1797, between Colonel Robert King and his cousin Colonel Henry Fitzgerald, who had seduced King's young sister Mary. Each fired six shots at the other and missed every time: Brandon and Willoughby likewise are both unwounded. Since King sent a report to The Times, the affair was widely known.⁹ I have argued elsewhere¹⁰ that Austen was too conscientious to use in a novel a duel unessential to the plot without real-life authority.

Elsewhere there is material apparently re-used which may help in dating Elinor and Marianne. In the autumn of the Dashwood's arrival in Devonshire we hear of Colonel Brandon's sister living at Avignon.¹¹ Avignon, papal territory until the French Revolution, was annexed in September 1791 and a massacre of political prisoners followed in October. For an invalid lady, an October at Avignon cannot be later than 1790. The canvassing which Mr. Palmer has recently been doing "against the election" can be for the 1790 general election.¹² Period feeling, too, points in the same direction. Love and Friendship,¹³ dated at the end June 13th 1790, consists of Laura's letters to her friend Marianne. Laura is the farcical version and Marianne Dashwood the realistic version of a recognizable type. Each possesses exquisite sensibility, but besides this they are liberals with revolutionary sympathies, of a type not uncommon around 1790. Marianne's sort of innocent enthusiasm, not overtly political, dates from before the Terror, not from the Post-Robespierre period around 1795.

I cannot accept Southam's dating of Elinor and Marianne to the earlier part of 1796, immediately before First Impressions.¹⁴ The action of the story being in 1790 and 1791, the reasonable date is 1792: I would say probably begun immediately after the History of England,¹⁵ which is dated at the end November 26, 1791. The Ferrars inheritance, then, belongs to a plot which Austen will have devised when she was barely sixteen.

In his advice to readers of the Pall Mall Gazette,¹⁶ the Regency authors that Collins mentions are Scott and Mrs. Inchbald: the latter's A Simple Story is worth seeking out. The praise of Scott is no mere conventional tribute: Collins reiterated it in private.¹⁷ There was no special need to mention Austen: she had been printed and reprinted in Bentley's Standard Novel series since 1833 and even inexperienced readers could be assumed to have heard of her already. His silence should not be taken to imply that Collins had laid Pride and Prejudice aside in despair, along with Clarissa. But are there any signs that he did read and learn from Austen? I think there are.

Collins first stated his artistic creed in 1852 in the dedication to Basil. With his first requirement, a solid foundation of fact, Austen certainly complies. She, however, kept chiefly to the everyday realities, whereas Collins insists that the dramatic and exceptional incidents of life are equally legitimate subjects; and in Basil he certainly accepts, consciously or unconsciously, the invitation in Mansfield Park: "Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery."¹⁸ His literary experiment might perhaps be defined as crossing Austen with Radcliffe: the irruption of the sensational into the domestic.

In The Moonstone, his subject forced Collins to have an older generation of Regency people. The Herncastle family history is merely sketched in, but to get away from Victorian stereotypes he needed a source for what Regency England was actually like. For the landed families, living on medium-sized estates, Austen was and is an important source, and it is hard to see what other Collins could find of equal authority. In particular there is Sir John Verinder, brought up in the Regency period. Since he has to leave everything to his wife, it might well be a comfort to have a realistic writer genuinely of the Regency authorizing the device by using it herself. Anyhow, Sir John is a more convincing leftover from the Regency than Sir Leicester Dedlock--which is not to claim that The Moonstone is a more important novel than Bleak House or Collins greater than Dickens.

What is a fact is that Collins could do some things better than Dickens. Rachel Verinder, as the heroine of a Victorian novel written by a man, is quite outstanding, and she is only one of the many fine female portraits for which Collins is so justly praised.¹⁹ His method, as he explains it, is that he takes several examples of a type that he has observed, keeps these living models in mind and draws on them for his character.²⁰ Yes: but can a writer observe

effectively without some preliminary briefing? Who then, in his early reading sensitized Collins to the feminine? Not Scott: scarcely Inchbald. I am merely conjecturing, but a heavy diet of Austen in boyhood would account for much. The dates do fit: Collins born in 1824, Bentley begins pushing Austen in 1833.

NOTES

¹ Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone (hereafter M.) Everyman Library edition with introduction by Dorothy L. Sayers (London: J. M. Dent & Sons; N.Y.: E. P. Dutton, 1944), p. 244 (Mr. Bruff's Narrative Chapter 1).

² M. p. 8 (Betteredge Chapter 2). She cannot be much more than twenty years younger than her brother John, who was at least twenty-two in 1799 (p. 27 Betteredge Chapter 5); I put her at thirty-five when Rachel was born. Her fortune will be the same as Mrs. Blake's--seven hundred a year (p. 13 Betteredge Chapter 3).

³ M. p. 247 (Bruff Chapter 1).

⁴ M. pp. 308-309 (Blake Chapter 6).

⁵ Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (SS.), ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford & N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 3rd ed., 1933, reprint 1986), p. 15 (Vol. I, Chapter 3).

⁶ SS p. 374 (Vol. III, Chapter 14; Chapter 50 in consecutively numbered editions).

⁷ Jane Austen, Minor Works (MW.), ed. R. W. Chapman (OUP, 1954), pp. 375-376.

⁸ Illustrated in MW. facing p. 242; text in B. C. Southam, Jane Austen's Literary Manuscripts (OUP, 1964), p. 53.

⁹ SS. p. 211 (Vol. II, Chapter 9; Chapter 31); Jack Smith-Hughes, Six Ventures in Villainy (London: Cassell, 1955), pp. 194-196.

¹⁰ "Jane Austen and the State of the Nation," Jane Austen Society Report, 1975, pp. 15-16.

¹¹ SS. p. 63 (Vol. I, Chapter 13).

¹² SS. p. 113 (Vol. I, Chapter 20).

¹³ MW. pp. 76-109; Austen was fourteen (born 16 December 1775).

¹⁴ Southam, pp. 46, 58.

¹⁵ MW. pp. 139-150. The unfinished stories Lesley Castle (pp. 110-139) and Catherine (pp. 192-240) I would assign to 1791: the 1792 dates appended will be dates when Austen copied out works definitely abandoned not to be continued.

¹⁶ "Books Necessary for a Liberal Education," February 11, 1886; reprinted in Wilkie Collins Society Journal, 5 (1985), 23-26.

¹⁷ Sotheby & Co. Catalogue of Sale 29/30, October 1962, No. 198. Extract from Letter to J. A. Stewart January 9, 1888.

¹⁸ Ed. R. W. Chapman (OUP, 3rd ed., 1934, reprint 1986), p. 461 (Vol. III, Chapter 17; Chapter 48).

¹⁹ E.g. by Sayers in Introduction M., pp. viii-ix.

²⁰ Sotheby ut supra, No. 197. Extract from Letter to Nugent Robinson August 28, 1860, with reference to Marian Halcombe.

A Daily Dozen: Twelve Englishmen of Mystery

Robert Ashley

Wilkie Collins is the lead-off man in a series of essays on British mystery writers from the nineteenth century to the present day, published by the Bowling Green University Popular Press and edited by Earl F. Bargainnier.¹ Until his death early in January of 1987, Bargainnier was Callaway Professor of English at Wesleyan College of Macon, Georgia. A well-known writer on detective fiction, he has also edited Ten Women of Mystery and co-edited Cops and Constables: American and British Fictional Policemen. The author of the piece on Collins is Jeanne F. Bedell of Virginia Commonwealth University, whose special interests include nineteenth-century sensation fiction as well as twentieth-century mystery and espionage.

Ms. Bedell belongs to the "Collins is a serious writer" school. This school has enrolled many distinguished scholars, including Collins himself, but it is one which I have always been a bit reluctant to join. Perhaps, like Shakespeare's "man who hath no music in himself," I am not to be trusted, since I consider Dorothy Sayers a snob and P. D. James a bore. The latter thinks she's the Jane Austen of the late twentieth century; when a mystery writer begins to think like that, give me Agatha Christie.

However, Bedell makes a pretty convincing case. In her view, Collins's "attention to important social issues; his careful and accurate descriptions of middle-class mores and values; his spirited and loving portrayals of independent women" (11); his refusal to accept "the indirect censorship of circulating libraries like Mudie's and Smith's, which he called 'twin tyrants of literature'" and to recognize "'young people as the ultimate court of appeal in English literature'" make him far more than "a 'good constructor,' a puzzle-maker, and an 'architect' of plots" (11, 12). Bedell admits that Collins can, in his lesser works, lapse into the worst kind of melodrama and sacrifice both characterization and credibility to the demands of suspense and plot. But she maintains that "at his best, seemingly melodramatic scenes or techniques are charged with psychological or social significance" (15). As keystones of her argument she cites a scene each from Collins's two best novels. In The Moonstone, the shivering sands represent both "a stunning use of foreshadowing" and "a metaphorical parallel to life at the Verinder estate after the

disappearance of the Indian diamond has disrupted its placid serenity" (15). In The Woman in White, the famous scene where Laura Fairlie stands beside her own grave, "her physical and mental health shattered, her fortune lost, and her identity destroyed" is "symbolically . . . one of the most powerful scenes in sensation fiction . . . that challenged Victorian attitudes about women and revealed their discontent with the limited sphere to which they were confined" (15-16). Bedell's summation is that Collins at his peak "wrote original, exciting, suspenseful novels which offered richly detailed pictures of Victorian life and subversive, challenging criticism of Victorian society" (29).

Where does this leave us? It probably leaves us in a position where we can have our cake and eat it too. Certainly, Collins is most successful when he is least insistently and obtrusively "serious," as in The Woman in White and The Moonstone. Most readers enjoy these novels for their incredibly ingenious and suspenseful plots; for their marvellous dramatic scenes and incidents like Hartright's midnight encounter with Anne Catherick, Laura's standing by her own grave, and Franklin Blake's drug-induced re-enactment of his own theft of the diamond; the marvellous originals like Count Fosco and Marian Halcombe and the amusing caricatures like Gabriel Betteredge and Frederick Fairlie. These readers really don't care that the two masterpieces also offer social commentary on the plight of Victorian women (married or unmarried), the abuse of lunatic asylums, the power of money in the courts, religious hypocrisy, British imperialism and racism. But these "extras" do exist, and they help raise Collins's finest work above the usual level of thrillers and whodunits. Does this make Collins a serious novelist who is also thrilling or a thrilling novelist who is also serious? Perhaps it doesn't make any difference, but for me he is the latter.

Bargainnier's other Englishmen of mystery, together with their sleuths and a representative novel, are 1) A. E. W. Mason, who imitated Poe in creating a French detective, Inspector Hanaud of the Paris Surete, and then saddling him with a colorless narrator, a device which only Conan Doyle and Rex Stout employed with conspicuous success (At the Villa Rose, 1910). 2) G. K. Chesterton, father of Father Brown, the most famous of the priestly sleuths (The Innocence of Father Brown, 1911). 3) H. C. Bailey, creator of Reggie Fortune, a medical consultant to Scotland Yard, once tremendously popular but now largely forgotten, who appears only in short stories (Call Mr. Fortune, 1920), and of Joshua Clunk, a shyster lawyer as unattractive

as his name (Garstons, 1930). 4) Anthony Berkeley Cox, one of the most original of mystery writers: As Anthony Berkeley, he invented Roger Sheringham, an amateur detective almost as obnoxious as Clunk and considerably more fallible (The Poisoned Chocolates Case, 1929, the classic multiple solution mystery in which Sheringham's solution is not the correct one); as Francis Iles, he popularized the inverted detective story, in which the interest lies not in the solving of a mystery but in watching the evolution of a crime and examining the mind of the criminal (Before the Fact, 1932). 5) Nicholas Blake, pseudonym of poet laureate C. Day Lewis, whose Nigel Strangeways, an amateur, shared many of his creator's personal traits and thus imparted a polished literary sheen to such whodunits as The Beast Must Die, 1938. 6) Michael Gilbert, lawyer, author of all kinds of crime fiction, and creator of all kinds of detectives, amateur and professional; now in his seventies, he is still going strong and proud to be categorized as an "entertainer" (Smallbone Deceased, 1950). 7) Julian Symons, a man of many talents: poet, critic (both literary and social), anthologist, biographer (Carlyle, Dickens, and Poe), author of Bloody Murder (a history of crime fiction sometimes entitled Mortal Consequences), and current president of Britain's Detection Club; like Gilbert he has a wide range, doesn't mind being called an entertainer, and is still going strong in his seventies (The Color of Murder, 1957). 8) Dick Francis, an ex-steeplechase champion, who makes frequent use of his horse-riding background; unlike most crime writers, he does not rely on a series sleuth, and unlike most Britishers, he favors the hard-boiled school; immensely popular, he is not, for reasons I don't quite understand, my cup of tea (Odds Against, 1965). 9) Edmund Crispin, pseudonym for Robert Bruce Montgomery, composer of both serious music and film scores and unabashed practitioner of old-fashioned Golden-Age mysteries; his detective is Gervase Fen, an Oxford don whom I find as precious as his name (The Moving Toyshop, 1946). 10) H. R. F. Keating, a prolific writer on crime literature and creator of Inspector Ghote of the Bombay C.I.D.; Keating is widely praised as a kind of minor-league E. M. Forster in interpreting the culture of India, although he had never been there until ten years after writing his first Ghote novel (The Perfect Murder, 1965--the title refers not to the perfection of the crime, but to the name of the corpse, which I don't find terribly clever. 11) Simon Brett, undergraduate president of the Oxford Dramatic Society and award-winning producer of radio and television shows, another mystery writer who doesn't mind being called an entertainer, but also a clever satirist, both of the stage as an entity and as a microcosm of British

society; his sleuth is Charles Paris, a not very successful alcoholic actor (Cast in Order of Disappearance, 1975).

The choice of authors to include in a critical series is always arbitrary. Bargainnier himself regrets omitting Freeman Wills Croft, Arthur Upfield, Andrew Garve, Cyril Hare, Henry Wade, Colin Watson, Peter Dickinson, and Peter Lovesey (2); he also admits that his selection reflects his personal preference "for the 'traditional' British mystery, whether one calls it Golden Age, puzzle, or whodunit" (2). Only such a bias justifies the selection of Crispin, who added nothing to the genre, but merely followed the well-worn trails blazed by his predecessors. Two genuine innovators, Crofts and R. Austin Freeman, would have added variety and rounded out the list: Crofts popularized the British police procedural; Freeman created the most famous scientific sleuth (Dr. Thorndyke) and also anticipated Francis Iles in developing the inverted crime story. The omission of Doyle is, of course, understandable.

Nonetheless, this is a book to be savored by all whodunit fans. The individual essays are uniformly high in quality, if not always absorbing. Perhaps most importantly, they often provide the most extensive treatments available of the authors selected.

NOTE

¹ Earl F. Bargainnier, ed. Twelve Englishmen of Mystery (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1984).

Collins, Wilkie. No Name, ed. Virginia Blain. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986. (World's Classics.)

Nick Rance

The publication of the World's Classics No Name, edited by Virginia Blain, a past contributor to this journal, is a gratifying event, not only in itself, but in helping to break the vicious circle whereby with much of the fiction out of print, publishers will be apt to regard critical works on Collins as poor commercial risks, and if there is a lack of visible critical interest, so much the less reason for reissuing the novels. While Dover Publications has led the way in reissuing several of the lesser known works, a difficulty for those keen to install the fiction of Collins beyond The Woman in White and The Moonstone on teaching syllabuses has been that Dover books must appear nowadays as comfortably beyond the averagely impoverished student's pocket.

This edition of No Name has further claims on our regard, since it will now be the standard edition which scholars read and to which they refer. The text, in the words of the editor, "is a photographic reproduction of the 1864 one-volume reprint of the three-volume edition of 1862." The reviewer is no bibliographer: the advantages of the 1864 text, however, as the editor explains them, are that while an abundance of printer's errors were corrected from the three-volume edition, hardly any were introduced. The method of this edition is then to elucidate such remaining errors in the "explanatory notes," which also contain intriguing information about changes between the serial version in All the Year Round and the three-volume edition and about such matters as the identity of the Joyce of "Joyce's Scientific Dialogues" and the extent to which Captain Wragge was indeed indebted to him. The Dover edition of No Name, it may be noted, is a republication of the Harpers American edition of 1873, which, as compared with the 1864 text, remarks Virginia Blain, "not only introduced a much larger proportion of substantive errors, but also repunctuated, often with considerable insensitivity." It may be said in favour of the Dover edition that one would recommend this rather than the World's Classics edition to anyone particularly myopic. On the other hand, until more expansive times, when as near as possible to a definitive text can be published, which does not need to be adjusted occasionally in "explanatory notes," the World's Classics edition will be the one to read if we

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want No Name by Collins rather than No name by Collins and assorted printers.

Virginia Blain has written a stimulating introduction. She is rightly dismissive about the insistence of so many contemporary reviewers that the elaborately plotted novel was precluded from being a novel of "character": as E. S. Dallas bravely argued at the time, what may be implied by the "novel of plot" is a different conception of "character," one which is acted upon and shaped by social forces, rather than being abundantly possessed of free will. Blain also has suggestive comments on the undermining of mid-Victorian moral stereotypes which is so much a feature of Collins's fiction of the 1860's. She remarks about the subversive presentation of "good" and "bad" female characters, so that the "good" may be seen as merely passive and the "bad" as admirably rebellious, that "Such a deconstructed opposition between 'good' and 'bad' behaviour adds a dimension of subtlety to the text belied by the conventional binary oppositions of melodrama."

No Name's preoccupation with the inadequacies of moralism may be stressed further. Blain comments on the play made by Collins "with suggested or shadow parallels which are effective in their very understatement" between apparently unlike characters, and instances Frank Clare and Noel Vanstone. Such parallels signal that version of "character" which Dallas would claim as typically emanating from the "novel of plot." Clare and Vanstone may thus alike be read as products of a period of crisis of belief in the hitherto dominant bourgeois creed of self-help which Collins in this novel, as in The Woman in White and Armada, and modern historians of the Victorian era have tended to concur, precisely locates in the late 1840's. Noel Vanstone remarks: "Lecount, there, takes a high moral point of view--don't you, Lecount? I do nothing of the sort. I have lived too long in the continental atmosphere to trouble myself about moral points of view."¹ The question is posed of Frank: "Was it Frank's fault if he had not got the stuff in him that engineers were made of?"² Like No Name, Samuel Smiles's Lives of the Engineers was published in 1862: The Life of George Stephenson had appeared in 1857. Both characters signify, in the face of the moralists, the decreasing opportunities in mid-Victorian England of linking material well-being with any conceivable merit. At a time when in Britain and the United States alike there is an attempt to resuscitate "Victorian values" ("the first time as tragedy, the second as farce," wrote Marx in a different context), the anatomizing in Collins's fiction of the earlier career

of the notion of self-help should be a modern selling-point as well as its feminism.

It is a pity that the rendering in the introduction of the name of "Falkland" should be inconsistent and wrong both times, and that "Lecomte" is another casualty. On the other hand, the handsome cover illustration of York circa 1840 is decidedly a plus of this edition.

NOTES

¹ No Name, 1986, p. 209.

² Ibid., pp. 26-27.

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The important Victorianist R. C. Terry has arranged a convention to mark the one-hundredth anniversary of Wilkie Collins's death. The Department of English of the University of Victoria will sponsor the gathering from September 29 to October 1, 1989. Scheduled speakers already include Michael Booth, Fred Kaplan, Christopher Kent, Sue Lonoff, Catherine Peters, and John Sutherland. For further information, please write to:

Nelson Smith, Secretary
Wilkie Collins Centennial Conference
Department of English
University of Victoria
P.O. Box 1700
Victoria, British Columbia
CANADA V8W 2Y2

Professor Terry has arranged what will be a marvelous event that will be exciting for us all.

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The Wilkie Collins Society is dedicated to serving the study of Wilkie Collins and related subjects. Dues are \$10.00 per year, USA, and £7.00 per year, UK. Memberships begin on January 1st and end on December 31st each year. New members are requested to specify whether they wish their memberships to be current or to be applied to the following year.

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A Search for a Form: Wilkie Collins's Early Fiction
Steve John Farmer

I

Wilkie Collins possessed a voracious appetite for controversy and a keen ability to create it among the literary circles of mid-nineteenth-century London. But until recently, Collins scholars searching for evidence of this tendency on Collins's part to fly in the face of convention have been content to note in some general fashion the rather overt sexuality that runs through several of his novels; or they call attention either to Collins's somewhat bohemian style of life or to the often provoking prefaces that he usually attached to the volume editions of his works. Of late, critics have begun to find that important evidence of Collins's impatience with convention lies in the pages of his major fiction, particularly *The Woman in White* (1859-60) and *The Moonstone* (1868). In *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers*, Sue Lonoff suggests that Collins's fiction reveals a "covert rebellion against popular opinion." She goes on to claim that this rebelliousness, "bound by convention" (16), creates in Collins's successful novels a complex and inconsistent attitude toward convention that is, ultimately, thematically crucial. U. C. Knoepfelmacher's "The Counterworld of Victorian Fiction and *The Woman in White*" posits an ambivalence on Collins's part toward convention, suggesting, in fact, that *The Woman in White*, one of Collins's two greatest novels, reveals its creator's interest in "an anarchic and asocial counterworld," a world that offered an appealing "alternative to the ordered, civilized world of conventional beliefs" (353). J. I. M. Stewart states forthrightly that Collins "lived . . . outside the ring-fence of Victorian convention" (9), that he "was a rebel—essentially aloof from popular feeling, and heartily hating and despising many of the central assumptions of Victorian society" (21). And William Marshall, in his *Wilkie Collins*, also suggests that Collins's works contain an ambivalence on the part of the author toward social normality. Marshall writes:

Despite the fact that nearly all the narratives conclude with the triumphant happiness of the virtuous, the line between good and evil in the world of Collins's novels is neither firm nor straight. . . . Whatever good may be (and for the most part, Collins does not make clear what

qualities it possesses), evil in the world of Collins' novels is far from absolute—it is a condition brought forth by time and circumstance, and it is occasionally mixed even with good. (122)

All these studies fail to consider the importance of the roots of Collins's disenchantment. Lonoff concludes with a detailed examination of how *The Moonstone* "questions a number of Victorian assumptions" (98). Knoepfelmacher explores only Collins's disenchantment as it reveals itself in *The Woman in White*. And Marshall, unwilling to specify particular works, claims simply that Collins never consistently "repudiated the shams of the Victorian middle class, for which . . . he revealed such contempt" and that he "might have left a greater number of works marked by intellectual integrity" had he been consistent (25).

Surprisingly, the roots of the disenchantment are exposed not so much in the four novels of Collins's decade of apprenticeship—*Antonina* (1850), *Basil* (1852), *Hide and Seek* (1854), and *The Dead Secret* (1857)—as among the nearly one hundred short nonfictional reviews and articles written by Collins for the *Leader*, *Household Words*, and *All the Year Round* between 1851 and 1863. Collins's nonfictional contributions to mid-Victorian weekly magazines—part of his literary background that has lain virtually unnoticed since being overshadowed by the successes of the 1860s—reveal, to a greater extent than his early fiction does, Collins seeking to become comfortable with the style of writing demanded by his mentors, attempting to instruct his audience, and ultimately becoming disenchanted with the entire process. My argument is that the beginnings of Collins's dissatisfaction with both social and literary convention—a disenchantment that Knoepfelmacher sees in *The Woman in White*, that Lonoff claims exists in *The Moonstone*, and that also can be found to exist in the other novels of Collins's period of achievement—appear in the usually neglected periodical writing of the 1850s, a type of writing that absorbed Collins for the greater part of this crucial decade and that can be seen to have played a much larger role than is realized by most in the shaping of Collins, his career as a writer, and his aesthetic principles.

But the apprentice fiction does have a place in a study that ultimately will focus on Collins's nonfiction and its influence on Collins's major fiction, for it reveals, contrary to what most previous observers have argued, that Collins's approach to the art of novel-writing was initially haphazard and patternless enough to suggest that one might have to look away from the fiction and toward the nonfiction for evidence of a developing disenchantment on the author's part. So, before an exploration of the evidence in Collins's

nonfiction for the development of aesthetic principles that would appear in his successful fiction of the 1860s should come a picture of Collins as a writer of fiction in the 1850s. Such a view will help to explain the atmosphere that contributed to the frustration that appears in his major fiction and also show that the apprentice novels, and other, shorter, pieces of fiction, were not so much stepping stones to success as they were a young novelist's several distinct attempts at finding a successful formula for writing fiction. Thus, I will first outline the direction Collins scholarship has taken lately to show how most critics of Collins's apprentice works have searched for a pattern of development throughout the early fiction. Then, beginning with a discussion of Victorian preface-writing in general and Collins's preface-writing in particular, and moving on to a different view of Collins's apprentice fiction, I will argue that his apprenticeship, at least as far as his fiction is concerned, reveals no evidence that his disenchantment with convention was apparent in his early experiments with different types of fiction.

II

Most students of Wilkie Collins routinely divide his career as a writer into three distinct periods: the 1850s, his period of apprenticeship; the 1860s, his period of success; and the 1870s and 1880s, his period of decline.¹ But for over a century they have been compelled to operate within the even stricter limitations created by the incredible popular success of Collins's two masterpieces, *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. Because of the popularity of these two works, and because of the history of their composition and publication, most readers have studied Collins either as a figure instrumental in the development and growth of detective, mystery, and sensation fiction, or as a privileged and perhaps influential friend of Dickens, for whose weekly magazines and under whose tutelage the works were written. Rarely do Collins studies venture beyond these two works or the limits imposed by them, and bibliographical projects treating Collins bear out this point. Kirk Beetz, in his *Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1889-1976*, offers evidence of the novels' popularity by listing a staggering sixty-plus editions each of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone* that have appeared since Collins's death (36-49), and Robert Ashley, in *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research*, attests to the narrow boundaries of Collins scholarship by dividing most of the existing criticism into two distinct categories: Dickens/Collins influence studies, and examinations of Collins's role in early detective, mystery, sensation, and crime fiction (225-26).

Interest in the literary importance of most of Collins's other two dozen novels, novelettes, short story collections, and nonfiction

articles has always been quite limited; and the reason is apparent. Most of Collins's other works have, until the last decade, lain unread since 1900, when P. F. Collier published a thirty-volume—though incomplete—set of the works. As late as 1980, Andrew Gasson, in his "Wilkie Collins: A Collector's and Bibliographer's Challenge," wrote, "For most of Collins's titles, even the relatively modest target of a reading copy will be achieved only after considerable effort" (59-60). Collins himself seemed to anticipate the direction critical evaluation of his novels would take, for he gave instructions that the inscription on his gravestone in Kensal Green cemetery should read "In Memory of Wilkie Collins, Author of *The Woman in White* and Other Works of Fiction."²

Studies that do treat more than Collins's two major works are usually devoted primarily to the relationships that exist between the novels of one period of Collins's career and the novels of another. More often than not their focus is on the role played by the apprentice fiction in the development of a writer ultimately capable of creating such respected and successful works as *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*; such a defined rise and fall as Collins's seems to have intrigued scholars and often led them to search the period of apprenticeship for early evidence of seeds of success—seeds that would grow to bear fruit in the 1860s. Many of these studies—Kenneth Robinson's and Robert Ashley's early critical biographies of Collins, as well as H. J. W. Milley's and R. V. Andrew's early evaluative probes into Collins's career—offer primarily straightforward comparative examinations of the works of Collins's apprenticeship and the works of his period of success. For the most part, the only discussions of Collins's period of decline are those that either search for a gem among rough stones or try, briefly, to explain away altogether Collins's last several literary disappointments. Aside from the two major works, then, critics most often attend to the novels of Collins's apprenticeship, and, as will be noted, most students of these novels want to use them primarily to suggest a straightforward and teleological development from apprenticeship to achievement.

III

Most who examine the four early Collins novels have not viewed these novels as Collins's attempts to establish a form but rather as works which hindsight allows them to compare with *The Woman in White* and later popular successes; their eagerness to find in Collins's apprenticeship an uninterrupted progression from 1850 to 1860 blinds them to some of the real motives behind Collins's early experiments in fiction. As they explore the early works for patterns, they usually try also to rank the four apprentice novels, hoping to show, for example,

that *Antonina* least resembles *The Woman in White*, that *Basil* shows slight improvement, that *Hide and Seek* shows a marked advance, and that *The Dead Secret* represents the last plateau before greatness. Some of the following comments reveal this understandable but misleading tendency to set these early pieces up against Collins's major works.

Antonina, Collins's first novel, is a rather transparent imitation of a Bulwer Lytton historical romance that, as Kenneth Robinson notes, "bears little resemblance to anything else [Collins] wrote and is today almost unreadable" (54). Still, for those concerned primarily with finding some connection between Collins's early and later novels, *Antonina* certainly offers some interesting material. Robert Ashley suggests the following:

Although it would have been impossible to foretell from *Antonina* Collins's future brilliance, nevertheless the familiar Collins trademarks are visible: the well-conceived . . . plot, the device of character contrast, the creation of atmosphere, the descriptive skill, the social criticism . . . the typical character types . . . the favorite themes and motifs. . . . (28).

Among N. P. Davis's disparaging remarks about *Antonina* is this: "For his theme he had the audacity to choose no less an event than the fall of the Roman Empire. It was a subject that his education had left him singularly ill-prepared to treat" (43). But Davis, too, claims that patterns found in the novel are patterns that would be "used again and again until . . . his creative imagination finally left the ground and he produced mature works" (43). Here Davis must be referring to certain types of character or incident which we see for the first time in *Antonina* but which would become trademarks of Collins's later fiction. For instance, the crudely drawn and beastly Giosvintha, the villainess in Collins's first novel, is also the prototypical Collins Jezebel, who would reappear, much more carefully drawn, as Lydia Gwilt in *Armada*, as Magdalen Vanstone, to a degree, in *No Name*, and as Madame Fontaine in *Jezebel's Daughter*. Dorothy Sayers's comments about Collins's first novel are similar: "In *Antonina* . . . we have our first glimpse of Wilkie Collins the plot-maker. It is not particularly impressive and suggests no great originality, but . . . we may notice a certain economy of incident and care . . . characteristic of the mature Collins" (68). William Marshall calls the novel "undistinguished" but recognizes its complex plot, a characteristic of all of Collins's great works (30). Walter de la Mare writes, "A touch here and there in this almost unreadable romance may hint at the author of *The Woman in White*, but only a critical seer could have foretold the later novels after reading *Antonina*" (54). From these comments might come the

impression that Collins was searching for *The Woman in White* in 1850, not that he was interested in finding a type of fiction with which he could be comfortable.

Of Collins's next novel, these critics and biographers have similar points to make. Keeping with the theme of progress toward the successes of the 1860s, Ashley writes of *Basil*, "In his second novel . . . Collins took a tremendous stride from *Antonina* in the direction of his best and most characteristic work" (32). More specifically, Ashley comments on the use of multiple narrative in *Basil*, a technique which would, when perfected and elaborately used in novels of the sixties, contribute to Collins's success (35). Robinson's comments concerning *Basil* are similar: "In many respects *Basil* marks a great advance, particularly in the creation of atmosphere and the description of scene" (71). Sayers echoes these sentiments: "*Basil* is a young man's book, crammed with errors and crudities, but it is a book that no one, looking for promise of future excellence, could disregard" (87). She goes on to suggest that "it marks a steady progress toward achievement in the direction of plot and character construction . . ." (92). And R. V. Andrew is rather straightforward in his evaluation of the work as a link in the chain that would be complete upon the publication of *The Woman in White*. He writes, "The plot is simple and straightforward, and Collins still has to write several novels before he is equipped to tackle *The Woman in White*" (37). These comments all reveal that the major critical interest in Collins's second novel is for some the economical plotting and the first appearance of the multiple narrative with which Collins was to accomplish so much in his two greatest works. Others focus on the character types—the master criminal, Mannion, or the prosaic but industrious hero, for instance—who would reappear in the successes of the sixties. And in that regard, the comments all suggest that *Basil* is only valuable when it can be made—forced, in some instances—to shine light on the novels of the sixties; they fail to show that the novel might shine light on Collins and the motivation behind his hit-and-miss search throughout the fifties for a type of fiction that would suit him.

Evaluations of *Hide and Seek* also lean toward discussions of the novel as a link in the chain connecting Collins's early efforts to *The Woman in White*, and not as a work which stands by itself as an attempt by a young writer to find himself. R. V. Andrew is probably the most overt in his view of the novel as a piece to be judged primarily by the merits of the successes of the sixties. He calls the book "Collins's best attempt yet at a mystery" and writes of the first years of Collins's apprenticeship, "Collins's progress has been steady. Item by item he equips himself for the *tour de force* on which his fame is to rest" (47-49). H. J. W. Milley, whose dissertation, "The Achievement of Wilkie

Collins and His Influence on Dickens and Trollope," documents five major themes and three major character-types with which Collins experimented in his apprentice fiction and which contributed to the success of the novels of the 1860s, suggests that *Hide and Seek* is an "advance" from the first two novels only in that it contains threads of themes that would play major roles in the novels of what he calls Collins's "period of achievement."³ And Swinburne also suggests that Collins's early novel is in some way dependent on the later, more successful ones when he writes, "nor would *Hide and Seek*, though a most ingenious and amusing story, have had much chances of a life as long as it deserves if it had been the best that its teller had to tell" (Hyder 210). So, it is apparent that most important to the critics of *Hide and Seek* is that in it the element of mystery which illuminates Collins's most popular works appears for the first time. As the woodsman Matthew Marksman unravels the mystery of Mary Grice's identity through the last half of the novel, most choose to see only the elements of mystery and detection—Milley calls it the "hide and seek" theme (9)—employed in much the same way it would be through most of Collins's successful works of the sixties.

The Dead Secret, Collins's final apprentice novel, labors under the same burden as the earlier novels: most critics steadfastly refuse to separate it entirely from the novels—*The Woman in White* in particular—which would follow it. Ashley, ranking the novels, maintains "*The Dead Secret* is on the whole the best of the early novels. Its significance is twofold: first, in the portrait of Sarah Leeson there is evidence of a profounder note of characterisation, and, second, for the first time Collins had subordinated everything to mystery" (53-54). The idea of mystery is one which Milley also focuses on in his discussion of the novel. He contends that the elements of mystery in *The Dead Secret*, though they were generally treated rather harshly by reviewers for being inconsequential to the plot, were elements observed and treated by Collins with much greater care when he wrote *The Woman in White* less than three years later (120). R. V. Andrew, as he notes scenic descriptions and character types found in *The Dead Secret*, several times suggests that the novel does "present certain features which constitute an improvement in technique," that it "brings Collins nearer his aim," and that much that is present in it "is to become of great importance in *The Woman in White* and subsequent novels" (85-94). And Robinson claims of *The Dead Secret* that it "can best be described as a tentative move in the direction of the sensation novel, that department of fiction of which Wilkie Collins was soon to become the best known exponent" (110-11). Again, then, the elements of mystery and sensation are virtually the only components noticed by the critics of this last novel of Collins's apprenticeship. All strongly imply that Collins was almost consciously working toward a yet-unwritten novel.

Aside from his first four novels, Collins wrote a good deal of other fiction throughout the 1850s. Most of these pieces he wrote for the mid-Victorian family and literary magazines to which he contributed throughout the decade, among them *Bentley's Miscellany*, *Fraser's Magazine*, the *National Magazine*, and, of course, Dickens's *Household Words*.⁴ And several of his favorites he collected and republished in two separate volumes at the middle and toward the end of the decade.⁵ Most of the stories are little read today, and, as with the apprentice novels, even the best known titles are treated by critics, those who attend to them at all, as important only insofar as they might throw light on Collins's methodological progression from apprentice writer of fiction to renowned author of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*. Andrew goes so far as to claim that the short-story writing of the 1850s was helpful to Collins to the extent that "had he continued to develop his skill as a story-teller . . . and had he devoted his energies to this aspect of his art while his powers were still developing and before ill-health claimed him, he might well have written more novels of the quality of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*" (77).

Among the more frequently mentioned stories, primarily because of their length, are *Mr. Wray's Cash Box* and *A Rogue's Life*. The former, a sugary Christmas tale fashioned after Dickens's, was published in one volume by Bentley in December, 1851. Ashley notes both the discouraging and the significant aspects of *Mr. Wray's Cash-Box* when he writes:

The least characteristic and probably the least successful of all Collins's fiction, it was quickly and deservedly forgotten. Yet the novelette has twofold significance in Collins's development as an artist: it indicates that Dickens is replacing Bulwer as his literary inspiration and that he is continuing to turn from the romance of the past to the romance of the present. (31).

Similarly, Marshall notes in this work "of slight intrinsic merit" that,

subjects and techniques which became familiar in Collins' later fiction are apparent here: the lack of action and mobility, the use of dreams, the concern with shock and alternating psychological states, types such as the country squire and the parson, and art used as a symbol of identity. (41)

Both comments reveal a need on the part of the writers to have even minor works fit neatly into the Collins chronology, a chronology that they hope demonstrates Collins's growth as an artist through the 1850s.

A Rogue's Life, a light and rather loosely constructed tale of the adventures of Frank Softly, a warmhearted rascal, was published over a five-week period in *Household Words* in early 1856. In it Knoepfelmacher sees roots of the amorality that were to become apparent in *The Woman in White*. He suggests that Collins's "markedly sympathetic treatment of the villains" (361) in *A Rogue's Life* would become a trademark in his later career, particularly the respected novels of the 1860s. Milley discusses the story only because he sees that the criminal Dr. Dulcifer is a prototypical Count Fosco and that certain aspects of the setting, namely the "lonely, old-fashioned, red brick building, surrounded by high walls,"⁶ (100) prefigure the eerie Blackwater Park of *The Woman in White* and the sinister Sanatorium in *Armada* (Milley 36).

Of the other, shorter, stories of the 1850s, Collins considered the six that he collected and published together under the title *After Dark* in 1856 and the ten he put together in *The Queen of Hearts* in 1859 to be the best. Of course, these stories, since they were Collins's favorites and most of them first appeared in Dickens's *Household Words*,⁷ have commanded more critical commentary than much of the other short apprentice fiction. But, nevertheless, the critics have an eye only for the sixties. In "Gabriel's Marriage" (1853), for example, Marshall, looking toward Collins's period of success, sees "a significant improvement in the control of materials and the penetration of a character's state of mind" (41). In "The Dream Woman" (1855), he sees Collins employing the theme of fatality in a way that is similar to his treatment of the subject in *Armada* ten years later. Milley claims that "A Plot in Private Life" (1858) "is on the road that leads to *The Moonstone*" (7), and Andrew echoes him by seeing in the same story "a pointer to [Collins's] special gifts which were to lead to the writing of *The Moonstone*" (109-10). Milley also suggests that "The Diary of Anne Rodway" (1856) "reveals, when stripped of its sentimentality, a situation which Collins employs in his best work" (18). And Andrew sees in "A Paradoxical Experience" (1858) a story easily dismissed with the exception of a leading character, Fauntleroy, who becomes Fosco in 1860 (119).

Even from these brief comments concerning some of the short stories Collins wrote through the 1850s comes the sense that critics view the first decade of Collins's career without ever losing sight of the works of the sixties; instead of assessing the works of Collins's apprenticeship as individual works in the hope of marking significant differences or similarities, critics too often compare them only to the successful works and, thus, fail to see crucial elements of Collins's apprenticeship in their own light. These attempts at ranking the early fiction fail to consider that the novels and short stories, far from being automatically comparable, and far from displaying only evidence of future talent, represent, primarily, Collins's early experiments with

several quite different types of fiction: an historical romance; a lurid potboiler set in modern London; a novel of detection with strong Dickensian influence; and a novel of mystery, much like those he would write in the sixties. It is a mistake to assume, as many critics obviously do, simply that Collins eventually developed enough to be able to create the novels he wrote in the 1860s. Also to be considered is this: by the time he took up his pen to write *The Woman in White* he had abandoned forms which he believed had failed him, had adopted techniques which had succeeded, and, most importantly, had discovered, not only through his early fiction but through his career as a journalist as well, a genre within which he could comfortably write but with which he had already become rather disenchanted. Another look at some of the early fiction will show this to be the case. First, though, should come a brief look at the Victorian practice of preface writing, for some of Collins's early prefaces supplement the fiction in revealing his experimentation, through the 1850s, with his aesthetic principles.

IV

Anyone who endeavors to examine the tremendous influence of the mid-Victorian novel on the expanding reading class of the day knows how full of vitality, how carefully cultivated, and how precarious the relationship between writers and readers often was. Most writers scrupulously, and with a courtesy difficult to imagine today, responded without hesitation to letters they received from their audiences, often answering quite straightforwardly a stranger's inquiries about their novels, their work habits, or their artistic goals.⁸ They truly valued their readers and must have been pleased by the votes of confidence which the correspondence seemed to be. But the writers must also have felt a certain uneasiness with the lack of distance they kept between themselves and their eager and insistent audience.

Sue Lonoff describes the closeness of the relationship, writing that "while the Victorian novelist regarded his public as a kind of extended family, the Victorian reader conceived of the writer as a friend or acquaintance to whom he could appeal" (10). The metaphors used here are fairly common ones, but they do not reveal the often tentative and sometimes uneasy nature of the relationships. Most of the novelists, though absolutely convinced of the validity and the responsibility of their mission to provide lessons to their readers on how to live, had also to bear in mind that these readers—the general public as well as the professional reviewers of literature⁹—could often make demands that impinged on the artists' beliefs and aesthetic principles. Occasionally, a Victorian author would carefully, and perhaps against

his better judgment, defer to his readers' desires. Even Dickens was persuaded to make the ending of *Great Expectations* "more acceptable through alteration" (Dexter III, 226). And the usually aloof Trollope claims, in his autobiography, to have killed off Mrs. Proudie after overhearing two readers discussing her—and her creator—disparagingly (275).

But the Victorian novelists, though they did usually attempt to accommodate their readers, also often felt a compulsion to prove to themselves and those who read their works that they could stand their ground firmly when the artistic balance of the novels was challenged by the suggestions of outsiders. In some instances, a writer would simply turn a deaf ear to his readers and their comments about his works; Dickens's refusals, despite an uproar from his British and American readers, to spare the lives of Little Nell and Paul Dombey, are two cases in point. More often than not, however, novelists would acknowledge their readers' suggestions or complaints, and answer them pointedly, in prefaces, which became quite popular and almost ubiquitous during the middle decades of the century. Since most novels were serialized, the novelists usually attached their prefaces to the first complete volume-form edition of a work, which almost always preceded by a few weeks or followed closely on the heels of the last serial number.¹⁰ The prefaces were, in essence, a novelist's first chance to address issues he had witnessed being bandied about by readers throughout his work's serial run. For example, Dickens, who once argued with Collins against the use of a prefatory letter addressed to readers "on the ground that a book (of all things) should speak for and explain itself" (Dexter II, 436), used a preface in the first volume edition of *Bleak House* (1853) both to deny, with vehemence, that he had misrepresented the length of certain Chancery cases and to defend the plausibility of Krook's spontaneous combustion. Thackeray used the first volume edition of his *Pendennis* (1850) to complain in a preface that "Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art" (34). He was weary of a society, he wrote, that allowed "no writer of fiction among us . . . to depict to his utmost power a Man" (34). Elizabeth Gaskell included a preface in the first volume edition of her *North and South* (1855) to explain to her readers that she felt serialization had hurt her novel, indeed that she had "found it impossible to develop the story in the manner originally intended and . . . was compelled to hurry on events with an improbable rapidity towards the close."¹¹ And, though her first published novel was not serialized, Charlotte Brontë used a preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* (1847) to defend her novel against "a timorous or carping few" who had questioned the propriety of Jane's relationship with Rochester (35).

Though suspicious of his readers' values, Wilkie Collins nonetheless seems to have thrived in this oxymoronic atmosphere of trustful uncertainty between writer and reader. Arguably the most outspoken and almost certainly the most dedicated preface writer among Victorian novelists—Robinson tells us he was "addicted to preface-writing" (68)—Collins did not often miss an opportunity to begin a volume edition of a work with an examination of some aspect of the writer/reader relationship. His prefaces, usually quite forceful in tone—Lonoff uses the words "belligerent" (29)—took the form of admonitions on some occasions, explanations of textual matters on other. In his preface to *Basil*, for example, Collins angrily takes to task those reviewers who have questioned the propriety of his book:

"Basil" was the second work of fiction which I produced. On its appearance, it was condemned off-hand, by a certain class of readers, as an outrage on their sense of propriety. Conscious of having designed and written my story with the strictest regard to true delicacy, as distinguished from false—I allowed the prurient misinterpretation of certain perfectly innocent passages in this book to assert itself as offensively as it pleased, without troubling myself to protest against an expression of opinion which aroused in me no other feeling than a feeling of contempt. (7-8).

Sometimes his prefaces grew into what have since been recognized as valuable statements of Collins's aesthetic principles.¹² And always, by their very presence, they proclaimed Collins's keen awareness of his readers' presence. As Robinson puts it, Collins, through his prefaces, "is assuring [the reader] of the author's friendly interest in him, an interest which he modestly hopes will be reciprocated" (69). But the prefaces also reveal a young writer quite prepared to change aesthetic directions if the need, or the desire, arose. In other words, Collins's prefaces suggest, in much the same way that his apprentice novels will be shown to do, an initially haphazard approach on his part to the world of fiction.¹³

The prefaces to his early fiction show a young writer serving notice to readers he knew very little about, readers he was to refer to as the "unknown public" in 1858,¹⁴ that he was striving diligently and forthrightly to lay some of the groundwork for what he believed could be a productive career as a novelist. His belief in himself stemmed at least in part from the relatively surprising success—Page terms it "an extraordinary triumph" (6)—of his first novel, *Antonina*. In these prefaces, he admits flaws and asks his audience to understand certain of his idiosyncrasies. He exudes confidence in these pieces, but there is

also a sense that he has yet to feel entirely comfortable with his ability to create important fiction.

For his first, and only historical, novel, *Antonina*, Collins created a preface designed primarily to explain to his readers his beliefs about the necessity of verisimilitude in an historical romance. But he also devoted a good deal of space to an explanation of what he calls the "arithmetical symmetry" of his novel, and throughout this explanation it becomes evident that Collins wished to make clear to his readers exactly what he believed fiction, his in particular, should do for those who read it. In an attempt to explain certain of his artistic motives, he writes:

. . . it was thought that different passages in the story might be most forcibly contrasted one with another, that each scene, while it preserved its separate interest to the mind of the reader, might most clearly appear to be combining to form one complete whole; that, in the painter's phrase, the "effects" might thus be best "massed," and the "lights and shadows" most harmoniously "balanced" and "discriminated." (Barnett 145)

Here we see Collins the conscious artist already much concerned about an artistic principle of balance and juxtaposition that demands the successful creation and combination of imagery. With his next novel, *Basil*, Collins's preliminary remarks suggest that he has become attracted by a different notion of what fiction is:

Believing that the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the family of Fiction; that the one is a drama narrated, as the other is a drama acted; and that all the strong and deep emotion which the Play-writer is privileged to excite, the Novel-writer is privileged to excite also, I have not thought it either politic or necessary, while adhering to realities, to adhere to every-day realities only. In other words, I have not stooped so low as to assure myself of the reader's belief in the probability of my story by never once calling on him for the exercise of his faith. Those extraordinary accidents and events which happen to few men seemed to me to be as legitimate materials for fiction to work with—when there was a good object in using them—as the ordinary accidents and events which may, and do, happen to us all. By appealing to genuine sources of interest *within* the reader's own experience I could certainly gain his attention to begin with; but it would be only by appealing to other sources (as genuine in their

way) *beyond* his own experience that I could hope to fix his interest and excite his suspense, to occupy his deeper feelings, or to stir his nobler thoughts. (5)

Unlike in his preface to *Antonina*, here we can see Collins's interest in drama, an interest that he held in common with Dickens, that led Dickens to make his acquaintance in 1851, and that would always be a huge part of his life and writing.¹⁵ We can also see a shift in interest, away from a concern for imagery and toward one for plot and verisimilitude. Collins had known Dickens for less than a year when he wrote *Basil* and its preface, and, though the novel does not reflect the Dickensian influence that his next novels would, the frank "Dedication" suggests that Collins had been compelled by suggestions from his mentor to think carefully through a philosophy that might guide his career.¹⁶ Yet in his "Preface to the Revised Edition" of *Hide and Seek*, Collins reveals newly discovered interests when he discusses both the importance of "delineation of character" in a work of fiction and the necessity of careful revision:

My project of revisal has . . . been carefully and rigidly executed. I have abridged, and in many cases omitted, several passages in the first edition, which made larger demands upon the reader's patience than I should now think it desirable to venture on if I were writing a new book. (4)

And in the "Preface to *After Dark*" (1856), Collins moves in still another direction by revealing that the idea of a "frame-work" for his collection of six short stories, most of which he had written for *Household Words*, is the structural pattern, the creative technique that is, at the moment, intriguing to him. He writes, "I have taken some pains to string together the various stories contained in this Volume on a single thread of interest, which, so far as I know, has at least the merit of not having been used before" (5). It is clear from this statement that more important to Collins than the individual stories that make up *After Dark* is the fact that he has created and experimented with a new narrative device.

Indeed, then, Collins's early prefaces, as they show the young author constantly and consciously attempting to move forward as a writer of popular fiction, provide clues that Collins was aware of and valued the attention of his readers, who allowed him a forum in which to explain his own creative principles. The prefaces also suggest, though, that with each new work he discovered and experimented with various conventions of fiction. But more valuable than the

prefaces in revealing Collins's early attempts at defining his literary goals are the early novels themselves.

As I have pointed out, several critics have attempted to show that Collins progressed from the weak *Antonina* to the strong *The Dead Secret* in his journey from apprentice novelist to creator of *The Woman in White*; they do not recognize that more important than systematically noting textual similarities between *Antonina* and Collins's major efforts is understanding that, after *Antonina*, Collins never again attempted to write another novel like his first. Despite the success of *Antonina*—Collins remembered fifteen years after its publication that it “was received by the critical authorities with such a chorus of praise as has never been sung over me since” (Ashley 29)—Collins chose to abandon the historical romance, leave behind the influence of Gibbon and Bulwer Lytton, among others, and forge ahead to different types of fiction. Even praise from such established and respected magazines as the *Athenaeum*, which pronounced the work “a richly-coloured impassioned story” (Page 40), and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, which called the novel a “profound study . . . with deep philosophic views” (Page 43), could not persuade Collins to delve further into what H. F. Chorley calls “antique fiction” (40). *Antonina* had, as Collins noted, “opened to me a career as a novelist” (Ashley 29), and the genre was one with which Collins's “glorious Walter Scott (King, Emperor, President, and God Almighty of novelists)” (Lonoff 5) had been tremendously successful, so to many it is puzzling that Collins abandoned a form that seemed to hold for him a great deal of promise. Avrom Fleishman's rather prosaic solution is a suggestion that most Victorian novelists, perhaps because of the intriguing popularity of the genre, “felt called upon to attempt the historical novel” at least once but almost always abandoned the form after one usually unsatisfactory try (36). Just as feasible a solution is that Collins, whose early prefaces, as we have seen, show him to have been a confident, almost boisterous young writer, and whose confidence had to have been bolstered by the reviewers' praise for his first novel, decided never to return to the form simply because he wanted to explore other types of fiction, types which perhaps would prove more lucrative, types which might present a greater challenge for him. We know today that once he found the type of fiction with which he became comfortable—the sensation/mystery novel—he stayed with it through much of the rest of his career; in the preface to his first post-*The Woman in White* novel, *No Name*, he suggests that he has finally become satisfied with a certain distinct type of fiction: “I am not turning my back in doubt on the ground which I have passed over already” (6). Whatever his reasons for leaving his first success behind, Collins shifted in 1852 to an entirely new form of fiction.

With *Basil*, the story of a young man's ill-fated love for a beautiful young woman and his duel to the death with her seducer, Collins decided to forego the historical novel and create, instead, a melodrama set in modern England. Though critics have noted similarities between this second effort and Collins's later successes, *Basil* marks for Collins less a progression toward the sixties than an experimental shift in position from one form to another. The lurid and, to many Victorian critics, overdrawn scenes of sexual seduction and violence in the pages of *Basil* represent a departure for Collins from the somewhat tamer *Antonina*. Of *Basil*, a reviewer for *Bentley's Miscellany* wrote, "the intense everywhere predominates" (Page 46). *Basil's* dreadful discovery of the infidelities of his wife, Margaret Sherwin, for example, is, for mid-Victorian literature, quite surprisingly suggestive:

I listened; and through the thin partition, I heard voices—*her* voice, and *his* voice. I *heard* and I *knew*—knew my degradation in all its infamy, knew my wrongs in all their nameless horror. (216-17)

And in his initial triumph over Mannion, his wife's seducer, the violence is unsettlingly brutal:

I . . . hurled him, with the whole impetus of the raging strength that was let loose in me, face downwards, on to the stones.

In the mad triumph of that moment, I had already stooped towards him, as he lay, insensible beneath me, to lift him again, and beat out of him, on the granite, not the life only, but the semblance of humanity as well. (222)

The audience to whom he had decided to appeal in *Basil* were the middle-class readers who had remained through the thirties and forties eager for and unintimidated by the burgeoning phenomenon, the Newgate novel. And though the vogue was pretty well finished by 1852, these readers were willing consumers of what Collins dubbed in "The Unknown Public" the "penny-novel-journals" or "pennurths" (*Household Words* 18 August 21, 1858: 218), which contained "a combination of fierce melodrama and meek domestic sentiment" as well as "short dialogues and paragraphs on the French pattern . . ." (219, 220).¹⁷ They were also, to a certain extent, the readers at whom *Household Words*, whose thoroughly middle-class philosophy must have been occupying a great amount of Collins's attention by late 1852, was directed.¹⁸

Just as Dickens recognized that the hardworking English wanted to be able to read primarily for the sake of entertainment,¹⁹ Collins must have believed that more compelling, more realistic, and more approachable entertainment could be lifted from the crowded streets of modern London, where Basil is first struck by Margaret's beauty, and the remote reaches of Cornwall, where the deadly duel between villain and hero concludes, than could be transferred from the dusty pages of history books. Realism was a key to Collins—he made a point of discussing it in several of his novels' prefaces—despite some of the rather ludicrous predicaments into which he places many of his characters in many of his works. In other words, with *Basil* Collins made more than a tentative move toward discovering and securing the lower middle-class audience whose potential would intrigue him throughout the 1850s and who would become his without question by the time *The Woman in White* finished its run in the pages of *Household Words* in August 1860. But the fact that he would set the rest of his novels against a nineteenth-century background and focus on the value of fiction as entertainment does not suggest that Collins settled into a routine after writing *Basil*. His third novel would show that he was still experimenting with fiction in a hit-and-miss fashion.

Hide and Seek is the story of the unraveling of the mystery of the deaf and dumb Mary Grice's true identity by her long-lost brother, Matthew Marksman. It, too, represents less a progress than a shift in form; in it Collins seems still to be looking for and coming to terms with an appropriate form. His first novel had been an historical romance; he left the form behind for sensational melodrama. The third novel suggests another shift, this time away from the lurid strains of *Basil* toward a more straightforward and less florid and impassioned form of writing. Put simply, by his third novel Collins was beginning to calm down as a writer. The calming factor was, to a great extent, Dickens, whose influence must certainly have been becoming a force in Collins's life by 1854. *Hide and Seek* is the first full-length work in which Collins shows the influence of his mentor. Ashley writes of it: "not only in humorous incident and eccentric characterisation, but also in style is the Dickens influence manifest. The style of *Hide and Seek* is lighter, warmer, more flexible, less austere and matter of fact than the previous Collins style. Time after time one can detect evidence of a conscious imitation of Dickens" (37). Norman Page echoes Ashley: "*Hide and Seek* . . . shows the influence of Dickens, to whom it is dedicated; the theme of the child of unknown parentage may well have been owed to the recent example of *Bleak House*" (8). And Andrew calls the novel "Collins's personal *David Copperfield*" (41). In particular, Dickens's influence is apparent in some of the eccentric minor (for the most part) characters who festoon the pages of the novel and whose

descendants would become an appealing aspect of Collins's major fiction. Mr. Jubber, the less-than-honest proprietor of Mr. Jubber's circus, itself influenced by Sleary's traveling circus of *Hard Times*, seems not far removed from, though perhaps a bit more garish than, Mr. Bounderby:

From this doorway there now appeared Mr. Jubber himself, clothed in white trowsers with a gold stripes, and a green jacket with military epaulettes. He had big, bold eyes, a dyed moustache, great fat, flabby cheeks, long hair parted in the middle, a turned down collar with a rose-coloured handkerchief; and was, in every respect, the most atrocious looking stage vagabond, that ever painted a blackguard face. (79)

And the portrait of "Bishop" Vance, a middle-aged manservant who oversees the Rectory at Rubbleford, is truly Dickensian both in terms of attention to detail and tone:

"Bishop" Vance, as the small wits of Rubbleford call him, in allusion to his sleek and solemn appearance, his respectable manner, his clerical cravat, and his speckless black garments, is placing the cake and cowslip wine on the dining-table, with as much formality and precision as if his master expected an archbishop to lunch, instead of a clown's wife and a little child of ten years old. It is quite a sight to see Vance retiring and looking at the general effect of each knife and fork as he lays it down; or solemnly strutting about the room, with a spotless napkin waving gently in his hand; or patronisingly confronting the pretty housemaid at the door, and taking plates and dishes from her with the air of a kitchen Sultan who can never afford to lose his dignity for a moment in the presence of the female slaves. (98)

Hide and Seek, then, is the first full-length work in which is apparent the influence of Collins's relationship with Dickens. *Mr. Wray's Cash-Box*, of course, had revealed Collins's talents as an imitator of Dickens, and some of the other early pieces of short fiction were Dickensian enough in construction to convince Dickens that Collins possessed the talent and organizational skills to collaborate with him on some of his own pieces.²⁰ But not until *Hide and Seek* does the Dickens influence become significant.²¹

His next major work, *The Dead Secret*, was to show not only the influence of his mentor but the influence of the people at whom

Dickens had long aimed much of his philosophy. Collins's fourth apprentice novel, *The Dead Secret*, is important in a number of ways. Though many critics seem to go out of their way to see it as a last plateau of early achievement before the tremendous successes of the 1860s, the novel can also be read as a last distinct experiment with form before *The Woman in White*. Unlike the first three novels, *The Dead Secret* was serialized—in *Household Words*. Collins, who had been a paid member of the *Household Words* staff since 1856, and a contributor of articles and short fiction since 1852, must have congratulated himself on the decision—probably his or Dickens's—to serialize, for, with his penchant for suspense, serialization was soon to make him his fortune. That he manages to maintain for hundreds of pages his readers' interest in a secret that, as Robinson claims, "does not remain for long a secret" (111) is a tribute to the practice of serialization, which gave Collins his first opportunity to hone narrative skills that are the foundation of his famous "make 'em laugh, make 'em cry, make 'em wait" formula. That the novel was one of only three ever serialized in *Household Words*²² also suggests that Dickens—always less than adventurous when it came to entrusting his readership to the pens of others—had become satisfied with Collins's progress. *The Dead Secret* also represents the first time Collins revealed a real interest in extended characterization—a facet of his fiction about which he was quite sensitive. The attention to detail that he shows in his portrait of the confused and feeble-minded Sarah Leeson, as well as in his eccentric and misanthropic hermit, Andrew Treverton—character types hitherto used only to supply works with minor comic elements—reveals in Collins a new interest in three-dimensional detailed characterization.

The element of sophisticated and developed sensation and detective fiction also make their first appearance in *The Dead Secret*. The pair of heroes, Rosamond Treverton/Frankland and her blind husband, Leonard, together play the role of detective and spend much of the book slowly but inexorably closing in on the terrible secret—Rosamond's illegitimacy—hidden, in the form of a confessional letter, in one of the abandoned rooms of Porthgenna Towers. The extended account of a pair of intelligent yet rather prosaic heroes, who rely on powers of deduction to solve mysteries, appears for the first time in *The Dead Secret* but would reappear, in polished form, in *The Woman in White*, as the adventures of Marian Halcombe and Walter Hartright. This device would, in fact, appear, in one way or another, in all the novels of the sixties, as well as in many of Collins's less approachable later works; one can speculate that Collins learned early and never forgot that most of his readers could readily warm to an unprofessional, and thus fallible, but human solver of mysteries, one like themselves.

But more significant than Collins's apparent experimentation with various fictional devices he would employ in his major works is that with *The Dead Secret* he had finally found the appropriate vehicle for his fiction. As Marshall notes, "the action [of *The Dead Secret*] conforms to the moral demands that the readers of *Household Words* might make upon it" (37). Marshall is accurately suggesting here that Collins had, after three rather distinct experiments, found his niche, and found also that the constraints placed upon him by this niche—*Household Words* and Dickens's rather middle-class audience—were constraints that influenced his fiction in positive fashion, at least to the extent that he stayed with what he had discovered through four respected novels of the 1860s. No longer would Collins experiment with different forms of fiction; the novels of the sixties would, instead, reflect his mastery of the skills introduced in *The Dead Secret*.

But the major novels of the 1860s would also reflect a new and darker side of Collins and the formula for success that his connection with Dickens and Dickens's first weekly magazine had led him to discover. These novels would begin to reflect, overtly enough for Knoepfelmacher to pronounce Collins "anarchic" and "nihilistic" (368-69), Collins's disenchantment with the stagnant middle-class literary conventions through which he had searched by the 1860s. The question that arises concerns the source of this disenchantment. Certainly the different types of fiction of the 1850s allow for speculation concerning Collins's dissatisfaction; the constant experimentation, the movement from one type of fiction to another, could itself be viewed as evidence of a writer uncomfortable with convention. But, as I have suggested, since there is no ostensible development through Collins's early fiction of this disillusionment, the student of Collins must look for it somewhere else. And the nonfictional fruits of Collins's career as a journalist offer more solid evidence of the roots this alienation. In fact, the growth of his disillusionment, which Collins subsequently expressed, subtly though with some frequency, throughout the major works of the 1860s, can be sensed in many of Collins's nonfictional contributions to certain mid-Victorian weekly magazines. So, before turning to the fiction of the 1860s and an examination of Collins's unconventional attitudes, we must review Collins's career as a journalist, as well as several of his contributions to journalism.

NOTES

¹ Even a glance through the tables of contents of a few biographies of Collins shows how biographers have come to view Collins's career. The last three chapters of Ashley's *Wilkie Collins* are "Journeyman Novelist," "Master Craftsman," and "Novelist Emeritus." Robinson, in his *Wilkie Collins*, devotes a chapter to "Literary Beginnings," four—one each—to the novels of the sixties, and one to Collins's slide "Downhill." William Marshall, in his *Wilkie Collins*, examines "The Early Works," "The Major Novels," and "Uneven Shadows."

² Collins was touchy about *The Woman in White* and its role in his career. In a letter to a publisher of his novel *Man and Wife* concerning the layout of the title page of the work, he comments on the shadow cast over his later works by his first huge success: "... the printing of *The Woman in White* in one type, and of my other, and later novels in another—is establishing comparisons between my books—and depreciating two of them, at the expense of one. Either keep *The Woman in White* . . . by itself, and add 'etc., etc.,' or let *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* have the same honours in type, as *The Woman in White*. I have no preference for either plan—by all means adopt which you like best yourselves. But don't let us encourage the public . . . in its one everlasting cry to me: 'Ah! He may write what he pleases! He will never do anything again like *The Woman in White*' (Coleman 140).

³ According to Milley, the "Dead-Alive" theme, the "Hide and Seek" theme, the theme of fatality, the "Social Outcast" theme, and the "Sinister House" theme all begin to appear in Collins's fiction, short and long, as early as 1850 and eventually become themes central to all of Collins's major novels of 1860s. And the three major character types—the Master Criminal, the "Jezebel Woman," and the Physically or Mentally Infirm Characters—also move often through the early fiction to become mainstays, indeed, often key figures, in the novels of the period of success (2-39).

⁴ Once he met Dickens, Collins was quite a faithful supplier of fiction for *Household Words*. Only four of Collins's earliest stories were published in *Bentley's Miscellany*. They are "A Pictorial Tour of St. George Bosherville" (January 1851), "Twin Sisters" (March 1851), "A Passage in the Life of Perugino Potts" (February 1852), and "Nine O'clock" (August 1852). Only one, "Uncle George or the Family Mystery" (May 1857), was published in the *National Magazine*. Another,

"Brother Griffith's Story of Mad Monkton" (November and December 1855), was published in *Fraser's Magazine*. Two stories, "The Siege of the Black Cottage" (February 1857), and "A Marriage Tragedy" (February 1858), he sent to the American *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, which he would save with his *Armadale* in 1864. The rest, more than a dozen of the stories written in the 1850s, appeared in *Household Words*. His stories average seven thousand words, though some are a bit longer, and at least two—*Mr. Wray's Cash-Box* (1851) and *A Rogue's Life* (1856)—are long enough to be considered novelettes. Not until the 1870s would Collins, as Andrew writes, "palm [less successful stories] off on *The Seaside Library* or other publications of the same type" (109).

⁵ *After Dark* was published in two volumes in February, 1856 and contained six short stories with "Leaves from Leah's Diary" as connecting narrative. *The Queen of Hearts* was published in three volumes in 1859 and contained ten short stories, also with connecting narrative.

⁶ Wilkie Collins, *A Rogue's Life* (New York: P. F. Collier, 1900), p. 100. Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent references to Collins's fiction will be to this edition and will be included in the body of the text.

⁷ Of the fifteen stories collected in *After Dark* and *The Queen of Hearts*, ten were originally published in *Household Words*.

⁸ Collins was one novelist who frequently corresponded with inquisitive readers. His open letter "How I Write my Books" published in the *Globe* in 1887, is a direct response to a reader who had written to ask how he had conceived *The Woman in White*. The letter, as well as others like it, is today considered a valuable reflection of Collins's own thoughts on the writing of fiction.

⁹ Lonoff, using the same distinctions employed by Collins in his aggressive preface to *Armadale*, divides Collins's audience into "readers in Particular" and "Readers in General." Readers in Particular were primarily the reviewers with whom Collins battled for most of his career as a novelist. The Readers in General were the general public.

¹⁰ Whether a novel was published in volume form before or after its completion as a serial depended both on the industriousness of its author and on its popularity. The writer had, of course, to have finished with his product in time to publish it before its serialized conclusion; and the novel's serial run had also to have been interesting

enough to compel readers to forego waiting for the weekly or monthly version to finish its run.

¹¹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. Dorothy Collin (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1979), p. 31. Gaskell's spat with Dickens over the publication of *North and South* in *Household Words* is well known. When the novel began to slow the sales of *Household Words*, Dickens began to insist on holding down the number of pages that appeared each week. Dickens's editorial excisions did not sit well with Gaskell, whose tone in the preface to the book's first volume edition reflects her unhappiness.

¹² Collins's "Letter of Dedication" to *Basil* is often looked to for evidence of the young novelist's developing aesthetic principles.

¹³ On one occasion, though, in his "Preface to the Revised Edition" of *Hide and Seek*, he unabashedly appeals to readers "to compare this novel [*Hide and Seek*]*—especially in reference to the conception and delineation of character—with the two novels ('Antonina' and 'Basil')* which preceded it; and then to decide whether my third attempt in fiction, with all its faults, was, or was not, an advance in Art on my earlier efforts" (5). It seems here as if he is inviting his readers to view his fiction in a teleological way, but Collins might actually be asking them to read his latest work in contrast to the others, to examine it on its own merit.

¹⁴ Wilkie Collins's article "The Unknown Public" was published in *Household Words* on August 21, 1858. In the article he laments the fact that over three million British readers are reading a corrupt, lurid literature.

¹⁵ Through Augustus Egg, Dickens met Collins and invited him to play a role in a production of Bulwer Lytton's comedy *Not So Bad as We Seem* that eventually was performed at Devonshire Terrace in the presence of the Queen on May 16, 1851. Collins and Dickens would perform on stage together many more times over the course of the decade.

¹⁶ Dickens, as he did with many young writers in whose works he recognized promise, wrote to Collins, on December 20, 1852, to express his opinions about *Basil*, as well as his opinions on Collins's skills as a novelist: "I have read the book with very great interest, and with a very through conviction that you have a call to this same art of fiction. I think the probabilities here and there require a little more respect than

you are disposed to show them. . . . But the story contains admirable writing, and many clear evidences of a very delicate discrimination of character" (Dexter II, 435-36). Dickens's opinions suggest that he is counseling his student on the right course to take to make a go of writing as a career.

¹⁷ All subsequent passages taken from *Household Words*, *All the Year Round*, or the *Leader* will be identified within the text by appropriate bibliographical information. The bibliographical information for the quoted articles will also appear in the "Works Cited" section at the end of the study.

¹⁸ Collins would not know his audience as thoroughly as he wanted to until he became firmly established as a journalist, an occupation that paid his bills throughout the 1850s. I discuss the Victorian middle class in greater detail in the second chapter.

¹⁹ Dickens wrote the following to Charles Knight: "The English are, so far as I know, the hardest-working people on whom the sun shines. Be content if, in their wretched intervals of pleasure, they read for amusement and do no worse. They are born at the oar, and they live and die at it. Good God, what would we have of them!" (Dexter II, 548).

²⁰ Most of Collins's collaborations with Dickens took place in the various Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. With the Christmas numbers Dickens would usually develop a theme and farm out to several trusted contributors the various chapters of what would, for the most part, amount to one number and a half—thirty-six pages—of his regular weekly magazine. The pieces were Dickens's to the extent that he always provided at least the introductory chapter of these numbers. In *Household Words* Collins contributed to "The Seven Poor Travellers" in 1854; "The Holly-Tree Inn" in 1855; "The Wreck of the Golden Mary" in 1856; "The Perils of Certain English Prisoners" in 1857; and "A House to Let" in 1858. In *All the Year Round* he contributed to "The Haunted House" in 1859; "A Message from the Sea" in 1860; "Tom Tiddler's Ground" in 1861; and "No Thoroughfare" in 1867. The extent of his actual collaboration with Dickens on these various projects is a much-debated topic. Among the most convincing studies of the authorship of Dickens' Christmas Stories is Deborah Thomas's "Contributors to the Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, 1850-1867," in the *Dickensian* 69 (September 1973): 163-72 and the *Dickensian* 70 (January 1974): 21-29.

²¹ Dickens certainly saw something in Collins that he liked, something that perhaps reminded him of himself in the late thirties. He wrote of *Hide and Seek* to his sister-in-law: "Neither you nor Catherine did justice to Collins's book. I think it far away the cleverest novel I have ever seen written by a new hand. It is in some respects masterly. Valentine Blyth is as original, and as well done, as anything can be. The scene where he shows his pictures is full of an admirable humor. Old Mat is admirably done. In short, I call it a very remarkable book, and have been very much surprised by its great merit" (Dexter II, 570).

²² The two other *Household Words* serial novels were Dickens's own *Hard Times* (1854) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1854).

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Dead Secrets Solved: William Clarke's
*The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*¹
 Robert Ashley

Wilkie Collins' friends all knew that he had achieved the remarkable feat of simultaneously and more or less harmoniously keeping two mistresses. Gossip in Gloucester Place and Wimpole Street, the decision not to allow his burial in Westminster Abbey because of the scandalous nature of his private life, J. G. Millais' lurid tale of Wilkie's rescuing from a poker-brandishing villain a beautiful woman whose "subsequent history is not for these pages,"² Thomas Seccombe's tantalizing reference to "intimacies" in *The Dictionary of National Biography*,³ and Kate Dickens Collins Perugini's skeleton-in-the-closet revelation that Wilkie had a mistress named Caroline, who left him to marry another man⁴ somewhat enlarged the scope of this real-life mystery without coming close to solving it. Facts began to emerge when Clyde K. Hyder published a 1939 article in *PMLA*.⁵ The two mistresses were Caroline Elizabeth Graves and Martha Rudd, who were bequeathed equal shares in Collins' will. Mrs. Graves was frequently listed in London directories at the same address as Collins; she had a daughter, Harriet, who married Wilkie's lawyer, Henry Powell Bartley. Martha Rudd, however, was kept in a "separate establishment"; she bore Collins' three children, all given the name of Dawson. Caroline tended Wilkie's grave until her death in 1895 and was buried beside him; ownership of the grave then passed to Martha. Next, Kenneth Robinson discovered that Caroline had married a Joseph Charles Clow in 1868, but returned to Wilkie two years later as Mrs. George Graves, however, not as Mrs. Joseph Clow. Later, Robinson discovered the identity but not the whereabouts of grandchildren and great-grandchildren.⁶ Otherwise, absolutely no trace remained of the subsequent fate of the Bartleys and the Dawsons. Until the appearance of Clarke's book.

Fortunately for himself and all Collinsians, William Clarke married Faith Elizabeth Dawson, Wilkie's great-granddaughter and the granddaughter of Wilkie's only son. Both Clarkes attended the Wilkie Collins conference organized by Professor Reginald Terry at the University of Victoria in British Columbia on the hundredth anniversary of the novelist's death. On the second evening of the conference, Mrs. Clarke proposed a toast to Collins, except for whom, she remarked, none of the conferees would be present and of course neither would she.

For obvious reasons, the Dawsons had been reluctant over the years to identify themselves. But the time had obviously come to end this secrecy, and the two Clarkes persuaded Wilkie's descendants to do so. Aside from Faith, two grandchildren and a great-grandson were still alive, and they provided Clarke "with memories, photographs and lots of their time."⁷ Two descendants of Caroline Graves were also discovered to be alive. As a result of Clarke's indefatigable efforts, a more or less clear picture began to emerge. Clarke does not attempt literary criticism; in view of all that has been written about Collins recently, there is no need for him to do so. His book is not, he says, "a full, rounded biography covering an assessment of Collins as a writer: rather a simple account of Collins, the man, and the women in his life."⁸ There is a good deal in the biography about the Collins-Dickens relationship, but this review will emphasize the story of the *menage à trois* and of Caroline's descendants, which constitutes Clarke's unique contribution to Collins scholarship. And a fascinating contribution it is.

Clarke is inclined to accept Millais' account of the melodramatic meeting of Wilkie and Caroline, however much Millais may have romanticized it. Caroline was not, as she liked to claim and as Millais also claimed, a gentlewoman in the Victorian sense of the term, nor was her husband an army captain of independent means. She was plain, though not in appearance, Elizabeth Compton, the 1830 daughter of a carpenter, and he was George Robert Graves, an accountant's clerk and (like Dickens) a shorthand writer. They were married in 1850, Elizabeth Harriet was born in 1851, and George died in 1852. Caroline was obviously in a somewhat vulnerable position, an attractive woman in her early twenties saddled with an infant daughter, a tempting target for Millais' poker-brandishing villain or some one like him. According to a paper read at the Victoria conference, Caroline until "rescued" by Wilkie survived by keeping a shop. At any rate, Wilkie and Caroline began sharing the same house, but there is evidence that he had earlier set her up in "a separate establishment." By the time they moved into rooms in Harley Street, Wilkie was listing Caroline in the census returns as his wife and disguising her daughter as Harriet Montague, a sixteen-year-old servant, though she was only ten at the time.

At this point, complication in the person of Martha Rudd reared its not very ugly head during Wilkie's 1864 trip to Norfolk in search of atmosphere for *Armada*. Collins's grandchildren believe they met at a pub or hotel in Yarmouth, where Martha may have worked. Born in 1845, she was the daughter of Mary and James Rudd, a shepherd, thus considerably lower on the social ladder than Caroline—Mary was

illiterate, having signed Martha's birth certificate with a cross. Clarke surmises that Martha's "dark good looks" were "striking enough to catch Wilkie's trained eye."⁹ Photographs in Clarke's book don't substantiate a claim to "dark good looks." But Caroline doesn't appear as a ravishing beauty either, so it may very well be that hideous Victorian clothes and hair styles, to say nothing of the primitive state of nineteenth-century photography, fail to do justice to either woman. Furthermore, temperament more than good looks could have been the source of Martha's appeal; in addition to being several years younger than Caroline, she had a "frank openness" and a "straightforward honesty"¹⁰ in striking contrast to the older woman's occasionally annoying pretensions to gentility. Whatever the reason, Martha lingered sufficiently in Wilkie's consciousness to lure him back to Yarmouth, and by late 1867 or 1868 she had moved to London.

This account of the Rudd-Collins relationship differs from that offered by Laurence Ince in *The Wilkie Collins Society Journal* for 1986. Taking his cue from Seccombe's statement in the DNB that "intimacies formed as a young man led to his being harrassed after he became famous, in a manner which proved to be very prejudicial to his peace of mind"¹¹ and Collins' claim on the first page of the "Letter of Dedication" to *Basil* (1852) that he had "founded the main event out of which this story springs, on fact within my own knowledge," Ince theorizes that Collins first met Martha, daughter of a linendraper (like Margaret Sherwin of the novel) in the early 1850s but did not consummate the relationship because such a liaison would have compromised his still not established career. Ince had discovered that a Thomas Rudd kept a linendraper's show in London, and he states, without citing any authority, that Martha Elizabeth Rudd was born around 1830, making her about the same age as both Margaret Sherwin and Caroline Graves.¹² However, Ince's suppositions clash with Martha's birth certificate as well as the convictions of all her descendants. Since the certificate is dated 1845, Martha could have been at most seven years old when *Basil* was published.

In recreating Caroline's background, Ince also disagrees somewhat with Clarke. Clarke states, "She was apparently christened Elizabeth Compton, and was probably born in 1830 and brought up in Toddington, a small village six or seven miles north-east of Cheltenham"¹³; Ince identifies the date of 1834 and the place as Bath. Actually Clarke admits the possibility of the later date: although some London documents "establish her year of birth as 1830 (or the second half of 1829)," others deduct four or five years from her age."¹⁴ In the absence of either a birth or baptism certificate for Caroline, there is no way of reconciling these discrepancies. The fact that Caroline was christened Elizabeth also creates a problem. Ince theorizes that she

adopted the name Caroline when she went to live with Collins. He goes on to say, "Certainly there appears to have been an attempt to cover up her early life [there is no doubt of this], for her daughter, when she married in 1878, was convinced that she had been born in around [sic] 1854 and not as the certificates testify in 1851."¹⁵ For the transformation of Elizabeth into Caroline Elizabeth, Clarke has no explanation; he merely puts parentheses around Caroline in the family tree.¹⁶

At any rate, Wilkie was now involved in one of the most amazingly complicated domestic arrangements in literary history: Caroline, her mother-in-law, and her daughter in one establishment; Martha and a soon-to-emerge morganatic family in another. As Clarke says, "One can only marvel at his stamina in keeping two women reasonably content, living an intense social life . . . and working remarkably hard at his chosen profession."¹⁷ But the "other woman" situation can hardly have been much to Caroline's liking, and she apparently delivered an ultimatum: either Wilkie would make her an honest woman or she would marry a possibly more financially secure, and certainly a younger, man. However, Ince believes that Collins actually proposed marriage, but was rebuffed. At any rate, on October 29, 1868, Caroline married one Joseph Charles Clow, eleven years her junior, in the presence of Wilkie himself and with one of his closest friends, Dr. Frank Beard, as one of the two witnesses. Early speculation assumed that Clow might have been a craftsman employed during some repairs or alterations on Collins' home. But Clarke, citing the church register, identifies him as the son of Joseph Clow, "a fairly well-to-do distiller in Avenue Road, just across from Regents Park."¹⁸ Ince suggests alternate parentage:

An examination of directories for the late 1860s tells us a slightly different story. Joseph Charles Clow was the son of Leonard Clow, who kept the Western Counties Hotel at the corner of London Street and Whitfield Street. Here Clow operated as an agent for Dublin stout, ale, and whisky [sic].¹⁹

At least, both possible fathers had alcoholic jobs. Whosever son he was, Joseph Charles vanished as suddenly and mysteriously as he emerged; obviously he had been a bad investment for Caroline. Within two years Caroline was back in Wilkie's home, but this time to play a reduced role. Ten years earlier, the census had listed her as Collins' wife; in 1871, she appears as a widow, housekeeper, and domestic servant and as Caroline Graves, not Caroline Clow. Clarke assumes that she was no longer Wilkie's mistress, a role now reserved exclusively for Martha. But she was certainly more than a mere

housekeeper and domestic servant; she was the female head of the house. For years she had been the center of Collins' social life, a life which collapsed around him when she left. This undoubtedly explains why, possibly in addition to some sense of obligation and kindness, Wilkie was willing, perhaps eager, to welcome her back, especially since Martha was ill-fitted to assume Caroline's role. Now life went on as it had earlier. Except for one significant difference.

On July 4, Martha presented Wilkie with a daughter, Marian (named after Marian Halcombe?). This blessed event forced the creation of a non-literary fiction: Wilkie Collins, novelist, became William Dawson, barrister; Martha Rudd, spinster, became Martha Dawson, wife and mother; the three children were Dawsons, not Collinses. Whether Collins ever seriously considered matrimony seems unlikely since he "had grown to despise marriage, and the effect marriage had on his closest friends."²⁰ Though "Martha always insisted to her family that she could have married Wilkie, anytime she wished,"²¹ he never took the step taken by his hero Basil, that is, marry a young woman so far beneath him in the social scale. As it turned out, the Dawsons would have fared much better if he had. For Martha, even a morganatic arrangement with a famous novelist was a pretty good deal for a poor, unsophisticated, uneducated country girl. For Wilkie, he was having his cake and eating it too: entertaining his friends at Gloucester Place without any of the complications of sex and Caroline's pesterings about matrimony and at Bolsover Street (later Taunton Place) enjoying a sexually satisfying relationship with an even-tempered and undemanding mistress as well as a growing family of whom he was obviously fond. This was the way it was to be for the rest of Wilkie's life. Consequently, we can leapfrog to Wilkie's death and to Clarke's unique contribution to Collins scholarship, i.e., what happened to the survivors in Gloucester Place and Taunton Place and to their descendants.

Before proceeding to that sad story, one juicy tidbit deserves mention: Wilkie had a small collection of "feelthy pictures" provided by his New York photographer friend Sarony, one of which Sue Lonoff exhibited at the Victoria conference. Clarke tells an amusing anecdote of how an actress friend, one of many "women of talent and personality from the artistic, literary and theatrical worlds" with whom he "carried on a teasing correspondence,"²² filched one picture of a gauzily clad damsel.

In drawing up his will, Collins hoped to secure the future of his two women and, to some extent, that of their children. Both Caroline and Martha received two hundred pounds and half the income from his estate of roughly ten thousand pounds. For the children, however,

he made a clear distinction: Caroline's daughter, Harriet, was to inherit her mother's share for her lifetime, but afterwards everything would go to the Dawsons. This made eminent sense, since Harriet's lawyer husband should have been able to provide for his family. Somewhat surprisingly, in view of his novels' crusades for women's rights, Collins' will was typically Victorian: after Martha's death, only the son, William, was to inherit a capital sum; the two daughters, Marian and Harriet, merely received income for their lifetime. Presumably, the girls would get husbands who would assure their future, but their illegitimacy might make this difficult. Unfortunately, nothing worked out as Collins had planned.

For obvious reasons, Caroline was the most immediately affected by Wilkie's death. Her entire *raison d'être* had disappeared; also she could not afford to maintain the large house in Wimpole Street, into which she and Wilkie had recently settled. So she moved; the fact that she died in lodgings above a cabinetmaker's shop shows how far her fortunes had declined by 1895. Her daughter, Harriet, suffered the consequences of a disastrous marriage; Harriet's husband, Henry Bartley, turned out to be thoroughly a bad lot. Not only did he squander Caroline's half of Wilkie's estate, but he deserted his wife and four young daughters to live with another woman in a pub near the Thames, leaving his family dependent on the charity of their in-laws. When he died in 1897, still a young man in his early thirties, after nine agonizing months of cancer, he was destitute. The outlook became even bleaker in 1900 when his mother died, putting an end to the allowance granted to Harriet and her four surviving daughters (a fifth had died in 1888, barely two months old). Fortunately, the girls all inherited their mother's and grandmother's good looks, especially the oldest, Doris, whose photograph, unlike those of Caroline and Martha, substantiates her claim to genuine beauty—Victorian photography as well as feminine styles had obviously improved in the interim. In addition to beauty, Doris had talent, poise, and personality and at the age of twenty was embarked on a glamorous, though financially precarious, theatrical career. With the stage name Doris Beresford, she toured in musicals and comedies, on at least one occasion playing the lead role, and eventually joined the famous company at the Gaiety Theatre, soon becoming a featured actress as well as a much sought-after model. The "Gaiety Girls" were remarkably successful in attracting titled husbands. Doris had at least one aristocratic suitor, but turned him down because of a long-lasting liaison with Louis Bishop, whom she met on tour. She eventually married Ivo Locke, a mining engineer; her career ebbed and flowed, but she was usually hard up.

The other three girls followed their older sister's example and enjoyed moderately successful stage careers. But their private lives, like

those of their mother and grandmother, were star-crossed. Cecile married George Gregson, an actor, had two children, was deserted, then died young of cancer. Evelyn, taking the stage name Eve Bevington, married Geoffrey Wonder, a cousin of a well-known actor-manager, who left her to emigrate to Australia. "For a time she was comforted in remarkable luxury" by Percy Arthur, manager of a theatre in Hammersmith, who had made a fortune during the Alaskan gold rush. After his death, she "met an attractive Frenchman, had two children and was again deserted."²³ The youngest, Iris, whom Clarke believes to have been "probably the most talented as an actress, dancer and singer married Martin Iredale when they were touring in *The Dollar Princess*."²⁴ Although Clarke says nothing about her subsequent fate, it may have followed the same pattern as her sisters': collapsing marriages, desertion, theatrical liaisons, children shunted back and forth among relatives, and ever-pressing financial difficulties.

What of the Dawsons? For a time at least, they fared better than the Bartleys. As Clarke says, "Their needs were small, and their income secure,"²⁵ there being no Henry Bartley lurking in the wings to squander their inheritance. They received a good education and even had a governess, but "they never lost the consciousness of who they were and why they were different."²⁶ When Harriet Bartley died in 1905, both Martha and the children, who had reason to expect some financial benefits, were bitterly disappointed to discover they were to get absolutely nothing: "It was an outcome that for many years soured their memories of Wilkie Collins's whole entourage, although they never tired of praising his many kindnesses and devotion as a father."²⁷

According to Clarke, the oldest child, Marian, was "extremely good-looking, bright and lively"; the second oldest, Constance Harried, known as Hettie, was "plainer, more subdued, and the more easily resigned to her position."²⁸ Both eventually married and both, like their mother, were long-lived, dying in the same year (1955) well into their eighties.

Wilkie's third child and only son, William Charles, known as Charley, joined the army at the age of nineteen and saw action in the Boer War. As evidenced by a photograph he cut a dashing figure in uniform; even in mufti, his handlebar mustache gave him a rather swashbuckling air. In addition to being handsome, he was quick-witted, ambitious, and opportunistic, taking as many army training courses as he could. Within five months dysentery sent him back to England, where he served as a riding instructor. He had hopes of a commission; but, when this appeared unlikely, possibly because of his parentage, he left the army in 1902 with the rank of sergeant. Soon he was chauffeur

to the Earl of Orkney, whose wife had been, like Doris Bartley, a "Gaiety Girl," very likely the connection that got him the job. This position, which involved caring for cars as well as driving them, intensified his interest in automobiles. Soon he started his own motor business, "even registering an invention for a new style variable gearbox in the name of 'William Charles Collins-Dawson, motor engineer,'" thus putting himself "in the vanguard of motoring experts and enthusiasts."²⁹ Somewhat earlier he had married Florence Sugg, daughter of a sea-captain, by whom he had two children: Helen Martha, later known as Bobbie, and Lionel. Charley became one of the organizers of the Society of Automobile Mechanic Drivers, and the young family seemed on the verge of financial security when Charley caught the flu and suddenly died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1913 at the age of thirty-eight. It took "the Dawson family over a quarter of a century to recover their financial balance."³⁰ Of Charley's two children, Lionel married Florence Louise Gibson Taylor; Bobbie married George West. Like Marian and Hettie, both Lionel and Bobbie died in the same year (1987). Lionel's daughter, Faith, who inherited the family's good looks, married William Clarke, the author of *The Secret Life*; Bobbie is survived by a son, Anthony West.

One of the most attractive features of Clarke's book is its wealth of photographs. In addition to those of Wilkie's mother, father, and brother as well as Wilkie himself, most of which can be found elsewhere, there are the unique treasures: single pictures of Caroline Graves, her daughter Harriet, and her granddaughter Doris Beresford, the Gaiety Girl; one of Wilkie and Martha Rudd, three of Martha alone, looking very grim in black dress and severe hair style, and one of Martha, her two daughters (Marian and Hettie), her daughter-in-law (Florence Sugg Dawson), and Charley's two children (Bobbie and Lionel); two of the dashing, mustachioed Charley; one of Charley, Florence, and a very young Bobbie; and one of Lionel and Faith as a little girl, both in one-piece bathing suits; all second and third generation Dawsons are remarkably handsome.

Although some allowance must naturally be made for hazy memory and familial bias, *The Secret Life* is unquestionably the unique and definitive account of the women in Wilkie Collins' life and their descendants. And a fascinating account it is. Of course, it would be foolish to assume that no further facts will be unearthed—one or two surfaced at the Victoria conference—it seems reasonable to conclude that not much will be added.

NOTES

¹William M. Clarke, *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., 1988). Clarke is a financier, journalist, and author of several books on the City of London (i.e., London's financial district); former city editor and financial editor of *The Times*; and currently Chairman of A.N.Z. Merchant Bank. His book has not yet been published in this country.

²John G. Millais, *The Life and Letters of Sir John Everett Millais*, 2 vols. (London: Methuen, 1899), I, pp. 278-81.

³[Thomas Seccombe], "Collins, William Wilkie," *The Dictionary of National Biography*, 1921-1922 reprint, Vol. 22, Supplement, p. 472.

⁴Gladys Storey, *Dickens and Daughter* (London: Muller, 1939; reprint, New York: Haskell House, 1971), pp. 213-14.

⁵Clyde K. Hyder, "Wilkie Collins and *The Woman in White*, PMLA, Vol. 54, March 1939, pp. 297-303.

⁶Kenneth Robinson, *Wilkie Collins* (London: Bodley Head, 1951), p. 135; a revised edition appeared in 1974.

⁷Clarke, p. x.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. xiii.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 113.

¹¹Seccombe, p. 472.

¹²Laurence Ince, "Wilkie Collins: The Intimacies and the Novels," *The Wilkie Collins Society*, VI, 1986, pp. 9 and 10.

¹³Clarke, p. 91.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, note 6, p. 215.

¹⁵Ince, p. 8.

¹⁶Clarke, p. [vi].

¹⁷Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁹Ince, pp. 8-9.

²⁰Clarke, p. 203.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 202.

²³Ibid., pp. 197, 198.

²⁴Ibid., p. 197.

²⁵Ibid., p. 186.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 8.

²⁸Ibid., p. 187.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 189-90.

³⁰Ibid., p. 190.

Wilkie Collins, 'Florentia' and the *Art Journal*
Catherine Peters

An article by William M. Clarke in the 1984 number of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, "The Mystery of Collins's Articles on Italian Art," followed up an assertion by Jeremy Maas that a series of seven articles which appeared in the *Art Journal* in 1854 and 1855, signed *Florentia*, can confidently be attributed to Wilkie Collins, bear the hallmark of his style, and represent 'a substantial addition to his *oeuvre*.'¹ William Clarke has since repeated this suggestion, in more cautious terms, in his recent biography of Collins.²

These articles were, in fact, not by Collins, but by a close friend of his, Frances Dickinson, later Frances Elliot, to whom he dedicated his novel *Poor Miss Finch* in 1872. She contributed regularly to Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*, under the pseudonym *Florentia*, from 1853 to 1857. Eighteen articles entitled "Diary of a First Winter in Rome" which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* from May 1854 to October 1855, were later reprinted, with some slight alternations and cuts, in *Diary of An Idle Woman in Italy*, by Frances Elliot³: Frances Dickinson married the Very Reverend Gilbert Elliot, Dean of Bristol, in 1863. Two of the *Art Journal* pieces, "The Artists' Festa" and "Visit to the Catacombs of San Calisto and the Church of San Sebastiano" were also included in this collection, becoming Chapter VIII, Volume I, and Chapter IV, Volume II, respectively.

Another book by Frances Elliot, *Roman Gossip* contains material taken from the other *Art Journal* articles. After stating that "My own recollections carry me back to about 1852," she describes a visit to Gibson's studio, and his "tinted Venus" in terms similar to, though not identical with, the article in the *Art Journal*; and goes on to describe the studio of the American sculptor Crawford. She also mentions, more briefly, many of the artists discussed in the *Art Journal* series "A Walk through the Studios of Rome," among them Story, Dessoulary, Rogers, Tilton, Page, Penry Williams, Tericrani, Overbeck, Cornelius, Riedel, Meyer, and Coleman.⁴ A further series of articles by *Florentia*, "Pilgrimages to the French Palaces," which appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* during 1856, were, with the addition of a piece from *Appleton's Journal*, turned into a book which Frances Elliot published in 1873.⁵ A translation from the German, "Death and the Doctor," appeared over the signature *Florentia* in the *New Monthly Magazine* in the last quarter of 1855.⁶ Wilkie Collins was never fluent in German: in later years he had to employ a clerk of Frederick Lehmann's to translate and reply to his business correspondence with German publishers.

From the early 1850s Frances Dickinson spent part of each year in Italy. In November 1853 she was in Florence, and her first *Florentia* article, "Gossip from Florence" appeared in the *New Monthly* magazine in December.⁷ By the time the *Art Journal* pieces were placed by Wilkie Collins, her pseudonym was well established.

The letter on which Maas relies, and the further letter cited by Clarke, are both consistent with the articles in the *Art Journal* being by Frances Dickinson. She is the "writer of the Article on the 'Studios of Rome'" for whom he requests a copy of the *Art Journal* for June 1854; she is "the friend of mine now resident in Rome" referred to in the letter of May 3 1854. Wilkie Collins, knowing Frances Dickinson well, would not have stolen her pseudonym, and could not have used it by accident. She was already a capable and experienced journalist, who had published a number of articles in *Bentley's Miscellany*, to which she contributed anonymously from 1852 to 1854.⁸ Wilkie Collins also contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1852. Richard Bentley also published a book by her in 1851, at the time when he was Wilkie Collins's publisher.⁹

It is possible, though it can never be proved, that Wilkie Collins, unable to place his Italian articles, made a gift of some of his material to Frances Dickinson, and that she used it in one or two of her articles. However she had a wealth of resources of her own to rely upon, and considerably more time than he had to investigate the artistic life of Rome. The evidence for all the *Art Journal* articles being by Frances Dickinson, later Elliot, rather than Wilkie Collins, seems to me inescapable.

NOTES

¹Jeremy Maas, *The Victorian Art World in Photographs*, London, Barrie and Jenkins, 1984, p. 168.

²William M. Clarke, *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins*, Allison and Busby 1988, pp. 74-76.

³Frances Elliot, *Diary of an Idle Woman in Italy*, 2 volumes, London, Chapman and Hall, 1871.

⁴Frances Elliot, *Roman Gossip*, London, John Murray, 1894 Chapter 12, p. 289 et seq.

⁵Frances Elliot, *Old Court Life in France*, 2 volumes, London, Chapman and Hall, 1873.

⁶*New Monthly Magazine* 105, p. 354.

⁷*New Monthly Magazine* 99 [1853] pp. 442-450.

⁸*Bentley's Miscellany* 31 [1852] pp. 185-196, 639-644; 32 [1852] pp. 609-618; 34 [1853] pp. 50-57; 35 [1854] pp. 338-345; 496-507. For attribution, see *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, IV.

⁹*The Priest Miracles of Rome, a Memoir for the Present Time*, [by Frances Geils, otherwise Dickinson, afterwards Frances Minto Elliot] London, Richard Bentley, 1851.

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The Wilkie Collins Centennial Conference:
Celebrating the Man and His Work
Peter Thomas

For the weekend of September 27–October 1, 1989 scholars and enthusiasts of Wilkie Collins from Great Britain, the United States, and Canada gathered at the Dunsmuir Lodge Conference Centre to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the author's death. Sponsored by the University of Victoria and held at their conference facility fifteen miles north of Victoria, British Columbia, the Wilkie Collins Centennial Conference was an immense success. From Friday evening to Sunday at noon, over drinks and meals, in conference rooms and in hallways, delegates talked Collins. Wilkie in the morning, Wilkie in the evening, Wilkie at supper time—for the connoisseur of Collins, such a diet of conversation was all too rare. At last, if only for a weekend, Wilkie Collins commanded center stage, and those in attendance were delighted to be part of the occasion.

The conference officially began at seven p.m. on the Friday, with the prominent Collins scholar, Kirk H. Beetz, tackling the contentious issue of Collins's literary status. With a paper entitled "Why Wilkie Collins is a Great Writer," Beetz effectively set the tone for the sixteen presentations to follow, which were scheduled over the next day and a half and which addressed topics in the life and the fiction. Among those examining biographical issues were Sue Lonoff, author of the fine work, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers: A Study in the Rhetoric of Authorship* (1982), and Catherine Peters, who was in the midst of writing a critical biography of Collins, and who presented some fresh discoveries concerning the women in the writer's life. Fred Kaplan, author of the recent *Dickens: A Biography* (1988), spoke on the Collins–Dickens relationship in "Wilkie Collins and Charles Dickens: A Tale of Two Writers," and Andrew Gasson, Secretary of the Wilkie Collins Society, provided interesting glimpses of Collins and his work in a slide show.

Speakers who focused on Collins's fiction examined concerns as various as narrativity, structure, gender, psychology, and folk elements. Of course Collins's two masterpieces, *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*, received scrutiny, but participants also discussed the other two novels of the major decade, *No Name* and *Armadale*, and *The Dead*

Secret, Heart and Science, The New Magdalen, and one of the most intriguing of the late novels, *The Law and the Lady*. Distinguished critics, such as John R. Reed, who spoke on "The Stories of *The Moonstone*," John Sutherland, who spoke on "Wilkie Collins and the Origins of Sensationalism," and Ira Nadel, who spoke on "Wilkie Collins and His Illustrators," alternated with others, such as Christine Moreau, Mary Rimmer, Kathleen O'Fallon, and Peter Thoms, who are just beginning their careers. All of this variety—of critical approaches, of novels treated, and of critical generations—attests to Collins's artistic vitality. As the conference confirmed, Collins's novels, both the best known and the lesser known, invite a diversity of interests, and continue to attract serious students of literature.

Participants in the conference could hear Christopher Kent on "Wilkie Collins and the Social Historian," Patricia Frick on *The Woman in White*, and Tim Moreton on *The Dead Secret*. They could attend papers by Barbara Fass Leavy and Peter Caracciolo, both authors of significant articles on *The Woman in White*. And, perhaps most importantly, they could meet one another. For many of the delegates, who had studied Collins in isolation and heretofore encountered very few Collins enthusiasts, the opportunity to chat about the common interest was rare and valued. Robert Ashley, author of the pioneering work *Wilkie Collins* (1952) was in attendance, as were the recent biographer William Clarke and his wife, Faith Clarke, who is Collins's great granddaughter. At last there was the chance to put faces to names—names which had previously only been appendages to books and articles—and to discover, for example, that the editor of this journal bears an uncanny resemblance to Wilkie Collins himself!

Reg Terry, the chairman of the Wilkie Collins Centennial Conference, and Nelson Smith, the secretary, deserve congratulations. Not only did they allow us to commemorate Collins's life and achievement, but they organized a wonderful weekend. Formal papers were balanced by informal talk and by a Victorian parlour entertainment that included a dramatic reading of "A Terribly Strange Bed." Discussions about Collins, good food, comfortable accommodations, spectacular views of mountains and sea, and a pervasive spirit of friendliness combined to create a special experience which will not soon be forgotten.

Palmer, William J., *The Detective and Mister Dickens: A Secret Victorian Journal, Attributed to Wilkie Collins* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). 290 pp. \$17.95.

Steve John Farmer

Charles Dickens enjoyed Wilkie Collins's company during the first half of their twenty-year friendship in large part because the younger writer, unlike Dickens's conservative companions Forster and Henry Wills, enthusiastically participated in his mentor's post-prandial roamings through the dark and seamy sections of London. Their wanderings have long been the cause of speculation and debate among biographers. Did the two roam the London darkness strictly to witness, to fire their imaginations, to hone their skills of observation? Or did they participate in the debaucheries of London's dens of pornography, prostitution and drugs? With his recent novel *The Detective and Mr. Dickens*, William J. Palmer reflects on this mystery and offers his version of Collins and Dickens's reasons for venturing regularly into the dark Victorian underworld in the early 1850s. The result is a clever bit of entertaining speculation marred by several technical problems difficult to overlook.

Collins would probably have enjoyed the frames that Palmer creates to begin his story. The "Editor's Note" that tells us how Collins's secret journals were uncovered recalls the machinery of the Prologue to *The Moonstone*; the chance meeting of Inspector Field (of *Household Words* fame¹) and Collins at Dickens's funeral, which allows the "two old soldiers . . . [to spend] the greater part of that afternoon in [a] warm pub" (8) to recall the past, resembles the frames that Collins used in *After Dark* and *The Queen of Hearts*; and the presentation of the story in the form of Collins's journal revives fond memories of Marian Halcombe's diary in *The Woman in White* and Lydia Gwilt's confessional journal in *Armada*.

Collins might also have appreciated the relatively fast-paced frolic that the main figures, Dickens, Field, and Collins himself enjoy through the novel. They and the reader move quickly from public executions to public houses and private clubs of all sorts, from backstage drama at Covent Garden theater to waterside vigils and floating bodies straight from the murky Thames of *Our Mutual Friend*, from the Bow Street precinct headquarters to lewd strip shows at secret upper class brothels and ritualistic sexual sacrifices of Victorian virgins by the noblemen of the Henry Ashbee's "Dionysian Circle²." We witness stakeouts, housebreakings, manhunts, breakneck chases, attempted suicides, attempted murders, a murder, streetfights, fleshy

auctions, rapes. The book has action, no doubt. And it also contains a mystery—not the caliber of Wilkie's mysteries, but a mystery nevertheless—that Collins might have enjoyed. We follow Dickens as he plunges into a psychologically cathartic friendship with Collins, Field, and the London night after the death of Dora, his infant daughter. We see him become amateur detective as he attempts to help Field solve the murder of an acquaintance whose body is discovered in the Thames. We witness the obsessive and on-sided relationship he develops with Miss Ternan, who becomes a fringe player in the murder mystery herself. We even see Dickens involve himself with Henry Ashbee, Victorian London's notorious pioneer pornographer. All potentially fascinating pseudo-history.

But there are certain problems with Palmer's book that a master technician like Collins would not have overlooked, and that any reader of Dickens and Collins might find hard to balance with the Victorian milieu that those two masters created and sustained in their fiction, in forty plus novels between them. To a technical matter first.

Collins, we may happily reflect, was a Victorian gentleman. He may have lived an odd life, complete with semi-secret identities, semi-secret sexual relationships, and semi-secret families. But he was a Victorian gentleman, a Victorian novelist. He could not, however, at least until late in his life, have considered himself a "Victorian"; in fact, it is safe to assume that no one considered Collins—or anyone else living in the 1840s and 1850s, when this novel is set—a "Victorian" until the mid-seventies, when the word was used for the first time.³ So, when the Collins of Palmer's novel describes himself as being too formal, too stiff, too proper "a Victorian gentleman" (179), or when the novel's Henry Ashbee tells Dickens, on May 9, 1851, of a work in progress—"It is an extended analysis of London life. For lack of a better title, I am calling it *The Memoirs of a Victorian Gentleman*" (163)—or when the novel's trio of detectives later discover Ashbee's pornographic manuscript, titled, sure enough, *My Secret Life: Memoirs of a Victorian Gentleman* (195), Palmer's credibility suffers.

Too picky? Perhaps. But Collins revered accuracy, often claiming that he depended on his lawyers to provide him with answers to legal questions that arose in his fiction and on his doctors or chemists for advice on medical issues about which he wrote.⁴

Another of the bothers with this book may simply spring from the sense of Victorian propriety (prudery?) that I have acquired from reading Dickens and Collins for the last twenty years. Whatever the cause, I couldn't help noticing that the Wilkie Collins of this novel, or, more likely, the creator of the Wilkie Collins of this novel, has an

almost obsessive attraction to Victorian breasts. Here, for the sake of making a point or two, not for simple lasciviousness I assure you, are some passages whose bouncing central images are unmistakable:

From an extended introduction of one of the novel's prostitutes:

"A large woman in a black dress laced loosely across her breasts, bolder than the others, rose to joke with Field." (32)

"The one aspect of her appearance which could not be overlooked were the two capacious mounds straining at the laces of her bodice." (33)

"With her free hand, the harlot clawed at the laces of her bodice. 'No, hit's this you want,' the creature crooned obscenely, as the top of her dress dropped to her waist." (34)

"The creature recoiled away from him, the whiteness of her exposed breasts undulating in the saffron light of the fog-bound gaslamp." (34)

From a discussion of Collins's initial attraction to another of the fiction's women of the streets:

"I was captured by the woman. Her neck was white and her full breasts almost completely exposed by the low-cut, loosely laced bosom of her dark, blood-coloured dress." (38)

From a description of an employee of a Victorian brothel:

"Her scarlet gown failed miserably (and intentionally, I am sure) to enclose her voluminous breasts." (93)

"At a command of some gentleman's voice, she unfastened her tightly laced corset thus freeing her breasts. . . ." (95)

From our introduction to, of all people, Dickens's Miss Ternan:

"The coarse brown peasant's smock fell open. Its neck hole had been slashed downward and the front was almost completely undone to her waist. She stood there helplessly, tears brimming in her eyes, her white shoulders and the tops of her breasts almost fully revealed." (109-10)

From an extended description of a street brawl:

"The whole top of the larger woman's dress came away in Meg's hand and, when released, fluttered in tatters at Scarlet Bess's waist. The result was the complete exposure of Scarlet Bess's more than impressive breasts." (211)

"Scarlet Bess hugged herself, all arms and elbows, in the attempt to cover the rolling milky expanse of her exposed breasts." (211)

"She missed her mark but her sharp nails raked down across her adversary's neck and bared breasts." (212)

"As a consequence I was pummelled about the ears by the unrestrained mounds of her wildly swinging breasts." (213)

From Wilkie's sexual encounter with the novel's Collinsian Magdalen. Is this Jackie or Wilkie Collins?

"With one uncomplicated motion she unlaced the top of her dress leaving herself, in an instant, naked to the waist. . . . She lowered herself to me, and, as we knelt facing one another like two devout supplicants praying in a darkened church, my lips sought and kissed her risen breasts." (237)

And, finally, here again, is poor Ellen Ternan:

"Ashbee stripped the cloth from her breasts . . . [and] ran the tip of his riding whip over and around Miss Ternan's exposed breasts. He stimulated her aureola with the whip. . . . She hung silently from her bonds, unaware of the liberties being taken with her person, and the six sets of eyes feeding upon her naked breasts." (254)

This has become silly.

Sillier still, though, is some of the action involving the character who is supposedly based on an historical figure, Wilkie Collins. The real Collins was a well known lover of comfort and restraint, who complained about participating in any activity involving the slightest physical rigor. His fictional counterpart discovers an superhuman athleticism in this novel that borders on the ludicrous. At one point near the climax of the story—after Wilkie has engaged in a hair-pulling, groin-kicking, and (of course) breast-slapping free-for-all with a couple of prostitutes, we find our narrator/hero climbing onto housetops, crashing to the rescue through skylights, dodging bullets, and chasing villains helter-skelter through secret passageways and crooked London streets. Victorian verisimilitude?

NOTES

¹Inspector Charles Frederick Field was the subject of an article, "On Duty with Inspector Field," that Dickens wrote for the June 14, 1851 number of *Household Words*. Dickens's interest in the police and detective work also found its voice in several other *HW* articles between mid-1850 and mid-1851.

² Henry Spencer Ashbee receives much attention in Steven Marcus's examination of sexuality and pornography in mid-nineteenth century England, *The Other Victorians*.

³ The *OED* notes the first recorded use of "Victorian" as an adjective used to describe something "of, or belonging to, designating, or typical of the reign of Queen Victoria" as occurring in 1875.

⁴ In his 1952 biography of Collins, Kenneth Robinson writes, "Wilkie was always most anxious to have the factual details of his novels correct. Writing against time, separated from books of reference, he is constantly importuning his friends to supply topographical details and information on a variety of subjects" (166).

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TECHNICAL NOTE

The first series of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* was printed from typescripts. The copy here is made from scans of a photocopy of those scarce originals.

The pagination has been checked so that blanks are retained and numbered correctly. The blanks occur because articles always began on a right hand page which led to many left hand pages being left blank if they did not contain text or an illustration.

The eight volumes were turned into searchable PDFs by an auto feed scanner. The original illustrations in the photocopy were very poor quality as they were taken from what were originally rather bad reproductions. Identical images have been sourced, the captions copied, and the pages replaced. No other changes have been made.

These PDFs of the first series are a faithful reproduction of the original paper publication with enhanced images and the great boon of searchable text. Indexes have been prepared and added.

This first series has 21 articles, two of which are reprints with commentary of hard to find Wilkie Collins pieces. There are also seven reviews and each volume begins with an Editor's Note and details of the sixteen scholars who contributed to the eight volumes.

The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, New Series, vols. 1-10, 1998-2007 is also available online.

Paul Lewis

June 2020