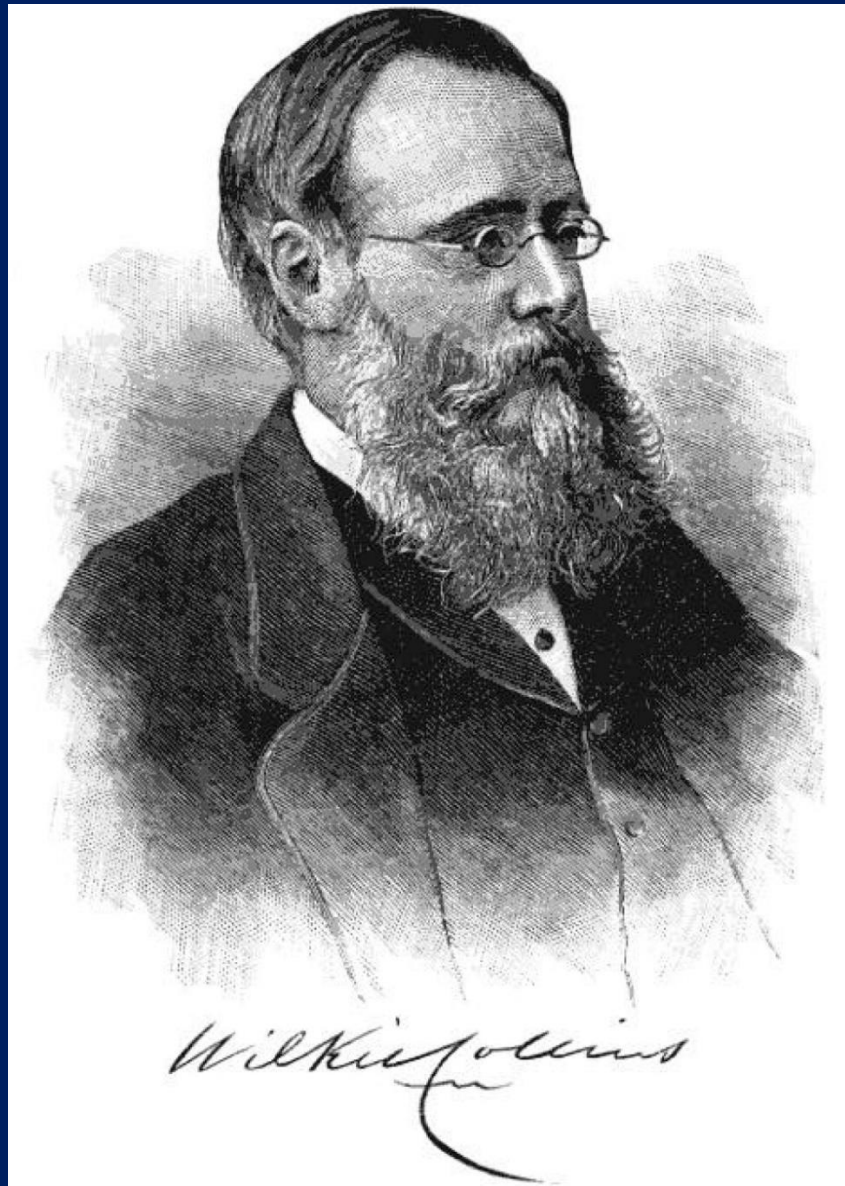


WILKIE COLLINS

SOCIETY JOURNAL



NEW SERIES

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1998-2007

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INTRODUCTION

It comes as something of a shock to realise that it is now approaching a quarter of a century since we were approached by the officers of the Wilkie Collins Society to start up a new series of the journal that had lain dormant since the early nineties. While we were fortunate from the start in having personal computers to generate and edit copy text, and email to transmit it across the oceans, the physical printing of the issues was still very much a do-it-yourself affair, as the garish and flimsy paper covers of the earliest three B5 volumes attest. It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that we were in a position to graduate to the more elegant A5 volumes in pastel card covers.

The first issue in the new series still contained one or two articles held over from the pioneering days under Kirk Beetz, including pieces from those stalwarts of Collins studies P.D. Edwards and Catherine Peters. But most of the later material came from the pens of up-and-coming younger scholars. The alphabetical list of such authors, beyond the editorial team and board, who provided more than one contribution, whether article, note, or review, to the new series is instructive: Simon Cooke, Steve Dillon, Clair Hughes, K.A. Kale, Mark Knight, Andrew Maunder, Emma Liggins, Carolyn Oulton, Lyn Pykett, and Laurence Talairach-Vielmas. Moreover, with the appearance of Collins's collected letters in the four volumes of Baker et al.'s *The Public Face* from Pickering & Chatto in 2005, the Journal began to carry the annual "Addenda and Corrigenda" updates from New Series Volume 8. Altogether, it seems fair to say that the decade of the new series saw major steps forward in the study of the work of Collins and his contemporaries that are well reflected in the more than 700 pages of these ten volumes.

This valuable act of retrieval would not have been possible without the enthusiasm, diligence, and expertise of independent scholar and secretary of the Wilkie Collins Society Paul Lewis. We are grateful to him and to the Society's Chairman Andrew Gasson for their continuing passion for bringing the life and works of Wilkie Collins to a wider audience.

Lillian Nayder, Bates College, Maine
Graham Law, Waseda University, Tokyo
June 2020

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL NEW SERIES

CONTENTS

Title	Author	Category	Year	Vol.	Pages		1-10
					From	To	
Volume NS I							8
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	1998	NS I	4	4	12
Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture	Cooke, Simon	Article	1998	NS I	5	19	13
Frances Dickinson: Friend of Wilkie Collins	Peters, Catherine	Article	1998	NS I	20	28	28
Wilkie Collins - An Interpretation of Christian Belief	Oulton, Carolyn	Article	1998	NS I	29	43	37
Yes and No: Problems of Closure in Collins's <i>I Say No</i> .	Kale, K A	Article	1998	NS I	44	46	52
Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates: A Postscript	Edwards, P D	Article	1998	NS I	47	49	55
Last Things: Materials Relating to Collins in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill	Law, Graham	Article	1998	NS I	50	58	58
<i>Wilkie Collins</i> by Lillian Nayder.	Hughes, Clair	Review	1998	NS I	59	61	67
<i>Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide</i> by Andrew Gasson,	Baker, William	Review	1998	NS I	62	64	70
Volume NS II							74
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	1999	NS II	4	4	78
The Ruins of Copán in <i>The Woman in White</i> : Wilkie Collins and John Stephens's <i>Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan</i>	Collins, Richard	Article	1999	NS II	5	17	79
Reading Landscape: Wilkie Collins, the Pathetic Fallacy, and the Semiotics of the Victorian Wasteland	Cooke, Simon	Article	1999	NS II	18	31	92
Could Lydia Gwilt have been happy? A new reading of <i>Armadale</i> as Marital Tragedy	Kale, K A	Article	1999	NS II	32	39	106
Music and Female Power in Sensation Fiction	Weaver, Phyllis	Article	1999	NS II	40	55	114
Collins, Count Fosco, and the Concertina	Atlas, Allan W	Article	1999	NS II	56	60	130
Belt-and-Braces' Serialization: The Case of <i>Heart and Science</i> .	Farmer, Steve Law, Graham	Article	1999	NS II	61	71	135
<i>The Letters of Wilkie Collins</i> . Ed. William Baker & William M. Clarke	Pykett, Lyn	Review	1999	NS II	72	73	146
<i>Ionani; or Tahiti as it was</i> . Ed. Ira B Nadel	Carnell, Jennifer	Review	1999	NS II	74	75	148
<i>The Moonstone</i> , Ed. Steve Farmer.	Pinnington, Adrian J	Review	1999	NS II	76	77	150

<i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens</i> . Ed. Paul Schlicke. <i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope</i> . Ed R.C.Terry	Dillon, Steve	Review	1999	NS II	78	80	152
Volume NS III							156
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	2000	NS III	4	4	160
Resurfacing Collins's <i>Basil</i> .	Dillon, Steve	Article	2000	NS III	5	16	161
Ellen Wood was a Writer: Rediscovering Collins's Rival	Maunder, Andrew	Article	2000	NS III	17	31	173
Of the Violence of the Working Woman: Collins and Discourses on Criminality, 1860-1880	Liggins, Emma	Article	2000	NS III	32	46	188
Rethinking Bibliolatry: Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism	Knight, Mark	Article	2000	NS III	47	58	203
The Persistent Phantom: Wilkie Collins and Dorothy L. Sayers	Hanes, Susan R	Article	2000	NS III	59	66	215
"Poor Fergus": On Wilkie Collins and Hugh Conway.	Law, Graham	Article	2000	NS III	67	72	223
Volume NS IV							230
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	2001	NS IV	4	4	234
Her Resolution to Die: "Wayward Women" and Constructions of Suicide in Wilkie Collins's Crime Fiction	Liggins, Emma	Article	2001	NS IV	5	17	235
Hunger for Closure in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> and <i>Armada</i>	Kapetanios, Natalie	Article	2001	NS IV	18	34	248
"A twisted piece of paper...half- burned on the hearthrug": Depictions of Writing in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>	Allbright, Richard S	Article	2001	NS IV	35	49	265
<i>The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine</i> , by Deborah Wynne	Pykett, Lyn	Review	2001	NS IV	50	51	280
<i>The Fiction of Geopolitics</i> , by Christopher GoGwilt	Dillon, Steve	Review	2001	NS IV	52	54	282
<i>Serilaising Fiction in the Victorian Press</i> , by Graham Law	Lund, Michael	Review	2001	NS IV	55	57	285
<i>The Private Road</i> , by Marlene Trump	Stoddard Holmes, Martha	Review	2001	NS IV	58	61	288
<i>Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science</i> , by Ronald R Thomas	Law, Graham	Review	2001	NS IV	62	64	292

Volume NS V							296
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian	Editorial	2002	NS V	2	2	299
	Law, Graham						
My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins	Lewis, Paul	Article	2002	NS V	3	23	300
<i>Black and White</i> : British and American Versions	Cothran, Casey A	Article	2002	NS V	24	35	321
Lady Audley: The Woman in Colour	Hughes, Clair	Article	2002	NS V	36	48	333
Collins and Chattos: The Reading Papers	Law, Graham	Article	2002	NS V	49	56	346
<i>Unequal Partners</i> by Lillian Nayder	Knight, Mark	Review	2002	NS V	57	58	354
<i>Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction</i> by Phyllis Weliver	Onslow, Barbara	Review	2002	NS V	59	62	356
<i>Wilkie Collins's Library</i> by William Baker	Dillon, Steve	Review	2002	NS V	63	64	360
							-1
Volume NS VI							364
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian	Editorial	2003	NS VI	2		367
	Law, Graham						
Madame Rachel's Enamel: Fatal Secrets of Victorian Sensational Mirrors	Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Article			3	18	368
Textual/Sexual Masquerades: Reading the Body in <i>The Law and the Lady</i>	Pulham, Patricia	Article	2003	NS VI	19	34	384
Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon	Mangham, Andrew	Article	2003	NS VI	35	52	400
<i>Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination</i> , by Alexander Grinstein	Peters, Catherine	Review	2003	NS VI	53	56	418
<i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> , ed William Baker and Kenneth Womack;	Pykett, Lyn	Review	2003	NS VI	56	59	421
<i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B Thesing;							
<i>The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Deidre David							
<i>Literature and religion in Mid-Victorian England</i> , by Carolyn Oulton	Vance, Norman	Review	2003	NS VI	60	62	425
<i>Blind Love</i> by Wilkie Collins, ed. Maria K Bachman and Don Richard Cox	Law, Graham	Review	2003	NS VI	62	64	427

Volume NS VII								432
Editors' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	2004	NS VII	2	2	435	
Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: on Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"	Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Article	2004	NS VII	3	20	436	
Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of <i>The Woman in White</i>	St. John Scott, G	Article	2004	NS VII	21	30	454	
"Never be divided again": <i>Armadale</i> and the Threat to Romantic Friendship	Oulton, Carolyn	Article	2004	NS VII	31	40	464	
"Dearest Harriet": On Harriet Collins's Italian Journal, 1836-1837	Richardson, Angela	Article	2004	NS VII	41	58	474	
<i>Realities Dark Light</i> ed Maria K Bachmann and Don Richard Cox	Taylor, Jenny Bourne	Review	2004	NS VII	59	61	492	
<i>Victorian Publishing</i> by Alexis Weedon; <i>The Making of the Victorian Novelist</i> by Bradley Deane	Law, Graham	Review	2004	NS VII	61	64	494	
							-1	
Volume NS VIII								500
Editors' Note	Law, Graham Nayder, Lillian	Editorial	2005	NS VIII	2	2	503	
Gendered Visions: The Figure of the Prostitute in <i>The New Magdalen</i> and <i>The Fallen Leaves</i>	Cox, Jessica	Article	2005	NS VIII	3	18	504	
Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in <i>Hide and Seek</i>	Leahy, Aoife	Article	2005	NS VIII	19	30	520	
Collins and the Custody Novel: Parental Abduction and Family Business	Wagner, Tamara S	Article	2005	NS VIII	31	47	532	
The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (1)	Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	Article	2005	NS VIII	48	55	549	
<i>Wilkie Collins (Authors in Context)</i> by Lyn Pykett	Knight, Mark	Review	2005	NS VIII	56	57	557	
<i>The Public Face of Wilkie Collins</i> ed William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, Paul Lewis	Nayder, Lillian	Review	2005	NS VIII	58	62	559	
<i>The White Phantom</i> by Mary Elizabeth Braddon ed. Jennifer Carnell	Law, Graham	Review	2005	NS VIII	62	64	563	

Volume NS IX							568
Editors' Note	Law, Graham Nayder, Lillian	Editorial	2006	NS IX	2	2	571
My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the Letters from Collins	Lewis, Paul	Article	2006	NS IX	3	42	572
A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins	Law, Graham	Article	2006	NS IX	43	52	612
From "A Journey in Search of Nothing" to "The Lazy Tour": Collins, Dickens, and the "Tyro Do Nothing"	Louttit, Chris	Article	2006	NS IX	53	58	622
The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)	Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	Article	2006	NS IX	59	70	628
<i>Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel</i> by Tamara S Wagner	Knight, Mark	Review	2006	NS IX	71	72	640
<i>Wilkie Collins's The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case, and Wrongful Convictions</i> by Rob Warden	Nayder, Lillian	Review	2006	NS IX	72	74	641
<i>The Woman in White</i> by Wilkie Collins Ed. Maria K Bachman & Don Richard Cox	Maunder, Andrew	Review	2006	NS IX	74	76	643
Volume NS X							648
Editor's' Note	Nayder, Lillian Law, Graham	Editorial	2007	NS X	2	2	651
"A Bed Abroad": Travel Lodgings and the "Apartment House Plot" in <i>Little Dorrit</i> and <i>The Haunted Hotel</i>	Cole, Natalie B	Article	2007	NS X	3	12	652
A Land of Angels with Stiletos: Travel Experiences and Literary Representations of Italy in Wilkie Collins	Costantini, Mariaconcetta	Article	2007	NS X	13	33	662
The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (3)	Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	Article	2007	NS X	34	69	683
<i>A Wilkie Collins Chronology</i> , by William Baker	Maunder, Andrew	Review	2007	NS X	70	72	719
<i>Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays</i> ed. Andrew Maunder.	Nayder, Lillian	Review	2007	NS X	72	75	721
<i>Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture</i> by Andrew Mangham.	Law, Graham	Review	2007	NS X	75	76	724
Author index							728
Category index by author							732
Technical Note							736

WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



Wilkie Collins

NEW SERIES

VOLUME 1

1998

WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* is an annual volume, sponsored jointly by the Wilkie Collins Society and the Wilkie Collins Society of North America, and is dedicated to original scholarly essays and reviews of publications relating to Wilkie Collins, his writings, and his culture.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



The Wilkie Collins Society is an international organization of scholars and enthusiasts of the Victorian novelist Wilkie Collins. The Society's primary concern is the promotion of research and the publication of new material relating to Collins and his work. The Society's journal, the Wilkie Collins Society Journal, is the primary vehicle for the dissemination of this research.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



New Series, Volume 1, 1998

Contents

Articles

- Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and
the Language of Melodramatic Gesture*
SIMON COOKE 5
- Frances Dickinson: Friend of Wilkie Collins*
CATHERINE PETERS 20
- Wilkie Collins—An Interpretation of Christian Belief*
CAROLYN OULTON 29

Notes

- Yes and No: Problems of Closure in Collins's "I Say No"*
K.A. KALE 44
- Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates: A Postscript*
P.D. EDWARDS 47
- Last Things: Materials Relating to Collins
in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill*
GRAHAM LAW 50

Reviews

- Lillian Nayder, *Wilkie Collins*.
CLAIR HUGHES 59
- Andre Gasson, *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide*.
WILLIAM BAKER 62

Editors' Note

After a hiatus of ten years, with this issue we are pleased to inaugurate a new series of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, now sponsored not only by the original London-based Wilkie Collins Society but also by the recently-formed Wilkie Collins Society of North America. The *Journal's* revival seems particularly timely because of the striking productivity of Collins's scholarship at the present time. During the past decade, in addition to the many excellent articles and book-length studies devoted to Collins, many of his less accessible have been re-issued in paperback editions; a two-volume edition of his letters is forthcoming, as is a scholarly edition of his first but hitherto unpublished novel, *Iolani*. We are delighted to support the flourishing state of Collins studies with the articles, notes, and reviews published in this issue. As you will see, this collection represents a considerable range in critical interests and methodologies—from Simon Cooke's reading of melodramatic gesture in Collins's fiction to Carolyn Oulton's argument for Collins's Christian belief. Graham Law introduces us to the archival resources in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill, K. A. Kale considers the problems of closure in the largely neglected "*I Say No*," while both Catherine Peters and P. D. Edwards discuss Collins and his associates. We hope you enjoy reading these essays, and look forward to bringing you more work that represents the differing interests and methods of those devoted to Collins studies.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture

Simon Cooke

In his introduction to *After Dark*, W. A. Brockington remarks that Wilkie Collins was fascinated by the stage, and offers the opinion that the writer "understood the world of theatre ... better than [he] ... understood the world of real life" (xiii). Brockington's comment is significant, for it identifies the "staginess" that features not merely in the sharply-focused episodes of *After Dark*, but throughout the author's narratives. Reflecting his belief, as he explains it in the preface to *Basil* (vi),¹ that "Novel and Play are twin sisters in the Family of Fiction", and might easily merge, Collins's prose is clearly influenced by the melodramatic stage. Writing as a novelist who enjoyed a parallel career as a playwright responsible, alone or with others, for no fewer than sixteen plays,² he explicitly conceived his fictions, in the concise terms of Saintsbury (290), as "melodrama in narrative form."

His stories can certainly be characterized by their use of melodramatic properties. Heightened emotionalism, terse dialogue, the unfolding of secrets, sharp conflicts, racy narratives, criminality implied or actual, domestic settings, the preponderance of villains, the division into scenes and acts, rapid exits and entrances, the focus on climactic units of action, exaggerated facial expressions, theatrical gesture: all of these are melodramatic conventions that feature as forcibly in Collins's fiction as they do on the stage. Drawing on a "standard iconography" of stock elements (Meisel, 356), Collins ensures that his fictions are closely linked to his own set of plays (of which *The Lighthouse* (1855) and *The Frozen Deep* (1857) are probably the best examples) and to the theatrical traditions embodied in such works as Hazlewood's version of *Lady Audley's Secret* (1863), or Lewis's *The Bells* (1871).

¹ Citations in the text from the novels of Wilkie Collins refer to *Wilkie Collins Novels: A New Edition*, the "Library" edition issued by Chatto and Windus from 1889.

² Collins's plays are as follows: *The Lighthouse* (1855); *The Frozen Deep* (1857); *The Red Vial* (1858); *A Message from the Sea* (1861); *Armada* (1867); *No Thoroughfare* (1867); *Black and White* (1869); *No Name* (1870); *The Dead Secret* (1877); *The Woman in White* (1871); *Man and Wife* (1873); *The New Magdalene* (1873); *Miss Gwilt* (1875); *The Moonstone* (1877); *Rank and Riches* (1883); and *The Evil Genius* (1885). *Black and White* was written with Fechter; *A Message from the Sea*, *The Frozen Deep* and *No Thoroughfare* with Dickens; and *The Moonstone* with Marcus Clarke.

The effect of these borrowings is one of melodramatic intensification, as generations of critics have observed.³ By appropriating the key conventions of the play, the author recreates the melodramatic frisson, the lurid action and extreme situations that are central to his (and all) Sensationalism. Writing a theatrical hybrid that seems decidedly at odds with his insistence on "plain facts," he creates a type of fiction that some have admired for its "dramatic power" (Harry Quilter, cited in Page, 241), but others have vilified for its "rhetorician's exaggeration" and emphasis on "strong effects."⁴ However in stressing the heightened effect of the whole, little analysis has been directed at the functioning of individual elements. Largely overlooked has been the treatment of melodramatic gesture. Briefly mentioned in an article by C. H. Muller, and identified in passing by Peter Wolfe, this use of gesture is, I suggest, a principal technique in the heightened representation of his dramatic personae; indeed the manipulation of gesture as a means to write character, and how those gestures can be read, are central to Collins's dramatic approach. This article examines the use of the gestural convention, the gestures that Collins chooses to deploy, and the process of interpretation that we, as readers, are compelled to adopt.

It is important to stress from the outset that Collins's knowledge of the gestural taxonomy was substantial. Pervading his fictions, used with an unusual specificity in his plays, and mentioned in his theatrical criticism, this sort of stage-business was clearly well understood by the novelist. Embodying what Peters describes as a "lifelong obsession with theatre" (Peters, 334), his knowledge was derived from several sources.

An obvious influence, and one which continued throughout his life, was his exposure to contemporary plays and acting. An inveterate playgoer who not only wrote plays but enjoyed watching them, Collins witnessed many productions in which melodramatic gesture was routinely employed. He was particularly impressed with Frederick Lemaitre's performance in the Parisian production of *Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life* (1856), which he and Dickens regarded as the most impressive acting that they had ever seen. He also scrutinized the gestural style of Ristori, whom he saw in a less than successful production of *Paradise Lost* in 1856 (Robinson, 91), and watched with interest the performances of actors such as Frank Archer, Charles Fechter, and the Bancrofts. Personal friends, these performers provided him with a direct insight into acting style; starring in *The New Magdalene* (1873), *Black and White* (1869) and *The Moonstone* (1877), they gave him the opportunity

³ See, for example, the review of "Basil" in *The Leader* (27 November 1852) 1141-1142; Allen, 207; or Booth, 135.

⁴ Unsigned review of *Antonina* in *The Spectator* (11 March 1850) 257, cited in Page, 39.

to observe their interpretation at every stage of its preparation (Archer, 147, 160-1, 243-53; Field, 154-73; Bancroft, vol.1 p.417, vol.2 pp.62-3). Moreover his knowledge of gesture was surely augmented by his experience as an amateur actor playing opposite Dickens in their collaborative production of *The Frozen Deep* (1857); Collins was terrified by Dickens's wild gesticulations (Peters, 170), whose extremity is vividly shown in a contemporary illustration (Fig. 1). Adopting the acting style that he had seen on the stage Collins must have learned from its direct application in a work of his own. Based on a combination of observation and practice, his knowledge may also have been derived, finally, from the acting handbooks that contained detailed descriptions of "how to gesture;" for although his library contained only generalist publications on theatre (see *Library of the Late Wilkie Collins*), he may also have been aware of such popular works as Henry Siddons's *Practical Illustrations of Rhetorical Gesture* (1807), Leman Rede's *The Road to the Stage* (1827) and Garcia's *The Actor's Art* (1888).

We can be sure on the evidence of his work that Collins knew and understood that melodramatic gesture was not merely a convention, but a legitimate semiology. Endowed with a stable notation that was derived from the rhetorical acting of the eighteenth century (see Rogerson; Smart), this discourse is a structured code which Collins himself describes as part of an "expressive language of the stage" (*The Evil Genius*, 164). In fact this type of gesture provides a form of visual shorthand, a mode of structured externalization in which the actors' inner lives are vividly revealed, through the physical enactment of the code, in the disposition of what in effect are gestural signifiers. As one observer remarks, "gestures are the exterior and visible signs ... by which the interior modifications of the soul are manifested and made known" (Siddons, 27). Routinely used in the melodramatic play, this manipulation of a visual "language" as a means to show or enact what lies "within" is carefully inscribed in the author's gestural directions.

In particular Collins manipulates the semiology so as to give the sharpest definition of his characters' traits. Calculatedly exploiting their "interesting outsides" (Baker, vol.8, 197), he uses gesture as a method of focus and distillation, in which the complexities of mind are condensed, in a series of visual tokens, into a gestural text. Blurring distinctions between novel and theatre, he writes his characters as if they are actors on a real melodramatic stage: *dramatis personae* whose gesturings are as tightly controlled, and revealing, as those of their flesh and blood counterparts. Identified by contemporaries,⁵ this point is stressed by the emphasis that is placed on

⁵ See, for example, the unsigned reviews of *Armada* in *The Reader* (3 June 1866) 538, and

characters who are quite literally thespians—such as Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* and Mrs. Treverton in *The Dead Secret*—and by constant allusions to the stage. Forced to perform, his character/actors are placed in a sort of conceptualized playhouse, a "Secret Theatre of Home" (*Basil*, 58) in which the "domestic drama" (*Poor Miss Finch*, 43) of their inner lives can unfold, as it were before the playgoing eyes of the audience, through the exercise of their gestural signifiers.

Recreating the configurations of stage-business, Collins focuses on two varieties of significant acting: "action" which involves the moving gestures of gait and demeanour; and "attitude" in which the characters make a point or freeze into a static pose. The first of these is a representation of the fixed traits of personality, so that how a person moves denotes his or her moral, intellectual and spiritual characteristics; whilst the second is an externalized depiction of the character/actors' passions, which are focused, usually at a moment of climactic intensity, in the adoption of an articulate stance (Booth 1965, 195-6; Booth 1991, 120-9).

In both cases the gestures provide a focused text, which, read in relation to the language of the stage gives much (if not necessarily all) of the information that the reader needs to know. Yet the process of reading these tokens can be problematic: for although Collins's original audience were theatrically literate, and knew the gestural language, this knowledge is not generally shared by the readership of today, which at best will have seen late representations of the code in silent films of the 20s. Confronted by a sign system which has lost its currency, a modern interpreter is unable to penetrate the code with the same facility as a Victorian counterpart. Nevertheless Collins's gestural configurations can be decoded by linking them to the written descriptions that are given in the gestural manuals by Siddons, Garcia, Rede and others. By reading intertextually, we can engage with the inner lives of the characters and decode them, as melodramatic performers, in considerable detail.

Used to define many, though by no means all of Collins's personae, the legible gestures of "action"—or "kineomorphs"—are organized into four distinctive sets. These consist of movements that are stiff and unyielding; vital and energetic; nervous and convulsed; or lazily inert. These "characteristic mannerisms" (Wolfe, 29) provide concise representations of four definite types.

Gestures that involve an upright stance, a fixed gaze and stiff manner are always to be taken, according to Siddons and Rede, as the conventionalized

of *The Woman in White* in the *Saturday Review* (25 August 1860) 249-50, cited in Page, 86.

signifiers of pride (Fig. 2). For instance, the aristocratic pride of Basil's father is indicated by his "unchanging manner" and "commanding" gaze (*Basil*, 6). Although Basil insists, in a characteristic piece of misreading, that his father is by no means a type of "conventional pride" (*Basil*, 4), the details of his manner are unequivocal. Immersed in what are soon revealed to be the fragile trappings of "ancestral prejudices" (*Basil*, 6) Basil's father appears to be, and is, a selfish egotist: a man who, despite his redeeming smile and occasional emotionalism, is more concerned for the family's name than for his son's welfare. Inflexible on the outside, his "firmness and dignity" (*Basil*, 6) act as a sort of fingerprint, a gestural token of the ossified soul within. Moreover this rigid stance can be further interpreted as the representation of pride that is not only fixed, but self-absorbed, unemotional, "cold and ... concentrated" (Siddons, 153). Mannion, in *Basil* again, is a case in point, his inert stance, when he is first seen by the main character, denoting an emotional frigidity and self-possession that only collapses into mania in the final sections of the text (*Basil*, 92). However the "hardest" character, both physically and in terms of his personality, is Richard Turlington in *Miss or Mrs?* Labelled with a gait that is "quite without a bend" (*Miss or Mrs?*, 3), Turlington is a type of ruthless pride, an automaton in which the regulating elements are his sense of personal importance, his obsessiveness, and his cold contempt for anyone who stands in his way. Programmed like a robot, Turlington has only one function to perform—the winning of Natalie; arrested in that task, his inflexible pride drives him to another sort of mania.

In complete contrast are movements that are languid or luxurious. Typified by limp wrists and hands, postures that involve "lounging" (*Man and Wife*, 74), and walks that "saunter" (*Man and Wife*, 286), this action generally denotes a type of personality that is weak and ineffectual. "Repose of the body," Garcia (61) indicates, is an indication of "calm sentiments, such as indifference (and) submission." Within this classification there are nevertheless several connotations. In one sense languor equals stupidity, a "quiet" set of movements being an indication that "all is numbed and quiet in the mental regions" (Siddons, 50). Such indolence, in which deadness of the mind is exemplified by inertia of the body, is used to identify some of Collins's most bovine individuals, and is typically applied to his weakest and most passive females. Mrs. Vesey in *The Woman in White* is defined in this way, the character's vapidty being evidenced by her stultifying languor. Endowed with movements that are "snugly comfortable," "tranquil" and "serene," Vesey does little more than "sit through life" in a mental vacuum—a torpid vacuity that Hartright, with uncharacteristic bluntness, likens to the state of the cabbage (*The Woman in White*, 37). The same is true of vapid females such as Laura

Fairlie and the hopeless Bride who appears in *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*. Barely moving, these characters are types of helplessness, stereotypical females who despite moments of self-will—such as when Laura challenges Glyde—are essentially melodramatic victims, "feminine" young women whose identity and very existence is under threat, and who need to be rescued by capable young men. As limp as rag dolls in a doll's house, all such women are presented as versions of "nothing," "credulous, incapable, helpless" and "weak" (Collins & Dickens "Lazy Tour," 195).

But if languid movements are used to reinforce the notion of woman as invalid or thing, then sauntering and flopping also connotes a type of masculine weakness. Transferring "female" signifiers to a masculine setting, Collins manipulates these "weak" movements to show that "gentle actions" are the stage-signs of "timid and irresolute" men, who lack courage or are morally feckless (Garcia, 164-165). A prime example is Frank Clare in *No Name*, whose mincing gait, "delicate hands" and "languid grace" show him to be an ineffectual weakling; as Collins tartly observes, he looks like a "convalescent Apollo" (*No Name*, 53). So do Noel Vanstone from *No Name* and Mr. Fairlie from *The Woman in White*. Weak in their movements, these characters invoke the stereotype of male homosexuality dominant in the period: spineless fops whose lack of "masculine" resolve is suggested in their gait before it is revealed in the dismal unfolding of their narratives.

Conversely, energetic movements are the melodramatic tokens of a good and generous heart, there being a direct relationship, according to Siddons (113), between the vigour of the "raised hand" and other affirmatory gestures, and the "raptures of vivacity" and "good will." Realized in the form of a bustling gait, these dynamic movements are used to label the light-hearted (but doomed) personalities of Mr. Vanstone (*No Name*) and Allan Armadale. Least troubled is Valentine Blyth (*Hide and Seek*), whose action is as breathless and robust as Fairlie's is still:

He appears to walk principally on his toes, and seems always to be on the point of beginning to dance, or jump, or run ... When he speaks he has an odd habit of turning his head suddenly ... (*Hide and Seek*, 31).

Moving with the restlessness of artificial youth, Blyth possesses what the reviewer in *The Athenaeum* described as a "child-like integrity" that is never less than "charming" (24 June 1854, 775). Denoted by his energy and stance, and stressed by his cherubic face and suggestive name, Blyth is a sentimental version of the adult as innocent.

But this sort of vigour should not be confused with the movements of agitation. Typified by twitching, fidgetting, and walking uncontrollably "in all possible directions," (Siddons, 80) agitation connotes the reverse of

lightheartedness. In a general sense it implies a type of nervous disorder or febrile restlessness. In Collins's words—which he used to describe his own state of mind as he struggled to complete *The Moonstone*—constant movement encodes a "wretched" condition of "shattered nerves" (Letter to Mrs. Lehmann, May 1868, in Coleman, 116). It further stands as the melodramatic evidence of a troubled conscience, of struggling to cope with the overwhelming consciousness of some "racking and insupportable idea" (Siddons, 82); indeed in Collins's prose, as on the stage, characters who twitch are "tormented" by some knowledge or secret that consumes their personalities. One such "wretch" (Siddons, 82) is Sarah Leeson in *The Dead Secret*. Over-burdened by the responsibility of knowing and hiding the Secret, Sarah's turmoil is concisely visualized by her "strange inconsistency of gait" (*Dead Secret*, 25) and "agitation of manner" (*Dead Secret*, 4). So is the torment of Percival Glyde in *The Woman in White*, who, despite being a crook, with the handsome looks and smooth (gliding) manner that was conventionally associated with the stage-villain, occasionally displays the pangs of conscience. It is noticeable, for instance, that when he has Laura firmly under his control he paces "nervously" (*Woman in White*, 202) and adopts a "comfortless" stance (*Woman in White*, 188). Scoundrel he may be, but in giving him a restless gait Collins identifies his personality not as that of a cold-hearted villain—such as the fiendishly static Mannion—but as a soul in torment, a man who is wicked rather than amoral, who knows that his crimes are heinous. Yet the greatest suffering is that of Mr. Sherwin in *Basil*. Reduced to a shivering mass of nervous tics, he is physically overwhelmed by the consciousness of some "wrong action" (Garcia, 164). First visualized by Basil, Sherwin is the very epitome of melodramatic turbulence:

... his eyes were small, black, bright, and incessantly in motion; they were affected by nervous contractions and spasms that were constantly drawing up and down in all directions the brows, the mouth, and the muscles of the cheek ... (*Basil*, 47).

The text fails to elucidate what is consuming him—can it be that he plans to deceive Basil the moment he sees him, and is trying to conceal his shame? or is it that he has something else to hide? But it is clear enough, on the evidence of his action, that Sherwin is troubled, and, by implication, will be a troublesome adversary. The tragedy is that Basil misreads his movements as surely as he misunderstands the action of his father. Reading him only as a domestic "tyrant" who is "little-minded" (*Basil*, 47), Basil fails to see that Sherwin is as psychologically unstable, as convulsively febrile, as the twitching in his face and movements. Watching this Secret Theatre at close quarters the reader/playgoer engages in a dramatic irony in which the gestures are illegible to the main "actor" who moves within the "play," but can be interpreted, as the exercise of a code, from the "auditorium."



Fig. 1. Tavistock House Theatricals: The Frozen Deep
 Wood engraving, 14.5 x 23 cm., in "The Illustrated London News", 17 January 1857, 51.
 Scene showing Dickens as Wardour (in rags).



Fig. 2. Hauteur
Photomechanical reproduction of lithograph,
10.5 x 6 cm., in Siddons, Plate 5.

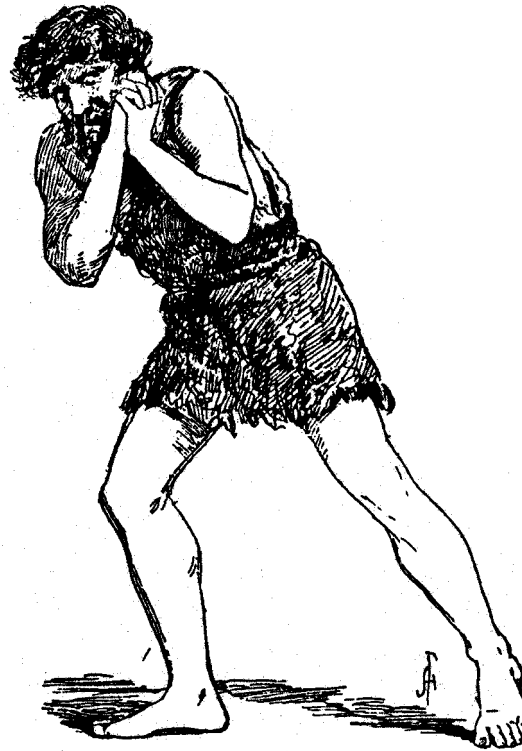


Fig. 3. Despair
Photomechanical reproduction,
14 x 10 cm., in Garcia, 79.



Fig. 4 Terror
Photomechanical reproduction
of lithograph, 13.5 x 9 cm.,
in Siddons, Plate 23.

Revealing his personality in the way that he moves, Sherwin epitomizes the legibility of Collins's characters/actors. Presented in terms of their gestural configurations, and revealing their psychological profiles to everyone who is gesture-literate, all of them are traditional types that were current at the time. Written as characters who are Tormented, Proud, Weak or comically energetic, they are clearly part of a melodramatic typology that is all-inclusive and highly prescriptive. This conventionality is stressed by comparing the personae with the types that appear in contemporary performances. For example, the nervousness of Sarah Leeson, as a tormented type (*The Dead Secret*), is paralleled by the starts and staggering of the conscience-ridden Mathias in Lewis's *The Bells*, a part that was first played to febrile excess by Henry Irving in 1871; whilst the energetic acting of the kind-hearted Blyth bears direct comparison with the movements of the "bustling, bothered, scolding and kindhearted" character of Mrs. Cratchit, as she was played by Mrs. Mellon in 1860 in the dramatization of Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* (Morley, 206). Exploiting this typology to achieve the highest degree of focus, Collins ensures that his characters are both condensed and transparent.

Equally legible are the gestures of "attitude," which are sometimes described as constituents in the "language of the passions." Manipulated, as I noted earlier, as a means to visualize the characters' feelings, these signifiers provide a sort of dumb-show in which the overriding emotion is conveyed in a static display of "terminal wordlessness" (Brooks, 61). Written as if they were show-stoppers on the stage, which would normally be accompanied by the dropping of the curtain, Collins's attitudes are presented as single forms, or as elements within a compound tableau, or "picture." In both situations the emphasis is on a narrow range of signifiers which encode the awful emotions that are central to Collins's effects, and, as before, can be "read" by relating them to the gestural taxonomy.

The hand that is raised above the head connotes the emotions of surprise, astonishment and bewilderment. Featuring at key moments when a character is affronted by an unexpected twist in the plot, it concisely reveals the passing frisson of surprise. So, when Miss Jillgall (*The Legacy of Cain*, 81) is surprised we are told her hands "flew up into the air" and "expressed the climax of astonishment by quivering over her head." More soberly the burden of despair is encoded in gestures that Garcia (160) generally describes as "desponding"—characteristic forms being heads that droop on bosoms, the downcast gaze, hands clasped over the face, fainting and prostration. These gestures are typically used, in another assertion of female weakness, in the treatment of stage victims, there being numerous occasions when Laura, Sarah and Antonina clasp their hands, adopt a downcast look, and allow their heads to droop. Yet male

characters despair as well. There could be no better climax of despair than the grotesque interview between Basil and his father, when Basil has to tell him of his misalliance. Overcome with "shame" as he makes the revelation, Basil's head droops on his breast, with his head "bent down." When he looks up, however, he sees his father in the classic melodramatic pose of all-consuming anguish (Fig. 3) "with his hands clasped over his breast." Overwhelmed by their emotions, they freeze into a static tableau, a moment of terrible "truth," that is held for "some minutes" (*Basil*, 152). And even more intense are the gestures of fear. Depicting the characters' response to the confrontations of the strange, these signifiers denote a wide range of fearful emotions.

The "sudden start" encodes fearful shock, or nervousness (Rede, 80). Visualized as a frozen recoil, in which the whole body withdraws from the threatening situation, this gesture is obsessively used as a means to convey the febrile intensity—the perpetual condition of fear—that is so characteristic of Collins's anxious personae. Charting the fretfulness of those who live in a world of threatening uncertainties, it externalizes the suffering of Mrs. Sherwin (*Basil*), Anne Catherick (*The Woman in White*), and Noel Vanstone (*No Name*). Consumed by "painful startings and hurrys" (*Basil*, 58), and "agitation" (*The Dead Secret*, 4) these characters are neurotics who live on the very edge of their nerves, progressing from one set of shocks to the next; an unsettling effect which is often wound up into the higher realms of horror and terror.

Terror is conveyed by the gesture of the outstretched arm, in which the character/actor tries to repulse the object (Siddons, 85; see Fig. 4). Thus in "Mrs. Zant and the Ghost" the petrified John Zant tries to deflect the vision with his "rigid" arms (*Little Novels*, 28), only to find (terror of terrors) that they have been grasped by something supernatural. Allan Armadale is similarly possessed with the desire to escape when he dreams his terrible dream aboard the blighted ship, his anguish being conveyed once again by arms that stretch in front of him (*Armadale*, 128). By contrast horror is shown in a transfixed stare, literally a "horrified look" that involves the grotesque enlargement of the eyes and the taut orientation of the body. Used by Collins within his face-to-face confrontations, this signifier represents the very climax of emotional disturbance. When Mat confronts Thorpe in *Hide and Seek*, for instance, Thorpe's horror is vividly conveyed by his "panic stare" (*Hide and Seek*, 343). This condition that is wrought to a "terrible" intensity in the confrontation between Ozias Midwinter and Lydia Gwilt, when, seeing her in widow's weeds, Midwinter demands to know the explanation (*Armadale*, 612); reduced to the level of crazed bestiality, Midwinter is overwhelmed by his horrified confusion.

Moreover these signifiers of fear are sometimes combined to create a terrifying tableau in which all of the conditions of fearfulness are brought

together. One such episode is given in "Gabriel's Marriage." Marking the moment at which the grandfather has a premonition, this tableau is heightened to the point of hysteria:

Gabriel ran to the bedside. The old man had raised himself into a sitting position; his eyes were dilated, his whole face was rigid with terror, his hands were stretched out convulsively towards the grandson. "The White Women", he said ... The children, with cries of terror, flung themselves into Perrine's arms; even Gabriel uttered an exclamation of horror, and started back from the bedside. (*After Dark*, 209).

Intensified by sound before it resolves itself into a static composition, the episode provides a dynamic interaction of varieties of fear. Gabriel's start denotes his panic, which is echoed by the children's recoil; while the Old Man's mingled expression of horror and terror is distilled in the details of his eyes and arms that are stretched convulsively outward. Supported by the use of the key terms "horror" and "terror," but autonomous in itself, this scene is one of the fearsome tableaux that feature at key moments throughout Collins's narratives.

Speaking more generally, Collins's tableaux provide a structured montage of heightened emotions. Arresting the quick flowing narratives with "pictures" of visualized feelings, they compel the reader to read a series of emotional shocks in which the main focus is placed on bewilderment, despair and fear. Insisting that in his father's art there is nothing that is "coarse, violent, revolting (or) fearful," Collins ensures that his own work is an emotional switchback in which a prime emphasis, as we "watch" the characters' agonies, is focused on creating a "thrill of horror" (*Memoirs*, vol. 2, 311-2). "Directing" his personae to adopt the conventional configurations of attitude, in which their emotions are acted out, he recreates the lurid excess, the *Sturm und Drang*, that was so characteristic of the melodramatic stage.

Considering both attitude and action, it can be argued, in short, that Collins creates a melodramatic prose in which the "language of the stage" provides a distinct classification of visualized extremes: of neurotic characters who twitch, proud ones who strut, horrified faces that stare or recoil, desperate claspings of the hands, and terrified extending of the arms. Exploiting gesture in order to condense and heighten the representation of his dramatic personae, he ensures that their inner traits are encoded in traditional forms which, despite being part of an obsolete discourse, can still be read. Written as a text that is enacted by melodramatic "puppets,"⁶ the gestures of the stage infuse Collins's prose with a combination of legibility and transparency, heightened emotionalism and dumb-show grotesquerie—which seems at its most extreme to recall the static displays of waxworks as much as tableaux vivant.

⁶ Unsigned review of *Armada* in the *Saturday Review* (16 June 1866) 726-7, cited in Page, 151.

Fused and conflated into one, this treatment of significant gesture lies at the heart of each of his texts. Nevertheless it is interesting to note as a final complication that Collins's critical attitude to the "language," as he voiced it in his reviews and letters, is not always as clear as his fictional manipulations would seem to imply. Although his writing of gesture is heightened in the traditional manner, he sometimes proclaims a dislike for this sort of extremity. In assessing the performance of Ristori in a letter to E. M. Ward (8 March 1856, in Coleman, 47), he roundly condemns "its perfect conventionality of the most hopelessly stage kind," and elsewhere speaks disdainfully of the artifice, as it appeared in theatrical painting, of melodramatic "frenzy" ("Exhibition of the Royal Academy," 618). Insisting that he prefers acting that is based, as, according to him, Fechter's was based, on "truth to nature," (Field, 156) his preference is paradoxically at odds with his mode of writing. Yet in the clash between naturalism and gestural artifice the stage-like, as this article has shown, strongly prevails. Believing that his "faculty" was "primarily a dramatic one,"⁷ Collins may certainly be understood, in the memorable words of Brockington, as a melodramatist who understood the world of theatre better than the world of plain facts.

⁷ "Memorandum Relating to the Life and Writings of Wilkie Collins," letter to unnamed recipient, 21 March 1862, reproduced in Parrish, 5.

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Frances Dickinson: Friend of Wilkie Collins

Catherine Peters

A photograph of Dickens's acting company taken after the London performances of *The Frozen Deep*, includes a woman in a bonnet sitting behind Wilkie Collins, between his friends Edward Pigott and Augustus Egg. She is neither young nor beautiful, but she has a lively, interesting face. This is Frances Dickinson, introduced to Dickens by Collins when an amateur actress was needed to replace Janet Wills in the part of the Scotch nurse Esther. She played in all the performances at the Gallery of Illustration, identified in the programme only as "Mrs. Frances." She was evidently a very competent actress, for when performances in the Manchester Free Trade Hall were in prospect, Dickens wrote to Wilkie Collins: "It is *an immense place* and we shall be obliged to have [professional] actresses—though I have written to our prononcée [i.e. ebullient] friend Mrs. Dickinson to say that I don't fear her, if she likes to play with them" (*Pilgrim*, vol.8, 395). However she did not: Mrs. Ternan took over her part, and her daughters Maria and Ellen those of the young girls, with the well-known consequences for Dickens.

Who was Frances Dickinson? Few once well-known nineteenth century journalists have now been so totally forgotten. In 1984 seven articles by her which appeared in the *Art Journal* in 1854 and 1855 under her established pseudonym "Florentia" were even attributed to Wilkie Collins (Maas, 168; Clarke). Yet in addition to being a member of the Dickens circle she knew the Trollope family, and Thackeray. She was married for a while to the Dean of Bristol. She merited an entry in *Women of the Day* during her lifetime (Hays, 64), an entry in Boase's *Modern English Biography* after her death (vol.5, 215-6), and obituaries in the *Times* (4 Nov 1898, 8) and *Athenaeum* (5 November 1898, 645). The books she wrote in later life, novels, travel books and popular history, were published in the United States as well as in Britain, well reviewed, and often reprinted; one was even translated into Swedish. The majority were included in the Tauchnitz collection, a sure sign of their popularity. One, *Diary of an Idle Woman in Spain*, was reprinted as late as 1927, nearly thirty years after her death. Behind this public success, she led a private life which at times recalls those of the heroines of her friend Wilkie's novels, and her curious story reveals that the unconventional women Collins loved to draw had counterparts in real life.

Unlike the army of underpaid women in the nineteenth century for whom journalism was primarily a way of making a living, Frances Dickinson came from a privileged background, and she seems to have written mainly from an urge for self-expression, not out of financial necessity. She was an only child, born 6 March 1820, her father's sixty-fifth birthday. Charles Dickinson was a member of an old Somerset Quaker family, many of whom became Members of Parliament for the county. Frances' mother, Catherine Allingham, was a friend of Mary Russell Mitford, and her father wrote a fierce attack in turgid rhyming couplets on British imperialism, especially in India, Ceylon and the Congo. Though he owned a manor house in Somerset, Frances was brought up at another Dickinson property, Farley Hill Court, near Reading, Berkshire.

Her father died when she was six, and in spite of a dispute over his Will, Frances inherited a fortune, in which her mother had only a life interest. In a series of anonymous articles which appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany* from 1852 to 1854, she described her happy childhood, running wild on the Berkshire estate. "I had ridden wild horses, driven tandem with dogs, mounted ladders, bird's nested in lofty trees, waded in rivers, until I conceived myself as good as a boy," she wrote of her first seventeen years. She depicts it as a Wordsworthian idyll: "I was a solitary child, placed apart from others, and drawing my ideas from books, and poetry, and plays ... It is impossible for children, brought up in a little community together, where all is noise, fun, and sociability, to conceive the strange daydreams I experienced ..." ("First Visit," 644).

Her account of a reception for William IV's birthday at Windsor Castle, to which she was taken, aged 12, by her mother, is less poetic, and reveals that she already had an iconoclastic eye. The Archbishop of Canterbury looked to her like a "little, old, shrivelled walnut." Her description of ugly, red-faced Queen Adelaide, who wore "a superb circlet of diamonds, but so ill-arranged, and so badly put on, I observed the large black hairpins placed to keep it firm, sticking straight out from it," anticipates—could it have inspired?—Lewis Carroll's White Queen ("First Visit," 642-3).

Frances Dickinson wrote, too, of her first "Season" in London, when she was presented to the young Queen Victoria. A country upbringing had left her unprepared for physical and social restrictions, and she recounts how she used to escape from corsets and ladylike behaviour to the attics of the London house with her maid, where the two young girls "fought and struggled with each other like schoolboys ... or spreading the feather-beds on the floor, we made believe it was a haycock, and rolled in them until ... we were so exhausted ... that neither of us could move, but lay there laughing at each other like a couple of happy fools" ("Adventures," 51).

Though no beauty, Frances Dickinson was lively and intelligent, and her fortune made her extremely marriageable. Surrounded by suitors, she fell in love, so she tells her readers, with a much older man who was not interested in women, though besieged by them. Rebuffed, she married at 18 a penniless Scottish officer, Lieutenant John-Edward Geils, and went to live with him at his heavily mortgaged estate at Dunbuck, near Glasgow.

She gave birth to four daughters, but the marriage only lasted seven years. In 1845 she parted from her husband, and returned to live in England, though spending much time abroad. Her action for a judicial separation from her husband, begun in July 1846, and heard in the ecclesiastical Court of Arches, was bitterly contested by Geils, and dragged on for two years before it was granted in August 1848. The unsavoury details of his adulteries with two of the household servants and his alleged mental and physical cruelty were fully reported in the *Times*, and as late as 1860 the case was described in *The Critic* as "perhaps the worst ... that ever was reported in the English press" (cited in *Pilgrim*, vol.8, 361n). Frances suffered all the opprobrium then heaped on a woman, however innocent, involved in such a public marital dispute. In May 1849 she issued a Summons for Divorce in the Scottish courts (Scottish Record Office. Ref. CS239/G/41/2)—divorce was then possible under the Scottish legal system, though not in England without a special Act of Parliament. According to Kelly's *Post Office London Directory*, by 1850 she had resumed her maiden name, calling herself "Mrs. Dickinson," though she was not finally granted her Scottish divorce until 1855, and it did not become valid in English law until 1857. Lieutenant Geils, according to the hints in her published articles, retained the children for a while, as the law then allowed, refusing to let Frances see them. When she did manage to reclaim them, Geils ceased to contribute to their support. Though her London address—she shared a house with her mother in Cavendish Square from 1845—and her country properties, Farley Hill in Berkshire and Queen Charlton in Somerset, suggest Frances Dickinson was still comfortably off, she may have travelled for reasons of economy as well as to escape the stigma of being separated from her husband and children. Whatever her reasons, it was at this time that she began to write, to travel, and to establish herself on the fringes of literary London, perhaps a less rigid milieu than the county society of Berkshire.

The first sign of her authorship so far traced is a book published by Richard Bentley in 1851. *The Priest Miracles of Rome, a Memoir for the Present Time* is an anti-Catholic tract, prompted by the Pope's appointment of Cardinal Wiseman as Archbishop of Westminster, which had been greeted with a storm of protest in the Anglican community. The book, which compares Cardinal Wiseman and St Dunstan as a pair of charlatans, is a

hectically written polemic. Were it not for the British Library attribution it would be difficult to believe that the author was in fact Frances Dickinson. Only its journalistic exploitation of the hot topic of the day relates it to her other writing.

Frances Dickinson's writing is lively and she sometimes turns a phrase with Dickensian flair, but most of it is now of interest only to the literary and social historian. The lightweight journalism which poured from her pen in the 1850s is a mixture of information, triviality and gossip cunningly designed to appeal to the average mid-nineteenth century magazine reader. Her earliest identified articles appeared in *Bentley's Miscellany* from 1852 to 1854. The first piece attributed to her, a version of a fairy-story entitled "The Dream-Ladder," appeared in the same issue as "The Life of Mr. Perugino Potts" by Wilkie Collins.¹ Thereafter she found her true vein in autobiographical reminiscences about her childhood and youth. Her strength lay in a frank personal tone which reveals a great deal about her character and personal circumstances, and those of her friends and enemies, under the veil of anonymity.

Wilkie Collins and Frances Dickinson knew each other in the early 1850s, and they remained friends until his death in 1889. In 1872 he dedicated *Poor Miss Finch* to her "in remembrance of an uninterrupted friendship of many years." Given their common interest in amateur dramatics, it is possible that they encountered each other as early as 1848 or 1849, when Wilkie Collins was arranging dramatic performances at his mother's house in Blandford Square. They probably met at Richard Bentley's evening parties, which Wilkie Collins attended more than once. Frances Dickinson was in Florence in November 1853, when Wilkie Collins spent a few days in that city with Dickens and Augustus Egg, and Collins may have called on her there. Though no letters to Frances Dickinson from Wilkie Collins are known to have survived, he was certainly in correspondence with her. In May 1854 he wrote to the editor of the *Art Journal*, S.C. Hall, accompanying an article "written by a friend of mine now resident in Rome ... 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 Journal*."² Hall took up the offer, and the *Art Journal* published a series of seven articles by Frances Dickinson under the pseudonym "Florentia," on the art and artists of Rome, which appeared from June 1854 to August 1855. The friendship continued to flourish: when Wilkie Collins was temporarily homeless in 1856, he told his

¹ Attribution from Bentley Receipts, University of Illinois, Illinois D 18.

² Wilkie Collins, ALS to S.C. Hall, 3 May 1854, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

mother that he might stay with his friend Edward Pigott, or with Mrs. Dickinson.³ Frances Dickinson became a family friend, well acquainted with Wilkie Collins's brother Charles and their mother Harriet. Charles Collins stayed with her at Queen Charlton Manor and reported to his mother: "The party is a very gay one and I am sure it would be the best thing in the world for Wilkie to be here. Do persuade him."⁴ In 1865 or 1866 Frances Elliot, as she now was, stayed with Harriet Collins, who found her "as droll as usual thinner but youthful still [she was 45 or 46]. Wilkie gave up his room to her & slept at the nice little Hotel opposite as did the German Soubrette [Mrs. Elliot's maid]."⁵ (One wonders whether the incorrigible Wilkie used the opportunity to attempt dalliance with the Soubrette.)

The friendship left traces in Wilkie Collins's fiction. A short story he wrote in 1859, "A New Mind," uses Frances Dickinson's situation at the time of her divorce, harking back to the time when

England stood disgracefully alone as the one civilized country in the world having a divorce-law for the husband which was not also a divorce-law for the wife. The writer in the Times ... hinted delicately at the unutterable wrongs suffered by Mrs Duncan; and plainly showed that she was indebted to the accident of having been married in Scotland, and to her subsequent right of appeal to the Scotch tribunals, for a full and final release from the tie that bound her to the vilest of husbands which the English law ... would have mercilessly refused. (Collins, 112-3)

His novel *The Evil Genius* also shows signs that he was familiar with her sufferings as a divorced woman, and those of her children, cold-shouldered by "respectable" families, as are Catherine Linley and her daughter Kitty.

During the 1850s Frances Dickinson wrote frequently for the *New Monthly Magazine*. The earliest piece that can with certainty be attributed to her is "Gossip from Florence," published in December 1853 over her pseudonym "Florentia," here used for the first time. It is her usual popular mixture of descriptive "picturesque" writing, commentary on art, music and politics, and gossip about expatriate English society. The novelist Mrs. Frances Trollope, mother of Anthony, who lived in Florence from 1843, is observed "playing whist in a corner in stern and rigid silence." Donizetti's opera *Poliuto* is given short shrift: "*Paulina*, the heroine, is finally led off to execution in company with the obstreperous [sic] Christian, a very Roman Chartist, in a very unbecoming kind of brown bombazine bathing dress" ("Gossip"). From May 1854 to October 1855 she contributed eighteen articles in a series entitled "Diary of a First Winter in Rome." In both this and another

³ Wilkie Collins, ALS to Harriet Collins (5 April 1856), Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

⁴ Charles Collins, ALS to Harriet Collins (Queen Charlton Manor, n.d.), Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

⁵ Harriet Collins, ALS to William Holman Hunt (July 24, n.y.), Parrish Collection, Princeton University Library.

series entitled "Polperro" which appeared in September, October and November 1855, immediately prior to the granting of her divorce petition on 7 December 1855, she interpolated details of her own private life and expressed her hatred of her husband, claiming that she was "banished" by his vengeance, and separated from her children by his malice, only able to see them by stealth. "Polperro" describes travelling with them in Cornwall, where she covered much of the same ground as Wilkie Collins had done for *Rambles Beyond Railways* in 1851. After the divorce the complaints about her husband cease, though she continued to relish scandal. Another series of articles in the *New Monthly Magazine* appearing throughout 1857 was entitled "The Baths of Lucca." These prompted a furious reply in the form of an anonymous pamphlet, identifying "Florentia" as an English lady who held up "even personal defects to public ridicule" and had, in an earlier piece, repaid the hospitality of her banker "by attempting to caricature almost every guest of his whom she names" (*Remarks*).

After *The Frozen Deep*, Frances Dickinson's acquaintance with Dickens had flourished. Dickens addressed her, once they had got to know each other well, as "My dear F... Ever yours affectionately." Her letters to him were destroyed in one of his Gad's Hill holocausts, but his frank replies provide a tantalizingly incomplete glimpse into her tangled private life; he was clear-eyed about her failings and absurdities. She, with typical impetuosity and a considerable degree of fellow feeling, dared to write openly to Dickens about his secret relationship with Nelly Ternan, asking to be allowed to meet her. Dickens wrote back in a panic that it would be "inexpressibly painful to N. to think that you knew her history" and asking her to be on her guard against her friends Tom Trollope and his wife Frances, Ellen Ternan's sister: "... make no reference to me which either can piece into anything. She is infinitely sharper than the serpent's tooth. Mind that." (*Nonesuch*, vol.3, 476).

Though she often exasperated him, Dickens always wrote to Frances Dickinson with warmth and affection. In a long letter of 1860 from Gad's Hill he gossiped about Wilkie Collins's relationship with Caroline Graves: "Wilkie has finished his White Woman (if he had done with his flesh-colored one, I should mention that too) and is in great force" and gave her an unsentimental and mocking account of his daughter Kate's marriage to Charles Collins. He also discussed Frances's own unsatisfactory situation with a reluctant elderly lover, who was evidently not coming up to scratch:

... are you quite sure that what you are disposed to resent as indifference, is not the stealing apathy of advanced age? ... As to yourself I might be very moral in my admonitions and didactic remarks; but you are a woman and I am a man, and we should both know better, even if I were. (*Pilgrim*, vol.9, 287-8)

This apathetic suitor was her future husband, the Dean of Bristol. There

is more being hinted at in Dickens's letter than at first appears. On 9 August 1863, Dickens wrote a warning to Wilkie Collins that he and his brother should be discreet about Frances Dickinson's past:

... she is extremely anxious you should know that profound confidence as to that adventure with the Doctor has become more than ever necessary, by reason of her having established the fact that the marriage (as no doubt he very well knew at the time) is no marriage and is utterly void. My own impression is that she contemplates a real marriage with somebody else, at no distant time. (*Nonesuch*, vol.3, 359-60)

No evidence about this "adventure with the Doctor," has been found. A marriage of dubious validity may have taken place abroad. There is a hint in one of her 1857 articles from Bagni di Lucca that she had an amorous relationship with a local English doctor, with whom she took long unchaperoned walks in the Italian countryside ("Baths," 109). Dickens was right about her impending real marriage. Three months later Frances Dickinson, 43 years old, married the Very Reverend Gilbert Elliot, a widower of 63. The marriage certificate gives her condition as "single," though the Dean must have been aware of some, at least, of her previous history.

In spite of his age the Dean seems to have had much to commend him to Frances Dickinson. He was a remarkably handsome man, a much respected churchman and preacher, and a relation of the Earl of Minto. Nevertheless this match ended as disastrously as Frances Dickinson's earlier escapades; less than three years later she was in trouble again. The story of the collapse of her marriage, and Dickens's patient attempts to mediate between the Dean and his lady, a task he eventually gave up in despair, can be traced through his letters. It is clear that he thought that Frances was being inconsistent and manipulative. Her attempt to retrieve what was left of her fortune in its entirety—no easy matter before the Married Women's Property Acts—is understandable, but she does seem to have behaved with ruthless opportunism. When she decided she had had enough of the Dean, she tried to blackmail him into agreeing to a Separation without making any claim on her money, by threatening to reveal "the secret between us"—the earlier marriage—now claiming it was valid. At the same time she wanted to keep the veneer of respectability. Dickens wrote pointing out "the monstrous absurdity of your repudiating your marriage on the one hand, and requiring that the Dean shall live with you at such and such times to keep up appearances, on the other ..." (*Nonesuch*, vol.3, 737).

It would have been even more disastrous for the Dean, as a Church of England clergyman, to be implicated in a case of bigamy than for Frances Elliot to surmount yet one more scandal. Some kind of compromise was reached, and the couple quietly separated.

Frances Elliot now increased her literary output, but more discreetly than formerly, concentrating on the scandal and gossip of the past only. Dickens

rejected some ghost stories she submitted to *All the Year Round* in 1867 complaining of their inconsistency and absurdity. He offered to publish two others, but there is no trace of them in *All the Year Round*. However Dickens did publish at least one piece by Frances Elliot, "The Old Cardinal's Retreat" which appeared in 1870.

In 1871 Frances Elliot published the first of a number of books under her own name, or a variant of it. She sometimes called herself Frances Elliot, sometimes Mrs. Minto Elliot. She had no claim to the latter name except on the tenuous grounds of her estranged husband's relationship to the Earl of Minto, but it is as Frances Minto Elliot that she appears in the National Union Catalog, and the catalogues of the British Library and the Bodleian Library. During the next 25 years she produced volumes of travel, fiction, and popular history, often consisting of compilations of her earlier journalism. Collections of biographical and historical essays, *Old Court Life in France* and *Old Court Life in Spain*, were among her most popular books. In all she published twelve books between 1871 and 1896. She inexplicably failed, however, to place a book based on material she had collected about Byron, and his relationship with the Gamba and Guiccioli families (Trelawney, 247).

A final glimpse of this remarkable woman in her later years is given in the reminiscences of Ella Hepworth Dixon who, decades later, still remembered her undimmed vitality and unconventionality:

I can see her now, a pale, distinguished looking woman with black hair done in a mass of thick plaits on the top of her head: a coiffure which, in very un-Victorian fashion she loudly announced was a wig. 'I wear a wig,' she would say, puffing at her cigarette, 'my daughters wear wigs. Everyone should. It saves a deal of time and trouble.' ... She must have thoroughly enjoyed life, for she was always busy and always kind ... Mrs. Elliot, indeed, lived in a social whirlwind; in her later years she became a little confused about her engagements. You would find yourself installed in a box with her at the Lyceum to see Mr. Henry Irving, when suddenly she would remember that she had left her granddaughter, Donna Daisy Chigi, alone with two young men in a box at the Opera. One of us would be hastily despatched to keep Donna Daisy company, and the whole party of young people hastily collected at the end of the evening and taken off to supper at the Savoy. If you went out for a night's amusement with Mrs. Elliot you never knew where you would ultimately find yourself. (Dixon, 29-30)

Two of her daughters, surprisingly for the children of so vehemently anti-Catholic a mother (if anything connected with that mother's history could finally surprise) married Catholics; one an Italian, the Marchese Chigi, the other a Spanish diplomat. It was at the Palazzo Chigi, Siena, that Frances Dickinson/Geils/Elliot died aged 78, on 26 October 1898, during the celebrations for the wedding of her granddaughter Mary.

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Wilkie Collins— An Interpretation of Christian Belief

Carolyn Oulton

In 1852 Wilkie Collins wrote to his friend and colleague Edward Pigott: "I make no claim to orthodoxy. I am neither a protestant, a catholic nor a dissenter. I do not desire to discuss this or that particular creed but I believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God."¹ Though this letter was written at a time when Collins was perhaps influenced by the beliefs of his evangelical parents, as Catherine Peters has shown (66-7) he had already shown himself willing to offend their religious sensibilities, and it seems reasonable to suppose that he was conscientiously expressing his own opinion rather than deferring to that of his family. However, prolonged and often minute discussion of "this or that particular creed" was not always easy to avoid in England in the 1850s and '60s, as the evangelical movement came into very public conflict with the forces of secularism and Catholicism. The religious census of 1851 highlighted the national lack of church attendance; F.D. Maurice was dismissed from his post at King's College in 1853 for expressing doubts about Hell; Darwin's *Origins of Species* appeared in 1859; and the controversial *Essays and Reviews* were published in 1860. By 1865 treatises impugning the divine nature of Christ were being widely read. I will argue that a liberal Christian faith, vigorously opposed to sectarianism of all kinds, informed Collins's thinking at this unsettled time.

It has long been noted that the issue of Collins's religious beliefs is a problematic one, not least in the light of his respect for other religions such as Hinduism, and his interest in spiritualism. But although his novels allow interpretations of events that might have shocked the more conventionally devout of his time, none of the explanations proffered is technically incompatible with a Christian faith. For instance, *Armada* posits the question of second sight, but the spokesman for orthodox Christianity in the novel, the Reverend Brock, himself declares that supernatural experience is traceable to God. Again, the Hindu curse in *The Moonstone* is not invalidated, but Collins seems less concerned with its efficacy than with admiration for the Indians' commitment to the demands of their religion.

¹ Letter to Edward Pigott, 20 February 1852, Pigott Collection (Box 3); cited by permission of the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Certainly Collins did not attend a public place of worship as an adult, and his own declarations suggest that his views underwent various changes during the course of his life. But the failure to attend church, unusual as it was, does not necessarily mean that he was uninterested in religion. The main sources for his few direct statements of belief are a collection of letters written in the 1850s and the written recollections of a friend in later life. His fiction does not provide the same level of overt religious debate as, say, that of the Brontës. But though Collins's novels are not written primarily as religious works, it is possible to glean from them some idea of his personal beliefs. Written under the influence of an evangelical upbringing, his early novels are notable for allusions to Hell, a position that undergoes various modifications until it is finally undermined in the major novels of the 1860s. It is also significant that as Wilkie's own death approached in the 1880s, he wrote with increasing feeling of the consoling nature of religion, and this again marks a shift from the 1860s novels, in which religious belief is directly related to temporal experience and hopes of eternal life are of secondary consideration.

Modern criticism has tended to bypass or deny this aspect of his writing, Kirk Beetz (24-5) being almost alone in allowing that Collins remained a devout Christian until the end of his life. In an article entitled "The Religion of Wilkie Collins," Keith Lawrence begins by stating that "Collins consistently veils his personal beliefs" (389), and avoids any specific definition of his ideology. Catherine Peters (108) quotes the letters to Pigott in which Collins declares himself a Christian, but will only allow him to have been a freethinker, the implication being that his philosophy was bound by no doctrines and that he had no belief in an afterlife. Such assumptions have been perpetuated with the help of Collins's friend Wybert Reeve, who caught him at a bad moment in 1873, on the evening of his brother Charles's death. Reeve (460) records:

The death seemed to have made a strong impression on him, and led him to speak of a future state of existence, in which he had little belief. He was a Materialist, and urged that death meant a sleep of eternity; it was the natural end of all living things.

There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of this account. But even such an emphatic expression of religious doubt at such a traumatic time is not inconsistent with Collins's assumption of faith in his letters and fiction. What it does suggest is that he was, like others of his generation, troubled by doubt at times. In 1885, only a few years before his own death, he returns to this same issue, presenting such doubt as almost inevitable at times of bereavement:

Are there not moments—if we dare to confess the truth—when poor humanity loses its hold on the consolations of religion and the hope of immortality, and feels the cruelty of creation that bids us live, on the condition that we die, and leads the first warm beginnings of love, with merciless certainty, to the cold conclusion of the grave?

(Collins "*I Say No*", 53)

What is commonly accepted is that Collins both ridiculed and suspected evangelicals and Catholics. But this antipathy is all too often used to illustrate his supposed lack of interest in religion, just as his use of the theme of providence is perceived as a means of avoiding discussion. The following brief and largely unsupported analysis is typical of critical sidestepping on this issue: "it can be said that Collins' interest in providence lay in the extent to which others believed in it, and found in it an adequate explanation of events" (Kent, 62). The article in which this statement appears is concerned with probability rather than with providence, but the author expresses the view in passing that Collins did not share his father's belief in an active providence, but used it rather as a convenient term for encoding chance or probability.

Peter Thoms (107) acknowledges the importance of the theme of providence in *The Woman in White* and *No Name*, but does not confront the issue of Collins's personal belief; he suggests that "what the unorthodox Collins is enunciating is not necessarily Christianity but a mode of living based on its precepts of love, generosity and sympathy." Providence is ultimately explained away in essentialist terms, as a benevolent but vague supernatural force. Thoms suggests that what it represents in the novels is a Carlylean moral order represented by the idea, but not necessarily the presence, of God. In other words, according to this interpretation, the basic idea of an external moral structure is maintained, but providence remains only as a perceived pattern within which experience can be contained or through which it can be mediated in language. This view is illustrated by the way in which characters in the novels narrate their own experiences, imposing an order on their narratives by the invocation of divine control. This interpretation does not rely on the direct intervention of providence, because it is the discernment of an overall pattern that is considered to be of importance.

Thoms (123-4) further argues that the major novels written after *No Name* are not supportive of a providential view. In *Armada* Midwinter's response to the Christian faith urged by the Reverend Brock is perceived as:

not a passive act but essentially one of creative interpretation. Midwinter creates the purposeful design he sees by imposing meaningful closure on the sequence of the inherited story. He may feel that the final pattern is providential, but it is a design which he ... helps to bring into being.

In this novel the underlying providential order is suggested, as has been shown by Zeitz and Thoms (498), by Major Milroy's clock:

when Collins was writing *Armada* the foundation of the design argument's use of the clock metaphor—the idea that a clock reflects its maker—would have been one of the recognisable associations that the literary image of the clock might convey. Collins's choice of the Strasbourg clock for Major Milroy's model in *Armada* strongly suggests that he wished to invoke the image of the clock as an "intellectual artefact" that illustrated ideas about the nature of the world.

But this interpretation surely breaks down in assuming that Collins uses the smaller clock to represent a lack of faith in a providential order. The Major's clock plays marches in place of psalms, and the mechanism does not work effectively. But significantly the Major is seeking escape from domestic troubles in turning to his machine, and it could be said that he has attempted to reduce the workings of providence to a personal fantasy, in which he can control the overall mechanism. The Strasbourg Clock was designed to celebrate the natural order as ordained by God, while the Major's offers only an escape from the world around him while positing himself as the sole creator. Collins had seen the original Strasbourg Clock while travelling with Dickens, and was not particularly impressed by its reductive symbolism. His writing emphasises again and again the importance of relating divine mysteries to human experience, rather than portraying them in incomprehensible and abstract terms, nor does he endorse simplistic systems of morality. Far from denying the divine order, Collins insists that its scope is beyond human comprehension.

I would argue further that direct intervention, and not merely the assertion of an overarching order, is crucial to Collins's treatment of providential intent. In using providential intervention as a theme in his novels, Collins takes one of the evangelicals' choicest weapons and uses it to subvert their judgmental version of Christian morality. Evangelical ideology stressed a providential plan based on intervention at every level from the personal to the national. In a novel such as *No Name*, Collins asks whether Magdalen is saved from suicide by chance or by providence, when she bases her decision on whether an odd or even number of ships will come into view within a given period of time. As far as the evangelical ethos went, an attempt at suicide would be sure to bring its own punishment, and certainly would not merit a divine interference concerning the number of ships passing a window—apart from anything else, gambling was regarded as a sin! Providential interference, commonly seen by the evangelicals in largely punitive terms, is here turned rather mischievously on its head, in the suggestion of God not only endorsing a gamble but "fixing" the outcome. Crucial to this famous scene is its deliberate engagement with evangelical doctrine, which might give pause to those who assume that the comical behaviour of evangelical women is alone of interest to the author. In the description of the last ship counted as a "Messenger of Life," it is made clear to the reader that God has intervened to save her. She herself has yet to comprehend this: "'Providence?' she whispered faintly to herself. 'Or chance?'" (Collins *No Name*, 409). Ultimately it is left to Captain Kirke to assert the involvement of providence in the world of the novel. Kirke, whose name connects him with the church and whose father was once 'the salvation'

of Andrew Vanstone, makes a miraculous appearance to save Magdalen from death as she lies ill with a fever. He has no hesitation in answering the question she herself had posed earlier in the novel: "'What has brought me here?' he said to himself in a whisper. 'The mercy of chance? No! The mercy of God.'" (Collins *No Name*, 579).

Given the importance of this affirmation, it is worth considering the ammunition that has been brought to bear against it. Philip O'Neill's seemingly formidable objection (178) is worth quoting at length:

This final accolade to Christianity may be interpreted as the ultimate acknowledgement of the ... divine order of the world but it is rather flat and unconvincing when considered alongside the passage which describes how Magdalen rejects suicide ... And while Kirke does answer Magdalen's question, his all too succinct and complacent reply is a poor counter-statement to the very forceful passage where chance is given such room to operate. Kirke is allowed to focus on the mercy of God, but in the text, this belief in divine Providence is counter-balanced by this insistence on the role of chance.

And yet O'Neill fails to acknowledge at the start that Magdalen has deliberately invoked chance, whereas Kirke has been led to Aaron's Buildings through no design of his own. More importantly, he misses the significance of Collins's theological design—divine intervention operates *within* a context of chance and free will as opposed to being cataclysmically imposed. Thomas Vargish (21) details the way in which providence was popularly assumed to operate through the free action of human beings, and observes that throughout the nineteenth century instances of specific intervention were increasingly used in fiction: "The concept of providence itself becomes progressively less an image of order, regulation, grand planning, and more an intimate solicitude for human lives."

Some clue to Collins's interest lies in his having been himself brought up in an evangelical household, a fact which is often forgotten. Travelling on the continent as a child, Collins had been obliged by his father to attend weekly Scripture meetings and two church services every Sunday, where the family were preached sermons on the power of the Devil by an evangelical minister (Peters, 38). As was the case for many children of evangelical parents, "Sunday did cast a blight over the week" (Peters, 29), as it does for the young Zack in *Hide and Seek*. Zack's sympathetic grandfather is exasperated at this system of restraint, which he feels to be wholly inappropriate; he himself advocates a more liberal system of religious education:

Let his morning service be about ten minutes long; let your wife tell him, out of the New Testament, about Our Saviour's goodness and gentleness to little children; and then let her teach him, from the Sermon on the Mount, to be loving and truthful and forbearing and forgiving, for Our Saviour's sake. (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 15-6)

The significantly named Mr Goodworth is obliged to defend himself against the imputation that he himself lacks religious conviction, as Zack's evangelical father insists that such an approach is purely "rationalist":

you think I'm wrong in only wanting to give religious instruction the same chance with Zack which you let all other kinds of instruction have—the chance of being made useful by first being made attractive. You can't get him to learn to read by telling him that it will improve his mind—but you can by getting him to look at a picture book. ... You admit this sort of principle so far because you're obliged; but the moment anybody wants (in a spirit of perfect reverence and desire to do good) to extend it to higher things, you purse up your lips, shake your head, and talk about Rationalism—as if that was an answer! (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 16)

The old man's ideal of religious education can clearly be taken as that of the author himself. In this fictionalised account, the religious zealot responsible for inflicting Sunday observance on the child ironically turns out to be hiding a discreditable past, for which he attempts to atone by increased severity in his religious practices. But this can hardly be taken as a critique of William Collins. Self-doubting to the point of morbidity, Collins Senior is presented in the memoirs written by his son as having been genuinely devout. The letters and journal extracts quoted suggest that he was a gentle and affectionate father, keen to stress to his children the value of moral behaviour rather than the effects of sin, as in this example to Wilkie and Charles of 22 August 1832:

Go on praying to God, through Jesus Christ, to enable you, by his Holy Spirit, to be blessings to your parents; and then you must be happy... A pretty *long* letter, methinks, for two such *short* fellows! However, I never regret any trouble I may have in doing anything for good boys. (Cited in Collins *Memoirs*, Part 2, 56-7)

This last sentence, conditional as it sounds, comes at the end of a long and cheerful letter about more secular topics which Collins Senior thinks will interest the children.

Less indulgent is the journal which William Collins kept for his own benefit. Many evangelicals kept a daily record of their spiritual life, in which they analysed their own shortcomings in considerable detail. The extracts quoted from the journal in Wilkie's memoirs must be assumed to show his father at his most introspective. On 27 March 1818 he writes:

This habit of smoking begets an inclination, and in fact a necessity, to allay the heat and dryness of the throat; and, as one smokes in the evening, liquor is always at hand; in addition to which, although I have given up snuff, yet the use of cigars and spiritous drinks would of course beget an inclination for their former companion: seeing all this, I hope I shall be resolute enough to resist the slavery of attachment to what it is best that I should hate. (Cited in Collins *Memoirs*, Part 1, 124)

His son, the *bon viveur*, offers no remark on this extract. More disturbing is William's reaction to the family's recurring financial difficulties, which he seems to have regarded as arising at least in part from his own negligence. In his journal William Collins wrote:

Notwithstanding my conviction that my troubles are real, and their number great, yet I feel that my desultory habits are adding to the list, (which is voluntarily and criminally incapacitating me for the performance of my numerous duties), and that my prayers for power cannot be from the heart, when the talents I already possess are suffered to lie idle until their whole strength shall be exerted against me; as the sweetest water becomes, under the same circumstances, first stagnant and then poisonous. Fearing consequences, which God of his infinite mercy avert, I once more implore his assistance.

(Cited in Collins *Memoirs*, Part 1, 117)

This self-accusatory tone is consistent with the evangelical fear of the demon within and the punishment sure to follow all turnings aside from the path of duty. As the Reverend J. McConnell Hussey (3) was to remind his congregation at mid-century:

... while you are labouring to overpower the adversary without, you are painfully led to discover that there lurks a traitor within, who is striving, noiselessly and imperceptibly, to unbar the gates, and roll back the portals, for the enemy's entrance.

Wilkie Collins's reaction to the journal entry is revealing. Ignoring the doctrinal assumptions behind it, of which his upbringing must have made him aware, he assures his readers that his father was not the man to be so easily defeated, and that he was soon able to overcome his depression (Collins *Memoirs*, Part 1, 117). Respect for his father's memory, and an expressed dislike of religious controversy, make an open disavowal of his doctrinal position impossible. What comes across from the commentary is that Wilkie regarded such outpourings as self-indulgent or morbid, while renewed vigour and determination are to be admired as an effective antidote. Though in later life Collins's reaction to evangelicalism sometimes bordered on the hysterical—in one letter, he refers to a devout cousin for whose trust fund he was responsible, as a "pious bitch"—this aversion cannot be taken as a reaction against his father personally. It is far more likely that he is venting his rage at those fanatical associates of his parents with whom he came into contact as a child. In particular, he would have abhorred the constant references to Hell inseparable from evangelical sermons and tracts. Judging by a letter to Pigott of 20 February 1852 in which he acknowledges that the ultimate salvation of Satan is a "useful and interesting subject for Christians to speculate on" (Pigott Collection), it seems likely that Collins was himself a universalist, that is, he believed that belief that all mankind would ultimately experience salvation.

His first two published novels, *Antonina* and *Basil*, do contain vague references to an undefined future judgement, but this doctrine is shown primarily in its most beneficent aspect, of encouraging mercy on earth. In *Antonina* Numerian prays for his dying brother despite their former enmity, and in *Basil* it is the forgiving nature of the hero that leads him to visit his estranged wife as she is dying, on the grounds that she is going "before the throne of God." Basil feels that:

The sole resource for her which human skill and human pity could now suggest, embraced the sole chance that she might still be recovered for repentance, before she was resigned to death. (Collins *Basil*, 288)

This concern with the meting out of post-mortem judgement betrays an obvious debt to the teaching of William Collins, under whose influence Wilkie's mother likewise adopted evangelical beliefs. But such beliefs are not

upheld, even in this most positive form, in Collins's more mature work; in *Hide and Seek* the worthy Mrs Peckover is convinced that Mary Grice's seducer is already suffering eternal torment, but she is proved wrong when he is discovered alive and proves far less blameworthy than had been assumed. His only punishment is the temporal one of exile from his home, and even this allows him opportunity for repentance. Even in *Basil* (299) Margaret is allowed a last moment of remorse, as her husband prays by her deathbed. Symbolically the dawn breaks, offering hope as Basil "burst into a passion of tears, as my spirit poured from my lips in supplication for hers—tears that did not humiliate me; for I knew, while I shed them, that I had forgiven her." Consignment to damnation is accepted as a possibility in these novels, but nonetheless human forgiveness holds out the hope of divine mercy.

Collins seems to have developed a more liberal outlook as his writing matured, and in his major novels of the 1860s he repeatedly subverts the idea of Judgement. He increasingly presents personal as opposed to vicarious atonement as not only redeeming but sanctifying—sanctification being the process by which human beings endeavour to come closer to Christ's perfection by a process of emulation. In 1886 he praised Walter Scott as "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" ("Books Necessary," 24). Many of the novels and stories relate to an individual moral regeneration set against a disapproving society. By employing female protagonists in many of his novels, Collins is able to demonstrate very clearly what he perceives as a flaw in the evangelical outlook. The heroines of his novels are judged more harshly by their society than are their male counterparts, and this allows them an insight into the tenuous relations between religious theory and social practice. Magdalen Vanstone is forced to abandon a career on the stage because its supposed immorality (an assumption that was condoned and reinforced by the evangelicals) has damaged her sister's position. As a direct result, she is driven to marry her hated cousin in a sacrament that is shown to be reduced thereby to an act of prostitution. Fully aware that she will be condemned by the very zealots who have denied her an honest living and caused her to commit a real sin, she writes bitterly to her erstwhile governess: "'What do good women like you, know of miserable sinners like me? All you know is that you pray for us at church.'" (Collins *No Name*, 481). The words "miserable sinners," taken from the Book of Common Prayer, lose all meaning in this context, when spoken by someone who ignores the implication that sinners are unhappy and in need of pity. It is this detachment from the transgressor that Collins is most concerned with attacking, insisting on the saving role of Christ in relation to personal sin. For

Collins it is possible for sin not only to be forgiven, but to give way to virtue. The erring central figure in both *No Name* and *Armada* is not only forgiven, but becomes a moral focus capable of ennobling virtue.

Lydia Gwilt's redemption in *Armada* is redolent with Christian tradition. Realising that she has been poisoning her husband and not the hated Armadale, she rescues him and dies in his place, thus transforming a criminal act into an atoning sacrifice. The radical nature of this sacrifice is made clear by Barbara Gates's appraisal. She points out that until 1880 suicides could not be buried in consecrated ground, such was the general conviction that to take one's own life was the ultimate sin. In social terms then, Miss Gwilt's suicide is unforgivable in a way that the intended murder would not have been. As Gates explains (304), suicide was seen as:

an audacious personal challenge to the will of God in which human justice could never really interfere. Thus if murder caused sensation among the Victorians, suicide was a source of anxiety and disgrace.

But Miss Gwilt's act is accompanied by a prayer for the mercy of God, and she believes that she is saving her husband future unhappiness by dying in his place. Her increasing dissatisfaction with herself, and her attempt to overcome her criminality in marrying Midwinter, suggest that Miss Gwilt, like Dickens's Sydney Carton, is likely to be receptive to religious promptings. Her gesture of atonement is a literal attempt to make amends for the harm she has done. Gates (308) affirms that "Without doubt, Lydia Gwilt's eventual suicide is intended as atonement." In making this atonement, Miss Gwilt not only displays repentance, but becomes a martyr. She has already displayed humility in asking Bashwood's forgiveness, and as she dies she appeals to God in terms that force the reader to reassess the nature of her criminal past: "'Oh, God, forgive me!' she said. 'Oh, Christ, bear witness that I have suffered!'" (Collins *Armada*, 807). The narrative approval accorded to this character inevitably drew down the wrath of the orthodox. But in *Armada* it is the orthodox who are shown to be hypocritical, whilst Lydia Gwilt ultimately repents and becomes worthy of salvation.

Respectfully discreet about evangelicalism in his biography and rather less so in his personal correspondence, Collins was able to make a very penetrating commentary in his fiction through the detached medium of caricature. Miss Clack's "Servants' Sunday Sweethearts Supervision Society" in *The Moonstone*, might have sounded suspiciously familiar to his mother, who in his father's lifetime had been a member of the "Servants' Charitable Bible Society." On a more sinister level, the philanthropist Godfrey Ablewhite, so beloved of ladies' committees, is shown to have a dangerous power over vulnerable women like Miss Clack, who are encouraged to sublimate their

sexual response to him in religious rapture. Only Rachel Verinder is impervious to Ablewhite's charms, and she has no connection with the meetings at which he speaks. At the end of the novel he is shown to be a thief and a philanderer, who has used religious oratory to maintain a respectable veneer. Above all it is this use of evangelical religion to gain social status to which Collins objects. A passing reference to Wesleyanism in *No Name* (211) suggests that he respected genuine religious convictions, however much they differed from his own; in Lambeth "the followers of John Wesley have set up a temple, built before the period of Methodist conversion to the principles of architectural religion." The accusation that the Methodists were becoming more concerned with the chapels themselves than with the congregations who attended them is referable to the process of consolidation that was taking place in Dissent at this time. As Alan D. Gilbert (157) explains:

... the once dynamic movement had assumed a more sedate character by the early Victorian period. The emphasis was now on maintaining, consolidating, and capitalising upon the strong position achieved during the initial phase of mobilisation: Anglican competition was now more fierce, and in any case there was now a huge internal constituency requiring pastoral care and demanding new varieties of religious-cultural satisfaction.

Furthermore, Nonconformity was beginning to attract middle class congregations, and Collins saw this new respectability as detracting from its earlier independence and fervour.

Collins clearly desired to replace Old Testament wrath, so greatly favoured by the evangelicals, with a liberal ethos based on the teachings of the New Testament. In other words, his religious views were focused on love and mercy rather than on fundamentalist doctrines of sin and retribution. He would not have agreed with the evangelicals' insistence on the literal truth of every word in the Bible, which led to acceptance of doctrines such as the eternal punishment of unbelievers. But one view he did share with them was a suspicion of Catholic teaching. The controversial Catholic Relief Act, which allowed Romanists a degree of religious freedom, had not been passed until 1829, and during the next two decades evangelicals were particularly interested in converting Roman Catholics, "exposing" the Church of Rome in "its true nature as the Antichrist" (Lewis, 189). In 1839 the newly formed Protestant League had asserted in its "Statement of Views and Objects" that:

the grand object with the Roman Catholic in all parts of the islands, at the present moment, is the destruction of the Established Church, which forms the chief, if not the only obstacle to the re-establishment of Popery.

(*Publications of the Protestant Association*, Preface)

The Papal Aggression of 1851 played a major part in stirring up popular as well as evangelical sentiment. Suspicion of Jesuitical spying and intrigue within the sacred confines of the family was exacerbated by religious tracts designed to prove the licentiousness and cruelty of unmarried priests.

In 1854 the Pope's Proclamation of the Immaculate Conception (which held that Mary was free from original sin at the time of her conception) was received in England with horror. Ultra-Protestants felt their doctrine of Atonement under attack, protesting:

Man must be seen to be what he really is by nature, a lost, undone, miserable being, who has no power of helping himself, otherwise the favour that God shall bestow upon him, will be only the means of propping up a lie, and of making him more effectually than ever the slave of the devil. (*Recent Decree*, 4)

In plain terms, if it were possible even for Mary to be free from original sin, then the doctrine of Christ's saving Atonement, dying for the sins of mankind, would become meaningless.

Steering clear of the excessive reaction shown by evangelical thinkers, Collins nevertheless had little sympathy with the Pope's assertion of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. In December 1854 he wrote to Pigott:

Now what shakes a man's faith?—an outrage on his common sense. ... But how can that affect individual Romanists—or Romanist congregations. Does any Papist make use of his reason when he lets his Church give him his religion? ... Does not every good Papist who will not let his father, brother, wife, or children, rob him of one particle of his common sense if he can help it, voluntarily hand that common sense over altogether to the keeping of his Priest whenever his Priest asks him for it? ... What is there in the Immaculate Conception to outrage millions of people who believe (if one may abuse the word by using it in such a sense)—who believe in "The Real Presence"? When Smith, a lay Papist, believes that if he gives money to Jones a clerical Papist to pray his soul out of Purgatory, Jones will succeed if Jones prays fairly up to his terms, what in Heaven's name is there in the Immaculate Conception to stagger Smith? (Pigott Collection)

It is of course unlikely that Collins was adhering to a doctrine of original sin in so writing. More likely to have exasperated him is the inconsistency of the Pope's maintaining such a doctrine for the entire human race bar one. His contempt for the idea of communion bread and wine literally becoming the body and blood of Christ, contained in the doctrine of Transubstantiation, (which he rather carelessly confounds with "The Real Presence," the idea that Christ is present in a metaphysical sense in the bread and wine), links him with the tradition of anti-Catholicism which held Romanism to be more superstitious than mystical. Nor is he entirely fair in his presentation of Jones praying Smith out of purgatory. This supposition was attacked by Luther in the sixteenth century as a *corruption* of Catholic doctrine. (The idea is rather that a priest prays for a soul already in purgatory, for which it is customary to pay him a monetary tribute, or "mass stipend." Smith could not pay in advance for a mass to be said for his own soul.)² Collins also betrays a common fear of the power of Catholic priests in assuming them to possess a greater influence on a man than his own family. The dangers of such influence were to appear in his later fiction, most famously in *The Black Robe*, in which a convert leaves

² Information from the Catholic Media Centre, London.

his Protestant wife in order to become a priest.

The claim that Wilkie Collins was indifferent to religion and did not believe in God must be questioned in the light of the few direct comments he made, and the concern he shows in his novels to subvert evangelical thought on specifically religious grounds. The misconceptions surrounding his beliefs can be traced to a telling observation in an essay by the Reverend James H. Rigg:

A century ago, a deist might be a Bishop, and a Unitarian stand high in preferment in the Anglican Church. But things are different now. Then, out of Methodism, there was scarcely any earnestness extant, whether in religion or aught else. Now, the world is full of energy, and the age teems with earnest spirits. Now, sincerity, whether in error or in truth, for evil or for good, is counted the 'one thing needful,' and earnestness is rated as heroism. (Rigg, 122)

Could it be perhaps that Collins was accused of irreligiousness, not for what he did or did not believe, but for a supposed lack of earnestness adduced from his habitual reticence on the subject? And could it also be that subsequent generations have made similar assumptions about him, through a misplaced assurance that anyone of serious beliefs in mid-nineteenth century England was only too anxious to share their convictions in pamphlet form?

Collins may have been reticent about his faith, but he was as devout as he was liberal, as his writing demonstrates. He believed himself in the didactic power of fiction, writing of Dickens in 1886 as one of the great teachers: "My own ideas cordially recognize any system of education the direct tendency of which is to make us better Christians" ("Books Necessary," 24). The few critics who accept that Collins did retain recognisably Christian beliefs in his adult life, would probably place him in the Broad Church tradition. But this is not entirely helpful, in that such a definition encompasses a broad spectrum of beliefs. It is tempting to define Broad Church belief in negative terms, for instance by setting it against the more definitive evangelicalism. But such tenuous definitions leave more liberal thinkers open to false comparisons, such as occur when Collins is called a freethinker. His letters to Edward Pigott in the 1850s reveal a reluctance to discuss points of doctrine simply because he feels such debate to be damaging to a common belief in Christ as Saviour and as the Son of God. These were the central tenets of his religion, and as he wrote to Pigott, "I hate controversies on paper, almost more than I hate controversies in talk" (Letter, Monday [16 February] 1852, Pigott Collection). But as has been seen, he was more aware of contemporary doctrinal debate than is often credited, and where he does raise a particular issue he is quite ready to offer his own opinion.

In 1860 Jowett (303-4) argued:

The same fact cannot be true in religion when seen by the light of faith and untrue in science when looked at through the medium of evidence and experiment. ... As the idea of nature enlarges, the idea of revelation also enlarges; it was a temporary misunderstanding which severed them. ... It may hereafter appear as natural to the

majority of mankind to see the providence of God in the order of the world as it once was to appeal to interruptions of it.

This readiness to mediate faith through scientific discovery would have appealed to Collins, who believed that faith was severely tested by any outrage on common sense. But he disapproved most strongly of the rationalist idea that religion should give way to a scientific or secularist view of the world. In *Heart and Science*, the ironically named Mrs Galilee has a nervous breakdown, because she has placed her faith in science rather than in religion. At the moment of collapse (309), she cries: "'Will somebody pray for me? ... I don't know how to pray for myself? Where is God?'" This outcry was surely not written by a materialist with no belief in life beyond the physical, as Reeve would have us believe.

As Collins himself began to feel old, one of his worthy characters, old Benjamin in *The Law and the Lady*, launches an indignant protest against new ideas. In a satirical outburst that is not only out of character, but has nothing whatsoever to do with the plot, Benjamin betrays his creator's own aversion to the "cant" of materialists and freethinkers who believe in the all sufficiency of science in explaining the human condition:

let's hear the new professor, the man who has been behind the scenes at Creation, and knows to a T how the world was made, and how long it took to make it. There's the other fellow, too ... the bran new philosopher who considers the consolations of religion in the light of harmless playthings, and who is kind enough to say that he might have been all the happier if he could only have been childish enough to play with them himself. Oh, the new ideas, the new ideas, what consoling, elevating, beautiful discoveries have been made by the new ideas! (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 321)

The jab at agnostic thinkers who concede the positive value of religious faith, while holding it to be practically untenable, is particularly topical. T.H. Huxley for one was using just such arguments in the 1870s, and was to declare in his essay "Agnosticism" 1889, the year of Collins's death, that:

No man who has studied history, or even attended to the occurrences of everyday life, can doubt the enormous practical value of trust and faith; but as little will he be inclined to deny that this practical value has not the least relation to the reality of the objects of that trust and faith. (Huxley, vol.5, 214)

This was emphatically not Collins's position.

Approving of scientific advance provided that it did not displace religion, Collins was not usually willing to discuss the details of his own belief. Quite simply, he wished to avoid any damaging appropriation of religious discourse that might serve to alienate fellow Christians, as he felt evangelical and Catholic dogmas did. His faith was individualised in the sense that he did not attach himself to any particular group, refusing to define himself in terms of a prescribed set of doctrines. He was a liberal Christian, in the sense that he avoided fundamentalist reliance on the Old Testament whilst maintaining a personal commitment to God, particularly through the teaching and ministry

of Christ on earth. In *Miss or Mrs?* (79), a short novel written towards the end of his life, Collins allows an old woman to reprimand her young companion's fear of death, in words that might stand as a testament to his own faith: "God has been good to us. We are in his hands. If we know that, we know enough."

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Yes and No: Problems of Closure in Collins's "*I Say No*"

K.A.Kale

Relatively little critical attention has been paid to Wilkie Collins's "*I Say No*". For example, Catherine Peters summarises it as "a mystery story, with no message beyond a practical warning that it is best to tell children the truth about their parents" (404). She goes on to say that "It eventually comes out that ... (the) death was suicide, not murder" (405). Ian Ousby states that "the central figure is involved in a mystery which the officials of society have failed to solve and have conspired to forget" (134). However, a careful reading of "*I Say No*" reveals a solution of the mystery which is different from Peters's, and which provides an explanation of why the officials in the novel could not be blamed for their failure to convict the fictional murderer. Sue Lonoff states about the novels of Collins in general that "He also took pride in tying up the various strands of a plot to resolve all outstanding difficulties, a practice that mitigated against a subtle or problematic denouement" (101). The solution to the mystery in "*I Say No*" represents a significant exception to this generalization.

Two of the themes which recur in Collins's work are the limitations of the legal system in punishing malefactors, and the question of interpretation of evidence.

Many of Collins's villains are punished other than through the operation of the law: for example, Fosco in *The Woman in White* and Ablewhite in *The Moonstone* are killed unlawfully, and Lydia Gwilt in *Armada* commits suicide. This could be interpreted either as social commentary on the legal system, or, more broadly, as a commentary on the limitations of any system of rationality.

The question of interpretation of evidence also crops up repeatedly in Collins's work. In the Prologue to *The Moonstone*, Herncastle's cousin writes, after catching Herncastle with a dagger in his hand:

If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward. I have not only no proof that he killed the two men at the door; I cannot even declare that he killed the third man inside—for I cannot say that my own eyes saw the deed committed... Let our relatives, on either side, form their own opinion on what I have written... (38)

The framing of this narrative within a Collins novel leads the reader to believe the moral evidence of the writer, in the absence of legal proof. We are also told by Herncastle's cousin that "[t]he deity predicted certain disaster to

the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the sacred gem" (34), and that "I am influenced by a certain superstition of my own in this matter. It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality..." (38). Again, the placing of these predictions within a novel leads the reader to believe them, even though the characters in the book have no rational reason to do so.

In *Armada*, Allan Armadale has a dream (141-142), which is interpreted by Ozias Midwinter as being a supernatural warning of future events (151). The reader gives credence to this interpretation solely because of the framing of the dream within a novel.

The solution of the mystery in "*I Say No*" provides a continuation of the two themes of the limitations of the legal system, and of questions of interpretation caused by the framing of events within a work of fiction.

In "*I Say No*", James Brown, the heroine's father, is found with his throat cut in the Hand-in-Hand inn. The medical evidence at the inquest is that "the wound could not have been inflicted, in the act of suicide, by the hand of the deceased person" (100). There are two suspects, Miles Mirabel, and Mrs Rook. In an attempt to solve the mystery, the hero of the novel, Alban Morris, tracks down James Brown's lover, Sara Jethro, and discovers that she had turned down his proposal of marriage, thus giving him a motive for committing suicide.

However, Collins misleads the reader. Cecilia (a friend of the heroine) introduces Alban Morris's discovery with the words: "Mr Morris has seen Miss Jethro, and has discovered that Mr Mirabel has been wrongly suspected of a dreadful crime" (261). Alban says, in his narrative: "He died, despairing, by his own hand—and you knew it?" (266). The narrator states: "Emily closed the pages which told her that her father had died by his own hand" (267).

Now while the discovery of a motive for suicide may be sufficient to establish a "reasonable doubt" in the minds of a murder jury, it does not by itself provide conclusive proof that a death actually was suicide rather than murder; and certainly cannot overrule medical evidence that suicide was a physical impossibility. So in this case, Collins appears to have misled the casual reader into wrongly accepting the solution that his heroine accepts.

Thus James Brown was murdered after all, either by Miles Mirabel or Mrs Rook. The text does not provide conclusive evidence against either of them. However, in the final chapter of the novel, it is revealed that Miles Mirabel has died (271), and Mrs Rook has made "a most remarkable recovery. It is the first case on record of any person getting over such an injury as she has received" (272). If we assume that a Collins mystery must have a

determinate solution, then it follows that the (constructed) author of "*I Say No*" knows who killed James Brown, even though he has not chosen to embed any conclusive evidence against that character in the text. In the absence of any other selection principle, we have to use poetic justice—the convention that the villain is always punished. So Mirabel, who dies, is guilty, and Mrs Rook, who survives, is innocent. In this case, as in the case of Herncastle's guilt in *The Moonstone*, and in the case of Midwinter's belief that Allan Armadale's dream has a supernatural explanation, the reader has moral evidence but no legal proof. However, in this case as in the others, the framing of the events within a novel gives credence to the moral evidence. The crucial difference is that in the other two novels, the arguments rely only upon the framing supplying relevance to the events: that is, the reader assumes that the events would not be mentioned unless they were important. The argument for Mirabel's guilt, on the other hand, relies crucially not just on relevance but also upon the moral order which may be posited in a fictional universe: poetic justice is here—uniquely—not just a moral luxury, as it is in other mysteries, but the only possible means of assigning guilt to the murderer.

By the very nature of the text, the indeterminacy about the identity of Brown's murderer can be resolved by the reader who is prepared to accept an extraneous assumption about mystery stories, but not by a reader who is not prepared to accept such an assumption, nor by the characters in the story itself. Thus Collins raises in this book questions about the nature of the reading process which in some ways are as deep as the philosophical issues raised by the dream in *Armadale*.

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Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates: A Postscript

P.D. Edwards

In his article "Wilkie Collins, Edmund Yates and *The World*" (*Wilkie Collins Society Journal* 4 (1984) 5-17), Andrew Gasson documented the long friendship between Collins and Yates, noting a number of effusive tributes to Collins in Yates's weekly newspaper *The World* (along with some unfavourable or lukewarm notices of particular novels or plays). The culminating tribute was the obituary in *The World* on 25 September 1889, two days after Collins's death. On Collins's side the warmest declaration of friendship came in a letter of 9 June 1883 thanking Yates for the eulogy "Letters to Eminent Persons, LXXII, Mr. Wilkie Collins," which had appeared in *The World* three days earlier. Gasson was troubled, however, by "apparent inconsistencies" in the relationship. Despite their long intimacy Collins dedicated none of his novels to Yates, as he did to most of his closest friends, and none of Yates's own numerous books was listed in the sale catalogue of Collins's library, not even any gift or dedication copies such as might have been expected from a close friend. (In fact none of Yates's books was dedicated to Collins.) Collins's only known contributions to *The World* were *The Fallen Leaves* and a shorter tale *The Clergyman's Confession*, and it is unlikely that he was ever on the staff of *The World*, although the entry on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* states that he was. Yates, according to Gasson, was the first critic consistently to apply ambivalent terms like "weird," "eerie," "grotesque" and "fate" to Collins's works, and he gave Collins "remarkably scant attention" in his *Recollections and Experiences* published in 1884.

One of the apparent "inconsistencies" noted by Gasson can be easily explained. Neither of the two articles in *The World* containing the terms that Gasson regards as ambivalent (or implicitly disparaging) was in fact by Yates. The author of one of them, "Mr. Wilkie Collins in Gloucester-Place," was probably, though by no means certainly, Bernard H. Becker.¹ That it was not Yates himself is clear from his later statement that only one of the "Celebrities

¹ Becker was identified as the journalist primarily responsible for the "Celebrities at Home" in an obviously well-informed article, "Journalism in England." (The reference to Becker is on page 7 of an offprint of this article which is among the Edmund Yates Papers in the University of Queensland Library.) Three volumes of selections from the "Celebrities" were published by *The World* in 1877, 1878, and 1879, but no authors were identified. This suggests that they were by a number of different hands.

at Home" series to which it belonged was his own work.² The author of the other, the eulogy of Collins in the series "Letters to Eminent Persons," which appeared under the pseudonym "Kosmos," was Thomas Hay Sweet Escott, Yates's right-hand man on *The World* and, since 1882, editor of *The Fortnightly*.³

What Gasson describes as the "mystery" of Yates's apparent "disregard" of Collins in his *Recollections* is less easy to solve. But a letter from him to Yates among the Edmund Yates Papers in the University of Queensland Library at least makes it clear that, if Collins had read Yates's *Recollections*, he had not been hurt by their "scant mention" of himself. Written only a few months after the publication of the *Recollections*, the letter is the shortest in the collection—even with the postscript half-apologizing for its brevity—but it unmistakably exudes the comfortable affection born of the youthful camaraderie between the two men. It is a simple message of congratulation to Yates on his early release from Holloway Prison to which, as Gasson notes, he was committed for a criminal libel in January 1885.

10 March 1885

My dear Edmund
Hooray!
Ever yours—
W.C.

P.S.

You will be overwhelmed with letters. Mine shall not bore you.

Collins gave further evidence of his unabated friendship for Yates when he attended the large public dinner held at the Criterion on 30 May 1885 to celebrate Yates's recovery from the illness that had struck him down during his imprisonment (*The World*, 3 Jun 1885, 16). Collins, as *The World* itself had remarked some years before, was a "modest genius," who preferred to avoid such gatherings ("Great Unknowns"). Yates of course knew that Collins had special reasons for living as privately as possible, and this in itself may partly account for the paucity of reference to him in Yates's *Recollections*. Characteristically, however, Yates was the first to hint at Collins's "secret life" once he was in his grave, describing the suggestion in one posthumous memoir that the "dinginess" of Collins's house was probably owing to "the absence of womankind" as "a startling statement to Mr. Collins's intimates" ("One Who Knew Him").

Another item in the Edmund Yates Papers bearing on the relationship

² Yates told an interviewer that the only article in the "Celebrities at Home" series that he himself had written was the one on Henry Irving, in *The World* 20 Sep 1876: 3-4 ("A Talk with Mr. Edmund Yates," 71-2).

³ Escott is identified as "Kosmos" in both "Journalism in England" and in a letter from Yates to Escott dated 13 Jan 1882 (British Library Add MS 58796).

between Collins and Yates is a letter from Edward F. Smyth Pigott to Yates written on 5 October 1889, just after Collins's death.

I have seen, with some surprise, my name among the members of a Committee formed, at the instance of Mr. Harry Quilter, to promote a memorial to Wilkie. I had never heard of any such project; still less had I been asked to join any such Committee.

It would be ungracious to object to an act of, I daresay, well-meaning courtesy, or to any proposal, however mistaken, to do honour to our dear lamented friend. But I am anxious to confide to you my intimate conviction that nothing could have pleased Wilkie less,—not to say, nothing could have annoyed him more—than the anticipation of being wrangled over in his grave, or of provoking grudges after his death, which his simplicity and sincerity of character had always kept at a distance whilst he lived.

His work was the only monument he cared for; and he was the last of men to claim the honour of a medallion in a crypt.

Pigott, perhaps best known nowadays as the Examiner of Plays savaged by Bernard Shaw for his philistinism (Holroyd, 333-5), had been one of Collins's most intimate friends since the early 1850s, when Collins was a frequent contributor to his paper *The Leader*; and he was also an old and close friend of Yates.⁴ It was clearly his opinions that prompted what Gasson calls Yates's "protest" at Quilter's proposal for a memorial in the next number of *The World*—a protest that doubtless helped ensure the miserable failure of the appeal ("What the World Says").⁵

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⁴ There are three letters from him to Yates among the Edmund Yates Papers, all bespeaking his warm affection for Yates and his wife.

⁵ The *Daily Telegraph* also denounced the proposal in a leader, possibly by (or instigated by) Yates's friend George Augustus Sala. Less than £400 was subscribed and the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's refused permission, on moral grounds, for the erection of a memorial. See Peters, 433.

Last Things: Materials Relating to Collins in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill

Graham Law

Introduction

A.P. Watt was the first successful professional literary agent and Wilkie Collins was among his first paying client authors.¹ After the experience of having his two most recent novels syndicated in the provincial newspapers by Tillotsons of Bolton and Leaders of Sheffield (Law 1997, 257-9), Collins responded to a circular from Watt in December 1881 and asked him to take over the arrangements for the serial publication of the novel on which he was then working, *Heart and Science* (Peters 393-4). Watt continued to conduct most of Collins's literary business throughout the 1880s. By the middle of the decade he had become a close personal friend, and was appointed Collins's literary executor on 1 January 1887 (Letter to Watt, *Collections*, 13). With Collins's death on 23 September 1889, Watt had to deal for the first time with the affairs of a deceased client, and went on to play a major role in the disposing of Collins's literary estate.

A good number of the documents recording Watt's work on Collins's behalf have survived. Many of Collins's letters to Watt dating from 1881-9 were until very recently held in private hand, though Catherine Peters was able to consult them while preparing to write *The King of Inventors*, and several are cited in Chs. 22-24.² The bulk of Watt's business records concerning the Collins account are held in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library. Most of these materials fall into two distinct groups: (1) documents relating to Watt's efforts to syndicate Collins's new novels in the weekly press from 1881-6; (2) documents from September 1889 to March 1890 relating to the sorting out of the estate. Again Peters makes extensive use of these materials in the later chapters of her biography. There is also a much smaller number of documents from the Collins account contained among the extensive A.P. Watt papers now held in the General and Literary Manuscripts Collection of the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These were not available to

¹ On Watt's agency generally, see Bonham-Carter Ch. 8, Hepburn Ch. 5, Gillies, and Rubinstein; on Collins as client, see Peters Chs. 22-4, and Law Forthcoming Ch. 3.

² The letters have now been donated anonymously to Pembroke College, Cambridge, and will be transcribed in the forthcoming edition of the letters of Wilkie Collins, edited by William Baker and William Clarke.

Peters and, as far as I am aware, they have not so far been referred to in the literature. It is the aim of the present short paper to offer a description of those materials and a discussion of their significance.

The Watt papers at Chapel Hill were purchased in three lots between 1984 and 1990 from the firm of A.P. Watt & Co. through a London bookseller. They were fully processed and available for consultation by 1994, and there is now a comprehensive index of the materials available over the World Wide Web.³ The bulk of the materials belong to Private Account Files extending from around 1884 to 1885, which include about 300,000 documents relating to over 2,500 authors, in 540 boxes occupying over 250 linear feet of shelf space. Documents in this series were arranged by the firm in nearly 10,000 numbered "packets." This arrangement has been maintained by the Wilson Library, with the contents of each packet now stored in a folder bearing the original packet number. A folder may contain material on a single work by a single author, multiple works by a single author, or multiple works by multiple authors; in addition, material relating to a single work may appear in multiple folders. However, the detailed nature of the index to a large extent makes up for the uncertainty created by this idiosyncratic organisation. Among this cornucopia, the materials relating to the Collins account probably amount only to seventeen documents in two folders.⁴ They date from December 1887 to March 1890, and are described in detail in the Inventory below.

All but one of these documents (Item [16]) relate to the various serial and volume appearances of Collins's last short story "The First Officer's Confession" or his last novel *Blind Love*, which only the most fanatical of Collins's supporters would claim to be of outstanding literary merit. Nevertheless, the documents at Chapel Hill are of literary interest in at least two senses. First, they provide one or two missing pieces in the puzzle of the bibliography of Collins's later works, which are detailed in the notes; and secondly, they provide interesting evidence of an important change taking place in the late Victorian literary market-place to be clarified in the Discussion. Given these two emphases, this paper can perhaps be seen as a post-post-scriptum to two previous essays on Collins and Victorian publishing practice by the same author (Law 1995 & 1997).

³ Accessible at <http://www.unc.edu/lib/mssinv/dir/a/A.P._Watt_and_Company>.

⁴ The index to the Watt Collection indicates that Folders 467.01, 467.04 and 467.06 also belong to the Wilkie Collins account, but, on inspection, they prove to contain materials relating to the account of G.K. Chesterton which include references to a Miss D.E. Collins.

Inventory

Folder 2.11

[1] Agreement (two-sided sheet, German-language, printed with hand-written insertions) between A. P. Watt [APW], as literary executor of the estate of Wilkie Collins [WC], and Freiherr von Tauchnitz for the firm of Bernhard Tauchnitz in Leipzig, for sale of right to publish a Continental edition of *Blind Love*, for the sum of £80, dated 20 Jan 1890⁵

Folder 6.3

[2] Offprint of partly-set copy of *Bow Bells Weekly* (NS 1, 6 Jan 1888, 14 pages) containing on pp. 1-3 the first installment (Chs. 1-3) of "The First Officer's Confession" by WC

[3] Stationer's Hall single-sheet Memorandum of registration of "The First Officer's Confession" by WC as Book, dated 21 Dec 1887

[4] Single-sheet invoice for 1d to one copy of *Bow Bells Weekly* containing the first installment of "The First Officer's Confession" by WC, from APW to Chatto & Windus, dated 21 Dec 1887⁶

[5] Draft MS memorandum of agreement in three folio sheets, annotated, between Henry Dicks on behalf of the firm of John Dicks and WC, for sale of English-language newspaper serial rights to new novel of 104,00 words, to appear in *Bow Bells Weekly* beginning on the first Saturday in July 1888, for the sum of £1000, dated Nov 1887

[6] MS memorandum of agreement as in [5], but with serial to appear in "one of Messrs. Dicks's publications" beginning on the first Saturday in September 1888, dated 2 Feb 1888

[7] ALS from Henry Dicks to APW, accompanying Item [6], and concerning the date of publication of the first installment of the novel, dated 2 Feb 1888⁷

[8] TS memorandum, with MS insertions initialled by APW, of agreement between the proprietor of the *New York World* and APW, for purchase of North American serial rights of *Blind Love*, for the sum of £300, dated 11 Feb 1889⁸

⁵ See Item [15] below, with an earlier date. There are also three other letters from Tauchnitz to Watt concerning this transaction in the Berg Collection, dated 9 & 19 Oct 1889, and undated but stamped as received 22 Jan 1890, the last of which clearly accompanied the agreement. The price was reduced from £90 to £80 in the light of the diminished sales of Collins's later novels (see Peters 433).

⁶ "The First Officer's Confession" appeared in two parts in *Bow Bells Weekly* (New Series, Nos. 1-2, Jan 6-13, 1888), following its publication entire on 24 Dec 1887 in the *New York Spirit of the Times*, where a Christmas story by Collins had appeared annually from 1876. All but one of these also appeared in British periodicals, usually at Christmas time, including literary monthlies like Chatto & Windus's *Belgravia* and Macmillan's *English Illustrated Magazine*, metropolitan weeklies like the *World*, *Pictorial World* and *All the Year Round*, or syndicated in provincial weeklies by Tillotsons of Bolton or Leaders of Sheffield. Eight of the twelve were retitled and reprinted in the three-volume *Little Novels* (1887). "The First Officer's Confession" itself did not appear in book form until reprinted in Thompson in 1995.

⁷ Given the dates, the work intended must be either Collins's last novel *Blind Love* itself, or one of the two unpublished stories which were eventually incorporated into it, "Iris" and "The Lord Harry." "Iris" recycled episodes from Collins's 1882 play *Rank and Riches*, and was abandoned as unsatisfactory no later than summer 1888, while Collins wrote to Watt describing the idea behind "The Lord Harry" at the beginning of December 1887 (Peters 427-8). No novel by Collins in fact appeared in any of Dicks' papers (see Discussion). As Items [9]-[11] suggest, *Blind Love* itself was serialised in the *Illustrated London News*, in 26 weekly parts from 6 Jul to 28 Dec 1889; the novel ran in the same parts but with a fortnight's delay in the American edition of the same journal, i.e. from 20 Jul 1889 to 11 Jan 1890. Presumably because of the publicity created by Collins's death, the proprietors of the *Illustrated London News* also took the opportunity to run the novel again in its cheap sister publication, the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, in the same twenty-six parts from 12 Oct 1889 to 5 Apr 1890.

⁸ The novel appeared in the *New York World* Sunday edition in 26 parts from 30 Jun to 29 Dec 1889, with a break on 29 Oct marking the Collins's death, when a synopsis of the story

[9] Stationer's Hall single-sheet Memorandum of registration of first serial installment of *Blind Love* by WC as Book, date 21 Jun 1889

[10, 11] Two single-sheet invoices for 6d to one copy of *Illustrated London News* containing the first installment of *Blind Love* by WC, from APW to Chatto & Windus, and to Wm. Isbister, both dated 21 Jun 1889

[12] MS note from Francis Carr Beard, physician, to APW, informing him of Collins' condition following his stroke on June 30, and of the novelist's consequent inability to complete in the near future the current serial number of *Blind Love*, dated 17 Aug 1889⁹

[13] MS note from NOPS' Electrotpe Agency to APW, confirming purchase of German-language translation and publication rights to *Blind Love* for £60 on behalf of unnamed client, dated 31 Aug 1889¹⁰

[14] MS agreement between APW, as literary executor of the estate of Wilkie Collins, and Chatto & Windus, for sale of the residual publication rights to *Blind Love*, for the sum of £500, dated 30 Sep 1889¹¹

[15] ALS from Tauchnitz Junior [Freiherv von Tauchnitz] to unnamed recipient [APW], stating that the Tauchnitz edition of *Blind Love* would be set from the volume edition rather than from serial numbers in the *Illustrated London News*, dated 24 Oct 1889

[16] ALS from Chatto & Windus to APW concerning the purchase for £60 of both the stereo plates *A Rogue's Life* from Richard Bentley and the residual copyright of the work from Collins's executors, the sum to be divided equally between the two, dated 24 Oct 1889¹²

[17] ALS from Librairie Hachette to APW, offering to purchase the exclusive French-language translation rights to *Blind Love*, bearing the annotation "Accepted" in Watt's hand, dated 14 Mar 1890¹³

thus far was published instead. This was slightly different from the 27-part plan detailed in the agreement with Watt, although the intention behind the plan was preserved—see the reproduction of and discussion concerning the agreement on the following pages.

⁹ Collins had completed the story as far as Ch. 48, the second of three chapters that would form the nineteenth number, to run in the *Illustrated London News* on 9 Nov 1889. That August, through the agency of Watt, Walter Besant was asked by Collins to complete the remaining chapters, which he did using Collins's detailed scenario (Besant; Peters 428-30).

¹⁰ According to a personal communication from Andrew Gasson, the novel appeared in German in two volumes as *Blinde Liebe* from Deutsche Verlags-Unstalt in Stuttgart in 1890; no serial publication in German has been located.

¹¹ *Blind Love* appeared in three volumes from Chatto & Windus in January 1890. In the Berg Collection there is also a letter from Andrew Chatto to Watt, dated 25 Sep 1889 and obviously accompanying an earlier draft of the agreement. Watt promptly agreed to honour an understanding between Collins and Chatto concerning the sale of the copyright and the price.

¹² *A Rogue's Life* first appeared in five parts in *Household Words* (1 Mar to 29 Mar 1856), was reprinted in one volume by Richard Bentley in his Empire Library series in Apr 1879, and appeared in one volume from Chatto & Windus in late 1889 (Gasson 133). Five letters from Richard Bentley to Watt concerning the transaction, dated 7, 14, 21, 28 Oct and 1 Nov 1889, are held in the Berg Collection. Andrew Chatto wished to add the stray volume, along with others whose copyrights were retained by Smith, Elder, to the various uniform editions of Collins's works then published by Chatto and Windus.

Also contained in Packet 6.3 is an ALS from Chatto & Windus to A.P. Watt, unconnected with the Collins account, and confirming purchase of residual copyright, after serial publication by Tillotsons, of William Clark Russell's latest novel, dated 25 October 1889.

¹³ In a personal communication, Paul Lewis confirms that the novel appeared in Paris in 1892 in French, translated by Fanny Le Breton under the pseudonym "Hephell", as *C'était écrit!* from Librairie Hachette (publishers of around a dozen of Collins's previous works—see Gasson, 73). The Berg Collection contains a receipt (with respect to funds received for the French translation rights to *Blind Love*) from Henry Bartley for £27 with an accompanying letter to Watt, both dated 18 March 1890. This indicates that the sum paid by Librairie Hachette was £30, before the subtraction of Watt's standard commission of 10%.



2. Paternoster Square,

LONDON, E.C.

Memorandum of Agreement made this eleventh day of February 1889 between the Proprietor of "The New York World" of New York of the one part, and Alexander Pollock Watt of 2 Paternoster Square in the city of London of the other part.

1. The "New York World" agrees to buy the exclusive serial use for ^{North Am.} America in a new story to be written by Wilkie Collins, on the following terms:

1. The said story to commence publication in England in the first Saturday in July of this year.
2. That the said story shall run for 26 weeks - consecutively- publishing each week an instalment of not less than 4000 words.
3. That the "New York World" shall have the privilege of publishing the first 12 instalments of the story one week in advance of its publication in "The Illustrated London News", in this country, and three weeks in advance of the reprint of the story in the American edition of the "Illustrated London News" published in America. After the publication of the 12th instalment "The New York World" to divide the next five weekly instalments as published in "The Illustrated London & News" into six parts, and thereafter to continue publishing simultaneously with the "News"
4. Duplicate proofs to be delivered to "The New York World" at their New York office 8 days in advance of the date of publication as arranged.
5. If the publication of any instalment in "The New York World" be postponed (without fault on the part of the purchaser of this story) by publication in any other paper in the United States, then the agreement regarding this story to be at an end; and if at such time part payment shall have been made, then that payment shall be returned.
6. Subject to the above "The New York World" agree to pay to the said A.P. Watt the sum of £150 on the receipt by them of the thirteenth instalment of the said story; and a further £150 on the receipt of the final instalment of the said story.
7. A.P. Watt guarantees that no new story by Wilkie Collins shall be published in newspapers before June 30th of this year; also that the said

story shall not appear in authorized book form in the ^{or Canada} United States before its publication shall have been completed in the "New York World".

Item [8] Agreement with the proprietors of the New York World
(Reproduced with the permission of the Wilson Library)

Discussion

Produced, as it were, "in the valley of the shadow of death" with the minds of those involved on weightier matters, Collins's "last things" underwent a relatively simple and straightforward early publication process. This is clear if we compare the case of *Blind Love* with that of two other novels of the 1880s, *Heart and Science* (1884) and *The Evil Genius* (1886). In the case of *Heart and Science*, on which Collins placed great hopes for the revival of his fading literary reputation (Peters 393-4), Watt obviously pulled out all the stops to impress his newest and most famous client.¹⁴ At this early stage the roles of the "agent" and "syndicator" overlapped significantly, and Watt needed to compete head to head with firms like Tillotsons (Law Forthcoming, Ch. 3). With *The Evil Genius*, Watt obviously felt he had already established his case and was happy to sell world serial rights for a substantial sum to Tillotsons who laboured mightily to recoup their outlay.¹⁵ Nevertheless, *Blind Love* does provide a clear example of the range of publication modes (periodical against volume) and locations (metropolitan versus provincial, national versus international) available in the late Victorian period, and of the way in which they tended to be bound together. The issue of a novel in three volumes in London had to be timed precisely to coincide with the conclusion of the serial, often in a range of different journals. In addition, before the Chace Act of 1891, if serialisation of a novel by a British author concluded first in America, the entire British copyright was at risk, while if the authorised American serialisation began more than a week or so after the British there was time for pirates to jump in. And, of course with a slight delay, major British periodicals also circulated in America and the Colonies, adding to the complexity of the arrangements. The agreement between Watt and the *New York World* (Item [8]) makes an interesting illustration of this process (see reproduction), with its precise timing to protect the American journal's priority against the US edition of the *Illustrated London News* or the pirates or premature authorized volume publication, while all the time making sure the British copyright is not threatened.¹⁶ Clearly the growing

¹⁴ In addition to completing existing arrangements for publication in the metropolitan monthly *Belgravia* and *Frank Leslie's Magazine* in New York, Watt personally negotiated the novel's simultaneous serialisation in at least ten provincial newspapers, plus the Conservative London weekly *England* (Law 1997, 248-9).

¹⁵ Paying £1300, the Bolton firm arranged publication in at least ten British weeklies including the metropolitan *South London Press*, in around eight American regional papers including the *Chicago Daily News*, and in the *Sydney Mail* among other Colonial placements (Law 1997, 251-2).

¹⁶ Interestingly, despite this experience, Watt ran into trouble in 1892 when Harpers in New York, to whom he had sold American serial rights to Walter Besant's *Rebel Queen*, threatened to take legal action because their copyright was being infringed by the circulation of the serial

complexity of agreements between authors and publishers and the rise of the professional literary agent go hand in hand.

Although the Collins documents at Chapel Hill add a number of interesting details concerning agencies and prices, the only new bibliographical data concerns the serial publication of *Blind Love* in the US. However, the most striking piece of original information to emerge is the discovery that an unnamed novel by Collins, presumably either *Blind Love* itself or one of the two stories eventually incorporated into it (see note 7), was scheduled to appear as a serial in the second half of 1888 in one of Henry Dicks's popular penny journals. The agreement was being drafted around the time Collins's final short story "The First Officer's Confession" was to appear in Dicks's *Bow Bells Weekly*, and this was the journal first suggested, though an equally likely venue was *Reynolds Weekly Newspaper*, which seems to have been one of Collins's favourite papers (Clarke, 1). Though it is unclear why the Collins serial did not in fact appear in one of Dicks's periodicals, three possibilities suggest themselves. The two versions of the agreement with Dicks (Items [5] & [6]) show the scheduled appearance of the first number of the unnamed novel being pushed back from July to September 1888, while in an annotation on the second version and in the accompanying letter (Item [7]) Dicks seeks to delay publication further until after the prorogation of Parliament, when supplies of political news would thin out, possibly as late as November. This uncertainty, which would have created difficulties with the arrangements for serial publication elsewhere and for subsequent volume publication, may have encouraged Watt to drop the connection. A more simple explanation is that the rapidly aging Collins could not get copy ready in time even for this postponed schedule, and that Dicks canceled the contract. As Peters (427) has shown, illness forced the author in early 1889 to request a time extension from the *Illustrated London News*, the prestigious sixpenny weekly where *Blind Love* eventually appeared as a serial from July of that year. Finally, it is conceivable that there was a disagreement over the content of the novel between the Bohemian author and the popular newspaper proprietor. Something similar occurred slightly later between another Watt client, the Scottish novelist William Black, and Edward Lloyd, proprietor of *Lloyd's Weekly*. In mid 1889 Lloyd agreed to purchase for £1000 the British serial rights for Black's *Donald Ross of Heimra*, to commence in his flagship weekly at the beginning of 1891. But when Black submitted the first third of the manuscript in mid 1890, Lloyd complained that the work contained too much vernacular and not enough incident and refused to publish. By then parallel serial publication had already

in the US edition of the *Illustrated London News*, to which Watt had sold British serial rights (Folder 6.3, Watt Collection).

been arranged in Australasia and America, and Watt was left struggling at the last minute to find a suitable alternative London venue (Folder 5.9, Watt Collection), though he came up with an imaginative solution in the Wednesday Supplement of the *Daily Chronicle*.

As I argue elsewhere in greater detail (Law Forthcoming, Ch.3), from around the mid 1870s the dominant mode of initial British periodical publication (whether measured in terms of the number of works issued, the size of the audience reached, or the remuneration offered to authors) shifted from serialization in single monthly metropolitan literary magazines like the *Cornhill* or *Belgravia*, to syndication in groups of provincial weekly papers with complementary circulations. By the mid 1890s, the initiative had once more returned to the London press, but this time in the form not of the literary monthly, but of a variety of metropolitan weeklies. These included both the more expensive and prestigious middle-class weeklies, notably established Society or pictorial journals like the *Whitehall Review* or the *Illustrated London News*, and the cheap popular weeklies, whether the older radical papers like *Reynold's* and *Lloyd's*, or the newer Conservative ones like *England* or the *People*; each of these examples began to feature serial fiction during the 1880s. But, in the long term, the most influential were the first generation of mass-circulation entertainment weeklies led by George Newnes's *Tit-Bits*, which began to feature serials from around 1890. This second shift thus contributed to an even more rapid commodification of fictional content and form than had taken place under the provincial syndicators (Law Forthcoming, Ch.6). Already by the early 1890s Watt wielded enormous literary influence at almost all levels in the metropolitan periodical press; the success of his role as a professional agent was probably in part consequence and in part cause of this shift back in publishing power. Collins was one of the first major Victorian novelists to exploit successfully the constraints of the weekly serial, in Dickens's *All the Year Round* in the early 1860s; in the late 1870s he was among the first to sell his work to the provincial syndicators; the publication history of Collins's "last things," through the connection with Watt, provides a further early indication of changes in progress.

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Reviews

Lillian Nayder, *Wilkie Collins*. (Twayne's English Authors Series.) New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997. pp. xxi + 176. (ISBN 0-8057-7059-3).

This volume is a timely guide for the "beginning" student of Collins. Although several substantial biographies of Collins have appeared since the 1970s, critical comment has until recently been surprisingly sparse. As information about the writer's somewhat eccentric domestic arrangements began to emerge, the sensations of Collins's own life became a focus of comment and were used to explain the peculiarities of the novels. Lillian Nayder therefore understandably declines to discuss the novels in terms of Collins's life, providing a succinct biography at the start instead. Her purpose, she says, is to discuss the novels thematically, downplaying the over-neat patterns of achievement and decline that have been keyed in with his oscillations between his two "wives," and his supposed descent into final illness and addiction. Her book offers a new focus on Collins, providing a mine of useful information, for example, on matters such as the novels' legal and publishing contexts.

In order to foreground the themes of race, class and gender she discerns in the novels, Nayder sets out to link well-known works (*The Moonstone*, *The Woman in White*, *Armadale*, *No Name*) with less-known, more didactic ones (*The Dead Secret*, *Man and Wife* and *Heart and Science*), focusing on what she sees as Collins's ideological aims. This leads to her central thesis: that Collins's apparently radical social criticism invariably ends in retreat. Despite her evident enthusiasm for Collins, she sadly concludes that Collins has "blunted his critique," "scapegoat[ed]" his characters, or "reinscribe[d] the gender [class or race] norms he criticizes." While she demonstrates that Collins was to some degree concerned with social issues, and while this does provide a formula for grasping Collins's work as a whole, it is impossible to avoid the sense that Collins is being asked by Nayder to meet some fairly anachronistic demands.

This is a pity. One wishes she had not allowed her enthusiasm for Collins, and her careful research into matters such as the mid-century debate on married women's property rights, to be strait-jacketed by modern political imperatives. What I missed was the *experience* of reading Collins, the textual details that remain in the memory. The most striking aspects of his novels are not his plots, which are impossible to remember (but which Nayder does outline for us very competently), nor indictments of class/sex/race tyrants. They are extraordinary, even grotesque images—the legless Miserrimus

Dexter's sexual assault, the ditherings of Miss Finch's blue-faced lover. They are moments of textually contrived shock or terror—the confrontation with the "dead" Laura Glyde over her tombstone, for example, or the dream sequence in *Armadale*.

It is on the question of gender relations that Nayder is undoubtedly most interesting, but it is also here that I find myself, finally, doubtful about her readings. She suggests that Collins's reformist critiques exposed "the marital strife and domestic horror in the middle-class Victorian home," although a glance at Lawrence Stone's *Broken Lives* indicates that domestic horror was the monopoly neither of the Victorians nor the middle-class. It was surely that class's urge to self-analysis and improvement that created in its writings a discourse for the description of its own "diseased state." We need thus to tread carefully with distinctions between discourse and assumed historical reality. Novelists like Collins and Braddon were not so much concerned with revealing that domestic realities were shockingly different from the literary idealizations of woman and the family, but rather with offering the *obverse* of such impossible, manufactured icons—that is, a parallel set of improbabilities; what Peter Brooks describes as "the logic of the excluded middle." Collins does not, after all, aim at the kind of desolating realities we find in Gissing. He gives us bizarre characters, sudden violence and astonishing reversals. The extremes of Collins reassure the reader that familiar ideals are still in place—the hero returns to the colourless Laura or the forgettable Miss Milroy. But extreme plots also lead to implausible endings: can Walter sustain his ménage with the imbecilic Laura and mustachioed Marian? How can the sex-obsessed Basil end up in his sister's arms? Implausibility here is not necessarily loss of nerve. Collins's treatment of his sensational topics is not based on close reference or social science; it arises out of experiment with conventional novelistic discourse.

Within the volume's format there is obviously a limit to what can be covered, and Nayder has chosen not to deal with questions of narrative structure and language. In dealing with ideologies, however, it is difficult to avoid the business of narrative voice, as Tamar Heller's essay on *The Moonstone* in the recent Macmillan Casebook demonstrates. *Basil*, which Nayder reads as a critique of patriarchal class structures, is a first-person narrative. And it is because it is in Basil's own voice that the hysterically religious conclusion, peppered with dashes, questions and exclamations, so stretches credulity. Again, Collins's innovatory employment of a variety of voices and texts in *The Woman in White*, confuses any apparent allegiances to class/gender hierarchies; these embedded narratives also counterbalance the sensationalism of the novel, suggesting a humdrum framing world of train

timetables, shops, and policemen—Collins's especial and permanent contribution to the genre.

The melodramatic aspects of Collins are in fact played down by Nayder, as are his connections with fellow sensationalists such as Braddon and Le Fanu. She asks us instead to re-examine our ideas of literary value in relation to Collins and recognise the "ideological labours" his fiction performs. Nayder has herself performed a valuable service to students in putting together so much contextual research in one succinct volume. My regret is that she has burdened herself with a rather Victorian notion that a novel's value lies in its missionary, reformist zeal. I could have wished that her own "mission" had not so often been allowed to temper her enjoyment.

Clair Hughes
International Christian University, Tokyo

Andrew Gasson, *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide*. Catherine Peters, Consultant Editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. pp. xviii + 190. (ISBN 0-19-866215-7).

As readers of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* are no doubt aware, the Parrish Collection, Princeton University Libraries, has a wealth of Wilkie Collins materials ranging from manuscripts, letters, and first or subsequent editions, to theatrical programs and other memorabilia. There are Wilkie Collins materials in other institutions in the United States: at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York; in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library; at the Huntington Library, San Marino, Southern California, and elsewhere. Surprisingly, however, there appears to be a dearth of Wilkie Collins materials in institutional locations in the country of his birth. Though individual letters may be found in libraries throughout Britain, and there are manuscripts at the British Library and in other research libraries, there is nothing in the United Kingdom to compare with American holdings. But if we include materials held in private hands, there is one exception and a notable exception at that. The biographical details on the informative dust wrapper of the volume under review reveal its author as

co-founder and Chairman of the Wilkie Collins Society. A qualified optometrist, he has been a serious collector of Collins material for the last 20 years and has published several important articles on Collins, including "Wilkie Collins: A Collector's and Bibliographer's Challenge" in *The Private Library* (Summer, 1980).

This article is based upon Andrew Gasson's extensive and unique personal collection of Wilkie Collins materials. His *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide* allows us to explore with him Wilkie Collins's world. A generous "guardian" of a wonderful emporium of Victoriana, a unique Wilkie Collins collection, Gasson shares his knowledge and treasures with us.

The back dust wrapper of *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide* correctly draws attention to its being "Lavishly illustrated, with over 200 black-and-white images, many never before published." There is an illustration on almost every page and the quality is first class. The lengthy separate entry on "Collins, (William) Wilkie" has eleven accompanying illustrations: "Wilkie Collins as a baby, drawn by William Collins"; a painting of "Wilkie and Charles Collins aged 9 and 5"; a full-page "Wilkie Collins photographed for *Men of Mark*"; a "Painting of Wilkie Collins by J.E. Millais in 1850"; a full-length half-page photograph of "Wilkie Collins by Herbert Watkins in 1864"; "The hands of Wilkie Collins from *Celebrated Hands* by Claude Warren, London 1882"; a "Christmas card featuring Collins's titles"; a full-page reproduction of "Wilkie Collins on the cover of *The Bookman's* special issue of June 1912"; a "Painting of Wilkie Collins by Rudolf Lehmann in 1880"

alongside "Wilkie Collins photographed in Boston by Warren"; and finally a "Plaster bas relief of Wilkie Collins made in 1890 by Adolf Rost" (33-42). The sources of these illustrations are indicated: it is useful to know, for instance, that the painting of the two young brothers "Wilkie and Charles Collins aged 9 and 5" is in the collection of Mrs Faith Clarke (190). It is unfortunate that color isn't used in this and other instances. On the other hand the use of black-and-white images has helped to keep down the cost of this remarkably handsomely produced book.

Entries are arranged alphabetically and cross-referenced. The first entry consists of a paragraph on "Ablewhite, Godfrey" whom we are told is "the true villain of *The Moonstone*": the identity of the "untrue" or "false" villain is not revealed! The final entry is on "*Youth's Companion*." Gasson tells the reader that the *Youth's Companion* is

An American weekly paper for "Young People and the Family," run by Perry Mason of Washington Street, Boston. First published "Victims of Circumstances Discovered in Records of Old Trials," 19 August 1886. Other authors included Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Sophie May" and Mrs Helen C. Weeks.

There is a cross reference by "Victims of Circumstances," where the reader finds a two-sentence summary of its plot. Gasson also provides information on when it was first published and republished (154). There is no entry for Perry Mason the Boston publisher with whom Wilkie Collins corresponded during his later years.

Entries vary in length from single short paragraphs to the nearly ten pages with accompanying illustrative material on Wilkie Collins himself (33-42). The entries on *The Moonstone*, for example, extend to more than two pages, with quarter-size illustrations of the title page of the 1868 three-volume first edition, an illustration from the 1875 single-volume edition, "the diamond illustrated in the first American edition ... published by Harpers," and the program for the October 1877 stage adaptation of the novel (106-108). Gasson begins with an account of the novel's reception and an explanation of the circumstances under which Collins wrote it—while "taking large quantities of opium to alleviate the agonies of gout" (106). There follow a detailed clear plot synopsis, and the publishing history of the novel including bibliographical details. These range from a binding description of the first three-volume edition ("Violet cloth, covers blocked in blind, spines lettered in gilt, cream endpapers. Half-title in each volume") followed by publishing data such as "Published in July 1868 in an edition of 1,500 copies." Variant binding states are omitted. There is information on the second edition of the novel, published in a print run of five hundred copies (the source for this information is lacking), and the manner in which this edition can be distinguished from the first edition. Critical editions are listed beginning with T.S.Eliot's 1928

introduction in the World's Classics series. The last entry is the 1992 Everyman Library edition introduced by Catherine Peters. Some translations are given. Following this main entry are entries on "Moonstone, The (the diamond)," and on the stage version of the novel.

Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide opens with a "Preface" and brief "Acknowledgements" in which its author Andrew Gasson, like his hero Wilkie Collins in *The Fallen Leaves*, leaves his book "to make its appeal to the reading public on such merits as it may possess." There follows a listing of "The Main Works of Wilkie Collins" arranged in columns by title, publisher, and date, an extensive "Chronology," and a listing of "Short References Used in the Text." Following the main entries, there are five appendices. The first contains a reproduction from the original manuscript of a heavily erased section from Collins's first collection of short stories, *After Dark* (1856), though there is no commentary and no source is given. The second appendix lists in alphabetical order "Characters in the Novels of Wilkie Collins." Arranged in three columns under "Character," "Book or Story," and "Role," this is a most useful apparatus. "Appendix C" consists of "The Collins Family Tree." Replete with an explanatory area key, "Appendix D" consists of a detailed "Map of Marylebone" containing "The Residences of Wilkie Collins," thus supplementing information found in the "Chronology." "Appendix E" contains, alphabetically arranged by author, a "Select Bibliography" listing "Bibliographies," "Biographies," "Detective Fiction," "The Dickens Connection," "Publishing History," "Theatrical," "Other Criticism and Memoirs—Pre-1890," "Other Criticism and Memoirs—Post-1890."

The smallish typeface used packs a lot of information on three-column quarto-sized pages. There is a rather annoying habit of omitting pagination—at the beginning of a new letter in the alphabet, for instance. But these are insignificant caveats in a book which contains a rich galaxy of information relating to the life and work of Wilkie Collins. Information within it serves as the fullest bibliographical description of its subject's writings and their publishing history that we now have available, updating M. L. Parrish's *Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade: First Editions Described with Notes*, originally published in 1940 and republished in 1968. Hopefully Andrew Gasson will provide the detailed descriptive primary bibliography which Wilkie Collins so richly deserves; he is the only person around with the knowledge to do this. His *Illustrated Guide*, which is a product of enthusiasm and a labor of love, will be used as a source for information on Wilkie Collins and his circle for a long time to come. It is a worthy tribute to the genius of its subject.

William Baker
Northern Illinois University



WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



Wilkie Collins

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VOLUME 2

1999

WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* is an annual volume, sponsored jointly by the Wilkie Collins Society and the Wilkie Collins Society of North America, and is dedicated to original scholarly essays and reviews of publications relating to Wilkie Collins, his writings, and his culture.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



New Series, Volume 2, 1999

Contents

~Articles~

- The Ruins of Copán in "The Woman in White": Wilkie Collins and John Stephens's "Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan"*
RICHARD COLLINS 5
- Reading Landscape: Wilkie Collins, the Pathetic Fallacy and the Semiotics of the Victorian Wasteland*
SIMON COOKE 18
- Could Lydia Gwilt Have Been Happy?
A New Reading of "Armada" as Marital Tragedy*
K.A. KALE 32
- Music and Female Power in Sensation Fiction*
PHYLLIS WELIVER 40

~Notes~

- Collins, Count Fosco, and the Concertina*
ALLAN W. ATLAS 56
- 'Belt-and-Braces' Serialization: The Case of "Heart and Science"*
STEVE FARMER & GRAHAM LAW 61

~Reviews~

- The Letters of Wilkie Collins*. William Baker & William M. Clarke, editors.
LYN PYKETT 72
- Wilkie Collins, Ioláni; or, Tahiti as it was*. Ira B. Nadel, editor.
JENNIFER CARNELL 74
- Wilkie Collins, The Moonstone*. Steve Farmer, editor.
ADRIAN J. PINNINGTON 76
- Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens*. Paul Schlicke, editor.
Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope. R.C. Terry, editor.
STEVE DILLON 78

Editors' Note

Since the last issue of the *Journal* appeared twelve months ago, a series of Wilkie Collins's hitherto unpublished writings have become widely available for the first time. The author's own adaptation of *The Moonstone* for the stage, privately printed for professional performance in London in autumn 1877, has been published in a new Broadview edition of the novel, accompanied by a fine introductory essay by Steve Farmer. Further, Ira Nadel's long-awaited edition of *Ioláni*, Collins's rejected first novel, the manuscript of which resurfaced unexpectedly in New York in 1991, has at last appeared from Princeton University Press. Last, but by no means least, Macmillan have issued in two volumes a selection--chosen, transcribed and annotated by William Baker and William Clarke--of around five hundred of Collins's meatier letters, the large majority published for the first time. These three publications thus add considerably to our ability to judge as a whole the life and work of this major Victorian literary artist. All are reviewed briefly in this issue, along with the recent *Oxford Companions* to fellow novelists Dickens and Trollope.

This is in addition to original scholarly articles on a range of subjects: from Collins's sources for Marian Halcombe's vision of Central American exploration to his contribution to the symbolism of the Victorian wasteland; from the connotations of Fosco's concertina to the significance of female music in the Sensation Novel, and from the confusing generic characteristics of *Armada* to the complex serial publication of *Heart and Science*. We hope that readers will agree that the variety and vitality of these contributions bear witness to the thriving state of Collins studies.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

~~Articles~~

The Ruins of Copán in *The Woman in White*: Wilkie Collins and John Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*

Richard Collins

In Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (serialized in *All the Year Round* 1859-60) Walter Hartright disappears from the English setting to serve as illustrator for an archeological expedition to Honduras. As part of the quest theme in the novel, this journey is no detour. It is a significant absence because, after braving fever, savages and shipwreck, he returns "a changed man" ready to face his future "as a man should" (Collins, 373-4). As Lillian Nayder has suggested, "Hartright's manhood [...] is engendered in an imperial outpost" (1), an important detail in a novel that otherwise does not deal with Collins's usual critique and defense of British imperialism, except to raise the specter of Count Fosco's "reverse imperialism" from Europe. Hartright's reason for going to Honduras shows none of the missionary zeal that Swinburne objected to in Collins, yet it is curious how easily Walter requests and receives a place on the expedition—as though such an adventure was an Englishman's just entitlement. Walter's journey is far too sketchy and too mythically schematic to have its roots in anything but an archetypal rite of passage into manhood. Indeed, it is primarily through Marian Halcombe's imagination that Walter's experience is filtered. Walter himself is notably reticent, saying on his return, "These pages are not the record of my wanderings and my dangers away from home" (373). But the Wanderings of Young Walter would seem to deserve a sequel (and a better title than that), if they had not already been written by John Stephens in his *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan*.

While Walter is gone, Marian Halcombe, who got him his job with the expedition, has a vivid daydream about Walter in the forests of Central America. The dream begins:

He appeared to me as one among many other men, none of whose faces I could plainly discern. They were all lying on the steps of an immense ruined temple. Colossal tropical trees—with rank creepers twining endlessly about their trunks,

and hideous stone idols glimmering and grinning at intervals behind the leaves and stalks and branches—surrounded the temple, and shut out the sky, and threw a dismal shadow over the forlorn band of men on the steps. (248)

In the new Oxford World Classics edition (1996), John Sutherland gives credit to Harvey Peter Sucksmith, the editor of the earlier edition (1973), for "plausibly" suggesting the source of Marian's dream-description to be an unsigned article by Henry Morley on the ruins at Copán, published in *Household Words* in 1851 (Sutherland, 682n). As a friend of Dickens, a colleague of Morley, a contributor to the magazine from early 1852, and a member of its staff from 1856, Collins would certainly have known the article, so I do not wish to dispute this as one source for the details of Marian's dream. I would like to suggest, however, that Collins was also familiar with the source from which Morley (who had never been to Central America) so heavily borrowed—today we would say plagiarized—his facts and figures of speech, his information and impressions.

Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan (1841), by the American lawyer, explorer, and travel writer, John Lloyd Stephens (1805-52), was not only an extremely popular and well-written travel narrative, it was also the authoritative statement on archeology in the region well into the twentieth century, enjoying numerous reprints, abridgments, and translations. Today it is credited with initiating interest in the study of native civilizations in the Americas, and is still considered essential reading on the subject of Mayan art and architecture (see Baudez; and Ackerman, Introduction). Stephens had published two other popular books, *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia Petraea, and the Holy Land* (1837) and *Incidents of Travel in Greece, Turkey, Russia, and Poland* (1838), but it is his book on the New World that is justly singled out as his most lively, original and authoritative work.

Indeed, Stephens's authority on the region was recognized in the pages of *Household Words* in an unsigned article by William Weir and W. H. Wills that predates Morley's by almost a year. This refers to the book—somewhat elliptically if not monolithically—as "Stephens's 'Central America'" (Dickens, 65). The reference suggests that even the most casual reader would be familiar with the work. In the same article in which they mention Stephens as a source for their facts, though, Weir and Wills fail to capture his spirit when they describe Central America as a place of "poor and ignorant aboriginals and mixed races, in a state of scarcely demi-civilisation" (Dickens, 3). England's interest in the region was more political and economical than archeological. As the title to the Weir and Wills article, "Short Cuts across the Globe," suggests, the real topic of interest was how to ensure control of what was to become the

Panama Canal. If it could be established early that the indigenous people were incapable of designing, building or maintaining the canal, it would be in the world's best interest for a "civilized" (i.e., European or American) power to take control. Stephens himself, especially in the later editions of his book, devotes quite a bit of space both to the practicalities and to the politics of the canal project, although he falls short of making the imperialist and racist (if not racist) argument that Morley resorts to: "nothing but Anglo-Saxon energy will ever stir this sluggish pool into life" (521). The contrasts between the blustering superiority of Weir and Wills, or the disgusted superiority of Morley, and the bemused observation of Stephens's descriptions of local customs and conditions is striking. Early in his journey, for example, Stephens visited a tribe of Carib Indians who, he says, without "mingling their blood with that of their conquerors [...] were nevertheless completely civilized" (1:19).

While the *Household Words* colleagues share the tell-tale signs of the journalistic hack—excessive borrowing, overwrought writing, hackneyed and ethnocentric metaphors, reactionary ideology—on almost every point Stephens emerges not only as the better writer, but also as a well-traveled man of some enlightenment on racial matters. On his arrival in Belize, Stephens took the place offered him at table between "two colored gentlemen," noting that "some of my countrymen, perhaps, would have hesitated about taking it, but I did not." During the meal he learns "that the great work of practical racial amalgamation, the subject of so much angry controversy at home, had been going on quietly here for generations; that color was considered a mere matter of taste; and that some of the most respectable inhabitants had black wives and mongrel children, whom they educated with as much care, and made money for with as much zeal, as if their skins were perfectly white. I hardly knew whether to be shocked or amused at this condition of society" (1:6). Aside from the deprecatory "mongrel," Stephens's tone is that of the sophisticated traveler, observant of inequities without the missionary's judgmental zeal for reform.

As a lawyer, Stephens also took pleasure in observing the legal system of Belize, which he commended for its racial equality and its complete absence of "gentlemen of the bar." He notes the presence of mulatto judges and jurors, and records the comment of one judge who was "aware of the feeling which existed in the United States with regard to color, and said that in Belize there was, in political life, no distinction whatever, except on the ground of qualifications and character, and hardly any in social life, even in contracting marriages." The absence of lawyers Stephens treats with humor, warning his "professional brethren" not "to pack their trunks for a descent on the exempt

city" because the system, though "an anomaly in the history of English jurisprudence," happens to be quite "satisfactory" without them, even though "in every other place where the principles of common law govern, the learning of the bench and the ingenuity of the bar are considered necessary to elicit the truth" (1:10-11). Morley, too, mentions the system of justice in Belize, echoing Stephens's description almost point by point, except that while he remarks on the absence of lawyers, he avoids the question of racial integration (517). In *The Woman in White*, of course, the law as conjuror of the truth is at best seen as indifferent, impotent or irrelevant, and at worst as the corrupt "servant of the long purse" (1).

Morley, the armchair traveler, is well aware of his lack of first-hand experience. He even suggests that he has to rely on others' accounts, although his scruples stop short of actually citing his source: "Though most of us like to know as much as travellers can tell us, about the country of the Incas, very few of us care to experience what it now actually is" (516). For his lack of experience, Morley compensates with stylistic excesses. His fictional "we," for example, is a transparent device to establish his authority as our guide, while his use of the present tense is a sort of directorial imperative, instructing us not only in what to see at Copán, but what to feel:

What Titanic wall is that whose image is reflected in the river? By the shrubs and creepers we can climb up to the summit. It looks like the portion of some massive ruin. We have climbed, and we stand spell bound. Step below step, broken by trees, loaded with shrubs, and lost at last in the luxuriance of forest, we see the traces of a theatre of masonry. (518)

Compare Stephens's original on-site description:

The wall was of cut stone, well laid, and in a good state of preservation. We ascended by large stone steps, only some of which were well preserved, and reached a terrace, the form of which it was impossible to make out because of the density of the forest in which it was enveloped. (1:78)

A couple of pages later, Stephens continues his description, which Morley patchwrites into his own summary:

Climbing over the ruined top, we reached a terrace overgrown with trees and, crossing it, descended by stone steps into an area so covered with trees that at first we could not make out its form. When the machete had cleared the way, we saw that it was a square with steps on all the sides almost as perfect as those of a Roman amphitheatre. (1:80)

Note how a "good state of preservation" or a "ruined top" becomes a "massive ruin"; how a figurative "Roman amphitheatre" becomes an actual "theatre"; how a "density" of forest becomes a "luxuriance," and above all how objective description becomes a directive to "stand spell bound."

Morley continues by describing two carved *stele*, or 'idols,' and indulges in several more impressionistic directives (indicated here in italics). He ends with a rhetorical question:

But from a pillar of broken stone below, the fixed stare of an *enormous* sculptured head encounters us. We descend wondering, and stand before an altar richly carved. We seek for more, and find at our first plunge into the forest a *colossal* figure *frowning* down upon us; it is a statue twelve feet high, loaded with *hieroglyphic* and with *grotesque* ornament. The grand face seems to be a portrait—but of whom? (518)

Again, compare Stephens's calmer original:

[...] we came upon a square stone column, about fourteen feet high and three feet on each side, sculptured on all four of the sides, from the base to the top, in very bold relief. On the front side was carved the figure of a man (evidently a portrait) curiously and richly dressed, whose face was solemn, stern, and well fitted to excite terror. The design on the opposite side was unlike anything we had ever seen before; the remaining two sides were covered with hieroglyphics. (1:78)

Note how "fourteen feet high and three feet on each side" is inflated into "colossal," yet reduced to twelve feet high, and how throughout Morley conflates Stephens's meticulously recorded catalogues and measurements with approximations and inaccuracies. Where Morley poses a rhetorical question about "whom" is depicted in the stone "portrait," Stephens only suggests that it is a portrait. More interested in the culture's artisans than in its heroes, a couple of pages later Stephens reports: "When we asked the Indians who had made them [the sculptures], their dull answer was 'Quien sabe?' (Who knows?)" (1:80).

In general, then, Morley appropriates the voice of the "demi-civilized," while Stephens lets the facts and the natives speak for themselves. Describing the scene for the most part without sensationalism, Stephens does suggest that one of the sculptures is "well fitted to excite terror," and in an atmospheric passage tries to capture the spirituality of what he supposes is sacred ground: "One [monument] with its altar before it stood in a grove of trees which grew around it, seemingly to shade and shroud it as a sacred thing; in the solemn stillness of the woods, it seemed a divinity mourning over a fallen people" (1:79). Far from sounding like egregious pathetic fallacies, the personification of nature in this passage precisely characterizes his speculations. Whereas Morley directs us *like* a guide, Stephens modestly follows the real guide who often hacks a way through the foliage: "From our guide we learned that the square column was an 'idol' and the block of stone was an 'altar'" (1:79). As Predmore notes, the meticulous Stephens was not sure that 'idol' and 'altar' were accurate terms and so enclosed them in quotation marks.¹ Morley, however, takes these words as gospel, and as a cue to indulge in ethnocentric metaphor: "The trees meet overhead; it is like a cathedral aisle" (518). Unlike Morley, both Stephens and Marian Halcombe use the more generic "temple."

¹ Predmore comments: "Modern archeologists use the term *stela* rather than *idol*. Stephens enclosed the word *idol* in quotation marks because of his doubts as to the accuracy of the term" (Stephens, 1:79n).

It is clear that Marian's daydream is based on Stephens or Morley, though in a highly abbreviated form. Marian's description of the "immense ruined temple" is essentially only one sentence:

Colossal tropical trees—with rank creepers twining endlessly about their trunks, and hideous stone idols glimmering and grinning at intervals behind leaves and stalks and branches—surrounded the temple, and shut out the sky, and threw a dismal shadow over the forlorn band of men on the steps. (248)

Compare Morley:

The colossal roots of the mahogany trees get sadly in the way. It is almost dark under the dense branches. (518)

And Stephens:

The whole terrace was covered with trees, and even at this height were two gigantic ceibas (kapok trees), over twenty feet in circumference; their half-naked roots extended fifty or a hundred feet around, binding down the ruins and shading them with their wide-spreading branches." (1:80)

It argues for Morley's influence that Collins and Morley describe trees as *colossal*; Stephens uses the word frequently—and more correctly—only in reference to monuments or statues of human figures.

Beyond a source for atmosphere and setting, Stephens's popular travel narrative may also have aided Collins in developing Hartright's character. If Collins was looking for a model of modest heroism for his readers to associate with Hartright's character-forming mission to Central America, he could have done worse than to invoke the memory of Stephens's British illustrator, Frederick Catherwood,² whom Stephens introduces as "an experienced traveler and personal friend, who had passed more than ten years of his life in diligently studying the antiquities of the Old World" (1:3). Catherwood is portrayed by Stephens as something of a quiet hero, whose invaluable contributions to the expedition are not restricted to his famous illustrations to the text, but include acts of bravery and resourcefulness in dangerous situations. If the reader could be encouraged to associate Hartright with Catherwood, then Walter's unnarrated experiences in Central America would be put in a new light of modest heroism and practical ability combined with artistic talent.

If the textual evidence is clear that Collins further abbreviated Morley's plagiarized précis of Stephens's description of the ruins, the rest of Marian

² The similarity of Frederick Catherwood's name to those of Frederick Fairlie and Anne Catherick in the novel may well be only coincidence. Nor would I want to make much of the fact that Stephens and Catherwood set sail for Honduras on a British brig named the *Mary Ann*, even though the *Mary Ann* takes Catherwood to Honduras and Marian sends Hartright there. It may be important, though, that before having Marian find Walter's position, Collins first had Walter asking the lawyer Mr. Gilmore to look for a position among his "large circle of acquaintances," which could have included an American colleague like Stephens. See Sutherland (676n) for a discussion of this revision of the manuscript.

Halcombe's dream suggests that Collins was also acquainted with Stephens's original text. Marian envisions Walter as surviving the three dangers of illness, attack, and shipwreck. Morley, too, envisions a trinity of dangers in Central America to be survived by the traveler, but gives them a comic coloration: "Fleas, fevers, and frijoles [...] go far to quench the spirit of the traveller" (516); this is his brief in favor of armchair travel. So when Marian envisions Walter as surviving illness, attack, and shipwreck, Collins seems to be, if you will, *unparodying* Morley's text, returning it to the original seriousness of Morley's source. Morley, for example, simply mocks the fever obligatory to the travel narrative: "We will get a fever at San Miguel. It's time to have a fever. Every traveller in Central America must have a fever and get well, or die" (520). But it is no joke for Marian who tells Walter in her dream, "Come back to us, before the Pestilence reaches you, and lays you dead like the rest!" even though Walter replies, "The Pestilence which touches the rest, will pass *me*" (248). The travelers in Stephens are not so lucky. Directly after their first visit to the ruins at Copán, Stephens tells how Catherwood is besieged by the hacienda natives for *remedios* for their fevers and rheumatism, and how the illustrator becomes a "medico" by distributing pills and powders and liniments from his medicine chest. The journey ends, however, with Catherwood, his constitution "severely shattered" by fever (2:354), having to be carried from Uxmal to Mérida on the shoulders of the natives. Stephens himself died in New York in 1852 as the result of a fever he contracted in Panama years earlier (Stephens, xv).

The second part of Marian's dream shows Walter still in the forest. "The temple is gone, and the idols were gone—and in their place, the figures of dark, dwarfish men lurked murderously among the trees, with bows in their hands, and arrows fitted to the string." She calls out to him, but he answers, "The arrows that strike the rest will spare *me*" (249). No such adventure takes place in Stephens's book, because it was not the "savages" that Stephens and Catherwood had to fear but the soldiers of the "civilized" governments of the region. All of which suggests that Collins was working from materials other than Stephens or Morley, such as the stuff of adventure tales or, more likely, of contemporary London exhibitions of anthropological curiosities that were described by the newspapers as "strikingly similar to the sculptured figures on Central American monuments" (cited in Altick, 284). Collins may have been drawing on the awe inspired in the public mind by the so-called Aztec Lilliputians, who were on display in Regent Street and the Queen's Concert Rooms, Hanover Square, and summoned to meet the royal family in Buckingham Palace. Called by the *Athenaeum* (9 July 1853), "living wonders," they were thought to have "no other alliance in the species" than to

"the ancient races whose portraitures are found on the antique Sculptured Obelisks and Hieroglyphical Pictures brought from the ruins of Nineveh, Egypt, and Central America" (cited in Altick, 284), a direct reference, it seems, to Catherwood's several accomplishments.

The third part of Marian's dream shows Walter "in a wrecked ship, stranded on a wild, sandy shore." According to formula, Marian calls out to him and he replies, "The Sea which drowns the rest will spare *me*" (249). On their return journey through the Gulf of Mexico, Stephens and Catherwood ran into sharks and whales, oppressive heat and a lack of wind that set them dead in the water, giving them plenty of time to "read through all the books in the mate's library, consisting of some French novels translated into Spanish, and a history of awful shipwrecks" (2:390). When the wind came up and they resumed their journey, they discovered that they were four hundred miles off course and "perfectly lost," but there was no shipwreck outside of their reading (2:394). Stephens and Catherwood were rescued by an American vessel bound for New York; Hartright is rescued by an American vessel bound for Liverpool.

A displacement and combination of Stephens's metaphors may explain Marian's vision of shipwreck. Stephens, in concluding the description of his first impression of Copán, uses two comparisons to evoke the image of the ruined city: it is like a shipwreck, and it is like the monuments of Egypt. First, it is

a shattered bark in the midst of the ocean, her masts gone, her name effaced, her crew perished, and none to tell whence she came, to whom she belonged, how long on her voyage, or what caused her destruction—her lost people to be traced only by some fancied resemblance in the construction of the vessel, and, perhaps, never to be known at all. (1:81)

But Copán is also like Egypt, where

colossal skeletons of gigantic temples stand in unwatered sands in all the nakedness of desolation; but here an immense forest shrouds the ruins, hiding them from sight, heightening the impression and moral effect, and giving an intensity and almost wildness to the interest. (1:81)

Thus, if Stephens's "shattered bark" is transported, through metaphor, to Egypt's "unwatered sand," Marian's vision of Walter seems to combine the images to see him "in a wrecked ship, stranded on a wild, sandy shore" (249). Given the sensation novelist's interest in tombstones, lost identities, fancied resemblances, impressions, moral effects, intensities and wildness of interest, it is easy to see how Collins could have been charmed by Stephens's evocation of a lost civilization.

In addition to these parallels in Stephens's text, the closing lines of Marian's dream may have a source in Catherwood's drawings: "The darkness closed round the pilgrim at the marble tomb; closed round the veiled woman

from the grave; closed round the dreamer who looked on them. I saw and heard no more" (249). This is clearly a foreshadowing of Hartright's experience on his return, when he visits Laura's grave, only to be confronted with Laura herself when she unveils and looks at him over "her" tombstone (378). In several engravings of monuments, Catherwood includes a human figure, no doubt to provide a sense of proportion. Catherwood's talent was apparently for monuments rather than men: most of those he depicts seem to be natives, their dark skin indicated only by cross-hatching, even though their body types and facial features are European. One or two of these figures, however, lack the native characteristics and appear to be entirely European, although they wear the indigenous loose cotton clothing and high straw hats, almost as roomy as opera top hats. Figure 8, for example, depicts next to a "Gigantic Head at Copán" a light-skinned young man (without cross-hatching), who might be Stephens himself in the native dress of short cotton trousers, open-throated shirt, and a hat that might suggest the tall headgear of the European Pilgrim that Marian mentions, presumably metaphorically.

Marian's dream does not need to be—nor is it meant to be—an accurate representation of the ruins of Copán.³ As a novelist, what Collins needed was a credible model for what Marian *fancied* Hartright might have seen there. The scene filtered through Morley's imagination would be just as serviceable as Stephens's reportage—perhaps even more so. As a journalist and academic, Morley had to visit Copán vicariously through Stephens's text. As a woman, Marian can only "dream" what Walter experiences. Her vivid imagining of the ruins, brief as it is, may show an uncanny sympathy or spiritual connection with Walter, but it may also show an envious identification with Walter's passage into manhood through a three-part ritual of overcoming "The Pestilence that wastes, the Arrow that strikes, the Sea that drowns" and (equally overcome, though back on English soil) "the Grave that closes over Love and Hope" (249). If Marian's facial hair suggests a witch's talent for prophecy that envisions Walter's meeting with "the veiled woman" over a marble tombstone, it also suggests a masculine side to her nature that is impatient with being imprisoned in petticoats and eager for the engendering adventure.

The sensation novel relies for its full effect on the interaction of the

³ Let's assume for a moment that Marian and Walter are historical. She could not have read Morley's 1851 article in *Household Words* when she dreamed of Walter in 1850 (unless her powers of prophecy are more fully developed than we are led to believe). She could, however, have read Stephens's book in one of its many editions between its first publication in 1841 and 1849, when she sent Walter to Honduras, or even 1850, when she dreamed of Walter's adventures. (See "The Chronology of *The Woman in White*," Appendix C, in Sutherland, 662-68.)

reader, who brings his/her experience—both real and imagined, actual and textual—to bear on the novelist's evocations. Just as the reader is asked to flesh out Hartright's sketch of Laura Fairlie with "the first woman who quickened the pulses within you" (42), so the reader familiar with John Stephens's journey to Central America might have been able to add a number of impressions to Marian's dream of the ruins and to Collins's sketch of Hartright's journey to Copán, including perhaps a flattering comparison to Catherwood.

Whether Wilkie Collins based his description of the ruins of Copán on that of Morley or Stephens or both, he manages to avoid the former's purple prose and faux first person voice, even as he captures the latter's interest in lost identities and mystery in Marian's brief, feverish daydream. To understand how Victorian novelists treat colonial and imperial matters, we need to know how well acquainted they were with the texts of such first-hand descriptions of the New World and its ancient civilizations as that of Stephens, and not just their familiarity with such literary circles as that of Dickens and *Household Words*. Such research pays off when we turn to Stephens because his prose is highly readable yet scrupulously accurate, combining the narrative powers of art with the measured observation of a scientist. In calm and objective prose that has allowed Stephens's work to endure, we hear a voice that is for its time remarkably free of prejudice, indicating that Stephens was a man of reason, experience and sophistication.

David Johnson has argued that Stephens "complicates his desire to deromanticize the representation of Mayan ruins" when he tries to "subordinate the tales of the ruins to a scientifically rigorous discussion" (7), substituting the European discourse of scientific description for indigenous legend and ellipsis, thus falling into his "own particular romanticization of a scientific discourse" (15).⁴ Interestingly, the same might be said of Collins's

⁴ Stephens's attempt to "deromanticize" the discourse previously applied to New World ruins and to replace it with that of science seems entirely laudatory. But in Johnson's view, it seems, any attempt by a European to understand Amerindian culture is doomed a priori to Eurocentrism because a hieroglyphic discourse is not accessible to an alphabetical one. When Stephens wants to know the history of the artifacts, he is frustrated by native ignorance; as Johnson puts it, "the site ultimately grounds a critique of Amerindian indifference to the antiquities of their country" (10). Johnson argues that "the role of the native informant and of native knowledge" is devalued by Stephens so that it is "no knowledge at all" (9). But it is not cultural insensitivity that causes Stephens to find the native knowledge lacking when it can tell him *where* a ruin is, but not *what* it is. It hardly seems fair to fault Stephens for the thrill of discovery and the desire to disseminate his findings in language comprehensible to his countrymen. If he finds it easier to translate the unpronounceable Xcocoop as "casa no. 1," it may be a "discursive strateg[y] of appropriation" used to "familiarize the radically foreign, soothe the European imagination, enabling not only comprehension but cultural exploitation" (17), but Stephens was neither disingenuous nor diabolical in his discourse; he was an explorer and a scientist who used language as a tool for the work in hand. (If that tool can be called "exploitative" by Johnson, it

use of the forensic method in *The Woman in White*, attempting to supersede the romanticism of the Gothic tale of horror with the more familiar horrors of everyday life as seen in the courtrooms and asylums of London. Hartright is the mediator of that transformation, combining the investigative eye of the detective, lawyer, or scientist, with the observing eye of the artist. In this way, Hartright is a combination of the lawyer Stephens and the illustrator Catherwood, as well as the partial alter-ego of Wilkie Collins, the novelist trained in both painting and law.

Hartright, however, must earn his right to interpret. While, as already noted, I think that he zealously overstates Stephens's culpability in what he calls the "devaluation" and "exploitation" of the Amerindian culture, Johnson does make an interesting point when he focuses on the importance of the hieroglyphics as "writing in the dark", in Stephens's metaphorical phrase. Despite his trained eye, Catherwood has difficulty drawing what is in front of him because of the unfamiliarity of the "writing": "The designs were very complicated, and so different from anything Mr. Catherwood had ever seen before as to be perfectly unintelligible" (1:90). And later:

As we feared, the designs were so intricate and complicated, the subjects so entirely new and unintelligible that he was having great difficulty in drawing [...] The idol seemed to defy his art; two monkeys on a tree on one side appeared to be laughing at him, and I felt discouraged and despondent. In fact, I made up my mind with a pang of regret that we must abandon the idea of carrying away any materials for antiquarian speculation, and must be content with having seen them ourselves. (1:92-3)

Like Catherwood, Walter Hartright is unable to interpret the unfamiliar signs of the mystery that is woven by the foreigner Count Fosco until after he has had more exposure and experience in the Central American heart of darkness. The next day, "Mr. Catherwood was much more successful in his drawings; indeed, at the beginning the light fell exactly as he wished, and he mastered the difficulty" (1:93). When Walter returns, "the morning light showed the friendly shore in view," and the next sentence reads: "My pen traces the old letters as my heart goes back to the old love" (374). The familiar light of the English coast and the familiar letters of Laura's name restore Walter's confidence and he is now able to decipher the mystery of the various hidden documents that are the "writing in the dark" that he must interpret and bring

may be because Johnson is appropriating the discourse of a historically specific past to soothe the moral absolutism and universalist confidence of his academic imagination in an act of exploitation of Stephens's cultural text). After all, discourse is all we have. When he realized he could not be another Elgin by physically carrying his finds to New York, and that even Catherwood's drawings might not materialize, Stephens resigned himself to the possibility that his discourse would be all he had to show for his trip. The explorer who shares his findings should not be blamed for the colonial regime that follows him, just as Einstein cannot be blamed for the atom bomb.

to light.

One of the few times Walter mentions his Central American experience is when he is going after "positive evidence, in writing," of Sir Percival's secret at the church (472). His blood is throbbing at "fever heat," and though he has bought a cudgel in case of attack, he is ready and willing to take to his heels, for he "had not wanted for practice since, in the later time of my experience in Central America" (472). This slightly comic note may remind us of the dangers he had to undergo there, or it might invoke Stephens's experiences with hieroglyphics, those "writings in the dark" which Catherwood had such difficulty copying, and which Hartright will copy if he can, but would rather take home the original if possible. ("The copy of the register was sure to be safe in Mr. Wansborough's strong-room. But the position of the original, in the vestry, was, as I had seen with my own eyes, anything but secure", 472). In the building the Indians call Akatzeeb, "signifying the writing in the dark [...] no light enters except from the single doorway, the chamber was so dark that the drawing could with difficulty be copied" (cited in Johnson, 20). Similarly, the vestry which holds all the records of the people of Welmingham Parish Church is lit by a single skylight.

Hartright himself is, in a sense, writing in the dark—or at least reading in the dark—until he returns from Honduras. Only then, after his presumed contact with the undecipherable hieroglyphs which (like Catherwood) he would have had to illustrate, is he able to see Count Fosco's and Sir Percival Glyde's mysteries for what they are: not mysteries at all but puzzles, word games in which the legal and criminal minds excel. In contrast to the unreadable hieroglyphics of the Mayans, these European, or alphabetical mysteries are quite legible. In restoring Laura's identity, Walter brings her back to light, reinscribes her name not on a lying tombstone (literally a hieroglyph, or "sacred carving") but on the registers of law, such as deeds of property. Hartright becomes a reader of the dark writing, as well as a writer who enlightens us about the truth of the woman in white. Rendering the aesthetic surfaces in art is not enough to right wrongs in the realm of ethics. A faithful portrait may capture her character but it does nothing to establish her identity. His journey into darkness and mystery, in other words, ends in light and truth. His rewards, of course, are those of the returned colonialist who has translated his foreign-earned capital (in this case, his new-found resourcefulness and resolve) into real estate, providing his son with a legacy as the "heir of Limmeridge House."

Stephens was a writer with whom the unconventional Collins might well have identified, and his work on Central America is one that Marian

Halcombe, with her futile fantasies of vicarious masculine empowerment (if not engenderment), might credibly have appropriated from her reading into the dream work of paraphrase.

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Reading Landscape: Wilkie Collins, the Pathetic Fallacy, and the Semiotics of the Victorian Wasteland

Simon Cooke

In his assessment of the art of Wilkie Collins, Harry Quilter highlights the way in which the "facts of Nature" are combined with the "emotions of his story" (578). Quilter's comments are astute: for one of Collins's key concerns is the interconnectedness between his landscapes and his characters' states of mind. Indeed Collins regularly exploits the poetic device that, in volume three of *Modern Painters* (1856), Ruskin called the Pathetic Fallacy. Presenting his settings as 'real' places—many of the landscapes being literally based on specific locations—Collins insists on combining emotions with topographies. Collins thus writes his landscapes as tangible places that are also textualizations of inner conditions. As in his treatments of physiognomy and gesture, he develops his settings as a series of "outward signs" (*No Name*, 111),¹ iconic visualizations that exist in two domains and empower the novelist to chart what lies 'within', whilst rooting that information in the phenomenal world. At once intensely 'real' and 'symbolic', Collins's landscapes are concise embodiments, inscriptions of feeling in the very fabric of the material world. In Collins's settings "all things" can thus represent an "aspect of the heart" (*Basil*, 37); nature and human nature are merged, locations become mindscapes, and the forms of the land are simultaneously the "hieroglyphics" of the characters' psychologies (*The Moonstone*, 169).

This fusion of landscape and mind is partly realized in Collins's treatment of the Picturesque. Strongly influenced by the example of his father's art, he recreates the ideal linkages, the connection between sentiment and setting which, according to him, was a main characteristic of the paintings of Collins senior (*Memoirs*, 2:229). As William Collins makes use of the Picturesque as a method of projecting his figures' emotions, so Wilkie manipulates the serenity of the natural world as a means of visualizing his characters' happiness. In *The Two Destinies*, for example, the "grassy banks" and "soft reflections" of Greenwater Broad are the emblems of a swain-like contentment (11). The Picturesque similarly encodes the bucolic contentment

¹ Unless listed otherwise in 'Works Cited', citations from the novels refer to *Wilkie Collins's Novels: A New Edition*, the Library Edition issued by Chatto & Windus from 1889.

of the children of St. Cleer, whose innocence is signalled by the details of unspoilt terrain and "rambling" village (*Rambles Beyond Railways*, 20-1). Modelled on pictures such as *Borrowdale* (1821) and *The Kitten Deceived* (1816), both now housed in the Guildhall Gallery, London, these descriptions represent the "sentimental rusticity" of his father's sensitive style (Wood, 11).

The linkage of mental and material is more typically developed, however, in the writing of Gothic dystopias. Conceived as gardens gone to seed, these grotesqueries subvert the aesthetic and moral certainties of the Picturesque. Described as dense fields of rank vegetation, tangled trees, dank pools, sluggish rivers, barren plains and moorlands, they collectively suggest a type of psychological malaise. Reflecting the emotions of those who stand within them or (on a few occasions) those who own them, they provide a nightmarish equation, a series of diseased visualizations in which the characters' sense of morbidity is encoded in the blight of the land.

So much is clear, although the exact definition of the characters' state of mind is more problematic. Always presented as iconic descriptions, without textual explanations to frame them, Collins's dystopias imply a wide variety of distressing emotions. Walter de la Mare (94) keeps his options open when he interprets the landscapes as the emblems of "rapture . . . suspense . . . fear . . . dread . . . despair or anguish". For Sampson, on the other hand, the overwhelming effect is one of "desolation", "depression" and "horror" (646). Yet others, adopting a variety of approaches, have striven for more precision. Hutter, for instance, in a *tour de force* of Freudian psychoanalysis, has interpreted the Shivering Sand in *The Moonstone* as a dream-representation of "the fear of intercourse" (204). Bernstein has argued for a Gothic interpretation stressing the "manipulation of archetypes" (299), whilst the Blackwater Estate of *The Woman in White* has been linked to the sufferings of Dante's Inferno by Caracciolo (390-1).

These readings are useful, although the approaches are largely ahistorical and raise more questions than answers. The emotional content of Collins's dystopias can be better explained, I suggest, by viewing the emblems within those landscapes as signifiers drawn from a range of contemporary semiologies. Engaging in a sort of intertextual game, which eclectically borrows from literature and art, Collins appropriates what in effect are conventionalized notations of blight: ways of showing types of emotional malaise that were commonplace throughout the "wastelands" of mid-Victorian culture (Dahl, 341-7). In the domain of literature his sources include the Gothic landscapes of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew 'Monk' Lewis, whose work he knew well (see Peters, 6 & 32). By looking to the emotionalized landscapes

of Gothic, he found a rich source of emblematic details. He also drew on the elaborate landscapes of Scott, his favourite novelist, and on the contemporary descriptions of Tennyson, the Brontës, Browning and Poe. Other sources can be traced in the painterly wastelands of Danby, whom Collins regarded as a 'poetic' painter, and in the symbolism of flowers.

Familiar with each of these precursors, Collins exploits what is clearly a code or language of suffering. Indeed, the possibility of manipulating this discourse depends upon its legibility to his original readership. By drawing on a pre-existing semiology Collins strongly appeals to the knowledge of his audience; addressing the literate, he could be confident that (as in his manipulation of other sets of codes) his readers' awareness paralleled his own. Yet the notations of the wasteland are no longer understood, and the original significance of Collins's treatments has been lost. In this essay I reconstruct the emotional content of Collins's blighted mindscapes by reconnecting the emblems to their original semiologies. In so doing I demonstrate how the dystopias should be read, their significance as a method of characterization, and their position within the discourse of the Victorian wasteland.

Visualized as a dense conglomeration of "lank weeds" (*The Queen of Hearts*, 139), creepers, ivies and moss, or "tangled trees" (*The Woman in White*, 180), Collins's gross vegetation can be interpreted as a sub-set of the 'language of flowers'. Popular throughout the century, and described in literally dozens of books, this code provides a concise symbolism in which floral emblems are the "ingenious pictures" of states of mind (Phillips, 20). In fact Collins's use of the 'language' is highly systematic, and, although he never possessed any of the works associated with the discourse (see *Library of the Late Wilkie Collins*), his treatments reflect a clear understanding of its semiotics. This point needs to be stressed, for in her recent analysis of the symbolism of flowers, Beverly Seaton has cast doubt on its impact on Victorian writing. According to Seaton (162), there is "little or no direct application . . . to most nineteenth century literature". However, this claim can be refuted (in at least one instance) by examining Collins's usage in detail. In particular, we can decode his vegetation by linking it to the symbolic tables which appear in publications such as Phillips's *Floral Emblems* (1825), Wirst's *Floral Dictionary* (1829), Ingram's *Flora Symbolica* (1887), and the anonymous *Language and Poetry of Flowers* (1889). By reconnecting his emblems to these code-books it is also possible to question Seaton's other claim, that the language of flowers was barely a language at all, but only existed as a "vocabulary list" with no universal notation (Seaton, 2 & 148). On the contrary, the code Collins employs is always consistent. Functioning, like all proper languages, to give expression to a range of connotations, it

materializes a specific set of psychological conditions. Featuring at key moments in the characters' emotional development, Collins's weeds and bushes give iconic but resonant expression to their thoughts and feelings.

In sharp contrast to the sentimental encodings of flowers (Seaton, 16-18), gross vegetation generally acts as a signifier of troubled thoughts. Presented in the form of cankerous plants, it visualizes the metaphorical cankers invading the characters' mental terrains. Stressing the idea of psychological infestation, Collins focuses on plants that trail and climb. Provocatively described as the emblems of "dangerous insinuation" by Phillips (107), these icons are used particularly to convey the cancerous qualities of fear, anxiety, paranoia and obsession. Thus, in *The Woman in White*, Marian's concern for Jonathan is vividly evoked by the "rank creepers" in her dream (242). Ostensibly part of the jungle in which Hartright is supposedly marooned, the creepers provide a graphic sign of her deep (or "insinuating") anxiety. An "untrained ivy" similarly suggests the cankerous quality of Sarah's obsessive guilt in *The Dead Secret* (20). Described as a creeping plant "growing in the fissures of the stonework" (20), it infests the wall as surely as Sarah's sense of wrongdoing clings to the fissures of her mind, and threatens its stability.

Mentally corrupted by unwelcome thoughts, both of these characters are caught in a parasitic embrace. In the terms of one theorist, their mental "parterre" has been choked by a "secret poison" (Phillips, 107 & 187). Moreover, this notion of weeds choking a garden—in effect, of nature destroying itself—is further developed as a means of showing how some characters are entirely consumed by their anxieties. A prime example is Mad Monkton, whose self-absorption is frighteningly revealed in the details of the Italian wood. At once a 'real' place, this setting provides an exemplification of the character's emotional turmoil. As the wood is smothered by "thickets" and "lank weeds" (*The Queen of Hearts*, 139), so Monkton's monomania finally turns in upon itself, and consumes his mind. Cankered by the fear of insanity, he is overcome by the very condition he most fears. Self-destruction is again visualized by the convulsive vegetation in *The Guilty River*. Imaged by the animistic detail of trees "undermining their own lives" (6), this conflict symbolizes the Cur's state of mind as he continues his damaging obsession with Cristel. Like the trees themselves, the Cur is bent on destroying his mental equilibrium, by "undermining" his well-being with a "rank" disorder. Nature wrecking itself in a gross conglomeration of weeds and unchecked growth thus becomes a powerful metaphor for the process of emotional ruination. Always recalling the Darwinian Struggle for Survival, Collins's gardens gone to seed are intense representations of convulsive conditions of mind.

Yet this weedy notation does more than emblemize the cancerous quality of the characters' malaise. Acting as a stable code, it identifies specific details of the characters' anguish and suffering. This process is sometimes a matter of clarification, in which a character's emotion is focused by the careful placing of a single plant. For example, in "Gabriel's Marriage", the hero's state of mind as he returns to the site of the (alleged) murder is visualized by the presence of a bramble. Described as a "tangled nook" (*Complete Shorter Fiction*, 115), this detail signifies remorse (*Language*, 151). In other settings, though, the plants are organized in multiple fields, so giving intricate representations of the characters' state of mind.

In *Hide and Seek*, for example, the plants surrounding Mary's grave are used to catalogue Mat's complex emotions as he contemplates his sister's "damp" resting place.

About this spot the thin grass languished; the mud distilled into tiny water pools; and the brambles, briars and dead leaves lay thickly and foully between a few ragged turf-mounds . . . (364)

Taken as a field of "humble" plants, these emblems initially suggest the brother's despondency (*Language*, 175). More specifically, they visualize varieties of melancholia. The "dead leaves" denote his "sadness" (*Language*, 167); the brambles, as noted above, his "lowliness" and "remorse" (Ingram, 349); and the briars his "solitude" and "thoughtfulness" (Lehner, 112). The graveside is written, in other words, as a rather static evocation of the brother's grief. But Mat's mind is unsettled by far more than melancholy remorse. By using plants which carry implicit as well as conventional connotations, Collins stretches the language of flowers to identify certain types of inner conflict. Most suggestive is the treatment of the grass: described as "thin" and "ragged", this could be read not only as the conventional notation of death and fate (Lehner, 117), but specifically as a signal of "vice" (*Language*, 166). In particular, the grass on Mary's grave can be interpreted as a signifier of Mat's overwhelming sense of his *own* wickedness. It is this realization, combined with a corrosive grief, which creates a moment of mental turmoil, a "dangerous brightness" of self-accusation only relieved by his determination to seek out and settle the score with Mary's seducer (*Hide and Seek*, 366). The weeds in *Hide and Seek* are developed, then, as a means of presenting a concise emotional profile. Placed at a crucial moment in the text, they greatly enrich the understanding of Mat's mind by revealing far more than has otherwise been exposed. Described as "cool" and "collected" (181), Mat gives little away, and it is only through careful scrutiny of the emblematic plants that we gain a primary clue to his feelings.

The same could be said for all the characters whose inner lives are

registered in this weedy lexicon. Configured as fields of rank excess—which according to Hayter reflects the author's dendrophobia (264)—Collins's plant-life is a hallucinatory but finally transparent text. By engaging with this primeval expanse it is possible to trace the characters' most primitive and distressing emotions.

Negative states of mind are more generally implied by the image of the rotting and bottomless pool. Various described as a stagnant mere (*Two Destinies*, 287), a pool in mud (*No Name*, 243), a hole in a cliff-face (*Basil*, 248), a marshy lake (*The Woman in White*, 180), and a quicksand (*The Moonstone*, 22-5), this emblem is richly evocative and offers a number of interpretations. As noted earlier, sexual readings have been attempted by Hutter (204-5), although the pool more generally connotes a condition of horror. Collins appears to have had a personal (and almost pathological) loathing of all things associated with "ooze" (see *Basil*, 248), and his treatment of this image is always infused with revulsion and dread. According to Hayter (266), whose comments on the Shivering Sand have a general application, they always suggest "feelings of menacing calm, of decay, of the dead-alive, of being sucked down". They equally imply mind-expanding terror—the fear of looking into the face of some unknown (or unknowable) reality or truth. It is precisely the unnerving contemplation of the "spirit of terror" that Franklin confronts when he reaches for the clue in the Shivering Sand (*The Moonstone*, 300).

More than this, Collins's pools can be interpreted as the emblems of despair. As in the treatment of plants, he manipulates a well-established sign, a betokening of dismay commonplace throughout the period. Configured as a symbolic currency, its sources lie in a number of literary and painterly texts, all familiar to the author. A primary influence was the image of the abyss, the dismal hole which regularly appears in Gothic fiction and occupies a particular prominence, as a sign of transcendent despair and suffering, in Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and Lewis's *The Monk* (1796). Collins would also have been aware (see *Library*, 5) of the dark pool in Scott's *Old Mortality* (1816), and the quicksand in *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). Moreover, he is almost certain to have been familiar with the desolate pools of his contemporaries. These would notably include the "lurid tarn" in Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1840), the "dark fen" in Tennyson's 'Mariana' (1830), and the black and menacing pond in Danby's painting of *Disappointed Love* (1821, Victoria and Albert Museum; see Adams, 25). These texts provided Collins with a powerful type, an all-embracing morass of "dead waters" (*Basil*, 132) which always encode the darkest recesses of dismay. Writing what in effect is a Romantic Pool of

Despair, Collins uses the pond as a terrible icon, a visualization of the characters' utter dismay as they contemplate a moment of climactic change and trauma.

Thus, when Magdalen decides to marry her dim-witted cousin Noel in *No Name*, her despondency is revealed in the apparently naturalistic details of "gleaming water-pools" turning suddenly to "pools of blood". Configured as part of a "marsh" on the beach adjacent to Slaughden, these emblems vividly suggest the loss of optimism, the overwhelming of "gleaming" prospects with a glutinous despair (*No Name*, 242-3). Walter's dismay, when he thinks he has lost his beloved Laura, is similarly conveyed by the depressing details of "a pool of water, stagnating around an island of draggled weeds". "Sodden" with depression, the pond provides a visual concomitant of his "groaning" state of mind (*The Woman in White*, 99-100).

But the most horrifying pools are those that visualize their characters' emotions, and swallow their bodies. Acting as both site and symbol, these suffocating spaces are voids of despair: physical exemplifications of mind and soul in which the personae are quite literally consumed by the "depths of depression". In *Basil*, Mannion's despair is signified by his absorption in a cliff-hole; transformed into a Frankenstein's monster who pursues his tormentor, if not to the ends of the world then at least to the ends of England, his underlying hopelessness is finally shown when he falls into the "yawning mouth" of "running ooze" (248). The same fate befalls Rosanna Spearman, who, on committing suicide in the Shivering Sand, is suffocated by the "dreadful deeps" of an overpowering depression (*The Moonstone*, 25).

Epitomized by the Shivering Sand, Collins's death-holes are images of despair taken to an absolute extreme. Although derived from specific precedents—there being a clear relationship, as Hayter has pointed out (266), between Collins's murderous holes and the quicksands in Scott's *The Bride of Lammermoor*—he moves this motif into new realms of grotesquerie. Indeed, Collins's signs resonate with a sense of Biblical hopelessness. As well as constituting holes in the mind, Collins's ponds and pits further suggest the "yawning" jaws of hell (*Basil*, 245). This is a point the author provocatively implies in *Rambles Beyond Railways* (76), when, in describing the Devil's Throat on the Lizard, he remarks on the aptness of its name as a place of "ghastly imagery", a place on earth where "Dante's terrible 'Vision'" is "realized". Imagining his characters as lost souls in a hell of despair, he consigns them to the "ooze" and "formless masses" of perpetual dismay (*Basil*, 248 & 132). In death, as in life, his suffering personae are condemned to a fate of inescapable (and thoroughly Sensational) extremes.

Less complex in its implications is the emblem of the barren plain or moorland. Usually described as a "dreary" tract (*Armada*, 255), empty beach, arid scrub, or other "monotonous" space (*No Name*, 243), the endless waste always denotes loneliness and isolation. To some extent this reflects a personal association, although the image is again explicable as part of a literary semiology.

Collins's source on this occasion was primarily a poetic one. Drawing, it can be argued, on the work of Browning and Tennyson, he would have seen numerous examples of "glooming flats" in the latter's 'Mariana' in which the equation of loneliness and plain is clearly shown. As the *Library of the Late Wilkie Collins* proves (6), he certainly possessed a copy of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* (1842), and may have noted the poem's connecting of isolation and moorland. He would also have been aware of the emotionalized landscape in the same poet's *Morte d'Arthur* (1842), and especially of the interconnectedness of the characters' solitude, as the old order fades, and the surrounding "waste land". Another influence is suggested by Browning's "'Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came'" from *Men and Women* (1855). We cannot be sure of Collins's knowledge of this poem, although it does provide another example of the interrelatedness of loneliness and the "grey plain". Nor can we be certain of Collins's familiarity with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), although here again there is a clear connection between loneliness and the drab open spaces of the moor.

It is clear, however, that physical and psychological isolation is used in Collins's texts much as it is in those of his contemporaries. As in the psychovoids of Browning and Tennyson, Collins places his loneliest characters in barren spaces: an agoraphobic device which focuses their state of mind by projecting it outwards, as if they were standing on a vast empty stage. Mapping their isolation of mind in terms of a physical concomitant, Collins makes his characters as insignificant as possible. Open spaces are typically used to reveal the isolation of Magdalen, as she contemplates the shingle emptiness around Slaughden (*No Name*, 243); Sarah's loneliness, as she tramps over Dartmoor in *The Dead Secret* (147); and Anne Catherick's, as she casts around for help on the moonlit expanse of Hampstead Heath (*The Woman in White*, 14-16).

Especially revealing is the beach surrounding the Shivering Sand in *The Moonstone*. Described by Cuff and Betteredge as a "lonesome" (22) place without "a scrap of cover" (119), this setting provides more evidence of the emotional void engulfing Rosanna Spearman. Surrounded by a wilderness visited by no-one but herself, Rosanna's condition is as "desolate" (119), as lonely and sterile, as the landscape itself. Just as the beach is avoided by the

"very birds" (22), so Rosanna is locked into a world of utter isolation, given a "wide berth" (22) and, with the kindly exceptions of Penelope and Betteredge, ignored by everyone.

The terrain around the Sand is in this sense another visualization of emotional disorder. Written as a nightmare text, the description vividly evokes the "unwholesome" and "unquiet" (25). By fusing the mental and material, it epitomizes the author's treatment of the land as a means of defining his characters' psychological and emotional "intensities" (Fowler, 296). With its linkage of quicksand and beach—or loneliness and despair—it also typifies the combination of signifiers to encode a compound condition. In the case of *The Moonstone*, the multiple approach helps to explain a particular orientation of mind, a set of conditions in which the character despairs not only because (in her eyes) she is jilted, but because she is lonely in the first place. Yet other land/mindscape are more complex. Uniting the principal motifs of pool, plain and rank vegetation, they provide multifaceted schemes, dense encodings of information. Figuring as elaborate tableaux, they visualize and make accessible important truths about the author's most secretive and challenging characters.

One of the most intricate texts is formed by the land/mindscape of Blackwater Estate in *The Woman in White*. Described in Pre-Raphaelite detail by Marian Halcombe, this topography is a complicated portrait of mind.

I found myself standing suddenly on the margin of a vast open space, and looking down on Blackwater Lake . . . The ground, shelving away from me, was all sand, with a few little heathy hillocks to break the monotony of it in certain places. The lake itself had evidently once flowed to the spot on which I stood . . . I saw its still stagnant waters . . . separated into pools and ponds, by twining reeds and rushes and little knolls of earth. On the farther bank the trees rose thickly again, and shut out the view, and cast their black shadows on the sluggish water. As I walked down to the lake, I saw that the ground on the farther side was damp and marshy, overgrown with rank grass and dismal willows. The water . . . looked black and poisonous opposite to me, and the rank overhanging thickets and tangled trees...
(*The Woman in White*, 180)

The question, however, is whose psychology is being revealed? Hayter argues for Blackwater being an "allegory" of Marian's "prospects" (265): a logical interpretation, given that it is Marian who overlooks and describes the landscape. However, Blackwater is better interpreted (in a calculated distortion of the Pathetic Fallacy) as a representation of the mind of its owner, Sir Percival Glyde. Marian, it can be argued, is simply the means of describing its grotesqueries; entering Glyde's emotional terrain (as Fosco enters hers when he completes her diary), she catalogues what is clearly a psychotic condition. Interpreted in the terms already defined, Blackwater is a grisly map, a physical transcript of its owner's emotional disorders.

Overgrown and weedy, the vegetation reads as another representation of obsession and paranoia. Configured as a dense assemblage of "rank grass" and

"twining reeds and rushes", the plants imply that Glyde (like Monkton) is self-consumed and ill at ease. As his woodlands are "planted far too thickly" (*The Woman in White*, 179), and close in on themselves in a claustrophobic struggle to survive, so Glyde's state of mind is overloaded with troubles, obsessive, congested, jungle-like. The precise nature of those troubles is specified, moreover, by the designation of the plants. As noted before, "rank grass" denotes wickedness (*Language*, 166), and in this context implies a mental habit of evil thoughts. He is equally prone to melancholy, symbolized by the conventional treatment of the "dismal willows" (Phillips, 210), and ill humour, here materialized by the despoliation of the "complaisant" reed (*Language*, 166).

Consumed with these anxious combinations of unspecified wickedness, inner congestion and sadness, Glyde's mental state is indeed "overgrown". At the same time his mind is absorbed by loneliness, as shown by the details of the Estate's openness. Imaged, when viewed from a prospect, as a "vast open space", the "monotony" of view exemplifies his isolation. As Marian remarks (in a moment of emotional identification), the Estate is infused with the "dreary impressions of solitude". Underpinning all this, however, is the emblem of the pool: a roll-call of despair embracing the "stagnant waters" of the lake—itsself significantly called Blackwater—a muddy series of "ponds", "damp and marshy" ground and "spongy banks". Threatening to swallow the whole estate—and metaphorically the mind of its owner—the pools at Blackwater highlight hopelessness as the primary constituent in Glyde's emotional composition.

Blackwater can be interpreted, then, as a personal hell in which Glyde is revealed as a suffering soul as well as a villain. Entering the Estate through the eyes of Marian, we penetrate a soul tormented by loneliness, agitation, sadness and despair. Described by Caracciolo as a Dantean monster who occupies an Inferno-like hell (390-1), he is also, on the basis of what is shown in his mindscape, a rather sad neurotic. Indicating what is otherwise concealed behind the character's smooth—or gliding—exterior, Blackwater provides vital information which predicts how he will subsequently behave. If we interpret him as lonely, despairing and self-obsessed, we should not be surprised when he undertakes his criminal conspiracy to eliminate his wife. For the attentive reader of landscape, all such clues are plainly inscribed.

Considering Collins's novels more generally, other complexities are suggested by the elaborate descriptions of the Broads in *Armada*. These landscapes have a primary role in the unfolding of the narrative; infused, as Quilter remarks, with an "underlying sense of mystery" (579), they act as the

ominous setting for the realization of the Dream. More to the point, they visualize several of the characters' emotions—rather than those of a single individual—as they change and develop. Locked into a mysterious landscape, the members of the party who visit the Broads reveal their inner feelings partly through the exercise of dialogue, but mainly in the semiotics of pool, plant and wasteland.

In the first instance plant-symbolism uncharacteristically denotes a positive outlook. As they begin to enjoy their adventure in the wilds the characters' contentment is signalled by banks of reeds, the conventional sign of complaisance and docility (*Language*, 166). Registered within *Armadale's* naturalistic surface, but signifying what lies 'within', the reeds provide materializations of their "placid" state of mind (237). This situation includes the "thoughtless" lovemaking of Allan and Miss Milroy (237), the dreamy speculations of the Major, and the "dormant amiability" (241) of the group as a whole. Surrounded by the emblems of harmony and well being, the revellers are united in a "friendly fusion" (241) of mutual pleasure. Yet this "enchantment" (240) is purely superficial. From the very beginning of their trip, Collins insists on the characters' incompatibility and potential for ill feeling. What is more, he manipulates the language of plants to predict that an emotional conflict, a clash of negative thoughts, will arise. Particular stress is laid on the small but telling detail of a "little weedy lane" (236), which marks their entry to the Broad. Existing as a canker within the "green grazing fields" (236) of their minds, the weed prefigures the impending affect of discordant thoughts and inner conflicts.

This process quickly unfolds in the period after the onset of Pentecost's illness, when the characters collapse into bad feeling and mutual antagonism. The dominant emotion, in recognition of lack of mutuality, is one of loneliness and isolation—and this Collins powerfully conveys through the symbol of the flat and dreary waste. No longer Picturesque, the landscape of reeds is reconfigured as a "lonesome" void (247), a watery waste charting the existential emptiness of the mind. In the words of Neelie Milroy, whose comments indicate her feelings of estrangement from Allan, it becomes "the most lonely, dreary, hideous place I ever saw" (253). Based on a 'real' place—the Hurle Mere being a version of the Horsey Mere in Norfolk (Clarke, xi)—the Broad becomes a chilling image of separateness, fear and the isolating effects of mutual antagonism.

Worse than this, it signifies Allan's growing dismay and depression, here typically symbolized by the "unfathomed depths of slime and water" (247). Possessed by "something" he does not understand (248), Allan is

uncertain as to why his thoughts of Midwinter give rise to such negative thoughts. Like the waters oozing under the peat, Allan's mind—itsself a sort of "labyrinth" (236)—is undermined by a sense of foreboding. What Allan senses, of course, is not the discomfiture of Midwinter (whom he supposes to be working too hard) but the forthcoming fulfilment of the Dream. When Midwinter arrives at the Hurle Mere he too partakes of the sense of desolation. But the most telling set of waters is that within the Vision itself. Described as a "broad lonely pool" (257), with Lydia standing on its banks, the Mere provides the definitive image of the despair of Allan and Midwinter. Looking at the pool, they are forced to look, at the moment when the Dream comes true, into the blackened tarn of their own dismay.

That moment represents the point of greatest intensity. Arranged in sequential tableaux, the descriptions of the Broads lead inevitably from the characters' primary happiness to the moment of emotional trauma. Nevertheless, all of these emotions are encoded in the author's initial descriptions of the Broad. Visualized as a landscape of "startling anomalies" (236), with strange contradictions between land and sea, wheat-field and rush, the Broad is also a challenging mindscape, a jostling combination of harmony and despair, loneliness and a growing sense of inner conflict. Evoking a particular passage of feeling, its emotional range locates it at the very heart of the novel's complicated skein of emotions.

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The Norfolk Broads, and all of Collins's corrupted gardens, might thus be viewed as revelatory texts. Assembled from pre-existing semiologies, they embody a type of "corrupted pastoralism" (Bornstein, 164) in which the blight of the land is a precise indication of the characters' states of mind. Conceived, in the words of Hayter (266), as a "hidden country of symbols", they can nevertheless be interpreted as legible texts, providing one knows the taxonomies from which the author constructs them. Used to give vital information, Collins's settings are dense with significance, and should always be read with care. As Quilter remarks, Collins "feels what every great landscape painter has always felt . . . that the interest of landscape . . . depends [on] the associations with which it is connected . . . and the emotions [it] wishes to excite" (580).

It can be argued, in short, that Collins cleverly exploits the Pathetic Fallacy, the traditions of the Victorian wasteland, and the older traditions of Gothic (see Punter, 223-8) and romance. Borrowing from Scott, Browning, Tennyson and the rest, he turns the emblems of blight to his own Sensational purposes. Writing his own version of established materials, he creates visual

tropes of great intensity and depth. In developing his own formulations of the wasteland he also makes a significant contribution to the on-going tradition of blight. Acting as a link between Gothic and his own time, Collins's hypnotic mindscapes highlight the importance of the wasteland as a key constituent in the charting of the aberrant and strange, and were themselves influential. Imitated by writers as diverse as Arthur Conan Doyle, Richard Jefferies, H. Rider Haggard and Thomas Hardy, his settings are quoted in a variety of contexts. For instance, there is surely a connection between the Grimpen Mire in Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and the Shivering Sand (Waugh, 365). Jefferies' apocalyptic imagery of watery scum and decay in *After London* (1885) must also bear a relationship to Collins's pools of despair. The deserts in Rider Haggard's *She* (1887) and the desolate moor in Mrs Henry [Ellen] Wood's *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863) are likewise related to Collins's dead open spaces, as is the blank expanse of Egdon Heath in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878).

All of these analogies, and especially the relationship between Collins and Hardy, need to be analysed further, and deserve a study in their own right. What we can say, finally, is that Collins develops a provocative materialization of what Dahl describes as the characteristically Victorian emphasis on "melancholy moods" (Dahl, 341). Offering a paradigm of blight and the symbolism of emotional ruin, he helps to define the territories of anguish and despair.

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Could Lydia Gwilt Have Been Happy? A New Reading of *Armada* as Marital Tragedy

K.A. Kale

Much of Wilkie Collins's *Armada* is taken up by Ozias Midwinter's internal debate about whether the dream in the novel has a natural or a supernatural origin, and by Lydia Gwilt's plots to acquire Allan Armadale's fortune. At first sight the marriage between Gwilt and Midwinter appears to be subordinate to these two themes, but it proves potentially one of the best marriages represented in Collins's fiction. I argue that as far as the fate of Gwilt and Midwinter is concerned, the origin of the dream is irrelevant, and that the tragic end to the novel is brought about by their own personality flaws. Thus the book is a marital tragedy rather than the melodrama that it at first sight appears to be.

My view can be contrasted with that of Peter Thoms, who argues that "for Gwilt, imprisoned as she is by circumstances, love is just another trap" (131), and that "Gwilt fails both because of circumstances and because the weaknesses in her character triumph too often" (132). In my reading, the "circumstances" which lead to the plots against Armadale's life are not the "formative influences" (130) in Gwilt's early life, but rather Midwinter's obsession with Armadale's dream; and love is not so much a trap as an alternative end which she unwisely renounces. Thoms also says that "*Armada* describes not only the successful quest of Midwinter but also the failed journey of Gwilt" (127) and that "[i]n his quest Midwinter has . . . emerged from isolation to reunite with Allan" (123). While I agree that Gwilt fails in the book, I also argue that Midwinter's outcome can only be defined as triumphant under the male value system which celebrates vocational success and male friendship; in intellectual as opposed to conventional terms, he is far less isolated during the successful phases of his relationship with Gwilt than he is while his friendship with the unreflective Armadale is at its strongest.

In her introduction to the World's Classics edition of *Armada*, Catherine Peters refers to Midwinter's "desire for the emotional satisfactions of friendship and sexual love" (xvii) and to Gwilt's "strong physical and mental attraction to another intelligent outsider" (xix). She also notes that "[w]hile presenting the surface of a sensational novel, *Armada* suggests the existence of a subtext . . ." (xii). I intend to show in detail how Collins

indicates the possibility of a hypothetical alternative ending to the book which does indeed constitute such a subtext. In the course of my argument, I shall also show how Collins's clumsiness in yoking together the two major textual elements of Armadale's dream and the Gwilt/Midwinter marriage was forced upon him by his need to follow generic conventions. Given the emphasis in the book on the debate between free will and determinism, in what follows I shall adopt the assumption that the characters had full psychological autonomy in their fictional world (except insofar as they were constrained to fulfil the dream).

Armadale's dream, as transcribed by Midwinter, contains three visions. The first is the appearance of "the Shadow of a Woman". The second involves the shadow of a man stretching out its arm towards a statue, which breaks. The third involves the shadow of a woman giving the shadow of a man a glass of liquid, the man giving the glass to Armadale, and Armadale's fainting when he puts it to his lips (Collins *Armadale*, 141-2). It is worth noting that the dream is not reported directly by the narrator; instead, the reader is given Midwinter's account, which the easygoing Armadale assents to as being an accurate representation (141). It is also significant that in one way Midwinter's attitude towards the dream is overly rationalistic—he insists on writing a detailed account of it, and asking Armadale to sign it—and in another, overly emotional—he persists in believing it to have a supernatural origin (143).

There are three different interpretations of the dream given in the text at this point. Armadale's interpretation of the dream is "warning be hanged—it's all indigestion!" (140). His attitude towards it is to request that Midwinter "leave off thinking about the dream", hand over "that trumpery bit of paper", and "have done with it" (152). I do not argue that his interpretation is correct (indeed, the question of which is the correct interpretation is an issue which is not settled by the text), but his advice to Midwinter, which is not followed, turns out by chance to have been good advice, as I shall show below.

The second interpretation is given by Mr Hawbury the doctor, who peremptorily dismisses Armadale's explanation as simplistic: "The sight of your face is quite enough . . . I certify, on the spot, that you never had such a thing as an indigestion in your life" (140). He asserts that "[a] Dream is the reproduction, in the sleeping state of the brain, of images and impressions produced on it in the waking state" (144), and laboriously traces each element of the dream back to an incident in Armadale's waking life (144-50). Mr Hawbury's explanation is what is referred to in the book (including the Appendix) as the natural explanation.

The third interpretation of the dream is Midwinter's (140, 143, 151). He believes that the three visions of the dream will be fulfilled, and that, as Mr

Hawbury puts it, "this dream is a warning, supernaturally addressed to Mr Armadale" (143) and that "these fulfilments of the dream will mark the progress of certain coming events, in which Mr Armadale's happiness, or Mr Armadale's safety, will be dangerously involved" (151).

There is a further, fourth reading of the dream, which is not suggested in the text, and which would be obvious if we were to take the chapter in which it is presented out of the context of the book: that it symbolizes male friendship being supplanted by female friendship. Armadale explains (in the presence of Midwinter) that the taste of brandy makes him faint (149), so that a reader who was not influenced by the knowledge that these events were being encountered in the context of a Collins sensation novel would not naturally think of poison. I speculate that Armadale's dream, and Midwinter's superstitious belief in it, represent male fear of marriage: that is to say, that vague fears about a union with the opposite sex have taken on the concrete form of a fantasy in which first of all the two friends quarrel, and then the female partner of one tries to harm the other.¹ Note that the characters in the book are led by the context in which the dream appears to overlook the possibility of this fourth interpretation: this context colours their emotional response. In the paragraphs below, I shall look more closely at the precise function of the dream in the novel.²

Much of the tension in *Armadale* is caused by the conflicting expectations arising from the narrative. The reader expects the three visions of the dream to be fulfilled, and anticipates that the third vision represents Armadale's death. But he or she also expects the conventional happy ending of fiction, in which the heroes survive and the villain is punished. Swinburne, in his 1889 comments on the book, reprinted in Page's collection, suggested that:

The prologue or prelude is so full of interest and promise that the expectations of its readers may have been unduly stimulated; but the sequel, astonishingly ingenious and inventive as it is, is scarcely perhaps in perfect keeping with the anticipations thus ingeniously aroused. (258)

The reason for this is that the prologue appears to herald a pure melodrama, whereas, in order to satisfy the conflicting expectations which have been set up

¹ Although my explanation for the origin of the dream, like all my arguments in this essay, rely only upon an examination of the text, and not on extraneous historical or biographical facts, it is interesting to note, purely as an aside, that Collins himself never married.

² Jenny Bourne Taylor's book includes material on the Victorian theory of dreams; as stated above, however, this historical background is not necessary to my argument. Catherine Peters (xxi-xxii) states that Collins "hints at the possibility of yet another, unexpressed meaning to the dream, which hovers between the other two" (i.e. the doctor's "rational" explanation and the "prophetic" one) and that the terms he uses for the three people in it ("the dreamer, the Shadow of a Man, and the Shadow of a Woman") "embody a startling anticipation of Jung's theories of 'the shadow'". Although my explanation could be called psychoanalytic, in the sense that it postulates a surface manifestation of hidden fears, it has been presented without reference to any specific psychoanalytic theory.

in the mind of the reader, Collins has the third vision of the dream fulfilled innocuously. Gwilt attempts to poison Armadale, but disguises the taste of the poison by using brandy, in ignorance of his allergy to it, and the brandy causes Armadale to faint (562-3), and thus, as I argue below, yokes the melodrama (which may or may not have been predestined) to a tragedy which has its roots in all too human character.

Gwilt comes to marry Midwinter after a sequence of events which originate in her plot to marry Armadale for his fortune. Thus, although her original motives were immoral, they fortuitously led her into a situation of potential happiness, as I argue below. (Perhaps Collins is here offering a comment on morality: what determines Gwilt's fate is not whether her motivations can be labelled as moral or immoral, but rather whether at any given stage she is acting in her own interests in acting on these motivations. Also, the distinction between the origin of Gwilt's motivations and the wisdom or otherwise of acting upon these motivations, parallels the distinction between the origin of Armadale's dream and the wisdom or otherwise of interpreting the dream as a forewarning of danger. I shall return to this theme of the relationship between emotion and reason at the end of the essay.)

A character-type which recurs throughout Collins's work is that of the intellectual character who (for whatever reason) does not fit in to his or her social milieu. Examples outside *Armadale* include Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* who tries to regain her family fortune by unconventional means (as discussed by O'Neill, 158-63), Mannion in *Basil* who is the son of a man who has been hung for forgery (228-9), and Ezra Jennings in *The Moonstone*. Such characters do not in general find marital partners who share the isolation from society caused by their situations or attitudes. Gwilt and Midwinter form an exception to this general rule. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a more appropriate partner for Gwilt (from anywhere in literature) than Midwinter, or of a more appropriate partner for Midwinter than Gwilt. Additionally, their marriage is unusual by the standards of most Victorian fiction, both in that it is a marriage of intellectuals, and in that it is a relationship between an older woman—Gwilt is thirty-five (162)—and a much younger man—Midwinter is only twenty-one (76).³ More typical marriages in Collins's fiction include that between Magdalen Vanstone and Captain Kirke,⁴ between Walter Hartright and Laura Glyde in *The Woman in White*, and between the

³ Collins did sketch the beginnings of a relationship between an older woman and a younger man elsewhere—Mellicent and Amelius in *The Fallen Leaves*—but he did not develop this as he does with Gwilt and Midwinter.

⁴ Melynda Huskey points out that Kirke's love for her "is based entirely on Magdalen's appearance" (9).

unintellectual Armadale and Neelie Milroy, anticipated at the end of the novel (676). Indeed, one of the functions of Neelie Milroy in the book is to highlight the emotionally and intellectually unsatisfying nature of the conventional marriage in the Victorian novel, in contrast to that of the Gwilt/Midwinter partnership.⁵

Gwilt writes of her relationship to Midwinter in her diary:

"How happy I was in the first days that followed our marriage . . . Only two months have passed, and that time is a bygone time already! I try to think of anything I might have said or done wrongly, on my side—of anything he might have said or done wrongly, on his—and I can remember nothing unworthy of my husband, nothing unworthy of myself. I cannot even lay my finger on the day when the cloud first rose between us . . . It is only at night . . . that I know how hopelessly I am losing the love he once felt for me." (545)

She wonders whether there is an "unutterable Something left by the horror of my past life, which clings invisibly to me still?" (546). However, this possibility can be discounted. The only sustainable explanation for Midwinter's unhappiness which has been presented to the reader is his superstitious belief in the dream as a harbinger of evil. We are told later on, that, on an occasion when Midwinter is asleep, he has lying under his hand his Narrative of Armadale's Dream (554). We are also told that his dedication to his work is not the only cause of his neglect of Gwilt:

"Midwinter's all-important letter to the newspaper was despatched by the post last night. I was foolish enough to suppose that I might be honoured by having some of his spare attention bestowed on me to-day. Nothing of the sort!" (550)

Interpreting the dream as Midwinter does—as an indication of preordained doom—makes the continued desire of Gwilt for Armadale's fortune appear a foregone conclusion. However, a close look at the text shows that this interpretation is incorrect. Collins indicates that, had he abandoned his superstition at this stage, Midwinter would have induced Gwilt to abandon her plot against Armadale's life on account of the happiness of her marriage. (As discussed below, the ambiguity in the third vision of the dream allows scope for this alternative reading.) We are told again in Gwilt's diary:

"Supposing I was not the altered woman I am—I only say, supposing—how would the Grand Risk that I once thought of running, look now? . . . the first of those three steps which were once to lead me, through Armadale's life, to the fortune and station of Armadale's widow. No matter how innocent my intentions on my wedding day—and they *were* innocent—this is one of the unalterable results of the marriage. Well, having taken the first step . . . supposing I meant to take the second step, which I don't—how would present circumstances stand towards me? Would they warn me to draw back, I wonder? or would they encourage me to go on?" (548)

The circumstances, as it turned out, encouraged her to go on.

At this point, it is necessary to take account of two different hypotheses.

⁵ The contrasts between the Gwilt/Midwinter, the Armadale/Midwinter, and the Armadale/Neelie Milroy relationships probably deserve a fuller analysis than I have given here, but for the purposes of my argument that the book is a marital tragedy, it is sufficient to note the quality of the first of these.

Firstly, even if we assume for the sake of argument that Midwinter was correct in his belief that the dream had a supernatural origin, and that the visions within it would have been fulfilled regardless of the actions of the characters, a close look at the text shows that he was incorrect in his further belief that the dream was necessarily a prediction of doom to Armadale. Collins makes the third and final vision ambiguous. It could have been fulfilled by Gwilt's handing to Armadale at some stage of her married life a glass containing brandy (the taste of which, as mentioned earlier, causes him to faint), but not poison. (This third vision, as described earlier, involved Armadale's fainting upon putting a glass of liquid to his lips; nothing within the dream implied that the glass contained poison, although this was implicitly assumed by Midwinter.) This would have represented an innocuous closure to the book. Secondly, if we assume that the dream did not have a supernatural origin, (and that the three visions were therefore not fated to be realized), then the fulfilment of the first two was merely coincidental. In this case, the alternative reading of events suggested by Collins is straightforward: again, as indicated above, had Midwinter abandoned his superstition upon marrying Gwilt, she would have abandoned her plot against Armadale, and thus the third and final vision would not have been fulfilled.

Thus I have shown that, whether or not the dream had a supernatural origin, in either case Gwilt's attempted poisoning of Armadale (which in the text represents the fulfilment of the third vision of the dream) was brought about first of all by Midwinter's irrational belief in the dream (and not, as might originally appear, directly by the dream itself), and secondly by Gwilt's irrational persistence in her plots against Armadale. (I call her persistence irrational because her marriage to Midwinter gives her a potential source of satisfaction independent of Armadale's fortune.)

Even at this stage, after the first attempt on Armadale's life, the eventual suicide of Gwilt could have been avoided. She plots to have Armadale murdered at sea (567-70). As she writes in her diary:

The one danger to dread was the danger of Midwinter's resolution, or rather of Midwinter's fatalism, giving way at the last moment. If he allowed himself to be persuaded into accompanying Armadale on the cruise, Manuel's exasperation against me would hesitate at nothing . . . he would be capable of exposing my whole past life to Midwinter before the vessel left the port. (573)

Again Collins suggests the possibility of an alternative chain of events: Gwilt's diary suggests that had Midwinter abandoned his superstition even at this late stage, at worst Gwilt's marriage would have broken up—the train of events leading to her suicide would not have occurred. Even after Armadale sailed, Gwilt's tragedy could have been avoided. She writes once more in her diary:

if he had persisted in his first resolution to accompany me to England, rather than allow me to travel alone, I firmly believe that I should have turned my back on

temptation for the second time, and have lulled myself to rest once more in the old dream of living out my life happy and harmless in my husband's love. (578)

As suggested in the diary, Midwinter once again had an opportunity to prevent the tragic ending of the novel. Armadale might or might not have been killed at sea, but Gwilt's marriage to Midwinter would have continued. Once the fulfilment of the three visions of the dream has been completed, it should be apparent even to someone who believes that the dream foreshadowed future events that this dream can now have nothing more to say about the future. However, Midwinter's fatalism persists even though the dream is now superannuated. In the Epilogue, after Gwilt's suicide, Midwinter says to Armadale:

I have learnt to view the purpose of the dream with a new mind. I once believed that it was sent to rouse your distrust of the friendless man whom you have taken as a brother to your heart. I now *know* that it came to you as a timely warning to take him closer still. Does this help to satisfy you that I, too, am standing hopefully on the brink of a new life, and that while we live, brother, your life and mine will never be divided again? (677)

Armadale's closing words in the Epilogue are:

Everybody says, Midwinter, you have a great career before you—and I believe that everybody is right. Who knows what great things may happen before you and I are many years older? (677)

Thus Midwinter's career prospects, like his friendship with Armadale, are celebrated at the expense of his potentially fulfilling marriage with Gwilt.

I have demonstrated that although the first part of *Armadale* (by which I mean the events preceding Gwilt's marriage to Midwinter) is, as is commonly recognized, a melodrama concerned with external conflicts, the second is a tragedy concerned with internal ones. The main conflict, which is responsible for the tragic end, being that in which Midwinter's superstition conquers his reason. Subsidiary conflicts are those of love against ambition: Gwilt's love for Midwinter against her ambition for the possession of Armadale's fortune, and Midwinter's love for Gwilt against his ambition connected with his career as a journalist.

I have also shown that the main theme of *Armadale* is that of male friendship considered as an alternative to a satisfying marriage (as opposed to the conventional marriage of Victorian fiction as exemplified by Armadale and Neelie Milroy). However, there is also another significant theme: that of how reason can be corrupted by emotion. Midwinter believes that, when Armadale has his dream, it is a supernatural indication that he may bring harm to his friend. He then continues to believe this even when the three visions of the dream have been fulfilled and the dream can therefore, even if his conjecture about its supernatural origin is accurate, have nothing more to say about the future. Finally, at the end of the book, he indulges in an elaborate post hoc fitting of circumstances to theory and concludes that the dream was in fact a

warning that his friendship with Armadale should be reinforced. Mr Hawbury also indulges in a post hoc fitting of circumstances to theory when he argues that the dream had a rational explanation (143-50)—a reading which is not sanctioned by the text. Armadale himself argues that the best course of action would be to forget the dream, but this sound advice (which, as I have explained above, would have saved Midwinter's marriage had he followed it) originates not from any kind of reasoned argument but rather from the flippancy of his character and his intellectual laziness. Finally, Gwilt is propelled by her mercenary desire for Armadale's fortune into what could have been a fulfilling marriage with Midwinter, but chooses to indulge her desire even when it is no longer in her own interests to do so.

I conclude by quoting Pedgift Senior's admonition to Armadale against Gwilt, which I take out of context as a comment on the interpretation of Collins's texts in general, and *Armadale* in particular:

You and my son are young men; and I don't deny that the circumstances, on the surface, appear to justify the interpretation which, as young men, you have placed on them. I am an old man—I know that circumstances are not always to be taken as they appear on the surface . . . (367)

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Music and Female Power in Sensation Fiction

Phyllis Weliver

Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) are two sensation novels that connect the power and identity of their heroines to music.¹ Sensation fiction—the best-selling thrillers of the 1860s—reveals masquerade in the home where it is least expected, and depicts crisis as a series of unexpected changes and shocks. Fictional observers and Victorian readers alike were startled when characters or situations were revealed to be other than they seemed, and this provided the "sensation." Because unravelling the mystery in these novels meant looking beneath the surface and reassigning meaning to recognizable types, sensation fiction challenged "the premises of judgement" and startled "early-Victorian sensibilities", in Nicholas Rance's words (2-3; see also Taylor, Heller, and Cvetkovich). As Rance comments on the first appearance of the woman in white in Collins's novel, Victorian moral attitudes assume that a woman discovered alone after midnight on the high road must be guilty of something (2). However, this woman is not "wild," "immodest," impatient or extravagant, and the protagonist is further perplexed because he cannot determine her social rank (Collins, 48). As all the visual, vocal, and behavioural signs are confused, he is slow to respond, not knowing what attitude to take. Her identity and its strange signposting are thus the initial mysteries of the first sensation novel, *The Woman in White*.

Issues of gender construction are particularly relevant to sensation novels, which also probe how Victorian ideals of passive womanhood were polished and formed by attendant accomplishments like musical skill. Social fears were unveiled as the potential dark side of angelic traits was explored. Suddenly, passive did not necessarily mean powerless, and accomplishments might be more than adornments, becoming a means of surprise attack through sensuous pleasure. Music's presence in these novels was almost guaranteed since it was considered the ideal lady's accomplishment, heralding refinement in the performer and attracting suitors. Sensation fiction frequently explores

¹ This research has been partially funded by the Overseas Research Students Award Scheme, administered by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom.

the problems that ensued when husbands discovered that their wives were not as angelic as they seemed during courtship, couching this sense of betrayal in terms that raised readers' hackles as everyday homes were destroyed by bigamy, adultery, and murder.

Music in Victorian England

To best understand fictional representations of female musicians, it is necessary first to examine how music was situated in mid-Victorian England in terms of gender and class.² Music occupied a contradictory position, as it was considered an emasculating or debasing activity for men of the aspiring middle classes and nobility to practice, but also an appropriate activity for women, working-class men, foreigners or professional "artist-musicians."³ Though there is no doubt that professional and domestic music-making were then important parts of daily life, musicologists have disagreed over whether nineteenth-century England could be fairly stigmatized as *Das Land ohne Musik*, the land without music (see Temperley, ed., *The Lost Chord*, Banfield, and Hyde). The phrase (which derives from the title of a 1914 book on Britain by Oscar A.H. Schmitz which itself has little to do with music) expresses the belief that first-rate music has not been produced by English composers, but it is also noteworthy that many Victorians did not themselves consider the English to be musical. Recognizing the prevalence of this idea, choral conductor Henry Leslie rejects it in his article, "Music in England": "To say that England is not a musical nation is absurd" (250). If England is not in practice *Das Land ohne Musik*, then the term must be an ideological construct, or a way that most Englishmen chose to see themselves. After all, prominent Victorian men like Gladstone, Tennyson, Charles Lamb, and the Archbishop of Canterbury all declared with pride that they knew nothing of music (Banfield, 12; Auerbach, 30). The English were musical and not musical, depending on the speaker, and therefore *Das Land ohne Musik* is a concept laden with gender- and class-based significance, since many women, factory workers, and artist-musicians were regularly practising, teaching, and performing music.

One way of understanding conflicting notions of Victorian music-making is by considering music's link with the rise of the middle class. While both genders attended public concerts, women's domestic music-making was a

² For scholarship on music and Victorian fiction, see Auerbach, Beer, Byerly, Gray, and Temperley, ed., *The Lost Chord*.

³ Following Nancy B. Reich ("Women", 125), I define "artist-musicians" as "a category which includes actors, artists, artisans, dancers, writers, and practitioners of allied professions. They had in common an artistic output and a low economic level. Above all, they depended on their work for a livelihood."

means by which the family enacted their class placement and aspirations at home. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall observe, "consciousness of class always takes a gendered form." (13). Sexual division of labour within families was part of middle-class identity, as was dividing the world into public and private spheres, again along gendered lines. For instance, unlike middle-class men whose social power in mid-nineteenth-century Britain derived from property ownership, business success, and membership in public bodies (whether philanthropic, professional, or cultural), women were judged by personal behaviour (including modesty and table manners), appearance (dress and cleanliness), language (see Davidoff and Hall, 397-416) and accomplishments such as musical skill.

Women's accomplishments had class significance because they were a form of cultural capital existing within the home. By cultural capital, I mean Pierre Bourdieu's definition of how tastes in art "function as markers of 'class.'" In other words, "[a] work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it is encoded" (Bourdieu, 2). Possession of this code (the cultural capital), and the ability to decipher meaning in a work of art, occurs through a lengthy process of accumulation and education, as family members, the society within which they exist, and educational institutions impart a sense of value and appreciation for certain types of music, literature, or painting, and as the beholder comes into repeated contact with these types. Having economic capital, then, does not necessarily imply possessing cultural capital, nor is the reverse true. Rather, an appreciation of certain types of music as beautiful can place the listener within a grouping or class of those who share the same tastes, and therefore class placement can be signified by appreciation of specific types of cultural production, as much as by possessing money. In Bourdieu's words, "Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier" (6).

That is not to say that ownership does not play a part in cultural capital, but a piano seen in a house only becomes cultural capital as the viewer realizes what it means in a wider context (on the most simple level, that the family can afford a piano). Similarly, certain knowledge was required to appreciate that drawing-room performances displayed the existence of money enough to buy lessons, sheet music, and even leisure time, since women who could afford to practice probably did not have to work either inside or outside the home, except for management tasks such as organizing servants and menus. When ladies performed for select gatherings of peers after dinner, they therefore visibly and audibly demonstrated the family's respectable social standing and financial well-being to those who shared the same cultural capital.

In Victorian England music-making could be deemed tasteful depending

on who played (gender, class, nationality), what they played (instrument and repertoire), and where they played (public or private). The performers who were most unambiguously appreciated in middle- and upper-class domestic settings were unmarried daughters. Because many lady musicians abandoned music-making after marrying, it seems that amateur music was largely used to secure a good marriage. This was recognized by Krebs in 1893:

One great reason why so many women utterly neglect music after they are married, or after they have finally given up all hope of ever marrying, is that, with them, music has simply been a means to an end, and that end—to shine in society—having been accomplished, or its attainment being despaired of, music is laid aside like a worn-out garment. (85)

The most important tasks for Victorian women were to marry suitably and happily, and to raise a family, and Krebs demonstrates that music was used to attract husbands even at the end of the century. Parlour performances presented potential suitors with the opportunity to watch a young lady's graceful and beautiful actions, to read the signs of her class suitability (her knowledge of how to behave socially), and/or to note her father's social status, which allowed her enough leisure to practice music. After marriage, music lost its purpose for these women, and household and mothering duties took precedence. Wives' musical performances might make others suspect that household tasks were being neglected, particularly in the second half of the century when there was widespread worry that middle-class women had forsaken the art of housekeeping (Branca, 22-3).⁴ This is not to suggest that all wives abandoned music, but rather that the emphasis in social settings was placed on eligible daughters' performances, and that for a wife to play and sing could convey messages beyond those relating to her family's place on the class ladder.

The type of music played by prosperous daughters further illuminates domestic music's meaning to respectable society. Serving social ends, music was an ornamental skill. Consumers wanted to play pieces that sounded more like concert hall repertoire than music hall tunes, but which did not require professional technique. Favourite pieces like "The Battle of Prague," opera medleys, or a set of dances, were all pleasing and had the virtue of sounding less serious than a sonata (Temperley "Ballroom", 121).

What happened when music itself became the focus, rather than merely a signifier, conscious or unconscious, of domestic refinement? When daughters played rigorous works by Beethoven or Mendelssohn, these members of a prosperous middle-class family appeared to be in danger of displaying

⁴ See William Kitchiner's *Housekeeper's Oracle* (1829) and Alexis Soyer's *The Modern Housewife or Ménagère* (1850) for contrasts between learning keyboard instruments and housekeeping (cited in Burgan, 61-62).

attributes of a lower class. Focusing on music for its own sake certainly brought censure within mid-century novels. For instance, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's sensation novel, *Aurora Floyd* (1863), Aurora's guest, Mrs. Lofthouse, is mistaken for a governess by the footman because "she plays too well for a real lady" (234). Indeed, the key signatures of her "sonatas in C flat" (242) and preludes in six flats themselves border on the ridiculous:

Mrs. Lofthouse was rather a brilliant pianist, and was never happier than when interpreting Thalberg and Benedict. . . . Mrs. Lofthouse was seated at Aurora's piano, in the first agonies of a prelude in six flats; a prelude which demanded such extraordinary uses of the left hand across the right, and the right over the left, and such exercise of the thumbs in all sorts of positions,—in which, according to all orthodox theories of the pre-Thalberg-ite school, no pianist's thumbs should ever be used . . . (231)⁵

Mrs. Lofthouse's "brilliant" skill is called an agony. Rather than reassigning meaning to her virtuosity and therefore giving it new cultural currency by narrating the scene with dignity and respect, the narrator emphasizes the mistaken assumptions about her class status and ridicules the performer. The unflattering representation simultaneously reasserts existing cultural capital, and potentially discourages girls from emulating this particular type of display. In other words, ridicule serves as a potent control against a woman's exertion for reasons other than advantageously demonstrating the social position of her family.

Given music's position in mid-Victorian middle- and upper-class domestic settings, how does sensation fiction use music to create a (false) expectation through social signposting? Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861) contains an excellent example when, before Isabel is married or even courted, her style of music-making helps to label her as an exemplary lady. When Archibald Carlyle visits Isabel's father, encountering his future wife for only the second time, there is no suggestion that she will become adulterous:

The conversation of the earl and Mr. Carlyle had been of the eager bustling world, of money getting and money spending, . . . and that sacred chant broke in upon them with strange contrast, soothing the ear, but reproving the heart.

"It is Isabel," explained the earl. "Her singing carries a singular charm with it; and I think that charm lies in her subdued, quiet style: I hate squalling display. Her playing is the same. Are you fond of music?"

"I have been reproached by scientific performers with having neither ear nor taste for what they call good music," smiled Mr. Carlyle; "but I like *that*."

"The instrument is placed against the wall, and the partition is thin," remarked the earl. "Isabel little thinks she is entertaining us, as well as herself." (48)

Victorian women ideally provided a refuge for their husbands, fathers, and brothers from the outside world of business, and Isabel's voice, piano

⁵ Some nineteenth-century pianists like Sigismund Thalberg (1812-1871) aimed at showmanship and became successful display pianists, but were often considered second-rank composers.

technique, and religious repertoire are themselves this haven, indicating her candidacy for the position of the "good wife" since she soothes away commercial concerns effortlessly. Moreover, her playing suggests her "true" personality since she is unaware of being overheard, and therefore shows a natural inclination to play morally-upright music. Indeed, Archibald only thinks of her music as "sweet" and "delightful"; he does not believe himself bewitched. Rather, it is her father who refers to Isabel's musical "charm." Musical performance helps to create sensation by sensually charming Archibald without his awareness, making him judge Isabel as exemplary because of cultural associations or meaning given to her type of playing and singing. Her ensuing adultery shocks because Isabel is not portrayed to Archibald, the reader, or herself as a powerful siren who knowingly enchants.

The Woman in White and Lady Audley's Secret

With this description of sensation fiction and amateur music-making in mind, let us turn to two novels that connect the power and identity of their heroines to music. While critics have highlighted the parallels between *The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret* (Showalter "Family", 112; Pykett, 55), the role of music has been overlooked even though both texts depict fear of domestic, amateur music, and end in ways that validate this anxiety. Collins's novel establishes a strong marriage partly by extinguishing music as one of the heroine's pursuits, while *Lady Audley's Secret* focuses on an unworkable marriage where the musical wife wields dangerous, seductive power. Placing these representations in their cultural context, we can see that societal concerns were amplified in fictional portrayals of musicians, and that Victorian theories of identity formation inform fictional portraits of women's domestic music-making.

In Collins's text, music helps to promote true love by enabling the characters to circumvent social hierarchy, thereby allowing a drawing master, Walter Hartright, to marry an aristocratic heiress, Laura Fairlie. This occurs as Laura plays music that evokes Victorian courtship rituals and displays of cultural capital, while simultaneously suggesting her strong personality through a virtuosity that violates class norms. Of course, other elements in the text also reveal the unsuitability of Laura's seemingly advantageous first marriage to Sir Percival Glyde as opposed to her socially undesirable union with Walter, but music proves especially important in this regard. Transmitting disparate cultural messages through drawing-room entertainments, Laura's musical performance initially helps to break class barriers, making a cross-class marriage possible. Music is then later forgotten,

partly because when Walter provides for Laura within a working-class setting, earning money is more important than displaying amateur musical skill.

The text's use of music is also informed by Victorian notions of identity, or the formation of a strong and unified "self." *The Woman in White* is allegedly written to reinstate Laura's rightful inheritance and class identity after Sir Percival wrongfully declares her to be dead. It is no coincidence that Walter and Laura only unite once the heiress is estranged from her class and community, and has at the same time lost her music and her sense of identity. The pivotal questions are these: why does Laura lose her memory and why does Walter need to re-member it? After all, her sense of identity is initially stronger than Walter's, as the connection between her powerful sense of self and music-making reveals.

As discussed earlier, many women like Laura abandoned musical performance after marriage, a fact which was particularly unfortunate given that music was uniquely linked to identity formation according to Victorian mental science. For instance, William Hamilton (1788-1856), Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Edinburgh University from 1836, thought identity was partially formed through performative actions, like playing the piano. Learning to play keyboard instruments was frequently used as an example in associationist psychology, which proposed that the mind stored simple ideas derived from sense or introspection that were then linked in chains to form complex ideas. Association of ideas explained how human identity held together over time. As an example, Hamilton cites learning to play the harpsichord:

The first step is to move his fingers, from key to key, with a slow motion, looking at the notes, and exerting an express act of volition in every motion. By degrees, the motions cling to one another, and to the impressions of the notes, in the way of *association*, so often mentioned; the acts of volition growing less and less express all the time, till, at last, they become evanescent and imperceptible. For an expert performer will play from notes, or ideas laid up in the memory, and at the same time carry on a quite different train of thoughts in his mind; or even hold a conversation with another. (Hamilton, 356)

With the unconscious and habitual actions involved in musical training thus tied to identity and memory, to stop practising could disconnect the performer from part of him or herself. This is precisely what Laura experiences when she develops partial amnesia. In effect, a doorway to her associative self is closed, a process that the text treats as necessary for a peaceful marriage.

Collins's novel is constructed as a collection of testimonies written by several characters, which replaces Laura's faulty memory and identity as it reconstructs events. The connection between memory and identity is viable because nineteenth-century theories of consciousness stress memories as essential to defining the self. For instance, respected Victorian physiologist,

William B. Carpenter (1813-85), wrote in *Principles of Mental Physiology* that personal identity is created by recognizing memory as a distinct mental state from present consciousness. Yet the past is also connected to the present, and this allows the feeling of identity to be carried from moment to moment (Carpenter, 455). Collins's novel records memories dealing with the Hartrights' marriage since it begins with Walter accepting work where he meets Laura, and ends with their child's birth in the penultimate paragraph. The novel therefore makes the Hartrights' "marriage identity," and this becomes the substance of Laura's identity.

Yet despite Laura's loss of memory, from the beginning it seems that Walter, not Laura, needs to capture memories. This is hidden within the text. In narrating musical events, Walter constructs Laura as the passive female ideal. The first time Laura plays is at Walter's request, but she repeats the melodies later that evening:

As the last sentence fell from the reader's lips, Miss Fairlie passed us on the terrace once more. She was softly singing to herself one of the melodies which she had been playing earlier in the evening. Miss Halcombe waited till she had passed out of sight again, and then went on with the letter . . . (83)

Although Walter requested the original performance, Laura chose the repertoire and decides to repeat it. By interrupting the primary action, Laura also subtly undercuts Walter's linear narration and his attempts to discover the woman in white's identity, proving that Laura has more power to direct the story than Walter admits.

There is a difference between events (the story or plot) and how they are told (the narration). Although the plot depicts Laura as having a frail memory after traumatic events, Walter's narration early in the novel reveals the instability of his own identity. For instance, Walter experiences a new self upon leaving familiar London:

. . . I seemed to burst into a new life and a new set of thoughts the moment I looked at it [the view]. A confused sensation of having suddenly lost my familiarity with the past, without acquiring any additional clearness of idea in reference to the present or the future, took possession of my mind. (57)

Lacking associations with the landscape, Walter floats outside past, present and future. Without time and memory, new possibilities of identity can occur, and he falls in love soon after. Writing then helps him to redefine and stabilize his own identity, as well as Laura's.

Walter also works to reconstruct memory because, by the time he collects the narratives of *The Woman in White*, he has married Laura and erased moments need resurrecting. The text is a re-membered history of their mutual identity, stabilized and set in concrete, verbal terms instead of floating free in memories that are as easily lost as traces in sand, strains of music, or

traumatized psyches like Laura's. Walter establishes himself as the dominant partner, and he only allows Laura to echo his musical requests and warn him that his feelings are inappropriate. He takes complete responsibility for the emotions aroused, and this is written in terms of lost memory:

All memory of the past, all thought of the future, all sense of the falseness and hopelessness of my own position, lay hushed within me into deceitful rest. Lulled by the Syren-song that my own heart sung to me, with eyes shut to all sight, and ears closed to all sound of danger, I drifted nearer and nearer to the fatal rocks. The warning that aroused me at last, and startled me into sudden, self-accusing consciousness of my own weakness, . . . came silently from *her*. (90)

When Walter loses his sense of time, he also loses his identity and forgets the class difference between himself and Laura. It seems that he enters an unconscious life since that state is contrasted with sudden "consciousness" of the inappropriateness of his feelings. In unconsciousness, love appears and is nurtured by his heart's seductive "Syren-song." Woken to the consciousness of the impossibility of union, the memory of events creating that possibility fades. For instance, Walter can no longer discern where trysts occurred: "Wind and wave had long since smoothed out the trace of her . . . the place in which we two had idled away the sunny hours was as lost to me as if I had never known it . . ." (140-1). Their love is as transitory as wind, water, and music. Sensitive to landscape, Walter secures places with paint on paper. By writing their story, he similarly captures the memories, making them permanent and assuring that he and they will not reenter a state of lost identity.

Because Laura does not contribute her own text or testimony to *The Woman in White*, it seems that she does not participate in (re)creating her identity. The reason for this, writes Walter, is her faulty memory. Therefore, he provides her lost identity by collecting verbal testimonies, which he claims the right to do because she has been cast out by "Rank and Power" (435). Despite Walter's construction of events, however, Laura is active before her amnesia. For instance, while sketching excursions and the ensuing musical evenings encourage intimacy, the text focuses on Laura's art as the lovers' language. Theirs is a forbidden, hidden courtship, alive with the genius of Mozart. Laura does play for Percival, but she chooses:

new music of the dexterous, tuneless, florid kind. The lovely old melodies of Mozart, which poor Hartright was so fond of, she has never played since he left. The book is no longer in the music-stand. She took the volume away herself, so that nobody might find it out and ask her to play from it. (187)

Within the semi-public Victorian courtship, Laura creates privacy by her choice of repertoire, causing Mozart to remain sacred to her memory of Walter. Moreover, Laura's repertoire of "dexterous" new music, in addition to her ability to play Mozart, suggests that her musical skill surpasses that of most

young ladies.⁶ Therefore, she demonstrates an interest in music beyond the display of cultural capital, while also suggesting an adroitness in manipulating how she uses music: she chooses tuneful melodies, even if they are technically demanding, for a courtship that she encourages with Walter, but the new "tuneless" music for a dutiful courtship with Percival. This dexterous music had accumulated little cultural capital at the time, causing William Pole to complain in *Macmillian's Magazine* (1861) about

the wretched and unworthy style of music which is now so much in vogue for this instrument at boarding-schools and other places where they learn to play. We allude to . . . torturing scraps of airs into a wild, harum-scarum filigree of notes, scattered about the instrument in a manner so utterly unmeaning as only to excite ridicule or disgust, instead of pleasure . . . (Pole, 455)

Laura does not encourage Percival's courtship as she did Walter's, and this is figured in music and its placement as cultural capital. It is this ability, under the surface, to manipulate courtship relations with men which is represented as dangerous in the heroines of many sensation novels, as I will discuss later in relation to Braddon's *Lady Audley*.

Far from having an unstable identity, Laura indicates that she is attuned to multiple layers of reality by communicating her own complicated feelings while participating in socially-approved conduct. For example, the evening before Walter leaves Limmeridge, Laura's piano playing masks conversation between the lovers, and then it is the actual forbidden language, becoming the very happiness they cannot have. Laura whispers, "Don't speak of tomorrow. . . . Let the music speak to us of tonight, in a happier language than ours" (145). Yet while she tries to express happiness, she fails as she strikes wrong notes. Laura's musical skill and interpretation not only reveal her feelings, but also connect her to her sense of identity—of what she would like to be real as well as what is real:

She played unintermittingly—played as if the music was her only refuge from herself. Sometimes her fingers touched the notes with a lingering fondness—a soft, plaintive, dying tenderness, unutterably beautiful and mournful to hear; sometimes they faltered and failed her . . . (146)

Laura may play to forget, but the act of playing is simultaneously one of remembrance since it is intimately connected with Walter and courtship. Obviously, Laura's identity is initially flexible and strong, able to negotiate multiple levels of memory, feeling, and association.

Given the link between Laura's sense of self, music, and constructions of class, it is significant that when she loses her memory she also loses her music and her class identity. It seems that if he had encouraged her to play piano after her traumatic experience in the asylum, Walter might have helped Laura

⁶ Although Mozart did write some pieces for beginners, most of his pieces would be too difficult for Victorian ladies.

to remember for herself. Instead, he recommends drawing, an activity that Laura practised in the past but which is not linked to Victorian theories of identity formation. Rather, by encouraging Laura to practice his art and to believe that she is contributing wages to the household through it, Walter becomes the drawing master again and establishes himself as master within a respectable, artist-class household where demonstrations of leisured, domestic accomplishments like music-making are not needed. He gives Laura the role of a working-class wife, although even this should not preclude music-making, since music for the masses was encouraged in Victorian England (Leslie; Ehrlich, 94; Newsome; & Rainbow). Yet there is a contradiction in the text because, although Laura believes that she is contributing to the household's earnings through her artistic efforts, Walter does not actually sell her drawings. Therefore, besides establishing himself as a working-class artisan (engraving for periodicals now instead of aspiring to painting) he simultaneously sets up the household as middle class, where the wife's leisure is a marker of that class. Laura's contribution to the household economy is contained within the house, making her wage-earning status invisible to outsiders. Moreover, Laura is deceived as to her actual role because Walter is not selling her amateur drawings. Therefore, the class of the household is firmly established as middle or upper class, making her cessation of music even more inexplicable in terms of a household's class identity, except if her musical skill itself, and its role in establishing her own identity and sense of class placement, is interpreted as threatening to Walter.

The periphery can be a powerful space, even as Laura's centrality and power are masked. She may not write her own words, but Laura is the text's focal point, just as the novel's other musician, the evil Count Fosco, only seems marginal. For example, Marian and Laura stumble upon Fosco histrionically singing "Largo al factotum":

He was singing Figaro's famous song in the Barber of Seville, with that crisply fluent vocalisation which is never heard from any other than an Italian throat, accompanying himself on the concertina, which he played with ecstatic throwings-up of his arms, and graceful twistings and turnings of his head, like a fat St Cecilia masquerading in male attire. 'Figaro quà! Figaro là! Figaro sù! Figaro giù!' sang the Count, jauntily tossing up the concertina at arm's length, and bowing to us, on one side of the instrument, with the airy grace and elegance of Figaro himself at twenty years of age. (250)

In an opera filled with masquerade, Figaro manipulates events in exchange for cash, as does Collins's villain. Interrupting the main action, Fosco's performance takes control of Marian's linear narration and recalls the scene in which Laura interrupted Walter's investigation of Anne's identity by singing. The Count's personality is deepened by comparison with Figaro's egotism, cleverness, and genius at disguise, so that the role becomes another identity,

both masking and defining Fosco as he sings. Fosco, like the aria's text, is everywhere, hidden and visible, where he is least and most expected: "Figaro here, Figaro there, Figaro up, Figaro down." In a book in which appearances are deceptive, it is telling that the masterful Fosco appears as if on the edge, and it is significant that Fosco and Laura are the two musicians of the novel, both of whom Walter masters as he also masters his own sense of identity.

The threat of hidden female power is implicit in Collins's narrative, which successfully suppresses Laura's power before it erupts, and explicit in *Lady Audley's Secret*, in which Robert Audley discovers Lucy Audley's secrets and hidden identity. Braddon's text unveils the danger of subversive wives, using the metaphor of the siren. Beneath the singing seraph may lurk a fishy monster, sometimes unknown to the angel herself. Wives like Lucy are presented in sensation fiction as both the female ideal and its opposite. The danger these women pose lies in their ability to deceive. Just as the narrator suggests that calm, beautiful locales may be the settings of unimaginable crimes, violence, and secrecy, the innocent, childishly beautiful Lucy hides a destructive temperament. Only Robert sees the secret threat hidden beneath her sensual appearance and accomplishments, envisioning Lucy in his sleep as "a pale, starry face looking out of the silvery foam, . . . transformed into a mermaid, beckoning his uncle to destruction" (246).

Playing piano is part of Lucy's conscious masquerade as an upper-class woman, but even more it symbolizes her power: her continuing sense of identity and individual motivation. Music is one of the few aspects of Lucy's life that remains constant in the face of poverty and wealth, marriage and desertion. It provides her income when she teaches, and becomes an opulent adornment after she marries Sir Michael Audley. Through music's continual presence, Lucy demonstrates an unchanging, if hidden, sense of self. Significantly, although she excuses her arson, bigamy, and murderous intentions by calling herself mad, a term which would indicate socially abnormal or unacceptable behaviour in 1862 (Showalter *Female*, 29), a physician of insanity instead pronounces her "dangerous" and acknowledges Lucy's rational reactions to desperate situations (Braddon *Lady Audley*, 379). The doctor's diagnosis is supported by Lucy's enchanting accomplishments, which reveal such complete awareness of community standards and upper-class cultural capital that she successfully masquerades as an angelic lady. However, music also indicates or encourages internal power as it did in Collins's novel. The difference between the texts is that Laura's music and sense of identity falter during her marriages whereas Lucy's only grows to frightening, uncontrollable proportions.

Any woman in sensation fiction may be angel or siren, and the thrill comes from the difficulty of distinguishing between them. For instance, proficient musicality marks the allure of both seraphs and fiends, and so Robert can no more vanquish Clara's image than Sir Michael can rid himself of Lucy's. Clara is the truly angelic sister of Robert's friend, George Talboys, but she spins spells as well as any siren when Robert hears her play the village church organ:

He stopped and listened to the slow harmonies of a dreamy melody that sounded like an extempore composition of an accomplished player. . . .

He lingered at the gate, not caring to break the lazy spell woven about him by the monotonous melancholy of the organist's performance. . . .

"I'll have a look at this new organist," he thought, "who can afford to bury his talents at Audley, and play Mendelssohn's finest fugues for a stipend of sixteen pounds a-year." (255-6)

Clara, playing without knowledge of her future husband's presence, enchants Robert by sound alone. He is not influenced by physical beauty, personality, or even gender. However, Clara's choice of instrument is problematic since organ was the only instrument which became less acceptable for women to play during the nineteenth century (Hyde, 32-4). Mid-Victorian female organists might exhibit signs of sexual transgression and danger. Clara chooses Mendelssohn instead of the simplified pieces normally played by amateur ladies, demonstrates accomplished improvisation, and plays fugues.⁷ These skills seem more like *Clara* Wieck who, before her marriage to *Robert* Schumann in 1840, included an improvisation or an original composition in every recital, as was customary for professional performers, and which required advanced theoretical training (Reich "Clara", 266). Therefore, *Clara* Talboys's repertoire, instrument, and improvisation combine to form an impression of a professional, male musician, and justify *Robert* Audley's mistaken reference to "his talents." Proficient female musicality is unexpected in *Lady Audley's Secret*, and it has interesting implications. Besides loosely linking Braddon's characters with the contemporaneous Schumanns, interpreting Clara's musicality as masculine supports Lynda Hart's thesis concerning Robert's homoerotic bond to George, whom Clara physically resembles (34-5). Regardless of Robert's sexual orientation, however, extraordinary female musicality in Braddon's text reveals hidden depth and power in Clara and Lucy. An unexpected comparison between the two is even suggested because Lucy also plays Mendelssohn (4). As angels and sirens mirror each other's repertoire and skill, the text emphasizes that bewitchment is as much the angel's effect as the siren's tool. Yet beneath the surface of

⁷ My thanks to Sophie Fuller for the suggestion that playing a fugue, an intellectual form of composition which Victorians deemed unsuitable for women, is part of Clara's gender ambiguity.

accomplished refinement, their polarity remains, since Lucy merely impersonates the feminine ideal, while Clara embodies it (Pykett, 55).

The coexistence of seraph and demon within a woman reflected contemporary fears. During the last half of the century, gender ideals and traditional female roles were questioned, and sensation fiction suggests that a woman's use of music reveals how she positions herself. Does she intentionally enchant like Lucy, or is she unknowingly overheard, like innocent Clara? What if the woman is deserted by her husband and is subsequently subjected to emotional trauma and poverty, like Lucy? Is she justified in deliberately charming her way into a luxurious marriage? Or what if an angel does not intend evil, but is still powerful through music? Although Laura is not a siren, her music dies and a harmonious marriage results, but the price is dependency upon Walter for her identity. How different from *Armada* (1866), another novel by Collins, where villainess Lydia Gwilt writes that the only man she cares for is Beethoven, a composer whose music requires hours of dedicated practice. In mid-nineteenth through early twentieth-century British fiction, Beethoven's music figures repeatedly in the repertoire of independent or rebellious women, from Lucy Audley to Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room with a View* (1908). Sensation novels make musical virtuosity a symbol of an alternate reality where women satisfy themselves. Novels use this depiction of music to different purposes: musical entertainments help to circumvent restrictions against a cross-class marriage in *The Woman in White*, while Robert Audley, in pitting himself against a dangerous siren, engages in purposeful activity and thereby discovers his own place within the existing social structure while unveiling Lucy's hidden identity. Although music assists and reveals strong female personalities, they are nonetheless defeated by men in these sensation novels. Singing mermaids do not succeed in drowning their ensnared husbands, but rather die or are banished, and angels in fiction, like young women in reality, frequently relinquish music upon marriage. The women who survive are those who adapt or submit after the nature of their power has been probed, and after their representation has been unmasked to reveal their true nature as siren, angel or both.

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~~Notes~~

Collins, Count Fosco, and the Concertina

Allan W. Atlas

When Margaret Oliphant reviewed *The Woman in White* in 1862, she described Count Fosco partly in terms of what she perceived to be his Italianate character:

No villain of the century, so far as we are aware, comes within a hundred miles of him: he is more real, more genuine, more *Italian* even, in his fatness and size, in his love of pets and pastry, than the whole array of conventional Italian villains, elegant and subtle, whom we are accustomed to meet in literature. (Oliphant, 113)

And nudged along by the likes of both his name and his "organ-boy" dexterity (Collins *Woman*, 243), mid-Victorian readers would no doubt have recognized the Count as Italian to the core.¹

Yet there is one respect in which Fosco could hardly be more *un-Italian*: he plays the concertina.

As we passed an open space among the trees in front of the house, there was Count Fosco. . . He was singing Figaro's famous song in the Barber of Seville, with that crisply fluent vocalisation which is never heard from any other than an Italian throat, accompanying himself on the concertina, which he played with ecstatic throwings-up of his arms, and graceful twistings and turnings of his head, like a fat St Cecilia masquerading in male attire. 'Figaro quà! Figaro là! Figaro sù! Figaro giù!' sang the Count, jauntily tossing up the concertina at arms' length, and bowing to us, on one side of the instrument, with an airy grace and elegance of Figaro himself at twenty years of age. (Collins *Woman*, 250)

And given that Fosco is singing and playing Rossini (the famous "Largo al factotum" from Act 1 of the opera), he must surely be playing that type of concertina known as the "English" concertina (hereafter, "English"), a designation that, by 1860 (and still today), refers not only to the instrument's place of origin—it was developed by the physicist Sir Charles Wheatstone (1802-75) during the late 1820s—but also to the musical system according to which it works.² For among the members of the concertina family, it was only

¹ On the ethnic implications of "organ-boy," see Grant, and Kurata. I am grateful to Phyllis Weliver for having called these articles to my attention.

² In addition to the "English," there were (and still are) two other generic types of concertina: the "Duett," also developed by Wheatstone and thus native to England; and the variously named "Anglo," "Anglo-German," or "Anglo-Continental," a British adaptation of the German *Konzertina*. Each of the three types operates according to different musical principles and each—until around the end of the nineteenth century—was associated with different repertoires and social milieux. On the various types of concertina and their repertoires and reception, see Atlas *The Wheatstone*, *passim*; for brief accounts, see Pilling, and Atlas "Concertina."

the "English" that made inroads into the art-music tradition and found a home in both London's leading concert halls and the drawing rooms (or in Fosco's case, on the grassy lawns) of the upper- (titled nobility included) and middle-classes.³ There it gained the attention of such respected mid-Victorian composers as John Barnett, Julius Benedict, George Alexander Macfarren, and Bernhard Molique, as well as a number of lesser lights—usually concertinists themselves—who composed original works and turned out transcriptions by the handful for the instrument.⁴

What, then, was un-Italian about Fosco's playing the instrument? Simply put, it was that the "English" was British to the core, virtually ignored (and to a large extent even unknown) on the Continent, particularly in Italy; and it would, therefore, have been a rather unlikely instrument for Fosco to have taken up, much less mastered, even though he had already spent some time in England prior to the opening of the novel (*Collins Woman*, 245).

Collins, I believe, must have known all this, for he seems to have been familiar with the instrument: 1) his description of Fosco playing with "ecstatic throwings-up of the arms" describes accurately a mannerism of many a concertinist;⁵ 2) he faithfully portrays another facet of the concertina in *Armadale*, where, on his "roaring" concertina, the junior Augustus Pedgift entertains Miss Milroy and friends with popular tunes of the day as they enjoy an outing aboard a picnic boat;⁶ and 3) Collins, as I have speculated elsewhere,

³ Collins was perfectly realistic in having Fosco play outdoors (as he would be again with Augustus Pedgift, Jr., in *Armadale*, see note 6), since the concertina's portability was part of the sales pitch of its manufacturers and devotees; see Cawdell, 13: ". . . the concertina may be played in any position, standing, sitting, walking, kneeling, or even lying down. If confined to the house by a sprained ankle, you may play whilst reclining on a sofa. . . and when you are convalescent, you may take your instrument into the fields where the Piano can never be."

⁴ Collins was realistic once again in having Fosco perform Rossini, since his operas—along with those of Donizetti, Bellini, and Meyerbeer—were a favorite source for those who ground out transcriptions for everything from unaccompanied "English" to the "remarkable" arrangement (as *The Musical Times* called it in 1851) by the virtuoso George Case of the Overture to *William Tell* for an ensemble of twelve concertinas. (Never published, the arrangement is, unfortunately, now lost.) Oddly, however, there is no known transcription of the "Largo al factotum," and Collins probably used it simply because it was so well known. On the repertory for the "English," which, by 1860, numbered hundreds of pieces, including concertos with orchestra, see Atlas *The Wheatstone*, 58-72.

⁵ That Collins took note of what was a widespread habit is evident from the various published tutors that tried to squelch it; thus George Case, 62, admonishes the player as follows: ". . . a continual swaying of the body, (however much it has a tendency to preserve the time) causes an unpleasant sensation in the spectator, and is consequently a habit which should never be indulged in."

⁶ See Collins *Armadale*, ed. Sutherland, 251; the Dover edition, 231, contains an illustration of Pedgift playing the concertina, its caption reading "Music on the Water." The description of Pedgift's concertina as "roaring" may be a slap at the inexpensive, mass-produced "Anglo" concertina, which, having arrived in Britain from Germany around the middle of the century, quickly became a favorite instrument among street musicians. It was the "Anglo" that later incited the wrath of George Bernard Shaw, who otherwise had nothing but praise for the

may have owned and played an "English" himself (Atlas, *The Wheatstone*, 4 & 14n).

This last assertion calls for documentation, and I should, therefore, spell out the evidence, flimsy and circumstantial though it is. On 18 May 1860—thus while *The Woman in White* was being serialized in Dickens's *All the Year Round*—a "Mr. Collins" purchased an "English" from Wheatstone & Co. (the leading manufacturer of concertinas). Nine months later, on 18 February 1861, the same firm sold a similar instrument to a "Mr. Dickens."⁷ Now, while neither name (particularly Collins) is rare, and while neither would arouse much speculation by itself, their appearance together within nine months of one another is enticing, and we must at least consider the possibility that Messrs. Collins and Dickens were the famous writers, especially since they often partook of things together (both literary and otherwise), and Dickens, as we know, was an avid accordionist and might, therefore, following Collins's lead, have been drawn to the accordion's smaller "cousin."⁸

To return to the main question: given his seeming familiarity with the "English," why did Collins place so thoroughly British an instrument in Fosco's Italian—and thus unlikely—hands? I believe that Collins had a specific model in mind for Fosco as concertina-player and that he fashioned the count's talents in this respect after the foremost "English" virtuoso of the time: Giulio Regondi (1822/23?-72), who, ironically—but significantly for Collins and his readers (see below)—was also a native Italian.⁹ But there the Italian connection

"English"; see Laurence, ed., 1:86, 118-19, 222, 439, 575-76, 605.

⁷ The sales are recorded, with no further indication of the buyers' identity, in one of the dozen extant ledgers of the Wheatstone firm. When I examined these in 1993, they were housed at the Concertina Museum, Belper, Derbyshire, with the ledger that records the transactions in question bearing the signature CM C 1053. Since then, the entire collection of the Concertina Museum—instruments, ledgers, and other archival material—has been acquired by The Horniman Museum, London, where the ledgers await cataloguing.

⁸ On Dickens and the accordion, see Ruff, and Lightwood, 1-2. Admittedly, there is one piece of evidence that may speak against the identifications. In 1885, another Charles Dickens—unrelated to the writer's family, so far as I know—married the pianist and teacher (at the Guildhall School of Music) Linda Scates, whose father, Joseph Scates, was a publisher and concertina manufacturer. Perhaps this is the "Mr. Dickens" to whom the 1861 sales record refers, and perhaps—to hazard a sentimental speculation—it was this Mr. Dickens and the Scates family's mutual fondness for concertinas that kindled the romance.

⁹ Although the literature on Regondi contains occasional references to him as having been born in Switzerland, these probably arose from an error in the nineteenth-century in which Genova was altered to Geneva (perhaps through nothing more than a typographical error). And even should the error eventually be shown to have gone in the other direction, there can be no doubt that "Signor" Regondi, as he was usually called, was thought of as being Italian. The most thorough account of Regondi's career is that of Rogers; see also the recent biographical discoveries reported by Tom Lawrence in "The Guitar", 121-69 and App. III, and "Giulio Regondi"; for a brief summary (that antedates Lawrence's findings), see Atlas *The Wheatstone*, 48-54. Regondi also composed and arranged extensively for the "English"; and some of his music for the instrument can be heard on *The Great Regondi: Original*

shared with Fosco ends. For by 1860, Regondi, unlike Fosco, was neither a recent immigrant nor just an occasional visitor to England. Rather, he had arrived there in 1831 as an eight-year-old child prodigy on the guitar, and except for a number of sojourns in nearby Ireland and two short tours through Central Europe (Leipzig, Vienna, and Prague) in 1840 and 1846-47, he never left his adopted home. Thus it was a thoroughly "anglicized" Regondi who became a fixture (as performer and teacher) in London's musical life, his career reaching an apex of sorts in the 1850s, from which time on he could hardly have escaped the notice of anyone with even the slightest interest in the concertina, the culturally aware Collins included (see Atlas "Wilkie Collins"). One review of his playing may stand for many:

Signor Regondi has now brought his execution on the concertina to such perfection that it is probably impossible to go beyond him. He has attained such wonderful dexterity, his command over his instrument is so great, that it seems a mere plaything in his hands. But therein does not lie his greatest merit . . . That which raises Signor Regondi above other performers, is the sentiment and expression by which he assimilates his instrument to the human voice, and sings in a manner to rival the effects of the greatest singers. The cantabile passages remind us, by their breadth of tone and feeling, of Rubini, or Paganini or Ernst in similar passages on the violin.¹⁰

Thus while those of Collins's mid-Victorian readers who were acquainted with the "English" would have known that it was an entirely home-grown instrument, it was with the Italian Regondi that the instrument had, to a certain extent, become synonymous, and it was with him that they would have immediately associated it.

In all, I would suggest that Collins placed the "English" in Fosco's foreign hands in order to cash in on the name-recognition of its single, but famous Italian connection: Giulio Regondi, who may therefore stand as the model for "Count Fosco, concertinist." And to some extent there is a parallel between the two, for just as Fosco outwitted his British hosts at almost every turn, it was Regondi who showed the English what the "English" could do.

Compositions by the 19th Century's Unparalleled Guitarist & Concertinist, The Giulio Regondi Guild, with Douglas Rogers playing the "English." Bridge Records, BCD 9039 (1993) and 9055 (1994).

¹⁰ Unsigned review in *The Musical World*. For further reviews, see Rogers, and Lawrence "Giulio Regondi". Giovanni Battista Rubini (1794-1854) was one of the great tenors of the period, and was extremely popular in London from 1831 to 1843 (he retired in 1845). The violinist Heinrich Wilhelm Ernst (1814-1865) was sometimes considered Paganini's successor; he too was popular in London, and settled there in 1855. On Rubini and Ernst, see *The New Grove*, 16:295-96 and 6:238, respectively.

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"Belt-and-Braces" Serialization: The Case of *Heart and Science*

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By "belt-and-braces" serialization is meant the publication of a novel in instalments simultaneously in both a metropolitan periodical distributed nationwide and in a syndicate of provincial journals with complementary regional circulations. Since the metropolitan periodicals in question were often monthly literary magazines, while the provincial journals were generally weekly miscellaneous newspapers, this frequently involved division of the same work into both monthly and weekly instalments. For practical reasons, despite the gradual reduction in the length of the average triple-decker novel during the second half of the nineteenth century, the weekly part remained consistently shorter than the monthly (Phillips, 86). The typical serial instalment found in a monthly miscellany was down to not much more than ten thousand words by the 1880s, but this would still have overrun the space available in a weekly journal. While there are isolated earlier examples of the initial publication of Victorian fiction simultaneously in 'fat' monthly and 'thin' weekly numbers, such as Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* in the late 1830s or Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* ten years later, the belt-and-braces approach itself was not possible until after the rise of the syndicate system in the mid 1870s.¹

Through this system, the provincial weekly press, which had begun to feature local or reprinted fiction from the mid 1850s with the gradual repeal of the 'taxes on knowledge', was enabled for a brief period to compete successfully with metropolitan periodicals and offer substantial sums to established authors for serial rights to original fiction. Beginning in 1873, Tillotsons Fiction Bureau in Bolton was the first and most successful operator, but there were quickly several competitors in the field, including Leaders in Sheffield. As shown in detail elsewhere (Law Forthcoming), the rise of the provincial syndicates is itself best

¹ See the analysis of Dickens's use of weekly and monthly instalments in the two articles by Fielding, and in Coolidge, who introduces the terms 'fat' and 'thin' instalments. Ainsworth's *Jack Sheppard* was serialized in the monthly *Bentley's Miscellany*, Jan 1839-Feb 1840, and in 15 independent weekly numbers from the same publisher during 1840; Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities* appeared in 1859 in 31 weekly parts in *All the Year Round*, 30 Apr-26 Nov, and in 7 independent monthly numbers, Jun-Dec, from Chapman & Hall.

understood as a transitional phase between two distinct stages in the periodical publication of new fiction, in both of which the market is dominated by metropolitan publishers. The first, typical of the mid-nineteenth century, is monthly serialization in more expensive, low circulation formats (either independent numbers or literary magazines, both generally sold at a shilling or more) produced as petty commodities for the bourgeois market by London book publishers. The second, characteristic of the end of the century, is weekly serialization in cheaper, high circulation formats (either news miscellanies or news magazines, often sold for as little as a penny) produced as commodities for the mass market by London newspaper proprietors. Belt-and-braces serializations then can be seen as reflecting fine adjustments in the balance of power between the provincial and metropolitan press within that phase of transition.

As suggested in Table 1 and confirmed by the archives at New York and Chapel Hill, most of the belt-and-braces serializations that have been traced were arranged by A.P. Watt, the pioneering professional literary agent.² Watt's role gradually evolved from that of advertising agent in the mid-1870s, through that of negotiator of fiction serial rights for both publishers and authors from the end of that decade, until by the mid-1890s he could claim wide-ranging literary influence throughout the English-speaking world (Law Forthcoming, Ch.4). Nearly all the examples of belt-and-braces serializations noted before 1885 involve monthly metropolitan appearances, and many feature the young publishing house of Chatto and Windus and their shilling literary miscellany *Belgravia*. In addition to employing Watt to sell on the serial rights to works already published in volume, Chatto and Windus seem to have allowed or even encouraged their authors to serialize their new works simultaneously in *Belgravia* and with the syndicates.³ The reasons for Chatto's policy must have been mainly financial. By 1880, like that of many of the other shilling monthlies founded in the 1860s, the print-run of *Belgravia* was below 10,000 and falling steadily (Edwards, 2), thus severely limiting the remuneration that could be offered to authors for serial rights. Granting freedom to publish simultaneously in country journals must have considerably enhanced the attractiveness of Chatto's offers to well-known authors. For such writers, many of whom, like Collins himself, found the idea of appearing in cheap provincial newspapers rather demeaning, it was reassuring to have a respectable

² Table 1 is not intended to represent a comprehensive listing of belt-and-braces serializations. We are aware of a handful of other cases where documentation is incomplete, and there are doubtless many other examples that have not yet come to our attention.

³ In addition to the cases noted in Table 1, on 11 Nov 1880, Watt wrote to William Black offering £1200 for a new novel to appear from Chatto & Windus in 1882 in both *Belgravia* and in three volumes, but allowing freedom for simultaneous serialization in country papers (ALS, Letterbook 3:126, BERG); Black seems to have refused the offer, however.

metropolitan periodical participating in the venture. Nevertheless, the role of the metropolitan monthlies in these early arrangements can properly be described as defensive with regard to the provincial press.

Most of the examples of belt-and-braces serializations traced after 1885 feature weekly metropolitan serialization, many in the successful illustrated newspapers, the *Illustrated London News* and the *Graphic*. Here the role of the London proprietors is more aggressive. Though these illustrated papers were relatively expensive at sixpence and aimed at a 'class' rather than a 'mass' audience (a pairing popularized by Gladstone in 1886 in a newspaper article), by the mid 1880s both were probably selling above two hundred thousand copies for ordinary issues and could reach over half a million on special occasions. Payments to authors were correspondingly generous. Though Hardy received only £550 for the British serial rights to *Tess* from the *Graphic*, rather more than twice that amount was paid by the same journal in other cases (Law Forthcoming, Ch. 4). So to help defray these costs, the metropolitan journals were often happy to sell subsidiary serial rights on to a small number of other local journals. But as Alexander Sinclair, editor of the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, pointed out (184), overlapping circulations were a serious disadvantage in this type of arrangement, because the *Illustrated London News* and *Graphic* circulated 'far and wide'. Indeed by the mid-1890s, the market strength of the major metropolitan journals was such that both they and Watt could begin to think about disregarding the provincial outlets altogether.

Wilkie Collins's *Heart and Science* was thus by no means the only or even the first late Victorian novel to receive the belt-and-braces treatment. Nevertheless, when Collins asked Watt to represent him in December 1881, he clearly became the still little-known agent's most prestigious client author. *Heart and Science* was also a work with which the novelist wished to strike a blow for the anti-vivisectionist cause and on which he placed great hopes for the revival of his fading literary reputation (Peters, 399-404). It is then not surprising that Watt put a good deal of effort into the serial arrangements for Collins's latest novel, and came up with what must rank as his most comprehensive and complex syndicate. Both Watt and Collins were presumably satisfied with the outcome, as the experiment was repeated for the author's next novel *I Say No*'. These two Collins novels probably represent the best documented of all the belt-and-braces serializations. In what follows, we have made extensive use of those records to describe in some detail both the specific arrangements made with regard to *Heart and Science*, and the resulting variations between its different serial editions.

Table 1: Some "Belt-and-Braces" Serializations

Work in Volume	Metropolitan Serialization(s)	Provincial Serialization(s) Traced	Agent(s)
James Payn <i>A Confidential Agent</i> (Chatto & Windus, '80)	<i>Belgravia</i> (Jan-Dec '80)	<i>Sheffield W. Independent</i> (from Jan '80)	?
William Black <i>Sunrise</i> (Sampson Low, '81)	Monthly parts, Sampson Low, Apr '80-Jun '81	<i>Sheffield W. Independent</i> (from Mar '80)	A.P. Watt (?)
Walter Besant <i>All Sorts and Conditions of Men</i> (Chatto & Windus, '82)	<i>Belgravia</i> (Jan-Dec '82)	<i>Birmingham W. Post, Leicester Chronicle, Sheffield W. Telegraph, Glasgow W. Mail</i> (as 'All Sorts of Men'), <i>Liverpool W. Post</i> (Jan-Aug '82)	James Rice
Wilkie Collins <i>Heart and Science</i> (Chatto & Windus, '83)	<i>Belgravia</i> (Aug '82-Jun '83) <i>England</i> (22 Jul '82-17 Feb '83, omitting 6 Jan)	<i>Manchester W. Times</i> (22 Jul '82-13 Jan '83), <i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i> (28 Jul '82-26 Jan '83), <i>Aberdeen W. Journal, Bristol Observer, Cardiff W. Times, Liverpool W. Post, Scottish Reformer</i> (22 Jul '82-27 Jan '83), <i>W. Irish Times</i> (22 Jul '82-3 Feb '83)	A.P. Watt
Wilkie Collins <i>'I Say No'</i> (Chatto & Windus, '84)	<i>London Society</i> (Jan-Dec '84) <i>People</i> (16 Dec '83-13 Jul '84)	<i>Cardiff W. Times, Glasgow W. Herald, Leicester Chronicle, Newcastle W. Chronicle</i> (15 Dec '83-12 Jul '84), <i>Belfast W. News</i> (15 Dec '83-19 Jul '84)	A.P. Watt
Robert Buchanan <i>Master of the Mine</i> (Bentley, '85)	<i>Illustrated London News</i> (Jul-Dec '85)	(<i>Aberdeen W. Free Press, Leeds Express, Scottish Reformer</i> (later '85))	A.P. Watt
James Payn <i>The Heir of the Ages</i> (Smith, Elder, '86)	<i>Illustrated London News</i> (Jan-Jun '86)	<i>Birmingham W. Post, Glasgow W. Herald</i> (early '86)	A.P. Watt
Walter Besant <i>The World went very well then</i> (Chatto & Windus, '87)	<i>Illustrated London News</i> (Jul-Dec '86)	<i>Sheffield W. Telegraph, Glasgow W. Herald</i> , (Jul-Dec '86)	A.P. Watt
Emile Zola <i>Germinal</i> (tr. Vandam) (Vizetelly, '85)	<i>People</i> (Nov '84-May '85)	<i>Sheffield W. Telegraph</i> (Nov '84-May '85)	A.P. Watt (?)
R.E. Francillon <i>King or Knave?</i> (Chatto & Windus, '88)	<i>People</i> (Mar-Sep '86)	<i>Sheffield W. Telegraph</i> (mid '86)	A.P. Watt
Robert Buchanan <i>The Moment After</i> (Heinemann, '90)	<i>People</i> (early '87)	<i>Sheffield W. Telegraph</i> (early '87)	A.P. Watt
Margaret Oliphant <i>The Heir Presumptive and the Heir Apparent</i> (Macmillan, '92)	<i>London Society</i> (Jan-Dec '91)	<i>Birmingham W. Post, Newcastle W. Chronicle, Yorkshire W. Post, Hereford Times, Newport & Market Drayton Advertiser</i> (Oct '90-Apr '91)	A.P. Watt/ Tillotsons
Thomas Hardy <i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> (Osgood, McIlvaine, '91)	<i>Graphic</i> (Jul-Dec '91)	As 'A Daughter of the D'Urbervilles': <i>Nottinghamshire Guardian, Birmingham W. Post</i> (Jul-Dec '91)	A.P. Watt
William Black <i>Wolfenburgh</i> (Sampson Low, '92)	<i>Graphic</i> (Jul-Dec '92)	<i>Nottinghamshire Guardian</i> (later '92)	A.P. Watt/ Tillotsons
S.R. Crockett <i>The Grey Man</i> (T. Fisher Unwin, '96)	<i>Graphic</i> (Jan-Jun '96)	<i>Newcastle W. Chronicle</i> (early '96)	A.P. Watt
Walter Besant <i>No Other Way</i> (Chatto & Windus, '02)	<i>The Lady's Realm</i> (Nov '01-Oct '02)	<i>Sheffield W. Telegraph</i> (Dec '01-May '02)	A.P. Watt

Arrangements

Collins had already completed arrangements for the monthly serialization of *Heart and Science* in *Belgravia* before he contacted Watt, presumably on Andrew Chatto's advice or at least with his consent. Collins's two previous novels, *Jezebel's Daughter* and *The Black Robe*, had already been syndicated in the provincial weeklies alone, respectively by Tillotsons and Leaders. Although Collins did not wish either of these agencies to act for him on this occasion, he wanted Watt to operate in much the same way that they had done, setting out the conditions in great detail in a two-page memorandum entitled 'Notes for Consideration' (Enclosure, 5 Dec 1881, PEMBROKE). Watt began to write batches of letters approaching over forty different journals from all over the United Kingdom between December 1881 and June 1882 (Letterbook 2, BERG). The initial approaches all took virtually the same form, among other things assuring editors (rather dishonestly, given the cause it advocated) that the new novel would not concern 'painful social subjects' (e.g. ALS to *Liverpool Daily Post*, 2 Mar 1882, Letterbook 2:420, BERG). Several editors did not even bother to reply, while there were many objections and rejections. But as soon as these came in, Watt was willing to renegotiate or to fire off a proposal to another journal in the same catchment area. Since serialization was due to commence as early as July, several proprietors requested more precise information about the story for publicity purposes (Collins Acc., BERG). When Collins heard, he was incensed and wrote immediately to Watt enclosing a letter threatening to break off negotiations, which he wanted copied and sent around to these 'curious savages' (8 Feb 1882, Collins *Letters*, 2:442). Watt seems to have solved the problem diplomatically, and by the spring had firm acceptances from nine British weeklies. As Table 1 shows, in addition to journals in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the English North, West and Midlands, Watt arranged for *Heart and Science* to appear in the new London Tory weekly *England*, through its owner, populist Conservative M.P. Ellis Bartlett.⁴ The proprietors in Bristol, Nottingham and Aberdeen passed the novel on to companion publications so that the novel also appeared simultaneously in the *Bath Observer*, *Nottinghamshire Evening Post*, and *Moray and Nairn Weekly Journal*. Watt also arranged for the novel to appear in New York, though Collins himself took care of the arrangements for publication in Australia and Canada.

⁴ The arrangements Watt eventually made probably overdid the degree of overlap in circulations viable in the serial market, not only in featuring a second metropolitan periodical, but in including provincial papers serving neighbouring communities, like the *Manchester Weekly Times* and *Liverpool Weekly Post*, or the *Bristol Observer* and the *Cardiff Weekly Times*. Certainly Watt found it rather more difficult to find country papers willing to take Collins's next novel, *I Say No* (see Table 1)

Chatto and Windus paid Collins £600 for a seven year lease on the volume rights (Weedon, 181), and £1 per printed page for the appearance in *Belgravia*, in eleven monthly instalments totalling £308 (ALSs from Collins to Chatto, 23 Aug 1882-3 Jul 1883, PARRISH). With the British newspapers Watt negotiated sums which varied according to their circulations, from £30 by the Welsh journal to £100 by the London and Manchester papers, in all totalling £565, of which Watt took a commission of ten per cent (Law 'Wilkie', 265n22). The *Liverpool Weekly Post* agreed to set up the novel in type first and provide proofs for the other journals, probably in return for a small reduction in price (ALS to Watt, 13 May 1882, Collins Acc., BERG). However, when Collins, who seems to have started writing in mid-May, received the first set of proofs at the beginning of June, he was disgusted by the poor quality of the paper and the minute size of the print. He immediately asked *Belgravia* to 'rescue [him] from the Provincial press' and Andrew Chatto seems to have been happy to comply (ALS to Chatto, 5 Jun 1882, PARRISH). However, Collins continued to write and send the novel off to Chatto's printers in weekly portions. He seems to have hit a few blocks towards the end of the year and only completed the final chapters in the middle of December, that is, less than a month before their first appearance in print. The instalments were set up in type promptly and Collins equally quickly corrected the proofs, probably with secretarial assistance--around a dozen sets, each with hand-written corrections, were required for all the different periodicals in Britain and overseas. There was neither the time nor the inclination for proofs to be sent back to the author when the instalments were once more set up in type by all the different syndicate members.⁵

Collins composed the novel in twenty-eight weekly parts and most of the newspapers published them as received, but the rest doubled up or sub-divided the final four instalments in different ways, probably to facilitate arrangements for their next serial. With the exception of the *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, which then came out on a Friday, all the subscribing British papers began to issue the novel on Saturday 22 July. The *Manchester Weekly Times* serialization was completed in only twenty-six weeks on 13 January 1882 and thus technically became the first serial edition, while *England* ended more than a month later on 17 February. Though the monthly serial appearance in *Belgravia* began at around the same time as that in the newspapers, it ran for eleven months and was thus only completed in the June 1883 issue, that is, more than a month after the novel had appeared in volume form in mid April.

⁵ Stereotype plates were not distributed as they often were by established syndicators like Tillotsons: the *Belgravia* text was produced in octavo leaves rather than the broadsheet columns required by the newspapers.

Table 2: Part, Volume & Chapter Divisions in the Three Versions

WEEKLY SERIAL <i>Manchester Weekly Times</i>			MONTHLY SERIAL <i>Belgravia</i>			TRIPLE-DECKER Chatto & Windus, Apr 1883		
Pt	Date	Chapter	Pt	Vol:pp/Date	Chapter	Vol	pp	Chapter
1	22 Jul 1882	1	1	48:175-99 Aug 1882	1	I	1-3	1
		2			2		4-19	2
		3			3		20-38	3
		4			4		39-44	4
2	29 Jul 1882	5	2	48:312-33 Sep 1882	5		45-63	5
		6			6		64-74	6
3	5 Aug 1882	7			7		75-87	7
		8			8		88-108	8
4	12 Aug 1882	9			9		109-120	9
		10			10		121-136	10
5	19 Aug 1882	11	3	48:438-65 Oct 1882	11		137-151	11
		12			12		152-166	12
6	26 Aug 1882	13			13		167-180	13
		14			14		181-201	14
7	2 Sep 1882	15	4	49:54-80 Nov 1882	15		202-218	15
		16			16		219-231	16
8	9 Sep 1882	17			17		232-250	17
		18			18		251-257	18
9	16 Sep 1882	19			19		258-277	19
		20a			20		278-294	20
10	23 Sep 1882	20b	5	49:168-93 Dec 1882	21	II	1-17	21
		21			22		18-26	22
11	30 Sep 1882	22			23		27-36	23
		23			24		37-48	24
		24			25		49-61	25
12	7 Oct 1882	25			26		62-77	26
		26	6	49:312-41 Jan 1883	27		78-102	27
13	14 Oct 1882	27			28		103-115	28
		28			29		116-131	29
14	21 Oct 1882	29			30		132-137	30
		30			31		138-147	31
		31	7	49:443-74 Feb 1883	32		148-160	32
15	28 Oct 1882	32			33		161-177	33
		33			34		178-191	34
16	4 Nov 1882	34			35		192-199	35
		35	8	50:39-69 Mar 1883	36		200-223	36
17	11 Nov 1882	36			37		224-244	37
		37			38		245-255	38
18	18 Nov 1882	38			39		256-265	39
		39	9	50:160-92 Apr 1883	40		266-283	40
19	25 Nov 1882	40			41		284-293	41
		41			42	III	1-9	42
20	2 Dec 1882	42			43		10-21	43
		43	10	50:298-330 May 1883	44		22-41	44
21	9 Dec 1882	44			45		42-53	45
		45			46		54-73	46
22	16 Dec 1882	46			47		74-87	47
		47	11	50:489-508 Jun 1883	48		88-105	48
23	23 Dec 1882	48			49		106-118	49
		49			50		119-137	50
24	30 Dec 1882	50			51		138-148	51
		51			52		149-154	52
25	6 Jan 1883	52			53		155-168	53
		53			54		169-182	54
		54			55		183-199	55
		55			56		200-218	56
		56a			57		219-227	57
26	13 Jan 1883	56b			58		228-233	58
		57			59		234-244	59
		58			60		245-255	60
		59			61		256-268	61
		60			62		269-292	62
		61			63		293-302	63
		62						

Variations

A detailed analysis of all the different British serial versions being impractical if not impossible, we have carried out a collation of the texts of *Heart and Science* as it appeared in the *Manchester Weekly Times*, the monthly *Belgravia*, and the three-volume edition from Chatto and Windus. The first stage of this research was carried out in connexion with the preparation of an edition of the novel for Broadview Press, Canada (Farmer). With the omission of minor variations in punctuation etc, the results are contained in a fifty-page document which is available over the Internet as a 'Portable Document Format' file, or in hard copy from the authors.⁶ The document reveals around a hundred variations between the two serial versions, the large majority of which consist of small verbal details, but nearly seven hundred differences between both serial versions and the book edition, many of which represent significant revisions, deletions or additions. (There are also a handful of cases where the weekly and book versions agree with each other but not with the monthly version, or where all three versions vary.)

The bulk of the variations between the weekly and monthly serial versions seem explicable as uncorrected slips by the compositors in Manchester. Most of these result in acceptable readings in the newspaper (eg 'as he said to himself' for 'as he said of himself'), though quite a few produce ungrammaticality ('trembling to his embrace'), and a handful nonsense ('in bewilderness' or 'some indifference of opinion'). A small number of more complex variations not explicable in this way seem likely to be due either to errors in copying out the corrections on the *Belgravia* proofs sent to Manchester, or to later revisions by the author for the monthly version alone. There is even occasional evidence of compositors or editors pursuing their own agendas. Two out of the six occurrences of 'damn' in Collins's manuscript were amended at Manchester (to 'confound' and 'd—'), while *Belgravia* seems to have frowned on the author's accusative uses of 'who' and replaced most with 'whom'. The *Belgravia* version seems to insert commas rather more frequently than in the manuscript, the *Weekly Times* one rather less. Nevertheless, these textual variations obviously represent significantly less important differences between the weekly and monthly serials than the pattern of breaks demanded by 'thin' and 'fat' instalments. All but two of the weekly instalments (Pts. 9 & 10) exhibit what can reasonably be described as 'climax-and-curtain' endings. With the exception of Pt. 3, all the monthly instalments reveal the same feature, though here each tends to be composed of two or three distinct 'scenes'. In letters to Chatto (4 & 25 Jul, PARRISH) Collins shows that reasons of space alone forced him to end monthly Pt. 3 in mid-scene, and weekly Pt. 9 in mid-chapter. The apparent splitting

⁶ URL: <<http://faculty.web.waseda.ac.jp/glaw/wcsj/b&bcoll.pdf>>. Postal address: G. Law, School of Law, Waseda University, Nishi-Waseda 1-6-1, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-50, Japan.

of Ch. 56 in the Manchester version over two weekly instalments is in fact an illusion created by an error in the proofs released by *Belgravia*, where two consecutive chapters were numbered 56. Most of the newspapers simply reproduced the error, the *Liverpool Weekly Post* corrected it, resulting in a full complement of sixty-three chapters, while the *Manchester Weekly Times* alone indicated that Ch. 56 was 'continued' in its issue of 13 January 1882. Collins himself only spotted the slip just before monthly Pt. 10 in *Belgravia* went to press in May (letter to Chatto & Windus, May 1883, PARRISH).

In general Collins spent little time revising the text of his last novels between the serial and volume editions (Law 'Wilkie', 253). *The Evil Genius* and *The Legacy of Cain*, for example, gain little more than chapter headings in volume, as there were no changes even in the chapter breaks. *Heart and Science* was the only novel of the 1880s for which he wrote a Preface, and there he stated that the work had been 'subjected to careful revision . . . in its present form of publication'. This is undoubtedly true, as we have seen. Letters to Chatto show that these extensive revisions were carried out between early January and mid-March 1883, volume by volume, on the proofs of the triple-decker edition set from the *Belgravia* version (PARRISH). The nature of the revisions seems to reflect the desire to polish to its best a work by which the author set great store, as well as the fear of errors and infelicities due to the speed at which the novel had originally been written and set up in type. Changes in breaks and divisions are again important. *Belgravia* Ch. 41 was split into two distinct chapters which end Vol. II and begin Vol. III in the triple-decker, while *Belgravia* Chs. 55 and 56 were there also combined into a single unit. Both of these changes were accompanied by significant textual revisions. Interesting minor changes include those affecting nomenclature: in the triple-decker version, the cat 'Snooks' loses her name and much of her prominence; the independent lady's maid 'Jane' is Frenchified as 'Marceline'; the medical adviser Mr. Null receives his negative name much earlier on; and the hero Doctor Ovid Vere is promoted to Mr. Ovid Vere, surgeon, above the vivisector Doctor Benjulia. The biggest changes include: a lengthy inserted passage that adds complexity to the character of the monomaniac scientist Mrs Gallilee, by allowing her an internal life and memories of her youth; a series of revisions to render more consistent the character of the governess Miss Minerva, who began the serial as an unmitigated villain but underwent conversion less than half way through; and a general toning down of the immediacy of the description of cruelty to animals, perhaps in part to keep a promise made to Frances Power Cobbe, the anti-vivisectionist who had sent Collins pamphlets on the subject (Farmer, App. D). But there are also many substantial changes which can be characterised simply as deletions to trim the fat and additions to sharpen the focus.

To what extent these arrangements and alterations are typical of belt-and-braces serialization is difficult to judge. The only other case which has received detailed attention is that of Hardy's *Tess*, though even there the serialization pattern itself, and the role of A.P. Watt, seem not to have been clearly recognized.⁷ Perhaps a comparison with what happened with *Heart and Science* might shed light on some of the remaining mysteries regarding the differing serial versions of Hardy's most famous work. Of course, *Tess* appeared nearly a decade later, when the role of the metropolitan journal was much more aggressive, and the issue of "candour" regarding sexual matters was to the fore. But in their different ways these two examples of the belt-and-braces approach both help to confirm the determining influence of material conditions in the contemporary publishing industry on the form of the Victorian novel. Or as Hardy himself put it, in his contribution to the 1890 symposium on 'Candour in Fiction' (15): 'Even imagination is the slave of stolid circumstance; and the unending flow of inventiveness which finds expression in the literature of Fiction is no exception to the general law.'

⁷ See Grindle & Gatrell, General Introduction. Though the relevant Watt Letterbooks are lacking at the BERG (vols 20-24, Dec 1889-Feb 1891), Hardy's letter to Watt of 2 Sep 1891 (Hardy *Letters*, 1:243) shows that the agent was definitely representing the author around this time. Moreover, four letters from the end of Jan 1891 in a file at the WILSON (10.7) prove conclusively that, acting on behalf of the *Graphic*, Watt arranged for *Tess* to be published in the *Birmingham Weekly Post* for £75 and the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* for £40, the agent as usual taking 10% commission on the sums negotiated. Like Besant's *The World went very well then*, Black's *Wolfenburgh*, and Crockett's *The Grey Man*, *Tess* was also serialized simultaneously in Australia in the *Sydney Mail*, under the title 'A Daughter of the D'Urbervilles' as in the provincial papers. The appearance of *Tess* in the *Birmingham Weekly Post* (4 Jul to 26 Dec as in the *Graphic* and *Guardian*), which does not appear to have been previously recorded, was discovered by John Stock Clarke (personal communication). This was in the course of his research for *Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897): A Bibliography*, which is the source for the serialization details concerning *The Heir Presumptive* and *the Heir Apparent* recorded in Table 1. Grateful acknowledgement is made both to John Stock Clarke and to Simon Gatrell for their helpful comments on an earlier manuscript version of this article.

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~~Reviews~~

The Letters of Wilkie Collins. William Baker and William M. Clarke, editors. London: Macmillan, 1999. Vol. 1 pp. xli + 268 (ISBN 0-333-674666-9). Vol. 2 pp. xiii + 269-616 (ISBN 0-333-73246-4).

Wilkie Collins is one of the few 'major Victorian creative personalities' (to use the rather infelicitous phrasing of the editors of this collection), whose letters have hitherto remained uncollected and unpublished. Sadly, many of the letters which might have proved most interesting for the biographer, the literary historian, or the merely prurient, will remain uncollected because they have disappeared or been destroyed. Thus this volume adds nothing to our knowledge of Collins's correspondence with Dickens; a correspondence which no doubt would have thrown a great deal of interesting light on their collaborations, the London literary scene of the 1850s and 1860s, and the life of the English flaneur in mid-nineteenth-century Paris. Another significant absence from these volumes, as the editors readily confess, is any trace of Collins's correspondence with his mistresses Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd, and other members of his 'morganatic family' as he refers to them in one letter. However, while much has disappeared much remains, indeed much more than the economics of modern publishing will permit to be reproduced here. Baker and Clarke have traced more than 2,000 items of Collins's correspondence in institutional and private holdings, and they produce transcriptions of 591 of the most 'important', letters, 127 in summarised form (pressure of space again), as 'the foundation for any outline of his life and any judgement of the kind of man he was.'

What kind of man do these volumes reveal? Who was Wilkie Collins? The young Collins was a great advocate of the new Republic of letters who saw the disappearance of the 'Great Man' (1:61) and democratisation of letters as a levelling up, and who put his faith in 'King Public' as a 'good King for Literature and Art' (1:79), and a ready ally for *The Leader* in its campaign for law reform. He was a man extremely preoccupied with money matters. The first volume (especially those sections covering the years in which Collins was trying to establish himself as a writer) contains numerous requests to his mother for money and just as many letters to his friend Charles Ward making complicated arrangements for the transfer of money from one account to another or one place to another. Later on, prompted it would seem by the deaths of Dickens and of his brother Charles, this man whose fiction often turned on complicated plots built around wills and inheritance busied himself setting his own complex affairs in order, regularly updating his will to ensure that his irregular dependants would be taken care of. Collins was also greatly interested in the monetary aspects of the fiction industry, ever anxious about his own contracts (and increasingly tenacious about gaining the best terms) and extremely interested in the details of other writers' deals with publishers and the profits

they obtained from them. Like Dickens Collins was a great champion of one of the main causes of the professional writer, a reform of the Copyright Law, and there are several forthright statements of his views about the iniquities of intellectual property theft by newspaper editors, adapters of novels for the stage, and the American and European publishers of pirated editions. These letters reveal a man who took the profession of literature very seriously. Later in life he dealt assiduously, and occasionally illuminatingly, with queries about his own writing practice, and offered advice to fellow writers. (A particularly interesting letter to Charles Reade (2:340) offers detailed professional advice about possible revisions to the latter's dramatic adaptation of his novel *Put Yourself in His Place*). He was also alert to changes in the publishing industry, deploring the 'present idiotic system of publication in 3 Vols.' (2:353), and remarking to George Smith in 1871 that 'a very few years more will see a revolution in the publishing trade for which most of the publishers are unprepared' (2:349).

Like the letters of so many Victorian writers (George Eliot's spring to mind) Collins's correspondence is full of references to his bodily (mal)functions. Collins had more cause than most for this preoccupation, and some of these letters are painful reading. The editors make some attempt to unravel the mysteries of Collins's illnesses by investigating his Pharmacopoeia, but the precise causes of his numerous ailments remain a matter of speculation. Given his own physical decline it is unsurprising that Collins should have been so interested in degeneration; what is surprising is the extraordinary vigour and energy of many of the letters of his declining years. Other surprises include his curious, playful correspondence with the eleven year-old Nannie Wynne (whom he addressed as 'Mrs Wilkie') which only came to light in 1988, and in which he enacts a fantasy of marriage. It is also intriguing to see this erstwhile boon companion of Dickens proffer his entertainingly Scrooge-like views on 'the season of Cant and Christmas' (2:409).

The editors reproduce this diverse correspondence chronologically, and divide it into ten sections, each of which corresponds to an important stage in Collins's life (an exception to chronology is made in the case of the Nannie Wynne letters which appear in a small section of their own). Each section is prefaced by a brief introduction summarising its contents and referring to Collins's current fictional projects. Baker and Clarke have struggled manfully, but not always successfully with Collins's difficult handwriting; most readers will want to offer more plausible readings of odd words here and there. A more serious deficiency is the extremely light touch adopted in the provision of explanatory annotation on some of the addressees and on events, persons, places, and books mentioned by Collins. This is a missed opportunity. However, despite these cavils these handsomely produced volumes will be a necessary addition to any self-respecting nineteenth-century library collection.

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Wilkie Collins, *Ioláni; or, Tahíti as it was. A Romance*. Edited and Introduced by Ira B. Nadel. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999. pp. xliii + 205. (ISBN 0-691-01571-6).

The publication of *Ioláni* has been eagerly awaited by Collins scholars and enthusiasts since the re-emergence of the manuscript in New York in 1991, when it was sold by the bookseller Glen Horowitz to an anonymous buyer. That discovery alone, a lost first novel by one of the major literary figures of the nineteenth century, is a romance in itself, coinciding with the continued revival of interest in Collins's life and work. Admirers of Wilkie Collins are fortunate that the generosity of the new owner has allowed swift publication, as many private collectors would have been tempted to keep the purchase to themselves, fearing publication might damage the future market value of the manuscript.

Most authors' first novels are rejected by publishers, and are usually never seen by anyone again. Certainly *Ioláni* can only have been read by a handful of people in Collins's lifetime. Because the author later became famous, in the words of the dust-wrapper blurb, "the novel casts new light on Collins's development as a writer and on the creation of his later masterpieces." It is from this perspective, inevitably, that this novel will be read and studied.

Collins wrote his first novel at the age of twenty, while working for a tea merchant, Antrobus and Company, and it is easy to imagine his thoughts faraway in Tahiti, rather than on the duller reality of the commercial day. A career as a writer offered the hope of escape from a job for which he knew he was entirely unsuited. His choice of subject, Tahiti before the arrival of Europeans, provided an opportunity to create an exotic blend of history, paganism and dramatic situations. An historical subject probably seemed to offer the best likelihood of acceptance by a publisher, since historical novels were at that time popular with both critics and public, and almost every author of note turned their hand to the genre. Despite its author's youth, *Ioláni* shows Collins was already scrupulous in his research, paying careful attention to recent works on the setting and its history. Once the novel was written, Collins was confident enough of its merit to ask his parents to advance him some money on account to pay for a trip to Paris.

The title character, Ioláni, is a villainous priest, with a seductive influence which proves irresistible to island maidens. In accordance with tradition, the first-born child of his relationship with Idía is to be sacrificed soon after birth, and it is the birth of this child which precipitates events. Idía flees with her baby and young friend, Aimáta, and Ioláni pursues them relentlessly. Much of the interest lies in Collins's depiction of these two intrepid women, and it is likely they will be seen as the first of a long line of resourceful heroines. The young Collins also displays his appreciation of female beauty, taking a voyeuristic pleasure in describing his younger heroine's sleeping form and disarrayed clothing (15). Collins is convincing in the depiction of his villain and in Idía's continuing obsession with the priest, dwelling on her attraction to the priest even

while hating him. The novel also offers an early example of one of the grotesque characters he was to later employ, in the mysterious outcast wild man, another of Ioláni's victims.

Although there is plenty of action, the novel is at times slow moving, partly because there is so little dialogue. There is in fact none until the twenty-second page, and what there is consists of what Robert Louis Stevenson was to call 'tushery', studded with "thees" and "thous". *Ioláni* thus has more in common with Gothic novels and the historical novels of Walter Scott and Edward Bulwer Lytton than the fiction which was to earn Collins lasting fame. Its strengths are the descriptions of landscape and Tahitian life, and the atmosphere created through weather and painterly scenery is written with real verve. Collins dedicates passages to the life and history of Tahiti, but it is not as overburdened with factual details as his first published novel, *Antonina* (1850), where a whole chapter is devoted to the history of the walls of Rome. There are some strong resemblances to *Antonina* with its battle scenes, and the women characters are forerunners to the Goth women of the later novel. The theme of religious extremism is developed further in *Antonina* with the pagan priest Ulpus and his equally fanatical Christian brother Numerian.

The manuscript of *Ioláni* was rejected by Longmans and Chapman and Hall in 1845, and Collins later suggested the lurid nature of some of the scenes contributed to their lack of enthusiasm. This reason seems unlikely, as historical novels of earlier Victorian years were frequently allowed an excess not permitted in fiction with a contemporary setting; for example Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia* (1853) contained the notorious scene of the naked heroine torn limb from limb by a group of rampaging monks, and *Antonina* is violent on occasion and contains the Gothic touch of a corpse presiding over a banquet held by starving nobles. When the latter was published, Collins was hailed as the natural successor to Bulwer Lytton and he rarely pleased the critics so unanimously again. Although popular at the time, *Antonina* has few admirers today, but, like *Ioláni*, it is entertaining in parts and carefully researched.

If *Ioláni* been published in the 1840s it would have made exotic reading, with its sorcerers and description of wrestlers (121), and would surely have proved popular with the reading public of the time. The book is divided into three books for narrative purposes, but it would not have been long enough to be published as a three volume novel, and its relative shortness may have deterred publishers. Had Collins chosen later in his career to resubmit the manuscript, it is quite likely a publisher would have looked more favourably upon it, if only to capitalize on his fame. As it was, Collins thought enough of the setting to use it again for a short story, "The Captain's Last Love" (1877).

Ira B. Nadel is to be congratulated on his informative introduction, providing the history of the manuscript after Collins gave it to the theatrical impresario Augustin Daly, exhaustively mapping the probable sources for the novel, pin-pointing the origins of the names of characters, adding detailed information about the manuscript, and compiling a list of variants and deletions.

The explanatory notes, however, are rather sporadic and erratic: for example, the occurrence of 'wend' on page 89 is explicated, surely unnecessarily, though an early occurrence on page 10 passes unremarked. As a book it is handsomely produced, with attractive layout, a facsimile from the manuscript, and appropriate dust-wrapper illustration. For a hardback it is very reasonably priced.

For those hoping for a lost classic, a mystery on a par with Collins's best work, there will, inevitably, be some disappointment. Judged next to them, the style is dry and it is a fairly tough read. *Ioláni* is the first novel of a very young man, and none the worse for that, but its chief interest lies in the many hints of the author he became. As such it is a wonderful opportunity to chart his development as an author, and it is an addition no admirer of Wilkie Collins will wish to be without.

Jennifer Carnell

The Sensation Press

Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*. Steve Farmer, editor. (Broadview Literary Texts Series.) Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1999. pp. 719 (ISBN 1-55111-243-4).

Of the twenty-five novels which Collins produced, over an exceptionally long and creative literary career, only two can be said to have really made it into the canon (or at least, which amounts to much the same thing, into undergraduate reading lists.) These two are, of course, *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). The most popular of his novels in his lifetime, they have remained the works by Collins which anyone with any interest in the Victorian novel has read. *The Moonstone*, in particular, ever since the poet Swinburne declared it to be the best of Collins's novels, has received a great deal of critical attention, although it was perhaps the introduction to the novel written by another poet, T.S.Eliot, which first made it academically fashionable. Thus, for Collins scholars and enthusiasts, who have put so much effort in recent years into editing and promoting his less well-known novels, the announcement of yet another edition of *The Moonstone*, when so many are already available, is likely to provoke a reaction of discouragement than pleasure. In the case of this new edition by Steve Farmer, however, such a reaction would be completely misplaced. Here is a book which anyone with an interest in either Collins or Victorian literature in general will want to buy.

The chief reason for this is Broadview's exceptionally generous editorial policy in its series of Literary Texts, and the very good use that Steve Farmer has made of this generosity. In this edition, for a very reasonable price, we are given not only a beautifully printed and error-free annotated text of the novel, but also a full introduction and over 150 pages of appendices. These appendices

include excerpts from early reviews of the novel, newspaper accounts of two sensational crimes which almost certainly contributed to its plot, an article by Collins addressing (albeit in a very indirect fashion) the issue of the Indian Mutiny, letters by Collins concerning the composition and publication of the novel, and, last but by no means least, the complete text of the stage adaptation of the novel which Collins made in 1877, together with reviews of the original performances. This is the first time that Collins's dramatic adaptation of the novel has been reprinted and this text alone is well worth the price of the book.

The text of *The Moonstone* is neither an especially difficult nor a problematic one, and, on the whole, Steve Farmer's annotation is correspondingly light. The notes tend either to be literary in nature, as when parallels in other novels by Collins are pointed out, or designed to explicate the social and historical background to the novel. This works very well in some cases, as when, for example, the precise duties of the various kinds of servant who feature in the story are explained, but at other times the notes struck me as somewhat tangential to the narrative. There were also a few points at which I felt that words or phrases in the text should have been explained but were not. The Introduction, in keeping with this approach, very skilfully combines an introduction to the major themes and literary features of the novel with a sketch of its critical fortunes up to the present. It is a relaxed and generous account, which manages to explain sympathetically the enormous range of critical responses that the book has evoked, from Dorothy Sayers' celebration of it as the founding Detective Story to those Freudian, feminist and post-colonial readings which have proved so modish an approach to Victorian fiction over the past decade. Farmer, indeed, imputes his own generous attitude to Collins himself, suggesting that the author would have been 'amused and pleased' by such a variety of 'explanations'. One wonders whether this would indeed have been the case, although Collins surely would have been delighted, at least, to find his work taken as seriously as he himself took it. At any rate, the word 'amused' here seems ambiguous, and one assumes from it that Farmer himself is underwhelmed by at least some of the critical essays he has waded through.

The editor's interest in the context and the sources of the novel is also very evident in the choice of material for the appendices, but—and here is the great advantage of Broadview's policy—the fact that we have the material before us allows us to draw our own conclusions as to its relevance to the texts. Post-colonial critics have recently made great play with the Indian dimension to the novel, suggesting that the Moonstone itself symbolises British fear and guilt over her imperial adventures. The reprinting of Collins's 'A Sermon for Sepoys', written at Dickens' request in 1858, certainly allows us to see just how temperate and measured his response to the Indian Mutiny was, compared to the horrified reactions of Dickens and others. But it also allows us to form our own view of Collins's attitude to British imperialism, and, to this reader at least, his fable conveys a much more ambiguous and nuanced attitude than post-colonial readings would suggest.

As I have said, however, the biggest plus of this edition is the reprinting of the complete text of Collins's stage adaptation. The text is taken from an edition which Collins had privately printed for his own use, and its reprinting allows us again to form our own judgement about the relationship between the author's famous passion for the stage and his novelistic craft. Collins himself saw the drama and the novel as 'twin-sisters' and during his life wrote some 15 plays, six of which were adaptations of his own novels. It was indeed this love of the stage which first brought Collins and Dickens together, and thus ironically helped assure Collins's success as a novelist. Farmer's expansive introduction to the play, based on much research, provides an excellent introduction to Victorian theatre as well as to Collins's own involvement with it. What is most striking when one reads the play is just how ruthlessly Collins revises the novel, squeezing the action into 24 hours, cutting out most of the suspense and omitting some of the most interesting characters. Even those characters which remain are to a great extent simplified. At the same time, some important characteristics of Collins's literary genius are clearly brought out—the extremely tight construction of the plot, the creation of moments of sensational drama and the complete control of pace. Yet one cannot help but feel, whether because of Collins's own particular genius or because of the constraints which the theatre-going audience of the time imposed upon dramatists, that his talents are shown in a much better light in the novel itself. And indeed the play itself was not nearly so successful as Collins and others had hoped.

Opinions about this will certainly vary from reader to reader. What is undoubtedly the case, however, is that anyone interested in Wilkie Collins will want to own a copy of this excellent edition.

Adrian J. Pinnington
Waseda University

Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens. Paul Schlicke, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. pp. xxiii + 654. (ISBN 0-19-866213-0).

Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope. R.C. Terry, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. pp. xxiv + 621. (ISBN 0-19-866210-6).

There are vast companies of "companions" in the world, on everything from China to Puccini, from Ayn Rand to Wagner's Ring. "Companions," indeed, constitute a genre with some antiquity; the earliest reference in the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives *Barnaby Googe*, 1577. These companions ask us to follow, vade-mecum, and may as well be called guidebooks or handbooks. But "companion" still sounds a good deal more amiable, and thus both the Cambridge and Oxford university presses, among many others, have continued to produce a mountain of such guides. For fans of Trollope and Dickens, and for readers of Victorian literature in general, it must be said that these two most

recent companions are both boon (adj. convivial), and a boon (n. blessing).

Obvious kin, the two volumes look similar in outward appearance and inward format: with slight variations, both contain a section called "How to use this book," a list of editors and contributors, a bibliography, family trees, a chronology, and maps; what Terry calls a "Thematic Overview" is named a "Classified Contents List" by Schlicke—either way you have a preliminary, organized set of topics before you dive into the encyclopedia proper. In each volume you will find plenty of beautifully reproduced photographs and illustrations, though not so many, unsurprisingly, as in the related, but differently focused, Oxford handbook by Andrew Gasson, *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide* (1998, reviewed in the last issue of *WCSJ*). The Dickens volume has an index; the Trollope does not.

Differences between volumes have much to do with the particularities of each respective author. For Dickens, there are exceedingly helpful articles on his proliferation, through abridgement, theatrical dramatization, plagiarism, continuation, and adaptation into both television and film (Grahame Smith begins his entry on "film" by invoking Eisenstein's fundamental essay, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today"). Trollope, in a sense, proliferates inwardly rather than outwardly, and so in his companion there is a new novel every few pages (it seems), along with brief descriptions of many of his innumerable characters. Editor Schlicke has ensured a certain uniformity in the entries for Dickens's novels, as he has written them all himself. Each of these entries is organized into "Inception and Composition," "Contract, Text, and Publication History," "Illustrations," "Sources and Context," "Plot, Character, and Theme," and "Reception." Trollope's novels, in contrast, are described by different hands, and without the boilerplate sub-divisions, yet we still get much of the same information. Momentarily, one might imagine that some bit of bias and boosterism ("I'm writing about a very important novel") leads five different critics to help us consider that their Trollope book might be exceedingly good ("Since the 1960s, critics have recognized *The Way We Live Now* as Trollope's most impressive achievement" (581); "James Kincaid has spoken of [*The Prime Minister*] as 'Trollope's most important novel'" (446); "Bradford Booth said, 'If [*Framley Parsonage*] is not his best book, it is the most characteristic, the most Trollopian of all his stories'" (211); "Today, despite continuing widespread disagreement about which novels represent Trollope at his best, many readers rank *The Duke's Children* very high among his 47 novels" (169); "Trollope's friends considered [*Orley Farm*] his best book" (410). Yet even Paul Schlicke, who is writing all of these entries himself, calls *Pickwick* Dickens's "best-loved novel" (444), *Little Dorrit* "one of his greatest works" (335), and perhaps unnecessarily says that *David Copperfield* is "considered by many to be his masterpiece" (144), while *Bleak House* is "widely held to be his masterpiece" (46). But there's not really any problem with these celebrations, since it is all true, and no one doubts that both Trollope and Dickens wrote several really wonderful books.

These companions are packed with superbly readable and useful entries on multifarious topics related to these authors, although not on every topic imaginable. For instance, you can use the other volume to imagine a topic that, in Paradise, you might eventually like to see. The Trollope contains entries on "anthologies," bibliographies," "comedy [in Trollope's work]," "courtship", and "race and racism," none of which appear in the Dickens. In the Dickens we find entries on "advertising in and of Dickens's work," "death and funerals," and "readership: literacy and the reading public," that do not have counterparts in the Trollope volume. Indeed, though there are ever so many entries here, over 600+ pages of Oxford's Trollope, one turns to *The Penguin Companion to Trollope* (by Richard Mullen with James Munson, 1996) to find many more brand new and seemingly basic topics. In the entry on Charles Dickens, for example, Mullen notes that Trollope often refers to Dickens's characters, giving a list, and that civil servant Trollope revenged himself on Dickens's attack on "The Circumlocution Office" in *Little Dorrit* in large part through *The Three Clerks*. The Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope's entry on Dickens is pretty thorough, but misses all this. I would recommend, in fact, that if one were in the mood to be guided through Trollope, one should probably set oneself behind both the recent Trollope companions, Oxford and Penguin.

There is plenty of high-quality work in these volumes, but some articles stand out even above the rest. Robert Patten writes on illustration in Dickens, and his overview of "illustrators and book illustration," along with his entries on illustrators such as Hablot Knight Browne ("Phiz"), George Cruikshank, and Robert Seymour, are masterpieces within the genre. In the Trollope volume, James Kincaid's pieces on Trollope's working habits, *Is He Popenjoy?*, "heroes and heroines of Trollope," and "comedy in Trollope" are all an absolute delight to read. Kincaid probably has other entries, but it is very difficult to tell; there is no index in either volume that lists all the entries written by any given contributor (so to find more Kincaid you just have to page through looking beneath articles for "JRK").

All in all, these are reader's companions in the truest sense, full of readerly company, and a pleasure to have about. Still, they are not quite up to that masterpiece (I think we all agree), that meticulous compendium, that dryly writ and widely read companion above all Victorian companions John Sutherland's one-man tour through everything, *The Stanford Companion to Victorian Fiction* (1989)!

Steve Dillon
Bates College

Announcements

Tennessee Studies in Literature is soliciting previously unpublished essays for a forthcoming volume

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



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VOL. 3

2000

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



New Series, Volume 3, 2000

Contents

~Articles~

- Resurfacing Collins's "Basil"*
STEVEN DILLON 5
- Ellen Wood was a Writer:
Rediscovering Collins's Rival*
ANDREW MAUNDER 17
- Of the Violence of the Working Woman:
Collins and Discourses on Criminality, 1860-1880*
EMMA LIGGINS 32
- Rethinking Bibliolatry:
Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism*
MARK KNIGHT 47

~Notes~

- The Persistent Phantom:
Wilkie Collins and Dorothy L. Sayers*
SUSAN R. HANES 59
- "Poor Fergus":
On Wilkie Collins and "Hugh Conway"*
GRAHAM LAW 67

Editors' Note

We are very pleased to present the following collection of essays on Wilkie Collins and his contemporaries. While ranging widely in their concerns and their critical methods, a number of these essays have a common aim: to place Collins in a context that illuminates his works as well as our own preoccupation with them. Emma Liggins considers Collins's fiction and his treatment of female violence in terms of the changing discourses of criminality in the Victorian period; Mark Knight discusses Collins's relation to the culture of Evangelicalism associated with *The Evangelical Magazine* and such figures as William Booth; Steve Dillon examines Bharadwaj's recent film adaptation of Collins's *Basil*, revealing the ways in which modern directors redefine the Victorians for their own ends. In his essay on Collins's contemporary and rival, Ellen Wood, Andrew Maunder helps us to understand Wood's significance as a sensation novelist, and raises a number of crucial questions about the formation of the literary canon, a process that has unfairly left writers such as Wood largely unknown to modern readers. In addition to these substantial articles, the *Journal* includes two shorter notes: Graham Law considers the links between the brief but glittering literary career of "Hugh Conway" (Fred Fergus) and that of Collins in his declining years, while Susan Hanes discusses Dorothy Sayers's views of Collins and the fascination he held for her, providing details about Sayers's little-known and unpublished notebooks on the Victorian novelist.

As these original essays suggest, Collins studies continue to flourish. Our next issue will also contain a number of reviews of recent work published in volume form which we have not been in time to include in the 2000 edition.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

~~Articles~~

Resurfacing Collins's *Basil*

Steven Dillon

Bates College, Maine

The cinema, then, aims at transforming the agitated witness into a conscious observer. Nothing could be more legitimate than its lack of inhibitions in picturing spectacles which upset the mind. Thus it keeps us from shutting our eyes to the "blind drive of things."

Sigfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film*

Why are film directors and audiences attracted to historical subjects, "costume pictures," and Victorian topics in particular? What leads talented directors and actors to take part in recent films like *The Governess* (1998, dir. Sandra Goldbacher), *Angels and Insects* (1995, dir. Philip Haas), *Wilde* (1998, dir. Philip Gilbert), or even *Mary Reilly* (1996, dir. Stephen Frears), where Julia Roberts plays the housemaid to Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde? Clearly *our* Victorians are not the same as the Victorians of D.W. Griffith (with one foot in the period itself) or David Lean (whose adaptations of Dickens are still among the finest we have). Like earlier generations, no doubt, we are attracted to Victorian costume and manners for a variety of reasons, some of which have to do perhaps with cultural capital—the notion that we are taking part in "classic" culture, yet with a knowing, condescending look. Hence our satisfaction may be double and even contradictory, as we take pleasure in the sumptuous households and dresses, while at the same time we resist, nowadays, class- and gender-bias from our more and more enlightened perspective. One of our most recent and complex enlightenments, of course, is shown in sexual terms; and movies *will* show us the sex that Victorians would not—both for the sake of honesty (as in *Wilde*) and, no doubt, for the sake of titillation (as in the recent updated version of *Great Expectations*, with Gwyneth Paltrow and Ethan Hawke [1997, dir. Alfonso Cuarón]). Many contemporary films make more than offhand use of sexual visibility as a way not just to satisfy expectations of the male consumerist gaze, but to contrast, often thoughtfully and pointedly, the openness of our own age with the repressiveness of theirs.¹

¹ In discussing *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, John Fowles says, "Magnificent though the Victorian novelists were, they almost all (an exception, of course, is the later Hardy) failed miserably in one aspect: nowhere in 'respectable' Victorian literature does one see a man and a woman described together in bed" (Fowles, 17). This aspect, then, is remedied in both the novel and in the film scripted by Harold Pinter (1981, dir. Karel Reisz). On this point see also Morgentaler's discussion of recent films on Victorian topics, and her comments on the particular problem of updating Victorian sexualities.

Recent critical trends in various disciplines have described, on the one hand, the response to modernity in the nineteenth century, and on the other, the turn towards nostalgia and tradition at the end of the twentieth century. The moment when the nineteenth century turns pre-cinematic, mobilized perhaps by Baudelaire's figure of the *flâneur*, is interestingly related to the moment when the late twentieth-century cult of the simulacrum reacts to the onslaught of visual phantasmagoria and disorientation, and stages a retreat towards the perceived stability of the past, and the Victorian past in particular.² Wilkie Collins's novel *Basil* (1852) and its recent film version (1998, dir. Radha Bharadwaj) provides an excellent opportunity to study this double junction: the Victorian confrontation with the modern, and the modern desire for the Victorian.³ A description of the relationship between Victorian modernity and contemporary Victorianism is the goal towards which this essay travels.

But before reaching that goal, this discussion will have a more humble, practical purpose as well. For holding up even rather free adaptations (such as *The Scarlet Letter* [1995, dir. Roland Joffe]) to their source may help us to understand more completely what the original was about all along. *Basil* as a film is clearly not as successful as *The Governess* or *Wilde*, but neither it is not incompetent; the cast includes well-known and more than just good-looking players, such as Derek Jacobi as Basil's father, Jared Leto as Basil, Claire Forlani as Julia Sherwin (Margaret in Collins), and Christian Slater as John Mannion. Just as Walter Benjamin claimed that we could find a wealth of meaning in a simple shop window, I would suggest that there are lessons to be learned even from theater that is not a masterpiece, and from its relation to an early Collins novel that, for what it does, is rather better than its reputation.

Key characters and aspects of the plot remain, but Bharadwaj has determinedly made a much less "sensational," excessive *Basil*. One of the

² On the nineteenth century and modernity, see Friedberg, and Crary. Important critical works that take on institutionalized nostalgia and commodified memory in Britain are Wright, and Samuel.

³ The film I discuss throughout is that recently released on video by Kushner-Locke (1998). The film was never released in theaters; so except for a few showings at film festivals and on AMC Romance Classics, the work is "Straight-to-Video." In the course of making the movie, there seems to have been substantial disputes between financial executives and the director (and also Christian Slater, one of the producers). The dispute is chronicled briefly by Andrew Hinder in the trade journal *Daily Variety* (13 Jul 1998). Piers Handling, the director of the Toronto International Film Festival, invited *Basil* to be shown there in 1998 ("We were impressed by its innovativeness, emotion, and beautiful performances"), but the Kushner-Locke company would not release its version. One of the conflicts, according to director Bharadwaj, was that chief executive Locke wanted more scenes of female nudity in the film; but she refused, and later attempted to remove her name from the film. So what I have to say about the video release applies, obviously, to that version; it may well be that "the director's cut" would look rather different. Scouring through my various electronic resources, other than basic promotions and cast lists, I see very little other information available on this film.

glories of Collins's novel for fans, no doubt, is the way it conducts its various over-the-top frenzies among resolutely domestic settings (calling out perhaps towards directors like Roger Corman or Ken Russell); yet this film's atmosphere is brooding, clean, and calm. Although we must know that Collins's labyrinthine plots are not signs of incompetence, but basic to his created world, the film reins in the more "unbelievable" and "ridiculous" aspects of plot and character. Still, the exigencies of cinematic time-scale—the quasi-Aristotelian rule that everything must be over in about 120 minutes of spectator time—often require adaptations to sacrifice some thickness and complexity, and so we might take the simplifications to be pragmatic rather than disloyal.

Although we might indeed wonder why someone would choose such a relentlessly frenzied text and then proceed, rather methodically, to vacuum out the frenzy, there's arguably more at the heart of *Basil* than nerves, and the film proves this by providing recurrently compelling "readings" of the book, now developed in far less panicky style. Where we might have expected jittery hand-held cameras or a camera rushing up out of darkness towards sudden light, in order to convey hypersensitive palpitation, here we have what might be termed "cool gothic," slow pans and clean lighting. Are the younger actors themselves too cool to emote, to tremble? Not necessarily, for their less melodramatic playing may still capture the obsessiveness and monomaniacal patience of these characters. Bharadwaj reads Collins's novel as a vicious circle, or triangle: the obsessive love of Basil for Julia (Margaret), the obsessive love of Julia for Mannion, and the obsessive hate of Mannion for Basil's father (Julia calls it a "terrible circle"; Mannion says that "hate is but love's twin"). Fatalistic drive is the keynote, rather than sublime, domestic horror. This "reading" usefully serves to underscore the strains in Collins that afterwards lead to Hardy, in contrast to the monstrous and Piranesian effects that descend to him from Mary Shelley and Thomas De Quincey.

The film version, implicitly and resourcefully, argues that the improbable, labyrinthine twists in Collins's plot ultimately mask over, or reduce to, repetition and doubling. At first glance, it may appear that the whole budget has gone to pay off Christian Slater, since the interior of Basil's family mansion consists, for the purposes of filming, almost entirely of the main staircase.⁴ The film continues to return to the staircase, its red carpet and coats of arms: here the children watch as families pass through on a tour of their

⁴ Stairways are often used in classical cinema to reflect the strange twists and turns of anxious and psychotic minds. See Ryall, 44-45, on the use of stairs in an early Hitchcock film, with further references to German Expressionist cinema. The use of the stairway in *Basil* is obsessively repetitive, but far from *noir*.

estate, here both child and Oxford undergraduate Basil stumble at the foot of the stairs (in a rhyme underscored each time by the maidservant's identical remark), and here finally Basil chases Mannion downstairs, out of the bedroom, and out of the house for a climactic dash to the ocean cliffs. Just so, there are drapes everywhere, not just around windows and beds, but framing the edges of the screen, and hung repeatedly down hallways. The plot goes this way and that, but the sets tend to collapse into themselves. The sets remind us that the plot is not progressing, but rather spiraling or repeating. A particularly effective set doubling occurs in Julia's "apartment." On the way in, we see with Basil a picture of Windemeer Hall (which later we learn was drawn by Ralph's pregnant lover in a nostalgic moment; she later kills herself by aborting the child in a scene as violent and more shocking than the notorious beating of Mannion). What we see inside the apartment itself, then, once through the door, is again all staircase; but this time it looks like the outside steps to the family mansion have been re-built *inside* as a kind of garden. This is where Basil first finds Julia, languorously sitting about with her (emblematically) caged birds.⁵

As the camera travels slowly up Julia's strange staircase, we brush past white leafy fronds and also peacock feathers: the eyes on the feathers meet our gaze. The film thematically foregrounds seeing, which is not only a self-reflexiveness common to movies, but also, once again, an interesting reading of the psychology of sensation. The film's narrative is structured far more linearly than the book, so we spend the opening fifteen minutes with the child Basil, as if this might be a recognizable Victorian *Bildungsroman*, such as *Oliver Twist* or *Jane Eyre*. But there really isn't any development, since the logic of the film is that Basil always will be what he has *seen*. We see what the quiet, round-faced boy sees: his father, on the balcony, washing his hands of brother Ralph; his father kissing a woman beneath a tree (his mother tells Basil, "You did not see what you saw").⁶ These are contradictory primal scenes: the father's expression of sexual passion, and the squelching of a brother's passion by paternal authority. The convolutions of Basil's adult life will always be framed by these origins. Later on the obsessive hatred of John Mannion is explained by this same visual logic; what little John Mannion sees (we watch this ourselves in a flashback) is his dead sister in a pool of blood—sexuality and passion crushed once again.

⁵ Birdcages have a consistent iconography in nineteenth-century fiction, and are here drawn directly from the novel (Collins, 37).

⁶ Our sympathy for Basil is much manipulated in the film, by having the father commit adultery, and before his son's very eyes. Thus the father's transgressions are seen as descending to his son (Jacobi gives a speech to this effect towards the end), and his paternal admonishments (outlandishly prideful in Collins) are now transparently hypocritical.

The sensation novel fires the body's nerves, no doubt, but the sensation novel, *Basil*, begins and ends, psychologically and structurally, in the eye—focused upon the gaze, upon looking. The movie helps us to see this even more clearly. In the novel, the emblematic pair before Basil's rapt attention ("the faculties of observation are generally sharpened, in proportion as the faculties of reflection are dulled, under the influence of an absorbing suspense" [192]) is Margaret and Mr. Mannion—all absorbing Beauty and mask-like Mystery. After his face is destroyed, Mannion underlines the symmetry for Basil: "My deformed face and her fatal beauty shall hunt you through the world" (251). It is true that narrative crises often cross over sense boundaries, as when Basil touches Margaret while riding the bus ("But how the sense of that touch was prolonged!" [29]), or when, above all, Basil hears Margaret and Mannion in the next hotel room together ("I listened; and through the thin partition, I heard voices—her voice, and *his* voice" [160]). But for the most part Basil's suspenseful world depends on acuity and sensitivity of sight. Thus he introduces his father: "It was that quiet, negative, courteous, inbred pride, which only the closest observation could detect; which no ordinary observation ever detected at all" (5). Basil falls into obsessive love at first sight with Margaret on the bus; apparently his bus-riding is both habitual and characteristic:

I had often before ridden in omnibuses to amuse myself by observing the passengers. An omnibus has always appeared to me, to be a perambulatory exhibition-room of the eccentricities of human nature. . . . To watch merely the different methods of getting into the vehicle, and taking their seats, adopted by different people, is to study no incomplete commentary on the infinitesimal varieties of human character—as various even as the varieties of the human face.

(Collins, 27)⁷

Basil begins voyeuristically, but soon finds himself in flames of love. Margaret lifts her veil, and Basil rapturously describes her face: "My powers of observation, hitherto active enough, had now wholly deserted me." His eyes draw him powerfully towards her youth and beauty, but it is a stunned vision: "Those were the days when I lived happy and unreflecting in the broad sunshine of joy which love showered around me—my eyes were dazzled; my mind lay asleep under it" (108).

Vision is, then, the sense above all others in this sensation novel, but it is always a dazzled, half-blinded sight. The catastrophic imagery of *Basil* follows the same archetypal, repetitive logic as *Oedipus the King*.⁸ First Oedipus can

⁷ There are similar passages (put to different uses) in Charles Dickens, "Omnibuses," in *Sketches by Boz* (1839).

⁸ In Basil's "Letter of Dedication," Collins writes that certain elements "add to tragedy" (Collins, xxxvi). A contemporary reviewer notes that "The fatality of the Greek tragedians broods over the drama" (Page, 46).

literally see, but he is blind to his circumstances, then Oedipus blinds himself, to ward off the burning light of truth. The blind prophet Teiresias emblematically rules this play. Thus even though Sophocles' drama provides the perfect example for an Aristotelian fall of total ruin and reversal, the conviction remains that Oedipus is the same on both sides, that there is no difference. The play is about, precisely, reduction and collapse: the three roads that meet at the killing of Laius, the clues that cause relentless Oedipus to discover himself as the murderer, and above all, Jocasta's womb, where Oedipus both emerges and returns.

Like Teiresias, who according to myth turned between female and male, Mannion's crushed face might be taken as the visual counterpart to Basil's mixed, repetitive logic. In the brutal attack Mannion loses the sight in *one* eye; then Basil begins narrating Part III (the book's halfway point, in fact, following on his realization of the truth): "when the blind are operated on for the restoration of sight, the same succouring hand which has opened to them the visible world, immediately shuts out the bright prospect for a time" (168). Even though there may appear to be an absolute change between Basil's hope for wedded bliss and the horrors of shame that come upon him afterwards, in a substantial sense Basil's head swamps with the same frenzies both before and after the hotel room revelation. The palpitations and tremblings of Basil's secretive, loving lust feel a lot like those generated later by shame and fear. Basil is all trembling—trembling under a dozen different names. Both before and after recognition, then, blindness and insight are all mixed up. The only clarity, as we shall see, resides in Basil's perfect sister, Clara.

This veiled, half-blinded, repetitive viscosity so characteristic of *Basil* is represented most completely by the plot of Mannion's face: both before and afterwards his face is a mask. Although he may appear entirely different at the beginning and at the end—trusted secretary vs. outcast monster—in fact his face is equally impenetrable either way, and in each case hides bloodthirsty revenge. At their first meeting, Basil thus describes Mannion: "the calm, the dead-calm face of the man beside me—without one human emotion of any kind even faintly pictured on it—I felt strange unutterable sensations creeping over me" (122); and Basil will expend much effort staring on Mannion, attempting to see past that stony exterior. Later, the monstrous disfiguring is simply a different version of the same mask, and although horrible, it does not stop Mannion from continuing to carry out conspiracies and revenge. Mr. Turner, as Mannion is later called, has really not *turned* away from his original, angry *man*.

While recalling one of Basil's spectacular nightmares, where "fiend-souls [are] made visible in fiend-shapes" (124), Dorothy Goldman reads Mannion's

monstrous appearance as a Victorian version of Spenser's Redcrosse unveiling Duessa: "Basil has exposed the inner man" (in Introduction to Collins, vii). Yet are we to think that Mannion is a monster? More monstrous than Basil? Are Mannion's justifications entirely monomaniacal delusions and madness? For we see Basil too behave in sudden, bizarre, extreme ways; we see him, in his turn, obsessively lie, wait, and conspire; we see him take justice into his own hands, decide on homicide, and then premeditate brutal maiming. The film version of *Basil* makes all kinds of effort to gain back our sympathy for Basil, which reminds us, after all, how unsympathetic the book's "hero" really is. Mannion's story, perhaps, is not as sympathetic as the one told by Frankenstein's monster but in the exaggerated terms of Collins novel, its outrageous fervor should not blind us to Basil's own duplicity and cruelty.

Basil and Mannion are inextricably linked, in the logic of the novel and in our judgment. As Lillian Nayder (33) and Tamar Heller (76) point out, they are doubles, who have lived similar careers as writers, and have been overwhelmingly influenced by their fathers. In a famous essay, Paul de Man discusses the exchanges between autobiography and defacement, noting that the "figures of deprivation, maimed men, drowned corpses, blind beggars, children about to die, that appear throughout *The Prelude* are figures of Wordsworth's own poetic self" (de Man, 73). Basil's "autobiography" (for such he calls his prose in Letter III, "From the Writer of the foregoing autobiography" [337]) of obsession and deceit depends on the disfiguring of Mannion to reveal his own guilt, his own loss. After attempting to elude his father's proud, surveillant gaze for the first half of the book, it is no wonder, and indeed almost reasonable, that Mannion's gaze haunts him for the second half. Mannion's monstrous mask does not reveal his own inner, evil soul, so much as justifiably linger over all who try to keep foul secrets. Thus Margaret also bewails: "Water! Water! drown me in the sea; drown me deep, away from the burning face!" (294)

It seems to me that the disfiguring of Mannion's face is the interpretive crux of Collins's novel. I hope to have shed some light on the first question: what is the significance of Mannion's monstrous face? His face implies more than a revelation of his own character, I hope we can agree. Yet we may pose further questions related to this scene. What should we make of the circumstantial details of the attack? And, lastly, to Wilkie Collins, son and biographer of a well-known painter, *what is a face?*

For the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, the face is by definition that which expresses the human, otherwise it is a mask. The expressive face, above all, repeats God's fundamental prohibition: "Thou shalt not kill." The face to face look expresses human commonality and sympathy (see Robbins). In this light,

watch how carefully Basil characterizes his pursuit of Mannion:

He looked up and down, from the entrance to the street, for the cab—then seeing that it was gone, he hastily turned back. At that instant I met him face to face. Before a word could be spoken, even before a look could be exchanged, my hands were on his throat.

(Collins, 164)

As so often in this novel, the actions are described in terms of seeing and looking. Note how Basil describes his own avoidance of the gaze, of human contact, on his way towards murder. He meets Mannion “face to face”, yet almost impossibly, “even before a look could be exchanged.” Basil does not want just to kill Mannion, but kill his human looks; he flings him “face downwards” on the road, to beat out the very “semblance of humanity.” He refuses not only to exchange a word, but even a look, for the face in Collins is as full of language as any book, and even Mannion’s iron visage may speak “don’t kill me” if looked upon.

Yet still, there is something more than the expressively human in these faces. There is something more contextual, more temporal, even ideological. Let us read *Basil* as “the face of man in the age of mechanical reproduction”: the unreadable, stoic face is the *modern* face, and Basil yearns nostalgically for the aura of the expressive face. It is not just to contrast *Basil* with his previous, historical romance, *Antonina* (set in fifth-century Rome), that Collins subtitles the novel, “A Tale of Modern Life.” Basil himself kicks against the age-old name and all its tyrannies (“Our family is, I believe, one of the most ancient in this country” [2]), and omits his family name from the autobiography; yet he ultimately returns to his household, the “old home” of the past with Clara.⁹ A writer himself of historical romances, he cannot bear to look at the newness of North Villa, “the eye ached looking round it” [61]). Everything glares at him, a bright, shiny surface, with a new-moneyed but superficial dazzlement later transfigured by Dickens into the Veneerings of *Our Mutual Friend*. Basil crushes Mannion’s face into a “newly mended” road: it is newness, modernity, and the future which dehumanize. Amid the “wretched trivialities and hypocrisies of modern society,” aptly named Clara is the woman who feels deeply and expresses her feelings, unlike those women who ape the “miserable modern dandyism of demeanor, which aims at repressing all betrayal of warmth of feeling,” and who “labour to make the fashionable imperturbability of the face the faithful reflection of the fashionable imperturbability of the mind” (20). It is no coincidence that Basil’s temptations and crises occur around images of modernity: on the omnibus, and

⁹ Of *Basil*’s conclusion, Jenny Bourne Taylor writes: “Basil’s final recovery and reassimilation into the family with which the story concludes is firmly set ‘in the shadowed valley of Repose,’ and here home becomes a safe place, an asylum, but also a kind of pastoral stasis—a place outside history, outside narrative itself” (Taylor, 77).

in a hotel “in the neighborhood of a great railway station” (158) Mannion’s imperturbable face is the mask of modernity, which conceals the furious patience of class resentment, and Basil grinds that face into its double, the surface, or resurfacing of modernity—face to face, surface to surface—and then retreats, in his turn, to the ancient, pastoral realm of Cornwall (see Nayder, 32-3).

Collins’s sensation novels of the fifties are contemporary with Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life* (written 1859-60), and may be read as equally vigorous, if more figurative, accounts of the confrontation with urban modernity. The “shock” of experience that Simmel and Benjamin point to as characteristic of modern city life must be related to the sensationalistic poundings of Collins’s mid-Victorian urban gothic. Yet important differences need to be drawn. Collins’s sensationalistic “moment” of ecstasy and terror is always linked to the past, is romantic and terrible. Baudelaire’s “modern” moment of disorientation and ecstasy also points backwards, in a way, and is named the “animal ecstatic gaze of a child,” yet this primality is that which regains innocence upon confronting “something new” (Baudelaire, 8). Following *Rambles Beyond Railways* (1851), which emblematically contrasts the “beyond” of Cornwall with the technological modernity of the railroad, Collins continually uses the archaic Cornish landscape to create confrontations with modernity. In *The Dead Secret* (1857), for example, the rebuilding of Porthgenna Tower in Cornwall sparks the flames for a hypersensationalistic detective story. The frayed nerves and chaotic disorientation of Collins’s sensation novels mirror urban chaos, but Collins, in effect, flees in panic from that chaos. By contrast, Baudelaire’s hero of modernity, the *flâneur*, plunges into the crowd, and loses himself ecstatically in its immense energy. Baudelaire, inspired by the gothic tales of Poe, manages to push himself still further through the horror and debris, to come out the other side, now accepting modern life in all its kaleidoscopic plenty.

Yet even as Basil retreats from the shocks and masquerades of the modern, given the repetitive and fatalistic nature of this text, it will come as no surprise that this withdrawal to the past is itself shrouded in ambiguity and doubt. What sort of past is this? Expressive, domestic Clara, pointedly linked with Basil’s lost mother, loves Basil and shows her love constantly throughout the novel. Notably, Basil’s brotherly feelings for Clara are as intense as his sexual feelings for Margaret, and Basil dreams of the two women paired with one another. Given that the tradition of gothic in which Collins works often resorts to a variety of incest plots, some overt, some suggested, Tamar Heller cannot be far out of line when she sees a subliminal sexual relationship between Clara

and Basil (63-5).¹⁰ The world of *Basil* is caught in a temporal double-bind. Forward is adult sexuality, but also the lying, modern mask; backward is the loving, domestic past, but collapsed in on itself narcissistically. The film version, interestingly, seems to substantiate this reading of the doubtful family home. One of the film's most unnecessary adaptations (it would seem) is to make Clara a half-sister to Basil. Thus when Basil is first aroused by Mannion's cynical, experienced sex talk, he goes first after Clara, kissing her on the stairway. One might take this alternative version as merely indecorous titillation, but I prefer to understand it as a serious interpretation of the siblings' notably intense relationship in the novel.

While Collins enacts a turbulent and confusing confrontation with modernity, by contrast, the film version of *Basil* exudes an airy confidence in its re-enactment of the Victorian. Like many recent adaptations, the film claims an authority over sexual matters that the Victorian novel presumably did not have. The film turns all the male characters into straightforwardly sexual beings; "You are a man now, I can speak to you of a man's passions," says Derek Jacobi as Basil's father"; "God knows, I know their force." Mannion explains his attraction to Julia: "I was a man, with a man's appetites." The audience, I take it, is supposed to, if not admire, then at least comprehend the biological destiny that drives the obsessions of the plot. Yet although "sex" is spoken more clearly and visualized in more detail than in Collins's novel, this cinematic sexuality still seems terribly constrained, made routine and commonplace by all these matter-of-fact confessions. The overall atmosphere of handsome young people dressed in handsome costumes is, in the end, more fuzzily romantic than seriously sexual, enough so that, before descending into the world of video rental, *Basil* aired happily enough on the AMC Romance Classics. And that the cast is so young—Jared Leto, Clair Forlani, Christian Slater—makes the catastrophic decisions seem more like youthful indiscretions. The adaptation makes Mannion and Basil into youthful "buddies," where Mannion gives Basil warnings (he hates the father, but not Basil) and kills himself out of remorse ("I never meant to harm you!"). The film implicitly claims to be more honest and sensible than the repressed, melodramatic Victorians (our tyrannical fathers), but our articulate, scrupulous honesty has the effect of reducing the power and mystery of sexuality. Collins—more accurately?—keeps the strangeness and sheer danger of sexual relationship, and offers no easy alternatives, sympathies, or explanations.

¹⁰ Here Heller also points out Clara's connection with the lost mother, and thus with the past. Related studies of incest in literature include Perry; Hudson, and Irwin.

The contemporary Victorian film is and is not a nostalgia film. We may, in part, admire or yearn for the more orderly social codes of the Victorians, but ultimately we see more limitation than idyll. A recent, very interesting nostalgia film, *Pleasantville* (1998), provides a good indication of contemporary taste. A young man and his sister time warp into their TV set (assisted by Don Knotts) to a “perfect” 1950s world. This world is lovable and quaint, but terribly repressed, and the addition of passion and sexuality slowly turns the black-and-white town, piece by piece, to splendid color. The ending surprises somewhat, in that the sister ends up staying (she began by loathing this archetypally un-cool place) and the boy returns to present reality (it was *his* favorite television show, after all). But the final result is that the movie has it both ways: nostalgia and anti-nostalgia at once, cute and sexual, sentimental and political. The film *Basil*, too, wants us to sympathize with its “rebellions” against Victorian oppression, at the same time that it gives us the serene pleasures and pastoral scenery of masterpiece theater (this Ralph lives out in a country farm, where, after all his mistakes, he finds “the possibility of happiness”). Eternally young and passionate, we are in control of our pasts and presents; we love our enlightened modernity and the way we can make history over into ourselves. Collins’s *Basil* offers us neither alternative, neither a confident present nor a trouble-free past, and it is on this absence of choice and control that our more knowing, free gaze, in its various overly assured and flexible historicisms, refuses to look.

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Ellen Wood was a Writer: Rediscovering Collins's Rival

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On a cold January afternoon in 1916, about fifty people gathered in the nave of Worcester Cathedral, the imposing fourteenth-century church which dominates the skyline of that English market town. They had come to witness the unveiling of a memorial to Mrs Henry Wood, 1814-1887, wife, mother, novelist, journalist, editor, and native of the city. The ceremony was performed by Lord Justice Avory who talked of “the enduring fame of great literary geniuses”, and of a woman whose works were “more widely read than those of any of the authors of the Victorian era.” Unveiling the white marble sculpture, he expressed the hope that it “might serve to stimulate others to follow her example and leave behind them some work for the benefit of posterity, that they might not die unwept, unhonoured and unsung” (“Memorial Unveiled”, *Worcester Daily Times*, 20 Jan 1916, 4).

Since Ellen Wood is now largely untaught, unread, and out-of-print, Avory's optimism has proved misplaced. Indeed there is something so final in the way this once-famous figure has disappeared from view that curiosity is immediately challenged. Here was a novelist widely thought “the best-read writer” (as Margaret Oliphant noted in 1895, 646), whose combined sales had reached 6 million by 1916 (Shuttleworth, 8). It was to Wood's success that Wilkie Collins enviously referred in 1872, claiming that she averaged £1000 a year from her novels in six-shilling editions. “I may certainly, without undue arrogance, consider myself to be a rather better novelist, with a rather wider reputation than Mrs Henry Wood,” he asserted. Yet the contrast between his own sales and those of Wood was not encouraging, a fact which, he remarks, “does not *add* to my faith in the British public!” (cited in Peters, 369). Much has been made of the rivalry between Collins and Dickens but the jostling for position with Wood preoccupied him more. Earlier Wood had compared the scantiness of her own earnings with those of Collins. “Sampson and Low gave Wilkie Collins three thousand pounds for *No Name*. . .” she complained in 1863, “Mr Bentley states fifteen hundred pounds to me, but he is mistaken” (24 Jul 1863, L44, UI).¹

¹ The bulk of the surviving letters written by Wood relate to her dealings with the publishers Richard and George Bentley. They form part of the Bentley Archives held in the British Library (BL), the University of Illinois (UI), UCLA, and the Berg Collection, New York Public Library. All but the Berg materials have been microfilmed by Chadwyck-Healey.

Despite Malcolm Elwin's claim, made back in 1935, that Wood was "the most intrinsically representative woman novelist of the mid-Victorian era" (232), there seems far greater resistance to recovering her reputation than her main literary competitors, whether Collins himself, or Mary Braddon, whose revivals are both now well established. A major study of Wood—the author of the phenomenally successful *East Lynne* (1861), of forty other novels, and over a hundred short stories, the editor and proprietor of her own magazine, *The Argosy*, and the writer of countless journal articles—seems long overdue.

Part of the explanation lies in the difficulty of obtaining copies of Wood's work, but it also has to do with the fashions of literary scholarship. Mrs Henry Wood was recognized for much of her own century as a voice of Victorian convention; but when the reaction against things Victorian arrived in the first decades of the twentieth century she seemed a ready candidate for the critical scaffold. The fact of her wide appeal across the classes also made her suspect as a serious writer. Wood wrote over forty earnest, sentimental novels during a period when novelists were admired for their prolificness, earnestness, and sentimentality. Soon after the First World War she would begin to be mocked for her exhibition of precisely these archetypally Victorian traits. Nor did her association with genres deemed sub-literary—melodrama, mystery, romance—help matters. For Oliver Elton in 1920, Wood was a mere curiosity, the producer of a quaint "species of absurd fiction", for novels characterized by their "simple-minded plots" and "governess mentality" (2:220). But Wood was marginalized in other ways as well. In 1936 in his *History of the English Novel*, Ernest Baker labelled Wood one of the "crude" imitators of Wilkie Collins (214). This is a designation that also seems to have stuck. Nicholas Rance's *Wilkie Collins and Other Sensation Novelists* (1991) is typical in the way in which it treats Wood as an acolyte of a male mentor. Nor have feminist critics bent on recovering lost women's voices argued for any significant legacy for Ellen Wood. With the single exception of *East Lynne* which, since Elaine Showalter's seminal analysis in the mid-1970s, has continued to surface in a variety of critical contexts, Wood's apparent refusal in her fiction to subvert Victorian clichés has meant she is categorized as conventional, conservative, and thus, by implication, unworthy of sustained attention (Horsman, 222). On every side Wood continues to be dismissed with all the condescension posterity can muster.

Even so, scholarly trends alone cannot explain the lack of interest. It has much to do as well with the professional consequence of the "myth" cultivated by her family during her own lifetime. The only biography of Ellen Wood—*Memorials of Mrs Henry Wood* (1894) by her son, Charles—is central in shaping this myth, presenting us with a saintly woman of wide interests and activities, but which do not conflict in any way. Eulogistic and devoid of dates,

Charles Wood's memoir is a partial one (in both senses of the word). It is also privileged and privileging. It suggests that we, too, can survey the life of Ellen Wood and obtain a comprehensive view. Stricken with illness and too weak almost to hold a pen, Wood is shown writing sensational best-sellers, discussing theology with visiting clergymen, editing her own magazine, turning out article after article for other journals, managing her household, inspiring her husband, children and servants. In the *Memorials*, Ellen Wood's greatness encompasses her femininity and exemplary wifeliness, as well as her public activities in literature and journalism. Charles Wood argues for Mrs Henry Wood's place in literary history (comparing her to Charlotte Brontë) and contends that her multifaceted consistency was itself extraordinary: "nothing ever jarred; the domestic atmosphere was never disturbed" (227). His claim for the value of Wood's life—and the value of the biography—rests on her status as a conventional and, above all, a unified woman. Her prevailing facial expression was one of "absolute repose," as he recalls at one point, "no doubt partly the result of a life lived to a great extent in the retirement of her study . . . Her calmness and serenity in a great measure came from within" (35-36). This ordered, unified life history is spiritually uplifting—a sentiment reinforced through Charles Wood's inclusion of the fulsome tributes paid to his mother on her death. But this reiteration of the condolences her family received adds to the sense that this is a static life. "She was Mrs Henry Wood" noted Margaret Oliphant after reading the *Memorials*, "What more?" (646).

The aim of this paper is not to rediscover the "truth" of Ellen Wood, but rather to suggest why she is worthy of attention and ways in which we might start to understand her.² Wood cannot be contained in a single critical category because she was too aware of the need to be different things to different people. Oliphant felt her to be "unapproachable" (646), a view with which, judging by the silence which continues to surround her, critics today seem to agree. However, if any contemporary critical approach were to be singled out as appropriate for a study of Wood it would be that associated with post-modern developments in biography. Claims that biography is disguised fiction have been put forward, and emphasis has been placed on seeing the life-story as a kaleidoscope of images—to be reconstructed through bricolage rather than a sequential cradle-to-grave narrative. Liz Stanley has argued that we should accept the diversity and complexity of a subject's life, not straighten it out into a single narrative: "She was like that and like that should be its motto" (18).

Wood seems a likely subject for this model precisely because she was a

² For a chronological account of Wood's life and career, see the present author's edition of Ellen Wood, *East Lynne*, 9-17.

person who embodied an ambiguous, shifting persona throughout her life. Meeting Ellen Wood accidentally in 1862, Geraldine Jewsbury saw a woman “as unlike a novel writer as anybody I ever saw” (16 May 1862, L46, BL). One of the striking things about Wood is the contrast between her public and private faces. Despite her status as the typical Victorian, there is something very modern about the way in which she carefully moulds her image through selective publicity and creates her own legend. She did not save her letters or keep a journal on a regular basis. Although she was immensely popular, she took little part in the social side of literary life. She did not preside over a literary salon like Ouida or George Eliot. She did not give paid public recitations like Collins or Dickens; indeed the very idea of a woman appearing on a public platform to engage in an economic transaction would have contravened widely held views on sexual difference. Bourgeois masculinity was hegemonically defined in relation to paid professional work. But, for middle-class women writers entering the public sphere was fraught with danger, since it threatened to equate the authoress with the actress, or worse, the prostitute, who also marketed her person in public. Wood’s absence was not therefore exceptional, but in her case the elusiveness was compounded by self-consciousness about her physical appearance. As the novelist Sarah Tytler recalled:

her figure was spoilt either from original malformation or from some injury related to the spine. I believe the defect was not prominent in her earlier years, but by the time she had reached middle-life, the back had turned into what was equivalent to a slight hump.

(Keddie, 322)

In an age which saw the emergence of the marketing of “star” personalities, Wood thus remained an elusive figure, a celebrity who maintained her fame by making a spectacle of her absence. Indeed, while I have represented Wood’s absence from literary histories and biographies as a twentieth-century phenomenon, in a sense it was always like this. From the beginning Wood was illusory. In 1865, *The Reader* begged to assure curious readers that nothing was known of Mrs Wood: “We are even ignorant whether this lady is stout or thin, tall or short, fair or dark.” (8 Jul 1865, 30). So Wood’s image was fragmented in her own day, but there she vanished in a different sense: into the varieties of representation by which she became known.

Among these, there were two images which became ubiquitous for more than thirty years: a picture of an impassive but respectable Victorian matron, projecting an aura as asexual as that of Queen Victoria herself; and the trademark name, “Mrs Henry Wood” which became as identifiable as any commercial logo. The only known portrait of Wood is an undated miniature by Reginald Easton which shows the novelist dressed in sober black, wearing a lace cap. This image was engraved and used as a frontispiece in later editions of her work. It was the only opportunity the public had to view their idol, since Wood

avoided interviews and never allowed herself to be photographed (unlike her less camera-shy rivals, Collins and Braddon). The authenticity of the likeness was supported by a message from the author—"Very sincerely yours, Ellen Wood". That Wood endorsed not a photograph but an engraving—a form of pictorial image which lacks the immediacy of the photograph and involves instead a process of reinvention—is suggestive of her methods of reworking and blurring her public image. Personal vanity and self-consciousness were important considerations, but Wood's self-fashioning involved display as well as inhibition, disclosure as well as concealment. It is also important to recall that, for a woman writer, looking the part could be important in gaining readers. The popular idea of the literary woman as deviant or unsexed could be rectified by such pictures at a time when what it meant to be a writer could not be divorced from what it meant to be a Victorian woman. By the end of the nineteenth century Wood's physical image, self-constructed as a dainty, respectable middle-class lady, was eventually so widely circulated as to be immediately recognizable even to those unfamiliar with her books.

Although she was reluctant to submit to the invasiveness of the camera lens, Ellen Wood kept the name "Mrs. Henry Wood" constantly before the public, extravagantly displaying herself in print. This second image, together with Wood's insistence that "the Christian name (Henry) is [always] inserted" (8 Aug 1861, L12, UI), has generally been read as an example of her innate conservatism and a recognition of the binding power of patriarchal norms. However, there are other implications. Most obviously it is a reminder that Wood's own identity as a writer was created as consciously as those of her characters. Women writers often took male-sounding pseudonyms thinking that it gave them an air of seriousness. Behind Acton, Currer and Ellis Bell, the Brontës lay in hiding, not wanting to be prejudged according to the double standard prevailing in Victorian criticism. There was also the dilemma that faced a female writer of sensation fiction in the wake of revelations concerning Mary Braddon's career. Braddon had become a bad example, the woman whose unsavoury personal life detracted from her accomplishments as a writer. She was a single woman, a former actress who wrote professionally and lived with a married man and their five children. In contrast, Wood's life was held up as exemplary—she managed to support her parasitic family and lived a life into which no hint of scandal intruded. As Stevie Davies has suggested:

To declare oneself 'Mrs Wood' is to say to the reading world that one is a safe, harmless, respectable, God-fearing, middle-class Englishwoman, probably endowed with children. . . . To add one's husband's Christian name for good measure . . . is to emphasize the point doubly

(Davies, v).

David Lodge has likewise suggested that writers are especially prone to assume

the meaningfulness of names. While it is not “customary for novelists to explain the connotations of the names they give to characters . . . such [names] . . . are supposed to work subliminally on the reader’s consciousness” (37). While the public name adopted by Ellen Wood failed to contain her, there is no doubt that it was a rich signifier of class and gender. At the time of her death the *Pall Mall Gazette* pictured Mrs Henry Wood approvingly

as a good Englishwoman of strong domestic tastes, unaffected by any of the popular fads of the day . . . [who] received . . . only her intimate friends, and rather shrank from the glare of publicity.

(*Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 Feb 1887, 4).

These “intimate friends”—Anna Maria Hall, Julia Kavanagh and Mary Howitt—were formidably respectable women writers, exempt from suspicion of working to support themselves, hesitant to push their own work in case such display threatened their modesty as ladies.

This image of Mrs Henry Wood was reinforced throughout her career. But it was also challenged. While Ellen Wood cultivated an image of respectability she was also willing to take risks for the sake of a large income. As a novelist she could be an unblushing apologist for infanticide, incest, adultery, forgery, and insanity of all kinds as suitable subject matter. In an 1864 review essay, Wood was called “an egregious offender against good morals and correct taste” (406), with *East Lynne* singled out for special censure:

Mrs Wood is a writer who puzzles us. Some of her stories are as pure, as free from anything that could offend, as earnest in their inculcation of virtue as any writings of their class. On the other hand, others are just as unhealthy in their tone and as questionable in their principles. . . . *East Lynne* is one of the most powerful but one also of the most mischievous books of the day. Throughout an exciting, though very improbable story, our sympathies are excited on behalf of one who has betrayed the most sacred trust man can repose in woman. All that the union of beauty, rank, talent and misfortune can do to create a prejudice in favour of the criminal is done, while the sense of the enormity of her crime is greatly enfeebled by the unamiable light in which her husband is presented. To exhibit a woman possessed of every natural gift that could call forth admiration, and then to surround her with her with circumstances that seem, as though by a resistless fate, to draw her into sin, is to inflict serious injury in the interests of morality; for which it is but very poor compensation to find that the sin is followed by a certain amount of suffering.

(*London Quarterly Review*, 44, Jul 1864, 405).

This review articulates some of the key themes that would ‘place’ Mrs Henry Wood among her contemporaries. Although she presented herself as a stalwart of middle-class values, her endorsement of these values was often open to question. In *East Lynne*, an enormous popular success, the adulterous Isabel Vane’s penitent decline is offered as an example to other women, an apparently unsympathetic but powerful lesson in the necessity of suppressing passion and desire. Having committed adultery and repented of it, Isabel dies and is buried in a nameless grave. In the course of the novel Wood uses her heroine’s enforced separation from her children to rehearse an idealization of motherhood that is

both predictable and conventional. But Wood's representation of her heroine is also potentially subversive. It suggests the liberating force of fiction to act out the breaking of cultural taboos that remained binding for herself and her readers. Not only does Wood encourage her female audience to indulge in fantasies of persecution (as Ann Cvetkovich has noted, 44), but she also exposes the kinds of negotiations that any young, penniless but marriageable woman might be expected to undertake in order to meet society's expectations. Specifically Wood portrays Isabel as a victim of the homosocial world of English society. She marries Carlyle, a man she does not love but a man with money, and Wood emphasizes the psychological costs involved. Beyond minor roles for Barbara Hare (Isabel's hated rival), Joyce (Isabel's maid and confidante) and Aphrodite Hallijohn (a lower-class "kept" woman, whose name echoes the commodification of love and marriage that leads to Isabel's downfall), Isabel is depicted as alone in a world of men. These men, most notably her husband, Carlyle, and her aristocratic seducer, Francis Levison, use Isabel as the ground on which their battles are enacted. Displaying more complexity than she has been given credit for, Wood implies that Isabel's performance, which is to say the performance of "woman", is interlocked with this preening display of masculine identity. To quote Luce Irigaray, in *East Lynne*, women act as fetish objects, "inasmuch as in exchanges they are the manifestation and the circulation of a power of the Phallus, establishing relationships of men with each other" (183). What is disconcerting about Wood's novel is not so much that it is sexually charged, but rather that it shows in a particularly unsettling way how received expectations of the woman work via the exchange of the sign that is "woman" to serve the imperatives of masculine identity.

Although she was forever associated with her early hit, Wood proved not be the firework that critics assumed would quickly burn out. By the mid 1860s, "Mrs Henry Wood" was everywhere—on Mudie's shelves, on the covers of periodicals, on the spines of the cheap reprints, and on the bill-boards and press announcements advertising all of these. In the decade following the publication of *East Lynne*, she published another twenty novels, often working on two at a time, beginning with *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* (1863), *Verner's Pride* (1863), *The Foggy Night at Offord* (1863), *William Allair* (1863), *Trevlyn Hold* (1864), *Lord Oakburn's Daughters* (1864), and *Elster's Folly* (1866), all produced at breakneck speed. To read these post-*East Lynne* novels—"expurgated versions of the Newgate Calendar, toned down so as not to offend the most delicate propriety", as *The Reader* put it (22 Oct 1864, 505)—is to watch a novelist carried along by her own momentum. So insidious were Wood's stories that many hostile critics labelled her (rather than Collins) "the originator and chief of the sensation school of English novelists" (*Athenaeum*, 1 Oct 1864, 428). The

same formula was used over and over again but to Wood's army of readers this did not seem to matter. As Geraldine Jewsbury noted, Wood's novels had

. . . a quality that oversees a multitude of sins. Their *readableness* is recognized by those who are most alive to their faults . . . and to the undiscerning and not fastidious people who form the majority of readers they are sources of keen excitement.

(*Athenaeum*, 1 Jul 1865, 12)

In acknowledging the popularity of Wood's novels Jewsbury and her contemporaries appreciated (as twentieth-century critics have not) the distinctiveness of Wood's fusion of decorum and daring—the fact that, beneath a veil of rigid conventionality, Wood allows her readers to glimpse the gaps within contemporary ideology. She implies things readers would rather not hear about middle-class life even as she embraces the common panaceas of religion and resignation. It is, of course, largely owing to Wood's seeming to try (as she does in *East Lynne*) to persuade her readers of the value of self-sacrifice that she has fared so badly among those critics attempting to read in her books a muted message of revolt against female submission.

Wood's construction of an acceptable writing self often seems to reflect the culture of her day, but the simple account of a passive female voice is far from adequate as an interpretation of her novels. For example, in *East Lynne*, Wood's apparent endorsement of her victimized heroine's suffering doesn't prevent the reader from weeping at her self-sacrifice and cursing the novel's male characters for their unthinking selfishness and complacency. Wood can also work from the other end of the melodramatic spectrum, as in *St Martin's Eve* (1866), where she depicts a seemingly malevolent villainess. When Charlotte St John leaves her five year old stepson to burn alive in a locked room ("a dark mass smouldering on the floor at the far end of the room . . . no trace of him, save that shapeless heap from which the spirit had thrown!", 151) before disappearing into the ghostly mansion's maze of darkened passages, the narrator declares in ringing tones of disapproval that she is both insane and wicked. Yet Wood was fond of secret mansions and underground passageways and her characters invariably have some kind of subterranean existence. The novel is grounded in the form of the female Gothic, with its nightmare visions of the home, a form which Tamar Heller has suggested as characteristic of sensation fiction by women (6). Wood uses the female Gothic's tropes of secrecy and transgression. She draws too, on what Heller describes as the form's associations with "what is 'other', subversive, and marginal, and thus the site of ambivalence" (9), to construct a story about female criminality and victimization, but one which, like *East Lynne*, is located in a historical reality that has particular implications for women. On the one hand, the novel's narrator views Charlotte's behaviour as a product of inherited insanity and naturally unstable femininity (Wood gives Charlotte a capacity for criminal cunning which is denounced as feminine and

ultimately monstrous). On the other hand, Charlotte's insanity can be seen as the behaviour of a woman who is trapped by her economic dependency and caught up in the snares of primogeniture which do not acknowledge her claims or those of her own child. Charlotte's actions may be evil, but she is also simply displaying the capacity for maternal love judged acceptably feminine in her society. And, as Wood makes clear, it is the sheer strength of her impulses and her concern for her own child's advancement which make her dangerous. The novel confirms Wood as an important commentator on nineteenth-century gender politics, engaged in a project which is feminist in effect if not intent: that of highlighting the patriarchal and legal obstacles to women's self-expression. Presenting her heroine as pitiful ("this poor young woman", 144) and dangerous ("her mind a every chaos of rebellious tumult", 144), a figure of rage without power to alleviate her suffering or to express it in terms which make sense to society, Wood encapsulates much of what feminist critics might say about the suppression of women's speech and desires.

Despite her seeming conventionality, Wood's novels are important examples of the way in which women writers used their novels explicitly or implicitly to expose the dark side of women's lives. While contemporary reviewers justifiably questioned the plausibility of her plots—a reviewer of *St. Martin's Eve* sneered that the story was reminiscent of the work of those novelists "who used to employ ghosts and revengeful Italians and secret passages and all the rest of it, to produce impossible or exaggerated results" (*Spectator*, 3 Feb 1866, 135)—this same implausibility is meaningful. As Nancy K. Miller has suggested, works of fiction by women which fall short of verisimilitude and depend on unrealistic narrative turns may "manifest an extravagant wish for the story that would turn out differently" (cited in Sinfield, 25). That is, they suggest rebellion against the constraints of the respectable plot. In her own correspondence Ellen Wood justified extremity and her comments tally with those of Miller. In a letter to Richard Bentley she explained that her success lay in her power of providing "distraction to take our thoughts for a time away" from "the many, many cares and perfidies of life" (14 Nov 1881, L102, BL). In her novels transgressive, excessive female figures are condemned (either to death or, as in Charlotte St John's case, to imprisonment in an asylum) but they are also manifestations of fantasies of escape from gender roles.

Although I would not like to claim for Wood's novels too weighty a part in the revisionist project, which consists in discovering feminist forebears in unexpected places, there is no reason to ignore her entirely. It is equally insufficient to accept the rigidity with which a sub-generic form like the sensation novel has been applied as a container for her work, and which for the most part has been used to find her novels less accomplished than those of male

counterparts like Collins. Nineteenth-century reviewers found it rather more difficult to contain Wood in a single critical category. They often located Wood alongside Dinah Mulock Craik, one of the women writers Elaine Showalter dubs a “‘feminine’ novelist” (61). Wood was even occasionally compared with George Eliot. In 1862, *The Morning Post* was enraptured with *Mrs Halliburton’s Troubles*, Wood’s story of a widow’s struggle against poverty and dishonest relatives in a small market town, suggesting that it ranked with *Adam Bede* in its “boldness, originality and social scrutiny” (cited in “Criticisms of the Press”, *Verner’s Pride*, 1895, ii). The *Literary Gazette* was put in mind “of our old and lamented favourite, Maria Edgeworth” (3 Jan 1863, 8). This connection was made by comparing Edgeworth’s tendency to stress woman’s particular talents in advancing social and moral development, and Wood’s own emphasis on Christian fortitude and the middle-class Mrs Halliburton’s beneficent power over the hearts and minds of her successful sons. The novel is indicative of the way in which Wood could move out of the sensation category with apparent ease. *The Channings* (1862), which she described as of “a very different class of story from *East Lynne*” (13 Jan 1862, L17, UI), is a realist study of endurance and self-sacrifice among a middle-class family, set in the cathedral city of Helstonleigh (a version of Anthony Trollope’s Barchester). Unusually for Wood, the worst crime committed in this story is petty theft and the most sensational scenes are those inspired by a schoolboy dressed as a ghost. Yet the novel was another best seller: Mudie’s alone took 1,000 copies, and by 1895, sales had reached 140,000, ranking the novel alongside Charlotte Yonge’s decorous, influential and spiritually uplifting *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1855). These domestic novels were usually seen as extensions or expressions of Wood’s femininity; they also suggest that her textual and physical appearance as a sweetly conventional lady novelist were not merely an affectation. Wood thus did not always write books exposing the myths of domesticity, masculine superiority, or the degradation of society marriages, and instead her novels often function as explicit restatements of her conservative Anglican beliefs.

Wood was not a literary rebel and her fiction was found acceptable by the proprietors of the circulating libraries and their bourgeois readers, but, for some nineteenth-century readers and critics, the significance of Mrs Henry Wood went far beyond that of a “good” woman. For many exponents of high culture she was cast as a vulgar figure, commercial in her aims, a symptom of decline in standards of reading and literary taste. The fastidious *Saturday Review*, labelled her “third rate” (18 Feb 1865, 203) and cited her success as disturbing evidence that there were “apparently no bounds to the insipidity, carelessness, and folly which the public is willing to tolerate, and for which, therefore, publishers are willing to pay” (13 Apr 1867, 475). Making this declaration when readers well

above the servant class were still happily reading Wood—including Harriet Martineau, Leo Tolstoy, Lord Lyttleton, Queen Victoria—papers like the *Saturday*, and the *Athenaeum* attacked the pollution of contemporary culture that Wood's success seemed to symbolize. The very qualities that Wood's voracious readers were drawn to—sentimentalism, emphasis on sin and suffering, melodramatic emotionalism—were dismissed as clap-trap. At the same time, the novels were proclaimed the reading matter of the half-educated, low-brows who are also, reviewers implied, low on the socio-economic scale. *The Saturday Review* found it

impossible that persons of keen perceptions can read her books with pleasure. She grates too much on the refinement which is the second nature of educated people; and to read Mrs Henry Wood is equivalent of listening to the setting of a saw, or plunging one's hands into a bed of stinging-nettles.

(*Saturday Review*, 2 Nov 1872, 577).

It became increasingly commonplace to sneer that Wood and her readers were semi-literate. *The Academy* pictured Mrs Henry Wood as a real-life Mrs Squeers (21 Feb 1885, 265), while the *Saturday* imagined the authoress as the “typical Mrs Brown”, whose novels in their “coarse garrulity” were

especially fitted for and addressed to servant maids, both for the side hints and exhortations she gives to that much-enduring and much inflicting class, and for the pleasure and gossip with which she repeats their gossip and their whole *manière d'être*.

(*Saturday Review*, 22 Oct 1870, 540).

A similar class animus is apparent in the *Athenaeum*'s jibe that “her diction and her point of view remind us very much of the housekeeper's room” (24 Jul 1875, 119). Others questioned Wood's ability to produce so many of these books—“coarse, hasty and ill-considered wares” as the *Saturday Review* termed them (22 Oct 1870, 539). Sometimes Wood's prolific output was seen as a case of misused talent; more often it was viewed as a cash-motivated approach to novel-writing and a rejection of aesthetic seriousness. In 1864, the *Saturday* painted a picture of Wood the hack, scribbling away in the family sitting-room, producing ephemeral articles for family magazines. “Emboldened by her success” with *East Lynne*, she had “gone on ever since at the rate of a novel every three months, each successive production weaker and more carelessly written than its predecessor” (16 Jan 1864, 83).

Reading these comments, it is hard to imagine commentary farther removed from the pieties of Charles Wood's account of his mother's career. Throughout the *Memorials* the devoted son strives to convince readers that while money, ambition, or frustration might characterize the adulterous, murderous heroines of *East Lynne* and *St Martin's Eve*, such qualities were singularly absent in Ellen Wood the woman.

Unable to sit up unaided she wrote in a reclining chair and never accepted anything it would be a strain to perform . . . When writing became a serious occupation, her

strength did not admit of anything else. Even after a quiet evening with friends she occasionally suffered from nervous exhaustion that almost felt like death itself. At such times she could only lie back in her chair, her eyes closed, a soft flush upon her face, until rest restored her . . .

(Wood, *Memorials*, 36)

Women writers made gains during the nineteenth century but their bids for professional recognition were often in collision with the preferred mode of womanhood: domesticity. The invalidism and reclusiveness emphasized in Charles Wood's description can be seen as the physical manifestation of a necessary and appropriate withdrawal from the world; the slow fade at the end suggests his mother's serenity and resignation. Written by a man who witnessed the development of his mother's career at first hand, later acting as her agent and personal assistant, the *Memorials* are most striking for the way in which they downplay Wood's role as a professional author in favour of her role as wife, mother and household manager. As noted earlier, Mrs Wood's life thus becomes a model of self-realization through self-renunciation. Charles Wood emphasizes that even when composing her novels his mother never neglected even the most mundane household duties. Her home is a haven of morality from the rapacity of the outside world, a sanctuary—and Charles Wood uses specifically Christian language—guarded by a real-life angel in the house. In fact, as we have seen, Ellen Wood's life was characterized as much by her subversion of these Victorian clichés as by her fulfillment of them. She did work within an ethic of domesticity, shunning publicity, but seen with the benefit of a century's hindsight, she also represents the talent well employed—through commitment to a career, to professionalism, and to financial independence.

Given her long history with Richard Bentley and Son and her frequent work for other major publishers, including Bradbury and Evans, the Tinsleys, and Norman Macleod, Wood should be a prime subject for scholars interested in the business of authorship and publishing. She also had close connections with a diverse collection of magazines including, *Temple Bar*, *The New Monthly Magazine*, *The Quiver*, *Tinsley's Magazine*, *Good Words*, *All the Year Round*, and *Once a Week*. Wood's extensive correspondence also suggests, as nothing else does, that she was far from being diffident and out of the world, as her son suggests. There we see her carefully arranging the marketing of her work in as many different forms as possible (serialization, books in one, two and three volumes, anthologies), rarely parting with a copyright, driving her publishers down to a third or even a quarter share of profits. Her letters to Richard and George Bentley, which cover the period from the 1850s to the 1880s, reveal a meticulous concern with the financial minutiae of contracts. They show that Wood was a regular and demanding visitor to the offices in New Burlington Street, collecting her substantial advances and royalties (preferably in cash) with

determined regularity. “It will I believe be in the morning . . . that I should call”, she once wrote to Richard Bentley, “early” (25 Sep 1861, L14, UI). Wood’s correspondence suggests, too, the keen awareness of her power as a circulating library favourite—what George Bentley cautiously referred to as a “strong confidence” in her own work . . . ” (30 Jul 1863, L83, BL). Wood’s letters also reveal that she spent a good deal of her time playing rival publishers off against one another. In 1866 George Bentley complained bitterly to Florence Marryat of Wood’s defecting to Tinsley’s “after we had given her . . . a bonus of £200” (15 Aug 1866, L78, BL). To Bentley this smacked of disloyalty and ruthless opportunism, but Sarah Tytler interpreted it more charitably as Wood’s determination “not to find herself in the cold when her opportunities came to an end.” (320). Wood’s pride in her hard work and success and was of practical as well as psychological importance: she had long assumed the role of family breadwinner, and her self-fashioned persona and clamorous readers represented her ticket to economic security.

I began by suggesting that we should recognize the existence of more than one Mrs Henry Wood and see her multi-faceted image not as problem but as a series of entry points into Victorian literary culture. On the one hand, Wood publicly endorsed the Victorian ideal of asexual domesticity. On the other, she did not spend all her time in household management and her life ran counter to the ideal which she advocated. I want to suggest that these multiple Mrs Henry Woods often appear simultaneously because Wood is capable of gesturing to both spheres at once. An important example of this occurs in 1867 when she takes on her most ambitious project: the editorship of the monthly magazine, *The Argosy*. At that point, *The Argosy* was still reeling from the outcry provoked by its serialization of Charles Reade’s controversial *Griffin Gaunt* (1865-6) which many readers had judged obscene. For the magazine’s strait-laced owner, Alexander Strahan, Wood’s respectability, her popularity, her ability to write for different markets, and her reputation as the most wholesome of the sensation novelists made her a suitable editor with whom to entrust *The Argosy*’s future.

Under Wood’s ownership *The Argosy* achieved an average monthly circulation of 20,000, far in excess of that of its main rival, Mary Braddon’s *Belgravia*. Addressed to the family circle, *The Argosy* was determinedly non-controversial and non-political in its outlook. In 1869, *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* complained that *The Argosy* was “by no means as racy in its literary cargo than it formerly was, since it has had more ‘wood’ piled upon it, its freight has been heavier than is either ornamental or pleasing” (20 Nov 1869, 6). By this time Wood’s once shocking books and ideas had become more assimilated into the suburban world of decency and morality. The tone of her serial novels for the magazine, notably *Anne Hereford* (1868) and *Roland Yorke* (1869), provide a

stark contrast to that found in bolder women's periodicals—Bessie Parkes's *Englishwoman's Journal*, for example, or *The Rose, Shamrock and Thistle*, published by the all-woman Caledonian Press. In the gaps between Wood's serials, *The Argosy* relied heavily on a core of regular contributors—Hesba Stratton, Julia Kavanagh, Alice King and Isabella Fyvie Mayo, a protégé of Anna Maria Hall—publishing articles on female role models from history, or on education and continental travel, discursive pieces which confirmed the middle-class's satisfaction with its own prosperity and the conventional roles assigned to its women. According to Mayo, Wood was a sympathetic, selfless and hard-working editor whose own ill-health gave her “ready comprehension of difficult and trying circumstances” (143). The Victorians valued the bourgeois work ethic as well as that of true womanhood, so Mayo's descriptions of the delicate Mrs Wood labouring dutifully over the submissions fitted both plots at once.

Recently, Phyllis Grosskurth has suggested that “[o]ne of the healthy signs in the development of biography has been the resurrection of otherwise neglected figures” (149). Wood's life and career should make her a prime candidate, with its different segments, its narrative of a promising marriage ending in disillusionment, with its themes of self-reliant struggle against genteel poverty, of interaction between domestic and professional activities. Yet to return Ellen Wood to her rightful place in literary history is not to stabilize her. She remains inherently contradictory. Like a holograph shifting under our gaze, she is at once heroic wife and mother, scandalous sensationalist, and harbinger of the commercial degradation of art. Although she apparently refuses to comply with any of the tropes of successive waves of feminist historiography, it is difficult to dispute that she confounded expectations about women of her time(s), challenging her gender and class by being the first woman in her genteel family to earn her own living. Her work had a cross-class appeal and, although she is now condemned as conservative, one of the attractions of her writing is its polyphony, and thus its potential to resist fixed readings. Wood's novels, which struck such a deep chord with Victorian readers, seem to be worthy of at least partial rescue and revaluation. Almost the only recent critical attention which Wood has received is that directed at *East Lynne*. Yet other works merit attention, not only as examples of popular fiction but as cultural documents that engage mid-Victorian ideas on gender, morality and the family. The trademark “Mrs Henry Wood” may not be interchangeable with “Wilkie Collins”, “Anthony Trollope” or “George Eliot” but the four participate equally in cultural currents which we will perceive in only a distorted way as long as Wood continues to be banished from cultural memory. While Collins's welcome critical rehabilitation continues, that of his nearest rival is long overdue.

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Of the Violence of the Working Woman: Collins and Discourses on Criminality, 1860-1880

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Debates on the violent impulses of women in the 1860s and 1870s drew on and developed key ideas from discussions of female criminality current at mid-century, seeking to characterize the nature of women who deviated from the norms of Victorian femininity. The prevailing view that female criminals were more depraved than their male counterparts—that “a bad man . . . is not so vile as a bad woman”—contributed to widespread beliefs that they were “irreclaimable” creatures ruled by their “wild”, animal natures (Owen, 152, 156). However, as psychiatrists, prison officers and female philanthropists and visitors began to involve themselves in the plight of criminal women, a more balanced and sympathetic view of their nature emerged, one which took account of factors such as class inequities, lack of education and limited employment opportunities,¹ and attempted to understand, rather than simply vilify, offenders. Violent women on trial in the courts generated debates on the cause of the uncontrollable impulses which prompted them to attack men or employers, as these could be attributed to mental disorders or seen as the outcome of women’s fury about the abuse they suffered.

In this article I will examine various interpretations of the violent working woman in both the press and the crime fiction of Wilkie Collins, whose novels often interrogated current definitions and explanations of the criminal nature, particularly their class and gender implications. At the beginning of a gradual shift from a “moralizing stance to psychological interpretations of the supposedly defective nature of criminal women” (Zedner, 43), both crime reports and popular fiction examined the relation between women’s passions and their violence, questioning newly-developed theories about homicidal mania and “frantic” behaviour and considering the links between abuse, social conditions for women workers and women’s resolution to kill.

¹ See, for example, the views of Susanna Meredith, a prison visitor, who links crime to “want of proper discipline” (236), and Owen’s more constructive comments about the lack of training and education available to poor women (153).

Classifying the female criminal in the press

Assumptions made about the female criminal in the press drew on well-worn stereotypes of the bad woman, emphasizing her lack of control over her sexuality, her unfeminine qualities and her low social position. M.E. Owen described her as “evil” and “unchaste”, prey to lying, drunkenness and slovenliness (153-5). It was generally accepted that “women, once bad, are utterly hopeless” (Martineau, 364). According to the testimony of a woman worker in an Irish reformatory, they proved “more difficult to reclaim than men” and in need of “more surveillance” and “a stronger effort of self-control, than is usually requisite with men” (cited in Martineau, 367). In her discussions of the oppositions between criminality and the virtuous feminine ideal, Lucia Zedner makes the key point that all criminal women came to be seen as sexually deviant, “so that assessment of sexual conduct was used to measure the depth of their criminality” (32).

However, accounts of bad women were tempered by the growing recognition that economic deprivation clearly motivated many female offenders; it was noted that the majority were “from the lower class of domestic servants downwards” (Owen, 153). As Judith Knelman has argued (19, 273), after mid-century murderesses were “better understood as victims of harsh circumstances” who sought “escape or control”. Knelman’s work is typical of developments in feminist criminology which explain female crime in terms of women’s victimization in society. Frances Heidensohn has suggested that we should approach female criminals “in the context of the structure of conformity and constraint” which governs their lives, though she goes on to warn of the dangers of simplification: “if there were a simple equation that ‘poverty and powerlessness equals criminality’ girls and women would be leaders in crime waves” (Heidensohn, 192, 195). Nonetheless, the more advanced views of philanthropists, feminists and criminologists in the 1870s and 1880s moved further away from the idea of crime as a manifestation of female depravity towards an acknowledgement of the links between criminal tendencies and women’s “political powerlessness” (Zedner, 76). Luke Owen Pike, in his *History of Crime in England* (1876), claimed that “the more active and energetic women were, the more apt they were to end up as criminals” (cited in Morris, 52), whereas articles in feminist journals about “our unhappy sisters sunk in crime” helped to strengthen perceptions of criminal women as “somewhat pathetic victims of the social structure, of personal circumstance, or of men’s brutality” (Zedner, 74). Links between criminality and woman’s nature were then being contested around the 1870s as the political disability of women became increasingly prominent in the press, though the stereotype of the unchaste and evil female offender still remained in circulation.

Medical classification of criminals intensified from mid-century onwards as the new sciences of psychology and psychiatry opened up alternative frameworks for interpreting illegal acts, particularly those committed by women. Changes in the law reflected the increased attention paid to the supposed insanity of violent offenders. In 1860, in response to overcrowding in asylums and concern about the insanity plea in criminal trials, under the Criminal Lunatics Asylum Act Broadmoor was established as an institution for offenders pronounced insane, many of whom were convicted murderers (Smith, 23-4). After 1865, it became compulsory for prison inmates to undergo medical inspections, which revealed that large numbers of prisoners did appear to be “mentally defective” or insane (Zedner, 84). According to statistics relating to criminal trials 1860-9, out of the 686 people committed for trial, 63 were acquitted as insane and 36 found or declared to be insane, around 15% of all committed (*The Times*, 31 Mar 1871, 4). Theories about the criminal impulse were developed in response to such findings. Harriet Martineau cited the opinion of a Newgate Ordinary that some criminals committed violence under “some sudden impulse or some single overwhelming temptation” (Martineau, 341), recalling medical research earlier in the century by alienists such as Esquirol and Prichard into the behaviour of homicidal maniacs, where the mind is affected by “partial” insanity (Smith, 37, 62). Legal and medical opinion was divided on this subject, as illustrated in an article in the *Saturday Review* considering the medical evidence on the mental states of three men recently convicted of murder. The medical confirmation of “an irresistible tendency to kill, founded on a disease of the brain” was believed to be “dangerous” by one presiding judge, leading the writer to conclude that “homicidal mania is only a morbid desire for blood” and “many so-called mental disorders are, in fact, only moral depravity” (“Homicidal Mania and Moral Insanity”, *Saturday Review*, 21 Mar 1863, 371-2). Despite the conservative tone of this response, it was apparent that the drive to classify violence in terms of depravity was being challenged by new theories of mental disorder, which provided alternative readings of impulsive acts.

Typically, theories of mental disorder seemed to fit more comfortably into discussions of female than male criminality, given the associations between femininity and insanity current at this time. Eliza Orme noted that women’s prisons were full of “poor creatures who are diseased and often insane” (791), while Mary Carpenter, a prison officer who conducted a study of prison inmates entitled *Our Convicts* (1864), claimed that “[women’s] offences are of a different character, and depend very much on impulse” (cited in Martineau, 364). Yet other female writers were not so sympathetic; whilst accepting that criminals were more likely to suffer from “hysteria, epilepsy and insanity” in

which they “are unable to resist the power of a force, that usurps the direction of their functions,” Susanna Meredith felt that attributing crime to some “extraneous influence” was simply a way of denying guilt and responsibility (Meredith, 217, 223). However, the work of Henry Maudsley, the influential alienist and psychiatrist, lent scientific weight to claims that women were more liable to experience such criminal impulses; in *Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1867) Maudsley considered the case of a mother’s sudden impulsive attempt to kill her daughter in terms of her “unconscious mental life” (cited in Smith, 52). In 1874 he linked irresistible criminal impulses, including violence, to “the influence of the derangement of their special bodily functions” on women, reinforcing the view of women as ruled by their menstrual cycles (cited in Zedner, 87). Theories about loss of control and unconscious activity lent force to prevalent views of woman’s nature and empirical work on female convicts, often subject to “wilful violence and passion”, leading Mary Carpenter to conclude that “the restless excitable nature of these women requires a vent in something” in order to “calm their spirits” (cited in Martineau, 365). Developments in psychiatry then tended to refocus attention on the mental states of female offenders, implying that they were not depraved but passionate, excitable and disturbed.

Despite these developments, stereotypes of violent women as passionate and lacking in control were perpetuated in the crime reports and transcripts of trials included in the daily press, which often reinforced the perception of the female criminal as sexually deviant. Women brought to trial for violence against men or adults excited curiosity, desire, revulsion and sometimes sympathy, depending on the details about their sexualities, appearances and criminal behaviour included in the press. Although the general view suggested that “aggressive, sociopathic women” did not deserve tolerance or pity, according to Knelman (229), “by mid-century the press had become adept at exploiting public interest in the criminal *because she was a woman*.”² Knelman goes on to examine the disparity between the everyday drabness of murder and the image of the murderess, which acquired a sexual frisson after the celebrated trials of such glamorous criminals as Maria Manning, who in 1849 was hanged with her husband for murdering their lodger.³

² Knelman notes that this was partly because few women hanged for murder at this time: in the period 1861-70 only 7 out of the 124 people hanged for this offence were women.

³ See the discussion in Knelman, 14. Female violence was also likely to be associated with “foreignness” at this time; both Manning and Marguerite Diblanc, a cook who murdered her employer in 1871, were Belgian and accounts of French women murdering their husbands in “crimes of passion” appeared in the English press. See, for example, the reports of a French woman who stabbed and mutilated her husband and of the group of French women who had poisoned their husbands, respectively in *The Times*, 16 Jul 1868, 10, and 11 Dec 1868, 5.

Sexually dominant women and those unafraid to voice their hatred of men formed a significant subsection of violent women. Priscilla Biggadike, hanged in 1868 for the murder of her husband, had proclaimed that she “couldn’t abide” him and was vilified for the “obdurate” tone she maintained after her conviction (*The Times*, 12 Dec 1868, 11, and 28 Dec 1868, 10). Constant allusions were made to the rampant sexuality of Ellen Kittel, tried for the murder of her husband’s former wife in 1872: she was pregnant during her trial due to her “intense” attachment to her husband and the “criminal intercourse” they had enjoyed and she is quoted as having said of him, “That’s the man I want, and that’s the man I’ll have,” even if it meant poisoning her rival (*The Times*, 16 Jul 1872, 11). Many of the women tried for assault, murder or manslaughter had become involved in quarrels with husbands or lovers or were responding to violent or verbal provocation. When their crimes appeared particularly unfeminine, due to the method of killing or related behaviour, they were given harsher sentences: Ann Lane was sentenced to twelve years’ penal servitude for stabbing her lover after a drunken quarrel and Diblanc nearly executed because her use of a mallet to bludgeon her mistress was “certainly more suggestive of the man than the woman” (*The Times*, 7 Dec 1871, 11, and 12 Apr 1872, 8).

In the sample of cases I examined in *The Times* between 1867 and 1872, the word insanity was barely mentioned, though the verdict of “temporary insanity” was frequently used in cases of women indicted for the deaths of children. Reflecting changing perceptions of women’s mental states, the reports tended instead to highlight women’s excitable, passionate natures and their subjection to impulses beyond their control. In the case of Mary Sadler, indicted for feloniously wounding her lover in 1871, her epilepsy, “violent paroxysms of rage” and “hysterical attacks” are confirmed by a doctor, who claims that she became “very much excited, partly . . . from stimulants and partly from mental emotion.” Although her sexually dominant personality is linked to her violence, the judge still debated her degree of control, putting forward the notion that the act might have been “committed under circumstances of such great excitement that the mind had no time to form any intention at all.” She was ultimately found guilty of unlawful wounding, because the evidence suggested that “the state of her mind was such that she could not control herself in the use of the weapon” (*The Times*, 18 Aug 1871, 9). In a similar case in which the woman’s violence did result in the death of her partner, the judge used the same argument to stress Flora Davy’s guilt, claiming that “there was something like provocation on the part of the deceased, and that it was under the influence of excited feelings that this unhappy event occurred” (*The Times*, 17 Jul 1871, 12). Although she was

proved to have stabbed Frederick Moon impulsively during a quarrel, this impulse was not linked to a specific mental disorder but to the passionate nature of women, as the prosecuting counsel reiterated phrases such as “a violent fit of passion” and “a frenzy of passion”. The prosecutor went on to imply that a woman who picked up a knife must by definition be a “woman of violent passions” and asked: “What a temper and state of mind did that exhibit?” Although Flora claimed that her lover was also behaving violently, her testimony was seen as irrelevant. In the Diblanc trial, the cook was ultimately recommended to mercy and her sentence commuted, presumably because it was felt that her attack on her mistress, “the result of sudden and irresistible impulse”, had been provoked by Madame Riel’s insults and refusal to pay her servant (“The Park-Lane Murder”, *The Times*, 22 Jun 1872, 9).

Issues about provocation, women’s passions and the violent impulses experienced in quarrels sparked off a debate about the distinctions between murder and manslaughter, relating to the very different sentences women might receive if premeditation could be disproved. One article asked, “is it murder rather than manslaughter if it happens in a quarrel?” and went on to caution “we hope it will not be hastily assumed that murderers who have acted under the impulse of sudden and violent passion have a claim to mercy” (*The Times*, 15 Jun 1872, 9). Given the equation of impulses and violent passions with violent women, this article appears to be articulating the fear that murderous women are receiving lighter sentences because of new medical theories and hence not being sufficiently punished and controlled. Whereas the medicalization of women’s fury sometimes went in their favour, it could also condemn them for responding spontaneously to provocation, particularly if it was implied that their retaliatory violence rendered them unfeminine.

However, as details of domestic abuse were more widely publicized from the late 1860s onwards, particularly by the feminist campaigner Frances Power Cobbe, crime reports began to acknowledge the extent of the provocation some women received prior to their violent acts. Morris has highlighted the violent tendencies of abused women in this period, noting that:

several individual cases publicized in the press aroused enormous public sympathy for the accused woman and corresponding outrage at the abuse which had precipitated the murder . . . After mid-century cases in which women murdered abusive husbands were not always taken to trial.

(Morris, 36-7)

Women’s disturbed mental states could then be seen as products of abuse; in the trial of Sarah Delaney for murdering her lover, it was recorded that she stabbed him “while under excitement, consequent on a blow inflicted upon her by the deceased” (*The Times*, 29 Apr 1871, 5).

Many other cases of violence against men include details of violence or verbal abuse by men. An unrepentant servant remanded for attempted murder in 1871 spoke out in court to the effect that “she was not to blame, that her husband treated her most cruelly, and that what she had done was only in self-defence,” a rare instance of a woman demanding that her abuse be recognized and taken into account (*The Times*, 13 Dec 1871, 9). In the Diblanc case and another involving an attempt by a younger servant to poison her employers, the unreasonable and offensive behaviour of employers is cited as a contributory factor, particularly the mistress’s powerful threat that she will dismiss servants without a character or pay if they do not obey her commands (*The Times*, 10 Aug 1871, 11). Diblanc’s lawyer dwelt on the “offensive” names her mistress used in the quarrel, claiming “any respectable girl would have felt outraged at such a suggestion, especially susceptible as she would be from the very consciousness of her respectability” (“The Park-Lane Murder”, *The Times*, 14 Jun 1872, 10). What is perhaps more significant is that judges and defence lawyers were beginning to emphasize the stories of abuse behind the convictions, as men’s immoral conduct was no longer unspoken. Men who had entered into illicit unions were reminded of the greater dangers that they posed for women, and their drunkenness frowned upon. Narratives which dwelt on the emotional, passionate and angry nature of women were then partially grounded in the details of their abuse at the hands of husbands, lovers and employers, so that violence could be categorized as an understandable response to allegations about sexual conduct, slurs on respectability, reminders of women’s financial dependency and continued domestic violence.

However, unlike their counterparts in France, where women were rarely seen as responsible for crimes of passion against their partners, “English judges and juries, recoiling at the havoc wreaked by furious women, saw to it that they suffered for the indulgence of their passions” (Knelman, 87). The oppression of working-class women had not yet been fully considered as one of the root causes of their passionate impulses, nor were their mental disorders always being recognized, as assumptions about sexually deviant women were still influential in the courts and in the press.

Wilkie Collins’s Violent Women: Abused or Disturbed?

According to Virginia Morris (107), “Collins . . . infuriated the critics by assailing the Victorian assumption that depravity was a primary cause of women’s criminality,” stressing the “normalcy” of the female criminal and downplaying the links between women’s sexual desires and their decision to kill. Arguably, in many of his accounts of women’s violence and the motives

underlying it, often narrated by the women themselves, he considered what it means to explain crime as a response to abuse or as a result of mental disorder. He also sustained an ongoing interest in female servants whose dependency led them to cross the border between crime and respectability, drawing on fears about the class antagonism explored in the Diblanc case. As Anthea Trodd has argued, servants often played “highly visible and sinister roles” in Victorian crime plots, in particular those female servants whose “distraught appearance and unguarded utterances pose a threat of exposure” to the middle-class household (Trodd, 46, 54). Many of Collins’s novels include servant narratives and testimonies, which map out the alienation of the servant within the household, showing how their respectability is governed by a set of rigidly-defined rules. “Servants were showered with advice, abuse and admonitions,” claims Frank E. Huggett (53). They had “few rights” (Huggett, 113), and were generally regarded as criminal and unchaste. Knelman has located the homicidal inclinations of servants in their position as “abused” individuals, fighting back against oppressors; Marguerite Diblanc is only one example of a female servant who used violence to challenge her mistress’s authority (Knelman, 181).⁴ In the texts that I will consider below, *Man and Wife* (1870), the short story “Mr Policeman and the Cook” (1880),⁵ and *The Legacy of Cain* (1888), Collins focuses on female servants and working women, whose violence is rooted in their position as abused victims but who also ambiguously display the signs of mental disorder. Working women might commit murder because their dependence on employers made them feel “powerless to change the system” (Huggett, 158-59), but the fury which led to their criminal impulses did not correspond in a simple way to their sense of powerlessness.

Both *Man and Wife* and “Mr Policeman and the Cook” represent the respectability of servants as a cover for their violence. Servants were dependent on the goodwill of their mistresses for their characters, without which they would find it “virtually impossible to get another situation” (Huggett, 113). Both Priscilla Thurlby in the short story and Hester Dethridge in the novel are described as “trustworthy” servants; Priscilla is proclaimed to be a “good girl” quite fit for “any respectable employment” by the parson who writes her character (Collins, *The Dream-Woman*, 208), whilst Hester is seen as “eminently respectable”, even “one of the best cooks in England” (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 113). However, the latter is particularly valued because she has

⁴ Knelman also discusses the trials of Hannah Dobbs in 1877 and Kate Webster in 1879, who were both found guilty of murdering their mistresses.

⁵ The story was originally published under the title “Who Killed Zebedee?” on 24 Dec 1880 in the *Bolton Weekly Journal* and other weekly newspapers, syndicated by Tillotsons of Bolton, as well as in *The Spirit of the Times* (New York) on 25 Dec 1880, but was retitled “Mr Policeman and the Cook” when reprinted in *Little Novels* in 1887.

suffered loss of speech after an assault by her husband; Patrick Lundie's comment, "A woman who *can't* talk, and a woman who *can* cook—is simply a woman who has arrived at absolute perfection" (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 271), ominously equates women's silence and submission with the ideal fulfilment of a servant's duties. Both wives and servants are described throughout the novel as behaving in a "mechanical" manner, slavishly adhering to men's rules and the "lifetime of personal subordination" which was perceived to be their lot (Davidoff, 409). The instability of the cook's respectability is underlined when Hester is accused of insolence by her mistress for disobeying orders and threatened with dismissal without a character. Geoffrey Delamayn also assumes that she is only "some crazed old servant . . . kept, out of charity, now" (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 241). It is implied that the "insolence" of servants who live "on the brink of dismissal" and must constantly kowtow to their employers might develop into acts of violence: Hester's defiance of her mistress aligns her with criminals such as Marguerite Diblanc, and is bound up with her antagonism towards Geoffrey, who also gives her orders. The power which he is able to exert over her after reading her confession is also the power of the employer: she expresses "the same lifeless submission to him, the same mute horror of him," which an oppressed servant might feel and is said to behave "like a machine waiting to be set in movement" (629).⁶

In the short story *Priscilla kills Zebedee*, her former lover, because of his insults; like Geoffrey, he also lodges in a house where she is employed as cook. She explains to the policeman that "her duties as a cook kept her in the kitchen—and Zebedee never discovered that she was in the house" (Collins, *The Dream-Woman*, 215), implying that her performance of the duties of cook, and the "virtual invisibility" to which servants were supposed to aspire (Trodd, 51), effectively facilitates her violence. In the later tale the homicidal cook appears more sinister; Priscilla is never indicted for the murder and remains "mistress of her own movements" in her search for a new situation (Collins, *The Dream-Woman*, 208), secure in the possession of the "good character" guaranteed by her perfection of the cook's role.

Man and Wife also identifies the abuse of the working wife as a motivating force to kill, where women's fury can be seen as a reaction both to the exercising of male power and to a legal system which perpetuated that power. Hester's confession rejects myths of the criminal woman as depraved in favour of economic explanations; as Morris has pointed out, "Collins repeatedly stresses the social causes of criminality—alienation, abuse, economic deprivation—and shows profound sympathy for women faced with the

⁶ Trodd (66) has argued that Hester "with her professional expertise [and] satisfactory dumbness . . . seems to summarize all the threats which Victorian fiction attributed to servants."

unpalatable choice between suffering and violence” (Morris, 106). In his earlier novel *Armada* (1866), Lydia Gwilt poisons her first husband as a response to his brutality which culminates in his striking her across the face with a riding-whip. She is later pardoned because her respectable appearance in court helps to convince the public of her innocence. As Donald E. Hall notes (167), in Collins’s fiction “[t]he abused woman becomes an even more active abuser of men.”

The details of Hester’s abuse are taken from the contemporary case of Susanna Palmer, tried for assaulting her violent husband in 1869. Like Mr Palmer, Joel Dethridge subjects his wife to repeated acts of violence. He knocks out her front teeth, sells her furniture and uses her earnings to finance his drinking, both the property and the money being legally his at this time. What is significant in the Palmer case is the sympathy Susanna’s retaliatory violence provoked and the judgment passed on her husband. The *Times* report noted that “the prisoner in her defence told a touching story, which appeared to produce a very strong feeling of commiseration for her among the whole audience,” whilst the judge upbraided the husband for his “abominable” conduct and added that “very few persons who committed crime and were sentenced were half so bad as he was” (*The Times*, 15 Jan 1869, 9). Similarly, the provocation which Hester endured ensures that her story is also “touching”, though her capacity to carry out a premeditated act of violence makes her appear more depraved. In her *Blackwood’s* review of the novel, Margaret Oliphant found Hester to be both an unnatural and improbable character despite the topicality of her challenge to abusive husbands, calling her a “deathly-faced weird woman . . . [who] belongs to the category of sprites and demons” (Oliphant, 630). By contrast Hall has argued that the novel’s revelation of the “traditionally hidden, horrifying experiences of an abused woman” means that “we are in full sympathy with Hester” (Hall, 172), though I would suggest that Collins’s partial vilification of the violent woman militated against such “full sympathy” with murderers. Assault and manslaughter might inspire “commiseration” for women desperate to escape from a cycle of abuse but it still proved difficult to disengage the idea of premeditated violence from images of the murderess as demonic, unnatural and depraved, whatever the provocation she received.

In the later novel *The Legacy of Cain*, Collins expresses even more explicit reservations about sympathizing with women capable of such acts, opening his novel with the story of an unnamed woman awaiting execution for the murder of her abusive husband. Although the beginning of the story takes place between 1858 and 1859, when women were more likely to be hanged for murder than in 1888, when the novel was written, it was still comparatively

rare, suggesting that Collins feels the need to stress the importance of subjecting such depraved women to the ultimate punishment. We are told that:

They had lived together in matrimony for little more than two years. The husband, a gentleman by birth and education, had mortally offended his relations by marrying a woman in an inferior rank of life. He was fast declining into a state of poverty, through his own reckless extravagance, at the time when he met with his death at his wife's hand. Without attempting to excuse him, he deserved, to my mind, some tribute of regret. It is not to be denied that he was profligate in his habits and violent in his temper. . . If his wife had killed him in a fit of jealous rage—under provocation, be it remembered, which the witnesses proved—she might have been convicted of manslaughter, and might have received a lighter sentence. But the evidence so undeniably revealed deliberate and merciless premeditation, that the only defence attempted by her trial was madness, and the only alternative left to a righteous jury was a verdict which condemned the woman to death. Those mischievous members of the community, whose topsy-turvy sympathies feel for the living criminal, and forget the dead victim, attempted to save her by means of highflown petitions and contemptible correspondence in the newspapers. But the Judge held firm; and the Home Secretary held firm. They were entirely right; and the public was scandalously wrong.

(Collins, *The Legacy of Cain*, 2-3)

The domestic abuse and the violent temper of the husband are all but discounted by the narrating voice of the Prison Governor, who clearly sympathizes with the male victim, as the paragraph quickly moves towards a categorization of the woman in terms of the “deliberate and merciless premeditation” behind her violent act. Despite the provocation, her act is viewed with horror because it is premeditated, rather than impulsive, the “fit of jealous rage” associated with the violent woman. The woman’s denial of madness, and the horror occasioned by her language and unrepentant attitude in prison, serve to bolster views of her “wicked” and “obdurate” nature. At this point there seems little distance between the voice of the narrator and that of the author, so that Collins unmistakably aligns himself with those who condemn her. Here the “topsy-turvy sympathies” of the public identifying with the victimized wife are overruled by the legal verdict, deemed “entirely right”. Issues of wife abuse and the exploitation of the working woman are once again glossed over and details about her life withheld as woman’s fury is once again located in her “wicked” nature.

Images of the murderess as both sexually dominant and activated by the madness of jealousy link this convicted woman to Priscilla Thurlby, who also refuses to attribute her criminality to mental disorder. Typically, the male representatives of the law, the Prison Governor and the policeman in the short story, are attracted to the women they should condemn; both men comment on the women’s bodies, and the policeman shares “delicious kisses” with Priscilla. In a short story Collins published earlier in his career, “The Dream Woman” (1855), violence is linked to sexual dominance in the figure of Rebecca Scatchard, a “fine, fair woman” who significantly attacks her husband with a knife whilst he is in bed. Priscilla stabs the lover who deserted her whilst he is

sleeping in the same room as his new wife, hoping to frame her for the deed. Collins characterizes all three women in terms of their “fury” and their “frenzied”, “frantic” behaviour, linking women’s rage to their inability to sustain their sexual dominance over men. However, he also implies that this fury may be a product of either mental disorder or the menstrual cycle; Rebecca experiences furies of passion, the condemned prisoner has fits and an “outburst of rage”, and Priscilla is introduced to us as a “frantic woman” when she bursts into the police station. Women’s fury is thus used to signal the possibilities of mental disturbance in sexualized female criminals but only in order to distract readers from the more threatening notion that such frantic behaviour may be only a cover for women’s capacity to commit “merciless”, premeditated violence.

In *Man and Wife*, Collins defines madness in terms of the loss of control, inviting a consideration of women’s ability to control their actions in a society bent on confining them. Lillian Nayder’s view that Collins treats Hester’s crime as “the logical outcome of her own victimization under common law” needs to be modified by a consideration of explanations of criminality based on women’s control over their minds as well as their property (Nayder, 98; see also Hall, 173). Hester, like the condemned woman in *The Legacy of Cain*, denies her own madness on the grounds that mad people are those who “have lost control over their own minds” (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 591), acknowledging that her violence was premeditated: “If my husband came back to me, my mind was made up to kill him” (594). Reflecting the clash over the workings of the will by medical and legal authorities, the text draws attention to Hester’s control over her own mental processes whilst also indicating that if she is perfectly sane, her behaviour is threateningly subversive. As Knelman has argued (88, 227, 273), the murder of husbands was seen as subversive and links murder to resistance and the attempt to gain control. In *Man and Wife*, Hester’s behaviour is subjected to medical scrutiny, due to her loss of speech: we are told that “medical men consulted about her case, discovered certain physiological anomalies in it, which led them to suspect the woman of feigning dumbness, for some reason best known to herself” (113). The subtext of her decision to live “a separate and silent life” (604), as a way of setting her “guilty self” apart from others, is that she refuses to speak as a further act of resistance to her employers. Even when Geoffrey has discovered that the dumbness is not the product of a nervous condition, she still refuses to speak, preferring to communicate with him by writing on her slate as if to emphasize the distance between employer and servant and her own “separateness”. The behaviour which is construed as mad by previous employers, the “strange impulses” and “sudden panics” which seize her periodically, affects her ability to work, at one

point leading her to complain of being “overworked with all the company in the house” (247), but she is able to control her reactions to the delusions in order to keep her situations. Susanna Palmer, said to be in “a state of great excitement and mental distress,” had begged a policeman to restrain her after her assault on her husband, claiming that “she could not control her feelings, and, if left alone, . . . feared that she would ‘finish’ him before the morning” (*The Times*, 15 Jan 1869, 9). In contrast, Hester’s violence stems from her ability to control her fury to the extent that she is able to “finish” her husband and his abuse without feeling the need to be restrained by the law.

Having said this, it is undeniable that Collins also implies that some of his murderous women are suffering from the partial insanity of homicidal mania. Morris has contended that he effectively “rejected biomedical explanations [for women’s violence]” perhaps because “they are so often employed . . . to denigrate women.” She claims that “he never suggests, as his medical contemporaries would have done, that the hallucinations that tempt Hester Dethridge to murder may be related to menopause” (Morris, 109). I think this is a reductive reading of Hester’s mental state, not least because the admission “there was a change coming” (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 588) in her confession can surely be read in this light. Hester’s descriptions of the “overpowering strength of the temptation” (606) to kill and the delusions in which an outside force, “the vision of MY OWN SELF” (605), orders her to kill, again recall Maudsley’s and Meredith’s recordings of violent women whose unconscious impulses are attributed to Satan. In Priscilla’s confession, she explains her violence in the same way: “the devil entered into me” and “the thought came to me to do it” (Collins, *The Dream-Woman*, 215). Hester’s condition is later described unequivocally as “the homicidal frenzy raised in her by the hideous creation of her own distempered brain” (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 606). In his research on homicidal mania, however, Prichard demonstrated that this kind of violence was distinguished by a lack of motive, the number of victims killed and lack of accomplices and escape plans, none of which apply to Hester’s case; in 1863 Crichton Browne claimed that it revealed “reflex functions out of control” (Smith, 62, 53). In the final scene where in a “homicidal frenzy” she flies at Geoffrey’s throat “like a wild beast”, she still appears to be challenging medical readings of women’s impulses. Geoffrey’s fears that the premeditated murder of his wife in which she is assisting him might be “more than the woman’s brain can bear” (Collins, *Man and Wife*, 636) are ridiculed as she effectively causes his death, liberating Anne Silvester from her abusive husband and freeing herself from an employer who sought to control her behaviour. This final act of feminine wildness, however, cannot go unpunished, as Hester is confined for life in an asylum, an “unhappy woman”, “unconscious of her

dreadful position” and “resigned to the existence that she leads” (639), rather as if she is returned to the subordinate position of an oppressed servant. The threat of women’s control over their violent impulses has to be contained in order to recast their passionate fury in terms of mental derangement.

Violent women in both newspaper reports and Collins’s crime fiction were then depicted as passionate and angry, capable of both premeditated murder and impulsive acts of violence. Whilst the provocation received by working women abused by men and employers ensured varying degrees of sympathy for their crimes in the courts and in the press, there was still a tendency to interpret their lack of control over their actions as horrific, unfeminine and a clear sign of mental disorder. Social explanations of female criminality gave way to biomedical interpretations, as the uncontrollable impulses attending homicidal mania and other mental disorders were given more credence. In his focus on female servants and working women bound by their dependency on husbands and employers, Collins explored the relation between economic, sexual and biomedical accounts of female violence, suggesting that women’s fury could be interpreted either in terms of class oppression or mental disturbance. As Knelman points out, “there is a fine line dividing murderous rage from insanity” (137). In the variety of working-class women killers he portrayed, the links between female violence and a loss of control attendant on mental disorder are contested as women’s passions and fury have more complex causes. Discourses on female violence from the 1860s to the early 1880s, when theories about the criminal nature provided a variety of contradictory views on female offenders, acknowledged new medical perspectives but had not entirely disengaged themselves from entrenched stereotypes of criminal women, so that the fury of the working woman was never adequately explained.

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Rethinking Bibliolatry: Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism

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In 1885 the Reverend Samuel Charlesworth produced a book for private circulation, entitled *Sensational Religion*. The book was written in response to his daughter marrying one of the Booth children and becoming a Salvation Army officer. Charlesworth's experience of the movement dated back to 1870 when it was still known as the East London Christian Mission. Although the methods employed by the movement underwent little change during the 1870s, Charlesworth became increasingly concerned at the Salvation Army's sensationalism. He wrote that:

the Army meetings seemed to me to be far too exciting, in an unhealthy unnatural form . . . The hymns, addresses, prayers and the testimonies of experience all led up to a culminating point of excitement . . .

(Charlesworth, 14)

Charlesworth's concerns echoed the complaints of a number of Evangelical periodicals. One of the more extreme journals—the *Record*—argued that:

No amount of good effected (as they assert) by the Salvationists can justify the use of profane and even blasphemous language so closely connected with it, united to a style of action more suited to the pantomime of a theatre than the solemn worship of Almighty God.

(cited in "Investigator", 7)

One of the most striking things about these criticisms is their resemblance to the attacks that Evangelicals levelled against sensation novels in the 1860s. This is not altogether surprising when we remember that, although the Salvation Army was not officially constituted until 1878, the movement had taken shape as early as the 1860s when William Booth had taken control of the East London Christian Mission.¹ The methodology that began to attract widespread hostility around 1880 as the movement grew, was, in essence, one that had been developed fifteen years earlier. The sensational techniques employed by

¹ According to the recent biography of William and Catherine Booth: "At the end of the 1860s he [William Booth] was everywhere in the East End of London, and it was impossible to pass a public house without being urged to accept one of his pamphlets. His preachers were on every street corner and the sound of his hymns disturbed Sunday morning rest from Limehouse to Whitechapel" (Hattersley, 165).

both William Booth and novelists such as Wilkie Collins in the 1860s attracted a range of criticism. At the heart of this criticism, though, was a complaint about the lack of content. As Patrick Brantlinger reminds us:

While some reviewers commend[ed] Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and other sensation novelists for providing new thrills, they rarely suggest[ed] that their fictions offer[ed] anything more than mere entertainment.

(Brantlinger, 143)

Like other critics, Evangelicals had a number of complaints to make about the use of sensation, but, at least ostensibly, the main concern that emerged was the thrilling yet superficial content. An unsigned article in *The Evangelical Magazine* in 1866 posed the following question:

Are those books which he [i.e. the reader] devours so eagerly sensation novels, or good substantial works, full of solid information and of right sentiments? We by no means prohibit all fiction, but we cannot condemn too strongly much of the trash which daily issues forth from the press . . .

(“Character: How it is Formed and What it is Worth?”, 376)²

The concern about what people were reading provides us with a helpful starting point for a deeper analysis of Evangelical concerns about sensation. This article will begin by examining the way in which Evangelical responses to sensation were shaped by concerns over contemporary revaluations of the Bible, and then move on to consider the way in which Collins’s novels of the 1860s, particularly *Armada* (1864-6) and *The Moonstone* (1868), addressed related issues. As we shall see, despite their differences, both Collins and Booth possessed a profound understanding of the challenges faced by Evangelicalism during the 1860s.

While readers of mid-Victorian novels had little trouble in recognizing Evangelical caricatures such as Miss Clack in *The Moonstone*, it was difficult to speak about Evangelicals with any precision. Since its beginnings in the 1730s with the revivalism of John Wesley and George Whitefield, Evangelicalism had transcended identifiable ecclesiological groupings. Evangelicals were to be found in both the Dissenting tradition and the Church of England (see Cunningham, Jay). They were not united by membership of a common organization, but by the sharing of similar convictions about the nature of the Christian faith. (We should note, however, the existence of the

² Evangelical disquiet about the reading of novels was not new—previous generations had been resistant to most fiction. While this attitude had softened by the mid-nineteenth century, the continuing apprehension can be seen from a review of Bowdler’s *The Family Shakespeare* in *The Christian Observer* in 1860: “Is it desirable that Shakespeare should be read in Christian families? Is it becoming that *The Christian Observer* should write a line to promote acquaintance with the great tragic poet? We must confess that we are not prepared with a precise answer. But if Shakespeare must be read, this is the edition, and the only edition, that ought to lie upon the table of a Christian family” (360).

Evangelical Alliance, formed in 1846 to foster Evangelical identity and unity, though its influence during the nineteenth century is generally agreed to be relatively marginal.) In *Evangelicals in Modern Britain*, David Bebbington argues that there was a quadrilateral of priorities at the heart of the convictions shared by Evangelicals: conversionism, crucicentrism, activism and biblicism. While all of these beliefs were important to nineteenth-century Evangelicalism, biblicism was the key to Evangelical perceptions of their theological position. Evangelicals saw themselves as people of the Word—hence the charge of bibliolatry that was often levelled against them. *Evangelical Christendom*, the unofficial organ of the Evangelical Alliance, records the recommendation of the committee to include at the organization's annual conference an address on:

The special importance at the present time of united action on the part of Evangelical Christians, in maintaining the principles and doctrines of the Word of God, against the progress of Romanism and Rationalism.

(*Evangelical Christendom*, Apr 1868, 157).

In the 1860s two events brought Evangelical perceptions of the Bible to the point of crisis. The first was the publication of *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, which, among other things, questioned the Evangelical doctrine of inerrancy. Evangelicals were appalled by the critical treatment of Scripture among fellow churchmen. An essay in *The Christian Observer* in 1860 warned:

But what is all this but a distinct rejection of the Bible, and of Christianity? If the Bible is plainly declared to have a great falsehood intertwined on every page, how is it possible to build anything upon it?

(“Theodore Parker and the Oxford Essayists”, 485).

Especial concern was generated by Benjamin Jowett in his essay on interpretation, which encouraged people to “interpret the Scripture like any other book” (*Essays and Reviews*, 377).

The background to the second event was the increasing amount of time that Evangelicals were spending reading novels in the 1860s, a tendency that was exacerbated by the popularity of the sensation writers who followed in the footsteps of Collins. Many Evangelical periodicals responded to this trend by challenging the reading habits of their subscribers, as can be seen from an article in *The Evangelical Magazine*:

What sort of books do you read? How much of the literature of the day is there, of which we may read whole columns, without there being suggested a single thought to quicken the life of our souls . . . ? . . . If we read little else . . . especially neglecting God's own word, the flower and crown of all books, it can scarcely be otherwise than that we should have to complain of spiritual lethargy and decay.

(“Cleaving to the Dust”, 792)

The concern over Evangelical reading habits came to a head with the controversy between the *Record* and *Good Words* in 1863. A Scottish publisher, Alexander Strahan, had launched *Good Words* in 1860 with the

moderate Evangelical, Norman Macleod, as editor. The periodical was to offer a broad Christian vision that permitted a variety of articles (including short and serial fiction) from a range of contributors. In spite of Macleod's Evangelical credentials,³ the *Record* quickly launched a series of vicious attacks against the new journal.⁴ Three key factors help to account for this condemnation. The first was the *Record's* fear that the combination of sacred and secular material in *Good Words* would erode the distinctions between different types of literature and confirm the implication of Jowett's essay, that the Bible was simply one book among many. The second factor was the way in which *Good Words* blurred the difference between Sunday and weekday reading. Finally, the popularity of *Good Words* (the first issue sold thirty thousand copies and this had increased to seventy thousand by December 1862), seemed to endorse the growing status of fiction, particularly sensation fiction, among Evangelicals.⁵ The *Record* complained:

These sensation novels are one of the crying evils of the day . . . Hearers who feed on sensation tales all week, and, by the help of *Good Words* and other periodicals, on the Sabbath also, can ill bear the plain wholesome food of sound doctrine from the pulpit. Hearers go to church with a diseased appetite that loathes plain food and diet which is simply nutritive. They demand a stimulus; and the weaker brethren, driven to the wall to maintain a footing, supply it by anecdotes, and stories, and startling texts . . .

(reprinted in *Good Words: The Theology of its Editor*, 56-57)

This concerted attempt by Evangelicals to delineate the parameters of 'acceptable' fiction helps explain the reasoning behind Collins's foreword to *Armada* in which he attacked the "Clap-trap morality of the present day" (Collins, *Armada*, 5). On a superficial level, the main issue under discussion was morality, but beneath this veneer ran a deeper debate about where true authority lay. Questions about the status of the Bible left Evangelicals worrying about the implications for the wider culture. As *Evangelical Christendom* put it:

there has been no period since the Reformation—perhaps we might say there has been no period since the beginning of Christianity—when the Church was passing through a more anxious and interesting crisis than at the present moment.

(*Evangelical Christendom*, Feb 1865, 103)

³ Although known as a moderate, Macleod had studied under Thomas Chalmers and was one of the founding members of the Evangelical Alliance. Moreover, his theology was thoroughly consistent with the Evangelical quadrilateral of priorities outlined by Bebbington. Macleod's enthusiasm for Evangelicalism diminished during the 1860s, but he continued to identify with this tradition.

⁴ It is interesting to note the position taken up by other Evangelicals in response to this debate. Periodicals such as the *Patriot* took the middle ground, criticizing the *Record's* hostility while admitting a degree of culpability on the part of *Good Words*.

⁵ Mark Turner (ch. 2) discusses the way in which the competition with *Cornhill Magazine* encouraged *Good Words* to look towards secular novelists to help boost circulation.

The increasing popularity of fiction focussed attention on whether or not the Evangelical's source of identity and authority was really adequate. This is a repeated subtext in Wilkie Collins's fiction of the 1860s, from the empty symbolism of the "smart Bible" placed on the centre of Mrs Catherick's "largest table, in the middle of the room" (Collins, *The Woman in White*, 494), to the way in which Betteredge looks for inspiration in *Robinson Crusoe* rather than the Bible in *The Moonstone*. Moreover, Collins's novels of this period addressed the broader issue of narrative authority. His use of multiple narrators and a variety of narrative styles not only raised the question of where authority lay and whether or not it could be trusted; it did so during a period in which British Evangelicalism was struggling to come to terms with German higher criticism.

Evangelical fears concerning the Bible took the form of two questions that had not been asked for some time: was the Bible intelligible? and if so, was it interesting? *Armadale* provides a helpful insight into the first of these questions. Serialized in *Cornhill Magazine*, it offered an elaborate tale of betrayal, intrigue and murder, in which two young men come close to repeating the sins of their fathers as they fall for the sinister Miss Gwilt. One of the questions posed throughout the novel is whether or not the elder Allan Armadale's deterministic reading of the Bible will be borne out by events:

I look into the Book which all Christendom venerates; and the Book tells me that the sin of the father shall be visited on the child. I look out into the world; and I see the living witnesses round me to that terrible truth.

(Collins, *Armadale*, 47)

As the story unfolds, we are presented with a secular parallel of the Biblical revelation. Not only does the use of letters to advance the story resemble the epistolary form of the New Testament; the narrative also contains a variety of prophetic symbols, such as the dream that the younger Allan Armadale experiences on the shipwreck. Indeed, the biblical parallel is made explicit in the build up to the dream that Armadale experiences. Armadale assures Midwinter: "here's the vessel as steady as a church to speak for herself" (124).

However, the revelation that we find in *Armadale* is notably different to its biblical equivalent. For a start, the disclosures offered by Miss Gwilt are patently unreliable: Gwilt's expertise as a forger is compounded by her admission to Mother Oldershaw that "we all tell lies at the bottoms of our letters" (162). More fundamentally, Collins's revelation is secretive, a point which is reinforced by his repeated description of characters as "impenetrable". Echoing the codified language of Madame Defarge, the story opens with a vision of "the strong young nurses of the coming cripples [who]

knitted impenetrably” (10). Later on, the Reverend Brock struggles to make sense of the obscure events taking place around him:

Little by little, a vague suspicion took possession of him, that the whole series of events which had followed the first appearance of Allan’s namesake in the newspapers six years since, were held together by some mysterious connection, and were tending steadily to some unimaginable end.

(Collins, *Armadale*, 76)

In contrast to the large number of Evangelicals who presumed that the Biblical revelation was clear, Jowett had argued that the multiplicity of existing interpretations demonstrated the need for a more sophisticated hermeneutic. He wrote: “The book in which we believe all religious truth to be contained, is the most uncertain of all books, because interpreted by arbitrary and uncertain methods” (*Essays and Reviews*, 372). In *Armadale* Collins concurs with Jowett’s assessment by showing the inadequacy of simplistic interpretations. The first thing that Mr Hawbury does in his attempt to explain Allan Armadale’s dream is to reject Midwinter’s naïve reliance on a supernatural explanation. And yet the allegorical reading that the doctor offers as an alternative is little better. The foolish enthusiasm with which Armadale receives the doctor’s explanation leaves the reader in no doubt as to its inadequacy: “‘Wonderful! not a point missed anywhere from beginning to end! By Jupiter!’ cried Allan, with the ready reverence of intense ignorance. ‘What a thing science is!’” (150). Aside from its reliance on a crude form of psychology, the doctor’s interpretation resembles the more fanciful allegorical readings of Scripture often delivered from Evangelical pulpits.⁶

Simplistic interpretations are also parodied in *The Moonstone* when Betteredge consults *Robinson Crusoe*, “the one infallible remedy” (518).⁷ His declaration to Franklin Blake that the line “I stood like one Thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an Apparition” is “as much as to say: ‘Expect the sudden appearance of Mr Franklin Blake’” (344), reveals a tendency to read whatever he wants into the text. A similar weakness can be found in Miss Clack, whose

⁶ A good example of this can be found in *Salvation Soldiery*, where Booth justifies the ignorance of his Cadets by likening them to David: “David was all unskilled and undrilled in the then existing rules of war. He knew nothing of armour, and sword, and spear, and shield, and all that... So with your Cadet... He is flagrantly ignorant of grammar, logic, philosophy, knows nothing of the prevalent controversies, can hardly read his mother tongue, to say nothing of writing it” (10).

⁷ Other critics have noted the way in which *Robinson Crusoe* is meant to be read as a parody of the Bible. Joss Marsh (181) describes the tendency among Victorian novelists to encode “their unorthodoxy in what we might call the heretic trope of the Book-within-the-Book”, going on to note that “*Crusoe* was also the classic example of fictional forgery, and as such stood in a sharply oppositional relationship to the truth of Scripture”. In a similar vein, Catherine Peters (306) suggest that “[t]he anti-evangelical theme is continued less obviously in Betteredge’s superstitious use of *Robinson Crusoe* as a secular bible” (306).

crude approach to interpreting texts is evident in the instructions that she gives Lady Verinder to help her read some tracts:

“You will read, if I bring you my own precious books? Turned down at all the right places, aunt. And marked in pencil where you are to stop and ask yourself, ‘Does this apply to me?’”

(Collins, *The Moonstone*, 258-9)

The limitations of Miss Clack’s hermeneutic can be seen from her own failure to interpret the events relayed by Godfrey Ablewhite correctly. Although she claims that she will simply “state the facts as they were stated” (237), the version of the story that she narrates recasts the morally questionable Godfrey as the “Christian Hero [who] never hesitates where good is to be done” (239). Through this episode Collins raises general doubts about the adequacy of Evangelical hermeneutics.

The difficulties involved in interpreting texts become evident in *Armada* when Miss Milroy and Armadale reflect on the legalities involved in their proposed marriage. At first, the fact that Armadale does not “know anything about the law” (454) does not seem to present a major problem as he can turn to the resources of his large personal library. However, when he tries to interpret Blackstone’s law commentaries, he quickly discovers them to be “[i]nfelicitous gibberish” (458) and recognizes the need to go and “consult somebody in the profession” (459). This reliance on professional expertise contradicts one of the central tenets of Evangelical belief, as Elisabeth Jay explains:

Evangelical religion is founded upon a personal apprehension of God . . . The onus of interpreting God’s Word therefore rests firmly upon the individual and there is no appeal to any authoritative body . . .

(Jay, 51)

Evangelicals were firmly committed to the idea that as long as someone had access to a Bible and could read, they were able to understand it. Evangelical resistance to professional interpreters is encapsulated in an article in *The Revival* of 1866:

The truth that the Bible is self-interpreting is as precious and all-important as the corresponding truth that it is the inspired Word of God. The message from heaven would, indeed, be of no use to men if it required any interpreter besides itself.

(“Unity of Creed: The Union of the Christian Church”, 71)

In the face of an effort by Evangelicals to maintain a strict belief in the self-interpreting qualities of God’s Word, critics such as Jowett pointed out that those “who interpret ‘the Bible and the Bible only’ [do so] with a silent reference to the traditions of the Reformation” (*Essays and Reviews*, 331). This inconsistency is something that Evangelicals were slow to acknowledge. This is illustrated by the advice that Booth continued to give his field officers some years later. On the one hand he tried to affirm the self-sufficiency of

Scripture, yet on the other he insisted that it should be interpreted with the help of his own aids. Having warned his field officers against a wide range of publications, Booth provided an exhaustive list of suitable reading material:

- I. Your Bible, and then the Bible, and then the Bible again.
- II. Your [Salvation Army] Hymn Book.
- III. General Orders, of which a portion should be read every day.
- IV. *The War Cry* and books published at our own Stores.

(Booth, *Doctrines and Disciplines*, Section 35)

For many Evangelicals, including Booth, questions about the intelligibility of Scripture were less important than the concern that readers might not be interested in reading the Bible in the first place. This would appear to explain the method of evangelism chosen by Miss Clack in *The Moonstone*. She presents Lady Verinder with tracts rather than a Bible, explaining that they are “all suitable to the present emergency, all calculated to arouse, convince, prepare, enlighten, and fortify my aunt” (258). Although tracts had been popular among Evangelicals for many years (the Religious Tract Society was set up in 1799), the extent of Miss Clack’s reliance on their efficacy is revealing. At the start of the nineteenth century, tracts were often used as a cheap alternative to presenting someone with a Bible, but by the 1860s the profusion of cheap Bibles made this rationale less plausible (see Marsh, 171). While Miss Clack’s use of tracts may be motivated by a belief in their ability to offer a clearer interpretation of the Evangelical gospel than the unedited Biblical text, it seems more likely that they are valued because of their supposed ability to capture Lady Verinder’s attention. One consequence of this is that the repository of truth is no longer confined to the Bible. Miss Clack confesses: “I reflected on the *true* riches which I had scattered with such a lavish hand . . . ” (270). Her allusion to the parable of the sower here (and elsewhere in her narrative) is particularly significant in view of the way that Jesus interprets the parable of the sower for his disciples in Matthew 13. As any committed Evangelical would have known, the seed represents the Word of God. Thus the value that Miss Clack places on her tracts is considerable.

By making tracts a prominent feature of *The Moonstone*, Collins draws attention to the growing need for Evangelicals to make the Bible more appealing by repackaging it. The extent to which this repackaging required an appeal to worldly concerns is evident in the title of the tract that Miss Clack gives to Penelope Betteredge near the beginning of her narrative—“A Word With You On Your Cap-Ribbons”. Yet it quickly becomes apparent that, despite the attempt to appeal to the masses, the tracts have little or no attraction. Penelope Betteredge rejects the tract that she is given, leaving Miss Clack with no other option than to slip “the tract into the letterbox” (237) to

mingle with the rest of the mail. Miss Clack's attempts to encourage people to read her tracts become increasingly ridiculous as the novel progresses. She resorts to hiding them in the bathroom and beneath the canary cage in an attempt to "surprise" Lady Verinder into reading them (269). In describing Miss Clack's missionary activities here, Collins highlights the hypocrisy of Evangelicals who complained about the way in which sensation appealed to "the lowest tastes of the most degraded classes" (*Behind the Scenes*, 6). In addition, Collins provides his readers with a useful analysis of the way in which Evangelicals were trying to adapt their message to meet the change in public tastes. When the strategic placement of tracts proves unsuccessful, Miss Clack changes the literary form, switching from "Preparation by Books", to "Preparation by Little Notes" (273). As we have already noted, a recognition of the need to repackage the Word for the secular market lay behind the formation of *Good Words* in 1860.⁸ It was even more explicit in the methodology adopted by William Booth, who, from the beginning of his work with the East London Christian Mission, utilized sensational and dramatic techniques to attract the attention of the people that he wanted to reach. Booth later defended this methodology in *All About the Salvation Army*: "They are all explained by the first necessity of the movement, which is *to attract attention*" (11).⁹ In the face of considerable criticism, Booth explained that attracting attention was merely a prerequisite to presenting people with the message of the Gospel. Nevertheless, critics feared that his methodology ran the risk of subordinating the message of the Bible to the whims of his audience. Their fears were often justified, for, as Pamela Walker explains (76), "the resemblance to popular entertainment was so strong that occasionally the Army's services were not recognized as religious."

The problem for Evangelicals was that while publicity seemed the best way to make themselves heard, it was fraught with risks. Aside from the danger of pandering to the desires of the heathen, the use of publicity required Evangelicals to set aside the authority of the Bible and become one voice among many. Moreover, the reduction of the Evangelical Gospel to another commercial product threatened to result in the sordid glimpses of

⁸ As Turner (64) points out, Evangelicals began to show an interest in the potential of periodicals to broaden their appeal during the 1850s: "The Religious Tract Society, for example, began publishing two weeklies priced one penny in the early 1850s, *The Leisure Hour* (1852-1908) and *Sunday at Home* (1854-1940)".

⁹ Booth made a similar point in his *Orders and Regulations for Field Officers of the Salvation Army*: "The work of the F[ield] O[fficer] is to publish Salvation, that is to make it known, and those methods must be preferred that most effectually assist them in doing so" (280).

Evangelicalism that are to be found in *The Moonstone* and *Armada*. In *The Moonstone* Godfrey Ablewhite's performances on the platform of Exeter Hall help to sustain his good reputation. However, while his message convinces more people than Miss Clack's tracts, Mr Bruff exposes him as "a smooth-tongued impostor" (317), and even Miss Clack herself describes him as speaking "with all the fascination of his evangelical voice and manner" (280). In spite of his willingness to capitalize on a succession of convincing performances, the false Godfrey Ablewhite claims to dislike notoriety, insisting that "I shrink from all this fuss and publicity" (246). The conclusion to *Armada* presents us with an equally insincere advert for Evangelicalism, this time with the "born again" (583) Mother Oldershaw in the role of preacher. Mustapha cynically invites Pedgrift Senior to attend: "They stop acting on the stage, I grant you, on Sunday evening—but they don't stop acting in the pulpit. Come and see the last new Sunday performer of our time" (674). The superficiality of Mother Oldershaw's performance is symbolized by the make-up worn by the ladies in the front row, who are said to be in "a state of devout enjoyment" (675), and the various references to the transient world of "fashion" (674-5) that accompany this episode. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the content of her sermon consists of a "narrative of Mrs Oldershaw's experience among dilapidated women" (675) rather than the exposition of the Word.

Although Collins's descriptions were deliberate caricatures, he managed to capture something of the tension that Evangelicals themselves faced as they tried to come to terms with the changing status of the Bible. As people of the Word, Evangelicals wanted to reject the methodology of sensationalists such as Collins and Booth, because, as a writer in *The Christian World* explained:

There needs no noisy declaration, no angry controversy, to prove the unspeakable worth of Holy Scripture. The Bible is its own witness, and contains those truths which can never grow obsolete . . .

("On Books", 458)

And yet the growing doubts about the adequacy of Scripture, which manifested themselves in questions about its intelligibility and its interest, left Evangelicals with little choice but to rethink their bibliolatry and turn to the language of sensation to promote their beliefs. When Catherine Booth asked her fellow Evangelicals whether it had "come to pass that Christians have so little confidence in the God of the Bible, and the religion of Jesus, that they must seek an alliance between Christ and the world in order to interest their children . . . ?" (49), the only honest answer was yes.

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~~Notes~~

The Persistent Phantom: Wilkie Collins and Dorothy L. Sayers

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For most of her life, Dorothy Sayers was haunted by the specter of Wilkie Collins. From the time that Sayers first discovered the enchantment of his novels as a child until her death precluded the completion of her Collins biography, he captured her imagination and profoundly affected her methods of composition and style of writing.

Both Collins the writer and Collins the man held a fascination for Sayers. In spite of her hesitation to allow biographical information about her own iconoclastic life to be circulated, she had hoped to write a biography of Collins for many years. It was probably her publisher, Victor Gollancz, who first encouraged Sayers to attempt this project (Brabazon, 139). As early as 1921, she started collecting material on Collins's life, and often expressed frustration that so little information was available about him. In a letter dated June 15, 1921, Myles Radford, a bookseller, asked Sayers when she was going to get her "Life" finished (Reynolds, 196). In 1927 her father wrote Sayers of G. K. Chesterton's reference to Collins in his life of Dickens, and encouraged her to complete her biography of Collins for inclusion in the *English Men of Letters* series. In June of 1928 she wrote to the *Times Literary Supplement* requesting readers to share access to letters and papers to assist her in a "critical and biographical study of William Wilkie Collins" (Coomes, 108).

In spite of the difficulties Sayers faced in researching Collins's life, she was able to complete five chapters by 1931. Sayers included as many details as she could find about Collins's parents, his childhood, school years and family travels, his early writings, and friendships with Dickens and others. These chapters revealed the qualities of Collins's work she most admired and which she set out to emulate (Reynolds, 239). Edited by E. R. Gregory from manuscripts held at the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, these were published in 1977 by the Friends of the University of Toledo Libraries as *Wilkie Collins: A Critical and Bibliographical Study*. In addition to Sayers's published manuscript and notes, she kept two other notebooks (now in the Wade Collection at Wheaton College, Illinois) which contained a

bibliography, and biographical and critical information for a lecture series on Collins.¹ Sayers presented at least one lecture on the detective genre to the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne in the early 1930s, based on these unpublished notebooks.²

Sayers disliked dwelling on the past and despite her later work on Dante, maintained that she disapproved of a biographical approach to literature; she often wrote that authors should be known through their art rather than their lives (Kenney, 54). However, she expressed disappointment that she was unable to learn more of Collins's personal life, although Radford assured her that she had as much information about him "as is likely to come to light, and a great deal more than most 'Memoirs' contain" (Reynolds, 370, 197). In her lecture notebook, she commented that "there was nothing very exciting about" Collins's private life. She bemoaned the air of "impenetrable mystery" that hung over him, offering an explanation that "he had no legitimate family to preserve his memory by their piety." For the rest of her life, Sayers never gave up the idea of completing the biography, as she said in a letter to a friend just before her death, "if and when old age brings leisure" (Hone, 184).

Beyond her biographical interest in Collins, Dorothy Sayers admired him as an author. She described him as "a writer of genuine creative imagination" (Sayers, Introduction to *The Moonstone*, xi), and predicted that he was "going to exercise still more influence on [the mystery-story's] future development" (Sayers, "Wilkie Collins, 1827-1889," unpublished lecture in Wade Collection). In much of her literary criticism, Sayers evaluated those attributes of Collins's style that she felt defined his greatness (Reynolds, 239). Sayers admired his skillful construction of complex plots, his descriptive verbal painting, his attention to detail and accuracy, and his gift of characterization.

¹ In his introduction to the partial Sayers's biography of Collins, Gregory described the manuscript, notebooks and note cards that he consulted in undertaking that project. He also described another notebook, held in the Wade Center at Wheaton College, Illinois, which contained lists of letters, books and articles pertaining to Collins. In a subsequent article, Gregory referred to *two* notebooks that were not part of the HRC collection: one at Wheaton College, and a second, at that time in the possession of Sayers's son, Anthony Fleming (Gregory). Gregory noted that the description of this manuscript and extracts from it were included in a letter to him from Anthony Fleming, dated 15 October 1977. On 25 September 1975, Clyde S. Kilby, Curator of the Wade Collection, purchased a large collection of the papers of Dorothy L. Sayers from the Sayers estate, through David Higham of London. A checklist for the collection was made by Dr. and Mrs. Joe H. McClatchey of Wheaton College, and a bibliography was subsequently prepared by Gregory in 1978. However, the second notebook was not part of that purchase. Rather, the accession number for the notebook indicates that it was added to the collection in 1981. Its being retained by Anthony Fleming most likely was related to some Peter Wimsey material included in it. The transcription of the second notebook was completed by the present author in 1999.

² Verified through correspondence with Mrs. E. A. Pescod, Librarian, who reviewed the Society archives, 20 October 1999.

In her unpublished lecture notebook, Sayers makes reference to the broad scope of several of Collins's novels. Of *No Name*, Sayers comments on its “nobility and breadth,” calling it more of an epic poem than a novel of sensation. She discusses Collins's fascination with fatality in *Armada*, and its theme of assertive women who triumph over “weak and vacillating men.” In the lecture “Wilkie Collins, 1827-1889”, she states that the *Woman in White* “takes the mystery genre to a new level by concentrating on the development of the steps to the revelation of a secret.” She also says of *The Moonstone* that it “was the most perfectly conceived and written detective story of this time or any other,” and praises Collins as an innovator who wove the plot of the mystery novel as closely as that of classical drama.

In her own classic of detective fiction, *The Nine Tailors*, Sayers demonstrated her mastery of Collins's techniques. As she was developing the outline of this novel, she was also working on his biography, so that his influence was pervasive. She painted on a large canvas, rich with the locations of her childhood and set in the timelessness of rural life. Within the time span of the story, the reader can experience the atmosphere of the changing of life's seasons as the bells toll for unions and dangers and deaths. The novel begins with church bells, and grows in complexity with broad themes of time and change, of death and reprisal.

Sayers's consideration of Collins's constructional gifts seem to mirror the thoughts of novelist Anthony Trollope, who in 1883, wrote:

When I sit down to write a novel I do not at all know, and I do not very much care, how it is to end. Wilkie Collins seems so to construct his that he not only, before writing, plans everything on, down to the minutest detail, from the beginning to end; but then plots it all back again, to see that there is no piece of necessary dove-tailing which does not dove-tail with absolute accuracy.

(Trollope, 223)

Sayers considered meticulous construction to be paramount to the successful detective novel, and like Collins, her notebooks reveal the intensive work that she devoted to her subject even before she began to write (Reynolds, 240). In her introduction to the 1936 *Tales of Detection*, she stressed that the detective novel should be defined by “a delicate balance of the human and the intellectual elements” which are exemplified in Collins's work (Sayers, Introduction to *Tales of Detection*, xiii). Although she had difficulty at first in accepting a love-interest in detective stories (she believed that the detective needed to stay clear of romance and keep to the business of detecting), she recognized that *The Moonstone* presented a perfect example of love as an integral part of the plot (Reynolds, 138), and later was able to work with Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane, seeing that their growing relationship could serve to broaden the plot-scheme of her novels.

Another characteristic of Collins's writings that Sayers admired and emulated was his attention to detail, which gave readers a sense of realism and involvement. In her unpublished notebook, Sayers points out that *Hide and Seek* gives "a faint glimpse of the real Collins" in its attention to precise descriptive detail, and she comments on his gifts of descriptive verbal painting in her introduction to *The Moonstone*. Collins traveled extensively in order to see for himself the scenes he described in his novels. He visited Aldeburgh to write the scene in which Magdalen looks out at the passing ships from her window and wrestles with her own fate in *No Name*. Knowledge of the Cornish coast helped him to describe the last dramatic scene in *Basil*. His description of the Shivering Sand in *The Moonstone* is based on careful observation along the Yorkshire coast near Runswick Bay. His description of the Norfolk Broads and Hurle (Horsey) Mere is perfectly wrought in *Armadale*:

The reeds opened back on the right hand and the left, and the boat glided suddenly into the wide circle of a pool. Round the nearer half of the circle, the eternal reeds still fringed the margin of the water. Round the farther half, the land appeared again, here rolling back from the pool in desolate sand-hills; there rising above it in a sweep of grassy shore.. .The sun was sinking in the clear heaven, and the water, where the sun's reflection failed to tinge it, was beginning to look black and cold.. .and on the near margin of the pool, where all had been solitude before, there now stood, fronting the sunset, the figure of a woman.

(Collins, *Armadale*, Ch. 9)

In *The Nine Tailors*, Sayers culled from her own experience and conducted careful research, describing the area of Fenchurch St. Paul based on her knowledge of the East Anglian countryside of her childhood. She enlisted the assistance of W. J. Redhead, an architect, in describing the church itself and the complex dam and sluice system which played such a key role in the narrative. The fine details of Sayers's writing entice the reader to step into the picture:

Ahead of them, the great bulk of the church loomed dark and gigantic. Mr. Godfrey led the way with an old-fashioned lantern through the lich-gate and along a path bordered with tombstones to the south door of the church, which he opened, with a groaning of the heavy lock. A powerful, ecclesiastical odor, compounded of ancient wood, varnish, dry rot, hassocks, hymn-books, paraffin lamps, flowers and candles, all gently baking in the warmth of slow-combustion stoves, billowed out from the interior.

(Sayers, *The Nine Tailors*, 26)

Collins was as concerned with accuracy of detail as with clarity of description, whether in train schedules, legal points or drug reactions. His careful timing was of crucial importance in *The Woman in White*. He relied on his knowledge of the legal profession gained in his studies at Lincoln's Inn to add details to such novels as *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*. His own experience with drugs added credibility to scenes in *The Moonstone*. He sought professional assistance to ensure that his descriptions of blindness and the

treatment of epilepsy in *Poor Miss Finch* were accurate and believable. Collins often sought newspaper accounts of true events to bolster his narratives, for as Sayers points out in her published biography chapters, the more incredible the incident, the more insistent the writer must be that the narrative is founded in fact, and the details are as realistic as possible (Sayers, *Wilkie Collins*, 82).

Sayers's meticulous research on the subject of bell-ringing in *The Nine Tailors* effected descriptions of such perfection that the *Oxford Companion to Music* refers the reader to *The Nine Tailors* for a clear explanation of change-ringing. Sayers was even asked to be vice president of the Campanological Society of Great Britain. As she wrote in her unpublished notebook, "In order to gain the reader's attention in the first place and in order to secure his belief in far more astonishing parts of the narrative, the writer. . . will strive for the...most exact realism in the details of everything that happens within the reader's experience." She agreed with Collins that by drawing romance from the familiar, everyday things in life, the sensational is blended with the ordinary to bring the reader into the story.

Sayers admired Collins's adherence to what she described as the "fair play rule." His carefully worked plots present the reader with all the facts needed to solve a crime before any detecting is done. As she points out in her introduction to *The Moonstone*, compliance with the "fair play rule" marks the difference between a thriller and a true detective story, engaging the reader beyond the role of mere observer (Sayers, Introduction to *The Moonstone*, v). For her novel, *The Documents in the Case*, Sayers painstakingly researched the poison muscarine. With the assistance of Dr. Eustace Barton, she determined the characteristics of the poison in its inorganic and organic forms, and meticulously presented the details crucial to the plot.

The development of character was important to both authors. Sayers praised Collins's gift of characterization, in spite of critics who compared him unfavorably to Dickens. She argues that it is not really fair to compare Collins to Dickens, "the most divinely-inspired creator of character . . . ever known in this country," saying that in searching for a compliment to pay Collins, one could do worse than to say that he was "not quite as good as Dickens" ("Wilkie Collins, 1827-1889," Wade Collection). Sayers approved of such "great women" as Marian Halcombe in *The Moonstone*, Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* and Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale*, who demonstrate Collins's sympathy with the feminist cause. She notes that Collins infused his carefully constructed plots with a "whole gallery of solidly-built characters" who nonetheless, are subtle and complex human beings. *The Woman in White* produced the "immortal" Count Fosco ("the Napoleon of Crime"). Zoe Galilee, from *Heart and Science*, is described in "Wilkie Collins, 1827-1889" as "one of the best and mostly

truly observed children one could hope to meet in fiction.” Regarding *Poor Miss Finch*, although she calls Lucilla Finch “odd,” she shows a great affection for two other characters in the novel, the audacious Madame Pratolungo and the German doctor Herr Grosse (a “delightful grotesque”). She finds delight as well in Gabriel Betteridge in *The Moonstone*. These carefully developed personalities served as models in her own characterization. In *The Nine Tailors*, the Reverend and Mrs. Venables are richly drawn and red-blooded, while Superintendent Blundell commands the same comfortable humanity as a Sergeant Cuff. The reverend, with butter dripping down the sleeve of his gesturing arm, and his wife, who demonstrates a “competent tranquility” throughout the dangerous and disturbing proceedings of the narrative, are marvelously developed characters after Collins’s own heart. Sayers’s simple description of Superintendent Blundell is typical of the endearing and humorous way that Collins succeeded in making his characters real:

‘Amazing!’ said the Rector. Mr. Blundell uttered a regrettable expression, remembered his surroundings, and coughed loudly.

(*The Nine Tailors*, 296)

Indeed, it is the combination of humanity and humor that makes Collins’s characters responsive and appealing. When Herr Dr. Grosse is belittled by another doctor for wanting to dig into the chicken mayonnaise dish before examining Lucilla:

Herr Grosse—with a fork in one hand and a spoon in the other, and a napkin tied round his neck—stared piteously; shook his shock head; and turned his back on the Mayonnaise, with a heavy heart at parting.

(Collins, *Poor Miss Finch*, Ch. 30)

Collins and Sayers knew their characters and understood their humanity, making them believable and empathetic to the reader.

In spite of the fact that Sayers was so favorably influenced by Collins, and displayed such success with *The Nine Tailors*, her experiments with his style did not always work. She greatly admired the brilliance of Collins’s technique of first-person narrative. In *The Woman in White*, Collins uses Walter Hartright to explain his presentation of the story as if it were in a court of law:

... Present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect; and to trace the course of one complete series of events, by making the persons who have been most closely connected with them, at each successive stage, relate their experience, word for word.

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, Ch. 1)

Sayers explained in “Wilkie Collins, 1827-1889” that Collins is able to succeed with the improbable plot by telling the story “in the most convincing and emphatic way—the lawyer’s way—by the narratives of the eyewitnesses.” In her 1930 novel, *The Documents in the Case*, she tried to emulate such highly regarded works as *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White*. However, her

venture into the epistolary form did not work, since the switching of viewpoints weakened rather than enhanced her carefully constructed plot. By her own admission, Sayers had undertaken a complex plot-line, and by introducing an equally difficult mode of story-telling, her results seem contrived and unconvincing. Although the witty characterization of the priggish Miss Milsom and her knitting is reminiscent of Miss Clack in *The Moonstone*, the other characters are not sympathetic, but flat and undeveloped; they function rather as pawns in the development of the motive for murder. The failure of the love affair of Lathom and Mrs. Harrison to invoke any emotional response in the reader is only highlighted by comparison to Collins's delicate characterization of Rachel and Franklin's relationship or Rosanna Spearman's despair in *The Moonstone*, or of Valeria's devotion to Eustace in *The Law and the Lady*. In *The Documents in the Case*, Sayers failed to reveal the raw emotion that would have been the basis of the relationship of these two people in order for such a heinous crime to have been committed.

In spite of her own remarkable career, Dorothy L. Sayers remained fascinated by Wilkie Collins, and for nearly thirty-five years researched his life, studied his works, and emulated his style. Ralph Hone, in his biography of Sayers, states that the study of Collins made her a better writer and critic. Barbara Reynolds, Sayers's longtime friend, collaborator and biographer agrees. And those generations of mystery-lovers who have been enchanted by her richly detailed, carefully constructed, and warmly peopled novels of detection, must concur.

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“Poor Fargus”: On Wilkie Collins and Hugh Conway

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Fred Fargus joined the family auctioneering business in Bristol as a junior partner at the age of 20 on his father's premature death in 1868, but decided to sell up when his uncle retired in the summer of 1884.¹ By then Fargus was far more widely known as the author Hugh Conway. Under that pseudonym, by the early 1880s he had published a slim volume of verse, the lyrics to several romantic songs, and a handful of short tales of mystery and the supernatural. The stories appeared not only in the *Bristol Times* and other local publications, but also in metropolitan magazines like the weekly *Chambers's Journal* and the monthly *Blackwood's*. Unexpectedly, though, it was a short novel which appeared at the price of sixpence in November 1883 as the third of the paperback Christmas Annuals issued by the Bristol house of J. W. Arrowsmith which became the publishing sensation of the year and brought him sudden national and international fame.²

Less than half of the initial edition of 6,000 of *Called Back*, as the novella was entitled, had sold by the end of the holiday season, but in the new year sales picked up, the story was reissued as a shilling volume in Arrowsmith's Bristol Library, and a total of 30,000 copies were cleared by March 1884. At the same time, in collaboration with J. Comyns Carr, the author rapidly created a dramatic version which enjoyed long runs in both provincial and metropolitan theaters. This sudden turn of events seems to have been precipitated by an enthusiastic notice in Henry Labouchère's widely-read society weekly *Truth*:

Who Arrowsmith is and who Hugh Conway is I do not know, nor had I ever heard of the Christmas Annual of the former, or of the latter as a writer of fiction; but, a week or two ago, a friend of mine said to me, “Buy Arrowsmith's Christmas Annual, if you want to read one of the best stories that have appeared for many a year.” A few days ago, I happened to be at the Waterloo Station waiting for a train. I remembered the advice, and asked the clerk at the bookstall for the Annual. He handed it to me, and remarked, “They say the story is very good, but this is only the third copy I have sold.” It was so foggy that I could not read it in the train as I had intended, so I put the book into my pocket. About 2 that night, it occurred to me that it was nearing the hour when

¹ For a brief biography of Fargus more detailed and accurate than that in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, see “Death of Hugh Conway”.

² The two earlier Arrowsmith's Christmas Annuals, both priced at a shilling, had been failures: the first, a collection of tales entitled *Thirteen at Dinner and What Came of It* appearing in late 1881, had included Fargus's first published story “The Daughter of the Stars” (Arrowsmith, iii).

decent, quiet people go to bed. I saw the Annual staring me in the face, and took it up. Well, not until 4.30 did I get to bed. By that time I had finished the story. Had I not, I should have gone on reading. I agree with my friend—nay, I go farther than him, and say that Wilkie Collins never penned a more enthralling story.

(3 Jan 1884, cited in Arrowsmith, iv)

According to the original agreement Fergus ceded the entire copyright of *Called Back* to Arrowsmith for only £80. However, on the success of the book, this was canceled by mutual consent and a royalty was paid for a period of six years. By summer 1887 over 350,000 copies of the book had been sold throughout the British Empire (Arrowsmith, iii-iv). A much larger number were undoubtedly printed in various cheap and unauthorized editions in the United States, and the story was quickly translated into all the major European languages. Many contemporary commentators, like the *Truth* reviewer or Margaret Oliphant in *Blackwood's* (312), tended to compare the story to Wilkie Collins's sensation novels of the 1860s, but readers are now more likely to recognize Fergus's tale as one of the first examples of the modern best-selling thriller.

Free of his duties as an auctioneer and inundated with commissions, Fergus turned out a vast amount of new fiction in the year following the success of *Called Back*. He wrote both a full-length serial and a trio of short stories for the provincial newspaper syndicates, in addition to regular contributions to metropolitan periodicals. Among these was *A Family Affair*, which was serialized in Carr's monthly *English Illustrated Magazine* from October 1884, before appearing as a triple-decker from Macmillan the following year. It is generally considered the young Fergus's best work, and an indication of considerable literary potential.³ However, Fergus's most popular and remunerative efforts were undoubtedly the two further thrillers for Arrowsmith, *Dark Days* and *Slings and Arrows*, which appeared as the Christmas Annuals for 1884 and 1885 respectively.⁴ However, many of these narratives appeared in volume form only posthumously. Perhaps the excess of literary labour led to physical exhaustion, for early in 1885 Fergus showed symptoms of tuberculosis and was advised to seek rest and recuperation in a warmer climate. While in the Riviera in the spring, following visits to Milan, Florence, and Rome in search of copy, he was diagnosed as suffering from typhoid fever. When convalescent, he caught a chill, suffered a relapse, and died at Monte Carlo on 15 May 1885.

Like almost everyone else in England, Collins was well aware of Hugh Conway's brief moment of glory. Around a month after the writer's death, he wrote to his agent A.P. Watt suggesting that, in order to copyright the title of his

³ Fergus has received little modern critical attention, but this position is the one taken by most reference works, from the *Dictionary of National Biography* to Sutherland.

⁴ *Dark Days* proved particularly successful; it was also dramatized and widely translated, and provoked a parody in Andrew Lang's *Even Darker Days*, also issued in 1884 under the pseudonym "A. Huge Longway."

new story so that it could not be stolen by pirates if used in advance publicity, he should adopt the method pioneered by “Poor Fargus” with *Dark Days* (14 June 1885, PEMBROKE).⁵ This was to issue a “bogus” story of a half-a-dozen pages or so under the same title, a practice in fact adopted with both *The Evil Genius* and *The Guilty River* (see Gasson, 58, 72). Moreover, it seems likely that the narrative form of *The Evil Genius* was influenced by *A Family Affair*, which combines sensationalism with delicate social comedy in treating the themes of adultery and illegitimacy. It is then perhaps not surprising that when J.W. Arrowsmith approached Collins after Fargus’s death to see if he would take over the Bristol author’s role for the Arrowsmith’s Christmas Annual for 1886, Collins was happy to agree to write a story “equal in length to ‘Called Back’” (to A.P. Watt, 18 Aug 1886, PEMBROKE). The result was *The Guilty River*, though it was far from achieving the popular and commercial success of Fargus’s efforts. When Watt wrote to Bristol on Collins’s death to settle the royalty account, Arrowsmith informed him that he still had 25,000 unwanted copies of the Bristol Library Edition of the story on his hands (5 Oct 1889, BERG; see Peters, 418-9). By then Fargus’s mantle had already passed to Walter Besant, who wrote all the Arrowsmith’s Annuals from 1887 to 1890, presumably with greater financial success.⁶ And in the 1890s many Annuals were produced by the rising young stars of imperial mystery and suspense, including Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Great Shadow* (1892), Anthony Hope’s *The Indiscretion of the Duchess* (1894), and Henry Rider Haggard’s *The Wizard* (1896)--all also reissued as short shilling romances in the Bristol Library.

The Guilty River and *Called Back* have more in common than simply their length, and there are grounds for comparing their narrative contents and strategies. Both center on a love triangle, where one of the male rivals is suddenly handicapped by sensory deprivation, the rejected suitor attempts or commits murder, and the result is a transgressive but finally happy union. In *The Guilty River*, the young landowner Gerard Roylake falls in love with Cristel Toller, the brown buxom daughter of the miller his tenant. To achieve fulfillment, however, he has to counter not only the social disapproval of his step-mother and the neighbouring gentry, but also the extreme jealousy of the miller’s mysterious and nameless lodger, a physician of great beauty and promise who has lost both his hearing and his sanity on discovering that homicide runs in the family. In *Called Back* the rich and independent Gilbert Vaughan hastily marries the pale willowy beauty Pauline March, the half-English daughter of an Italian patriot, only to discover at leisure that she is an

⁵ More generally on the relationship between Collins and Watt, see Law, 100-10.

⁶ Besant’s stories for Arrowsmith were: *Katharine Regina* (1887), *The Inner House* (1888), *The Doubts of Dives* (1889), and *The Demoniac* (1890).

amnesiac with the mental and emotional capacities of a child. Thus, before the union can be consummated, the husband needs to assume the role of detective in order to remove the veil from his wife's past. In doing so he simultaneously comes to understand a mysterious and melodramatic incident in his own youth, at a time when he was struck temporarily by blindness. The villain of the piece is the stiletto-wielding Macari whose desire for Pauline led him to murder her brother, in a traumatic scene strangely witnessed by both Gilbert and Pauline, then unknown to each other but finally happily united.

Although we are told that Collins's hero has been educated on the Continent and his villain's mother was a New World slave, *The Guilty River* is set uniformly and claustrophobically in the gloomy woods crowding the banks of a murky river in middle England, one of those heavily symbolic landscapes familiar from the author's early sensation novels (Cooke, 21). At the same time the social issues raised are deeply embedded in the swamps of class prejudice. In contrast, *Called Back* is keener to exploit stereotypes of national and racial identity. Though revolutionary politics are not themselves a serious issue, political conspiracy in Italy and political exile in Siberia provide an exotic background, so that the narrative can move from London's West End to Old Town Edinburgh on a shrieking express train that looks forward to John Buchan, or indeed switch from Turin to Moscow in jet-setting James Bond style.

Fargus had written *Called Back* in less than six weeks (Arrowsmith, iii), but the aging and ailing Collins got into serious difficulties when he attempted to work to a similar schedule. Publication of *The Guilty River* was arranged for 15 November 1886, with a simultaneous appearance in New York in Harper's Handy Series. Collins had been late finishing *The Evil Genius* in March, only a month or so ahead of the newspaper serialization, and was seriously ill for some time afterwards, so that he only set to work on the Arrowsmith story in August and was still less than half way through in early October. He was forced into working twelve hours a day from the beginning of November to complete the story, and even then unrevised proofs had to be sent to New York to meet the publication deadline.⁷ Partly as a result, the pacing of the two narratives is also markedly different. Fargus's tale in fact gets off to a rather slow and laborious start, but, after the murder scene, increases the grip of suspense inexorably until the release of the dénouement. Collins, in contrast, gets in with a strong opening sequence underlining the *doppelgänger* relationship between hero and villain, but after the failed murder attempt, the narrative loses its way and ends in bathos and confusion. The tale "was spoilt for want of room" as Collins put it in a postscript to a letter to William Winter (30 Jul 1887, Collins, 2:540-2).

⁷ See the letters to Watt, 18 Aug and 10 Oct 1886 (PEMBROKE), and to Harper & Brothers, 6 Nov 1886 (PRINCETON).

The greatest contrast, however, is in narrative tone, as evidenced by the following climactic scenes where both heroes are forced to imbibe an unknown liquid. Collins's hero is made to swallow the antidote to the poisoned tea he has naively drunk, by his lover who is quicker to divine the intentions of the villain:

"Drink it," she said, "if you value your life!"

I should of course have found it perfectly easy to obey her, strange as her language was, if I had been in full possession of myself. Between distress and alarm, my mind (I suppose) had lost its balance. With or without a cause, I hesitated.

She crossed the room, and threw open the window which looked out on the river.

"You shan't die alone," she said. "If you don't drink it, I'll throw myself out!"

I drank from the tumbler to the last drop.

It was not water.

It had a taste which I can compare to no drink, and to no medicine, known to me. I thought of the other strange taste peculiar to the tea. At last, the tremendous truth forced itself on my mind. The man in whom my boyish generosity had so faithfully believed had attempted my life.

(*The Guilty River*, Ch. 13)

Stumbling in his blindness on the scene of the crime, Fargus's hero is made to drink a narcotic by the conspirators before he is restored to freedom:

Presently a curious odour—that of some drug was perceptible. A hand was laid on my shoulder and a glass full of some liquid was placed between my fingers.

"Drink," said the voice—the only voice I had heard.

"I will not," I cried, "it may be poison."

I heard a short harsh laugh and felt a cold metallic ring laid against my forehead.

"It is not poison; it is an opiate and will do you no harm. But this," and as he spoke I felt the pressure of the little iron circlet, "this is another affair. Choose!"

I drained the glass and was glad to feel the pistol moved from my head. "Now," said the spokesman, taking the empty glass from my hand, "if you are a wise man, when you awake tomorrow you will say, 'I have been drunk or dreaming.' You have heard us but not seen us, but remember we know you."

(*Called Back*, Ch. 2)

Though neither tale can bear great claims to enduring literary worth, Fargus's use of language is here undoubtedly more crisp, more concise, more modern. In sum, though Collins attempts intermittently to reproduce the light romance of Fargus's thriller, he is constantly seduced by the attractions of heavy Gothic.

Although *Called Back* represented a key intervention in the market, Arrowsmiths of Bristol were not the only progressive house to explore the economic possibilities of publishing new shorter romances in single volumes at a fraction of the price of a triple-decker. Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story *A Study in Scarlet* appeared at only a shilling as Beeton's Christmas Annual for 1887, while, even earlier, the best-selling tales of adventure which established the reputations of both Stevenson and Haggard appeared as five-shilling volumes from Cassells (*Treasure Island*, 1883, and *King Solomon's Mines*, 1885) or Longmans (*Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 1886, and *She*, 1887). The only new fiction which Collins seems to have read with much enthusiasm during the last years of his life were these adventure stories by Haggard and

Stevenson. The former was also a client of A.P. Watt at this stage, and when Collins's agent sent him copies of the Cassells editions of *King Solomon's Mines* or *Kidnapped* he responded with by then uncharacteristic animation (4 Jan and 29 Jul 1887, PEMBROKE; see Peters, 419-29). However, the failure of *The Guilty River* seems to have discouraged him from any further attempts at writing thrillers himself. While Collins was struggling to complete his assignment for Arrowsmith, Watt was asked whether the author would also write a short romance of the same type for J. & R. Maxwell, the publishing house now run by John Maxwell's two sons. Collins replied that, though he might be "tempted by a five shilling series," if the offer involved "a shilling or two shilling series, then no" (10 Nov 1886, PEMBROKE). *The Legacy of Cain* and *Blind Love*, Wilkie's last two novels, both rather old-fashioned exercises in sensationalism, thus duly appeared as old-fashioned triple-deckers from Chatto and Windus.

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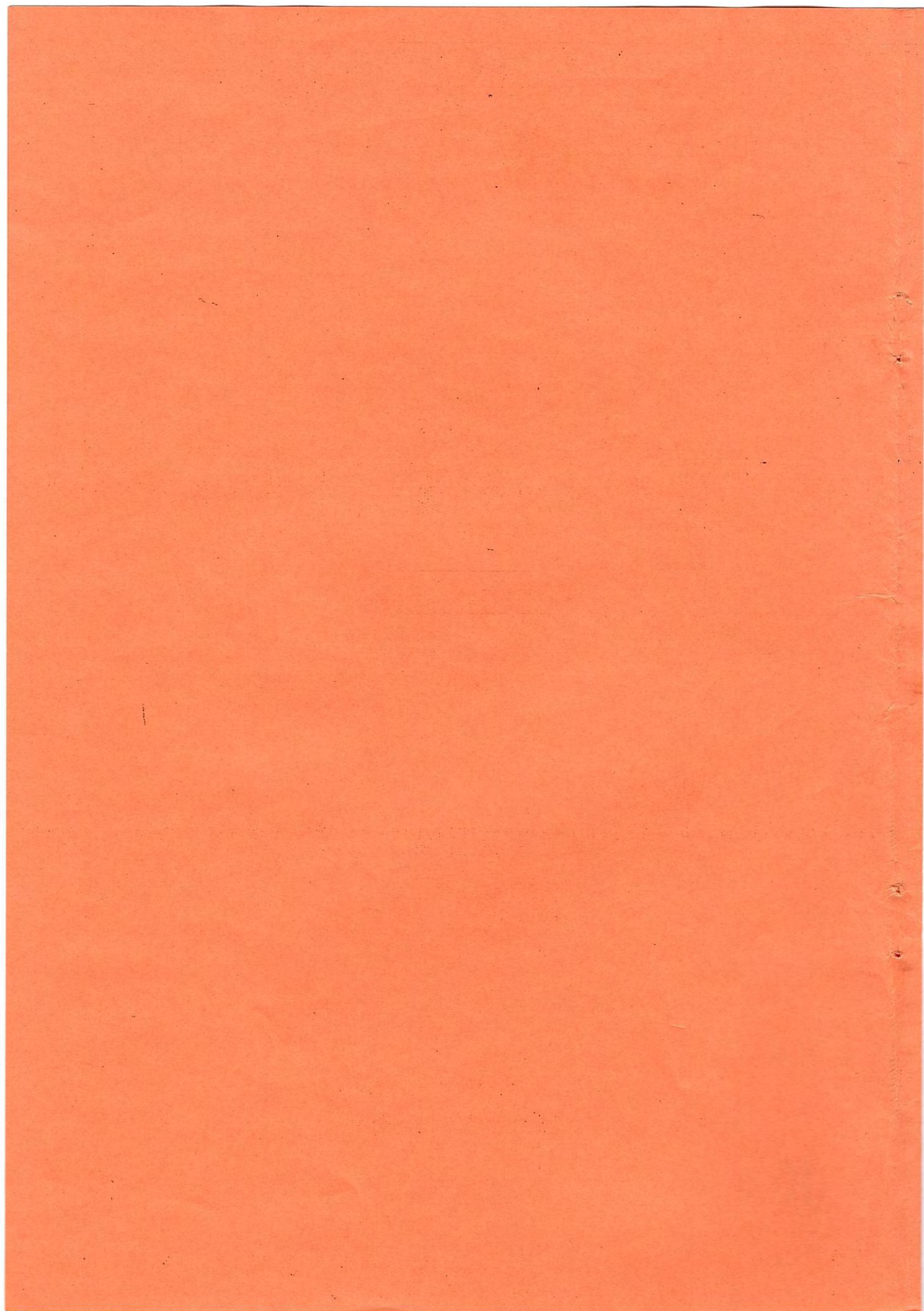
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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



New Series, Volume 4, 2001

Contents

~Articles~

- Her Resolution to Die: "Wayward Women"
and Constructions of Suicide in Wilkie Collins's Crime Fiction*
EMMA LIGGINS 5
- Hunger for Closure in "Lady Audley's Secret" and "Armada"*
NATALIE KAPETANIOS 18
- "A twisted piece of paper ... half-burned upon the hearthrug":
Depictions of Writing in "Lady Audley's Secret"*
RICHARD S. ALLBRIGHT 35

~Reviews~

- The Sensation Novel and the Victorian
Family Magazine*, by Deborah Wynne.
LYN PYKETT 50
- The Fiction of Geopolitics*, by Christopher GoGwilt.
STEVE DILLON 52
- Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*, by Graham Law.
MICHAEL LUND 55
- The Private Rod*, by Marlene Tromp.
MARTHA STODDARD HOLMES 58
- Detective Fiction and the Rise
of Forensic Science*, by Ronald R. Thomas.
GRAHAM LAW 62

Editors' Note

This year's issue of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* foregrounds the importance of Mary Elizabeth Braddon to Victorian studies generally and to Collins studies in particular, with Natalie Kapetanios's comparative approach to the subject of hunger and closure in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Collins's *Armadale*, and Richard S. Albright's article on depictions of writing in Braddon's fiction. Emma Liggins's essay on the intertwined constructions of gender and suicide focuses on Collins's crime fiction, while also revealing the complex relationship between his representation of "wayward women" and those in mid-Victorian suicide reports. With their original and diverse approaches to sensation and crime fiction, these articles testify to the flourishing state of Collins studies, as do the numerous reviews of recent books relevant to Collins that are included in this issue. As these reviews make clear, Collins's growing importance to Victorian studies derives from various sources, and includes the significance of his works to Victorian publishing history, to conceptions of class identity and domestic violence, to the genre of detective fiction and the development of forensic science, and to the discourse of empire and geopolitics. We hope you enjoy reading this collection.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

~~Articles~~

Her Resolution to Die: “Wayward Women” and Constructions of Suicide in Wilkie Collins’s Crime Fiction

Emma Liggins

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Nineteenth-century representations of female suicide exposed a series of contradictory links between women’s waywardness and social class. Whilst suicide reports in the mid-Victorian press tended to emphasize social and medical readings of the crime, Wilkie Collins used the genres of sensation fiction and detective fiction to explore the connections between crime, gender and class, focussing particularly on the sexuality of the suicidal woman. Lyn Pykett has noted the subversive potential of his fiction in terms of its blurring of gender boundaries, so that his “bold, assertive and/or devious and scheming heroines and villainesses” slip between “vulnerable, dependent femininity” and its “disruptive” counterpart (20, 14, 17). In their discussions of his interest in crime and gender, however, most critics have largely ignored his examination of suicidal women, preferring to focus on women who attempt murder, fraud, adultery or bigamy. Collins’s fascination with suicide is indicative of a wider interest in the conventions of crime reporting in the press, and the inclusion of such sensational material became part of his project to extend the limits of what was acceptable in bourgeois fiction. Drawing on contemporary crime reports, he also attempted to think beyond social and medical explanations of female suicide, as his fiction suggests that the links between femininity, sexual frustration and the suicidal impulse must also be examined.

Mid-Victorian suicide reports and wayward femininity

Collins’s novels then draw upon and rewrite contemporary crime reports from the press, which aimed to “explain” female suicide primarily in terms of social deprivation and temporary insanity. Polarized versions of suicide organized around stereotypes of gendered behaviour and anxieties prevailed, as statistically men killed themselves through worries over employment or money, whereas women reacted to sexual or emotional

problems (Anderson, 196). However, women's problems were also often to do with money rather than men. A high proportion of female suicides were young, working-class women, particularly servant girls; explanations such as "misery and privation" (*Illustrated Police News*, 4 June 1870, 3) or being short of money and "in want of food" (*Illustrated Police News*, 20 Feb 1864, 3) were common. Unregulated female sexuality was sometimes emphasized in the reports, which could then reinforce social policies for regulating female waywardness. Entrenched associations between suicide and the fallen woman, popularized in high art, cheap fiction and melodramas, also influenced styles of reporting. A series of famous paintings, such as G.F. Watts's "Found Drowned" (1850), depicted drowned women as erotic spectacles and thus promoted the "seduction to suicide" mythology, which had become "almost clichéd" by the end of the 1860s (Nead, 188, 190-1). Reports increasingly commented on the mental states of women and used telling phrases such as "in a low desponding state of mind" and "her mind weakened" to describe the disposition of suicides; some ended their lives after being advised by doctors to travel for health reasons. Shifts in the definition of insanity, which came to mean "psychological disturbance of a certain kind, rather than brain disease," made it much easier for criminal women to be classified as insane by mid-century, and this had far-reaching effects on legal verdicts (Smith, 149; Gates, 13-14). The "weak" state of women's minds and bodies could then be linked to emotional distress of various kinds, so that narratives of suicide could also reveal women's dissatisfaction with their domestic or marital roles or femininity in general. As Lucia Zedner has argued, female crime at mid-century was considered in relation to "deviance from femininity," as contemporary reports and articles illustrated "the tendency to assess female crime not according to the act committed or the damage done but according to how far a woman's behaviour contravened the norms of femininity" (28).

Whilst crime reports then cited lack of money, derangement, sexual irregularity and dissatisfaction with femininity as possible explanations for female suicide, the wider connections between crime, gender, class and female sexuality were rarely explored. A comparison between two cases of suicide by drowning demonstrates the contradictory messages such reports offered. The first case is the death of Sarah Tubb, taken from a *Times* report of 1835:

It appeared that she was the daughter of respectable parents residing at Hackney, and for several months had been addressed by a young man named Hinsby, who, under promises of marriage, effected her ruin. Such conduct deeply affected the deceased, and finding herself *enceinte*, she absconded from her home, and terminated her existence by drowning herself. After wandering about apparently in great distress of mind, she was observed by a gentleman to throw herself into the river. Hinsby was severely reprimanded

by the coroner and jury, and a verdict was returned, "That the deceased drowned herself while in a state of temporary derangement."

(*The Times*, 23 Mar 1835, 4)

The associations of suicide with unwanted pregnancy had a place in the popular imagination as Olive Anderson has pointed out, although she maintains that such assumptions were contradicted by coroners' reports, which found relatively few female suicides to be pregnant (57, 59). As drowning was generally believed to be the "prostitute's way out," Sarah Tubb's respectability cannot be accounted for, so class issues are diverted onto medico-legal explanations. The verdict of "temporary derangement" nullifies the narrative of female agency; if the woman had been in the right state of mind, it is implied, she would have had second thoughts. In a similar case in the *Illustrated Police News* of 1870, a thirteen-year-old servant, Jane Johnson, "an attractive girl" who had been "taken notice of by gentlemen," is "found drowned" (29 Jan 1870, 4), though medical explanations for her behaviour are never explored. The medical examination reveals that she had been seduced but was not pregnant, which, combined with evidence from other witnesses, lead the coroner to conclude that "no doubt she was fond of gadding about" and "probably ... was averse to work." Perhaps it is her working-class status and sexual precocity which preclude the medical explanation; although Sarah Tubb's pregnancy might be seen as a more comprehensible reason for committing suicide than Jane's dislike of work, her respectability has to be linked to derangement in order to pre-empt discussion of female suicide in the middle classes. Medicalized readings could then rob the act of its social resonances, typically stressing the diminished responsibility of the criminal woman (Smith, 149, 159).

It is also important to consider the different kinds of crime reporting in circulation at mid-century. Although daily newspapers such as *The Times* had become more sensationalized by the 1860s, popular weeklies such as the *Illustrated Police News*, established in 1864, with its lurid illustrated cover and melodramatic style of reporting, fed the public's appetite for scandalous narratives, which can be directly linked to the development of sensation fiction. Anderson suggests that suicide reports aimed at the new lower-middle classes concentrated on "domestic pathos," and that the "uniquely varied readership" of the mid-nineteenth century *Times* "was offered a worldly wise handling which emphasized the odd and the curious" (217). Reporters for *The Times* were less likely to comment on the sexual proclivities of the women involved, often providing shorter reports, which focussed on women's dissatisfaction with their marital roles. In an account of the "Extraordinary Suicide" of Mrs Grenshaw, a barrister's wife (31 May 1864, 12), we are told that whilst her husband has spent the day at the races, returning home "for the purpose of entertaining a party of friends," Mrs

Grenshaw has thrown herself and her child in front of a train on the way to visit relatives. The trend for mothers to commit suicide with their children underlines women's emotional investment in the family and potential anxieties surrounding their roles as wives and mothers. By contrast the *Illustrated London Clipper* of 1874 ran the story of a drunken Bristol prostitute who had taken laudanum after a "fit of depression consequent upon drink" (12 Dec 1874, 3). The woman was featured on the cover in a low-cut dress with no shoes on, gasping for breath, with a terrified client in the bed behind her; the report reinforced the point that "she was not alone" when she was discovered. Such titillating accounts provided a sensationalized alternative to the "domestic pathos" of *The Times*, demonstrating the different narratives of femininity which underpinned mid-century suicide reports.

Another significant aspect of these narratives of femininity was their commentary on female anger, often interpreted as derangement or waywardness rather than as a sign of women's dissatisfactions with their roles. The treatment of the suicidal tendencies of a young domestic servant described in *The Times* of January 1864 bears out these assertions. The "Wilful Woman" refusing to eat or move from the covered passage of a tollgate in Gainsborough is tested for insanity, "for in the event of her being pronounced deranged, the relieving officer would have the power to remove her by force, but, on an examination taking place, no evidence of insanity could be detected" (26 Jan 1864, 9). Arguably, it is only because her suicide attempt is prevented that she escapes the label; her history of suicide attempts, "fits of anger" and "a most ungovernable temper" can then be attributed to wilfulness, and the alternative explanation of female dissatisfaction edited out. Suicide is then potentially concealed because of the narrative of female anger which it may publicize; threats to the social order are dissipated by the control of women's violent inclinations. Moreover, no attempts were made to examine the links between this anger or dissatisfaction and women's social positions; as both servants and more respectable women exhibited this behaviour, it was taken to be indicative of a particular kind of femininity which might foster suicidal tendencies, rather than anything to do with class. The two women charged by the police for attempting to take their own lives in July 1861 were of contrasting social groups, but were specifically figured as representative by their unconventional behaviour. The class differences between the two women are then elided, as their suicide attempts brand them as "wayward women," reacting against a set of social restrictions common to all women. Ellen Greenwood who had taken laudanum was "well-known to the police" having been "several times charged at this court as a disorderly prostitute" (*The Times*, 29 July 1861, 11). The other woman being charged, Ann Herring, is from a "highly respectable family." The reporter's explanation that the parents "had done all they could to keep her at home; but she was very wayward and would not stop with them" privileges feminine waywardness over respectable femininity as an explanation for suicide. No

connection is established between respectability and the suicidal impulse; rather, Ann Herring becomes tainted with the judgement passed on Ellen Greenwood, as her waywardness is an alternative manifestation of the prostitute's disorder. Two short reports in the *Illustrated Police News* in 1874 about the drowning of respectably dressed women also failed to reconcile preconceptions about female suicide with middle-class femininity; no possible explanation is offered for why one of these "determined" women might be "crying bitterly, and ... in a very excited state" (3 Jan 1874, 2; see also 20 June 1874, 3), though unusually, since it wasn't a very sensational case, she was pictured on the front cover of the issue in her distracted state on the Thames Embankment. At a time when the families of suicides, particularly those from respectable families, tried as hard as possible to conceal them (Jalland, 70), the social stigma of the crime and the potential narrative of class dissatisfaction are separated out from the middle class.

With his first-hand knowledge of the legal system and his developing interest in the female criminal, Collins made an important contribution to these debates about the causes of female suicide. In the following section I argue that his fiction of the 1860s and 1870s incorporated key developments in medico-legal perceptions of the crime, casting doubt on dominant mythologies of femininity authorized by contemporary crime reports. Changes in the law regarding suicide over the century reflected a growing leniency towards perpetrators, who came to be regarded and classified in terms of mental illness or responses to the changing urban environment rather than sin and criminality. From the 1860s onwards suicide was perceived to be more of a social problem than a crime (Gates, 60). Collins also refused to accept the labelling of suicidal women as simply mad or sexually indiscreet, addressing issues such as the connections between respectability and the suicidal impulse, and the psychology of servant girls, which contemporary crime reports usually avoided. The detective plot also enabled the reworking of ideologies of female sexuality by allowing suicidal women to tell their own stories. The narratives of female anger and dissatisfaction provided for the reader attempt to locate female waywardness or derangement in the social conditions of both servants and respectable women, complicating social and medical explanations for the crime.

Collins's portrayal of female suicides

In his fiction Collins focuses on suicides which elude easy interpretation in terms of class or sanity, highlighting the ways in which women's violence exposes their dissatisfaction with middle-class marriage as well as their unacknowledged sexual desires. His characteristic use of women's letters, diaries and testimonies alongside supposedly more "authoritative" and controlled male narratives ensures that their dissatisfaction is not always

mediated through male narrators. However, women's narratives are frequently "edited" and hence distorted before the reader has access to them, as detectives and members of the family conspire to produce acceptable versions of femininity. Gates suggests that suicide as a topic appealed to Collins "both because it was subversive and because it was an ultimate test of character" (Gates, 57), bringing into play questions of motivation, concealment and secrecy which were essential to the sensation text and detective fiction.¹ It also allowed him to focus on the links between femininity and appearance. Women's anxieties about their looks are frequently cited as a contributory factor to their decisions to kill themselves as the lack of male appreciation of the female body precipitates violence. Questions of social identity, however, can never be entirely excluded from classifications of the crime, as the suicidal impulse jars with contemporary codes of middle-class femininity.

In *The Moonstone* (1868), Rosanna Spearman's working-class credentials seem to perpetuate many of the assumptions about the social causes of the suicidal impulse: she is a prostitute's daughter with a criminal past, now working in domestic service. However, like many of Collins's women, her social identity is not fixed, as she has "just a dash of something that wasn't like a housemaid, and that *was* like a lady, about her" (55). Yet her death seems to underline her social position rather than question it, as if she has internalized the codes of the popular reading of her class—Jane Johnson, the servant girl "found drowned," also appears to have been influenced by sensational stories about women in distress (*Illustrated Police News*, 29 Jan 1870, 4). Though Rosanna Spearman has not been seduced, she has been sexually rejected by Franklin Blake and is obsessed with his "indifference" to her: we are told "it never seemed to occur to him to waste a look on Rosanna's plain face" (92). Despite this comment on the invisibility of Victorian servants and the futility of cross-class desire, her actions have to be explained in terms of wayward femininity, rather than class dissatisfaction. Servants may play crucial roles in crime plots in terms of providing clues and testimonies, but they are still treated as nobodies within the Victorian household and their sexualities either ignored or misunderstood (Trodd, 8, 66). Avoiding an examination of the sexuality of servants, both the police and Rosanna herself seek to explain her "mysterious conduct" in terms of derangement and feminine irrationality: "Is such madness as this to be accounted for?" (376). Rosanna's suicidal impulse should also be linked to the accusation of theft and the threat of exposure of her criminal past; similar cases in the press detail the suicide

¹ Gates claims that Collins became more interested in the issue of male suicide as he got older, particularly after the suicide of his close friend, the artist Edward Matthew Ward. Her analysis includes a discussion of the novel "*I Say No*", published in three volumes in 1884, which deals with the concealment of the suicide of a man suffering from unrequited love.

attempts of “disorderly” women imprisoned for theft or felony (*Illustrated Police News*, 19 Feb 1870, 30 May 1874, 3). Although the official explanation is derangement, Collins also characteristically draws our attention to the social causes involved, implying that Rosanna’s suicide comments on her anomalous position as an ex-criminal servant girl.

Where Collins deviates more obviously from the conventions of the crime report is in his inclusion of a detailed suicide note offering the woman’s own explanation of her death, a technique he was to utilize in other novels to question contemporary interpretations of the act. Rather than endorsing perceptions of suicide as an entirely social problem, his examination of women’s narratives and their misinterpretations implied that violence against the self could be read as an act of female defiance and a pertinent comment on women’s experiences of sexual rejection and frustration. This subtext is endorsed by Betteredge who observes that the suicide note allows her to “speak for herself” (361) after being constantly classified by others. Rosanna’s note seems on the surface to tell a predictable tale of class inferiority and jealousy of her pretty employer, yet it develops to detail the feelings of “degradation” and “loneliness” of a crippled ex-criminal trying to be a “reformed woman” and hence stranded between clashing versions of femininity. She ponders “which it would be hardest to do . . . to bear Mr Franklin Blake’s indifference to me, or to jump into the quicksand and end it for ever in that way?” (374). Although the reader is aware of her feelings from reading the note in its entirety, Franklin himself is able to bear neither her recriminations nor her desire and only reads half of the narrative, signalling men’s failure to confront the links between suicide and femininity.² Trodd argues that this is a typical scenario in Collins’s crime fiction where “upper-class young men do their best to distance themselves from the nightmare narratives of the female servants, putting them away, giving them to other people to read” (86). She claims that such “genteel characters” offer “a behavioural guide to the reader” who should react to such sensational stories by “rejecting them, reading them selectively, [and] refusing the narrators their desired response” (95). However, this does not take sufficient account of the gendered implications of the rejections of such “nightmare narratives” of female distress. I would suggest that, far from encouraging readers to adopt the male stance of cruel

² Catherine Peters (310) has noted the changes in the manuscript version of this scene, which imply that Collins is trying to alert the reader to Blake’s indifference. Originally Blake is overcome by remorse; part of the deleted passage reads: “I had cast on another – for all I knew as innocent as I was – the unendurable slur that had been cast on me. And there was the answer of the woman whose memory I had slandered. ‘I love you’.” Peters suggests that “the published version, by omitting this, reduces Blake’s insight, making him a harder and less sympathetic character . . . His inability to confront the reality of Rosanna’s love makes the reader indignant, and is meant to.”

indifference to women's suicidal impulses, Collins is in effect urging them to reconsider medico-legal explanations of the crime and to consider the alternative explanations of class dissatisfaction or sexual rejection. Rosanna's case suggests that the suicides of servant girls do not always adhere to the stereotypes of sensational narratives, but may reveal alternative accounts of working-class female sexuality.

Women's voices are then employed to contest notions of suicide as motivated solely by derangement and to prompt a reexamination of the uncertainties of female social and sexual identity. As Margaret Higonnet has argued, "To take one's life is to force others to read one's death" (68), not to signal one's loss of sanity. In *Armada* (1866) and *The Law and the Lady* (1875), the deaths of middle-class women need to be read in terms of the relationship between respectability, female desire and the suicidal impulse. Lydia, the criminal heroine of *Armada*, has risen from her lowly origins as a lady's maid through a career of fraud and bigamy to become the wife of the middle-class Midwinter, intending to use him as a pawn in her latest scheme. Her transgressive nature is however checked by her love for her husband as "the strong, resourceful, independent woman is made vulnerable and dependent by sexual desire and romantic love" (Pykett, 27). Lydia's nature is marked both by her criminal intentions and her uncontrollable sexuality, making her a prime candidate for feminine waywardness. By staging her own suicide by drowning, she draws on sensational narratives of men's perfidy: "Does a woman not love, when the man's hardness to her drives her to drown herself?" (490). But her rehearsal of the role of prostitute-victim is not convincing, as it jars with her respectable appearance: "though most respectably dressed, she had nevertheless described herself as being 'in distress'" and persisted in "telling a commonplace story, which was manifestly an invention" (80). The middle-class suicidal woman, however wayward, threatens received conceptions of respectable behaviour and her story then becomes distorted, as the public refuses to confront the combination of "respectability" and "distress".

Expectations about suicide and femininity are however endorsed in the conclusion of the novel where Lydia's death is represented in terms of medical control of female wilfulness. Far from achieving the great murder that has been her motivating force throughout *Armada*, her final scene is a successful staging of her own death, a triumph in a different kind of crime. The female suicide is a more acceptable model of the criminal woman than the murderess. As Lydia's restlessness is channelled into suicide, it gradually coalesces with the madness she must dissemble in Doctor le Doux's Sanatorium. As Higonnet argues, "to medicalize suicide is to feminize it" (70), where the suicidal female body can be read as a sign of woman's passivity and tenuous grip on selfhood. Although this might seem to contradict Collins's attitudes to medical explanations of suicide, it seems that he is exploring the ease with which women's dissatisfactions can be

(mis)read as derangement, which can then be regulated. In both Collins's novels, the use of poisons such as laudanum and arsenic is given a specifically feminine appeal. Both Lydia and Sara in *The Law and the Lady* take sleeping-draughts or laudanum to calm their nerves; Sara is confined to her bed for most of the novel, suffering from a rheumatic complaint which requires constant medication. The overdoses of poison they take can be seen as a "cure" for female waywardness, which will keep them quiet. As Lydia accepts Dr le Doux's invitation, she enters the Sanatorium "in the most unimpeachable of all possible characters . . . in the character of a Patient" (618). The doctor gambles on the female appropriation of this role; Lydia's boast, "I shall be your patient in earnest! . . . I shall be the maddest of the mad" (631) sounds ominous in the context of earlier textual evidence of behaviour that could be labelled as "deranged." Moreover, the doctor's cursory summary of Lydia's situation to one of the visitors—"Shattered nerves—domestic anxiety . . . Sweet woman! sad case!" (636)—depicts her as a stereotypical female suicide, suffering from nervous illness, a much more plausible story than the revelation that she is planning to murder a man she will claim was her husband. Taking medication was always seized on in crime reports as evidence of "temporary insanity" or mental illness; Collins is then illustrating some of the ways in which female suicide was medicalized.

However, in order to counter such readings, Collins also locates the female suicidal impulse within women's marital dissatisfactions, focussing here on the sexuality of the middle-class woman edited out of contemporary crime reports. Like Rosanna, Sara in *The Law and the Lady* is obsessed with her appearance, categorizing herself as "that next worst thing myself to a deformity – a plain woman" (388). The fear of arousing male disgust is seen as an important aspect of her suicidal tendencies and her final wish, that she had been a "prettier woman" (394) poignantly evokes the cultural obsession with female beauty as a guarantor of sexual fulfilment. What partly precipitates her death is the fact that she has been cruelly given her husband's diary by her admirer, Miserrimus Dexter, to fuel her distrust of Eustace, the implication being that if wives were to gain access to their husband's secret thoughts, they would kill themselves. The diary then reveals the secret of Eustace's sexual disgust for Sara, encouraging her to believe that she has failed to live up to the requirements of a "good wife" and therefore destroying her faith in her sexual identity.³ It is also significant that the connection between suicide and insanity seems to have weakened by this stage, as Sara's mental state is not classified in terms of madness. Her nurse testifies that she has a "detestable temper" which was

³ In her reading of the novel, Jenny Bourne Taylor comments on the ambiguity of Sara's character and notes her similarities with Rosanna Spearman. She argues that both women are disturbing because they represent "passionate female sexuality that is not the object of male desire" (Collins, *The Law and the Lady*, xxi-ii).

“made still more irritable by unhappiness in her married life” (128), where it is the anger at the behaviour of men rather than women’s mental instabilities which is being recognized as a possible explanation for the act. This may reflect shifts in public opinion towards greater tolerance of suicides and awareness of alternative classifications than insanity. Like the angry and bad-tempered women described in some suicide reports, Sara seems to be exhibiting symptoms of depression, a term actually cited in several cases from the 1870s (*Illustrated London Clipper*, 12 Dec 1874, 3; *Illustrated Police News*, 8 Jan 1870, 4). This was often coupled with the verdict that such women were of “an unsound state of mind,” that is, suffering from mental illness, rather than being certifiably insane, as developments in psychiatry contributed to new ways of classifying suicidal women.

By 1875, Collins was also reflecting changes in perceptions of suicide by stressing the determination and anger of the female suicide. Sara’s death in *The Law and the Lady* is represented as an attempt to secure her husband’s desire, a sacrifice made easy in the knowledge of unrequited love. The suicide note earnestly solicits his gaze, imploring him to look at the dead body of a woman his eyes have always avoided:

The poison will have its use at last. It might have failed to improve my complexion. It will not fail to relieve you of your ugly wife. Don't let me be examined after death. Show this letter to the doctor who attends me. It will tell him that I have committed suicide; it will prevent any innocent person from being suspected of poisoning me. I want nobody to be blamed or punished ... You have just gone, after giving me my composing draught. My courage failed me at the sight of you. I thought to myself, “If he looks at me kindly, I will confess what I have done, and let him save my life.” You never looked at me at all. You only looked at the medicine.

(Collins, *The Law and the Lady*, 392-3)

In this scenario the husband’s gaze is privileged over its medical equivalent as Sara shrinks from the prying eyes of the attending doctor. There is an underlying suggestion that she does not desire to be subjected to a post-mortem to ascertain the cause of death, so that her note is designed to remove such a legal requirement and preserve the appearance of the body. Lydia, too, imagines the viewing of her dead body by men: “Shall I jump out? No, it disfigures one so, and the coroner’s inquest lets so many people see it” (434). By taking a very high dosage of a poison meant to improve the appearance, the text suggests that Sara believes her body will at last be noticed, “The poison will have its use.” Later in the suicide note she writes of “my resolution to die” (393) using the word Collins deployed throughout his fiction to symbolize self-will and determination. Female suicides in the press were often described as “determined” or “deliberate,” reinforcing the

idea of female agency and anger, rather than waywardness. This implies that, notwithstanding medical readings, female suicide could be valorized as an important act of self-assertion, a sign of female dissatisfaction.

Concealing female suicide

And yet this greater tolerance is also often only achieved through misrepresentation, as women's suicides were still perceived to be scandalous occurrences, which needed to be concealed. Medical readings of female suicide as accidental occur in Gustave Flaubert's influential novel, *Madame Bovary* (1857), as Emma Bovary's act of self-destruction is represented as a domestic accident—that of mistaking arsenic for sugar—in order to minimize the risk of scandal and social stigma. As female suicides were constantly misrepresented as murders, accidental deaths or deaths from natural causes and illnesses, the interpretation of the woman's life necessitated by the act is often distorted. When, in *Armada*, Lydia's body is discovered in the Sanatorium, her story has also been changed and her death medicalized, her suicide note retained by Midwinter and thus kept from public knowledge:

There is not the least doubt that the miserable woman (however she might have come by her death) was found dead - that a coroner's inquest inquired into the circumstances—that the evidence showed her to have entered the house as a patient—and that the medical investigation ended in discovering that she had died of apoplexy.

(Collins, *Armada*, 671)

In this extract the circumstances and evidence are structured around her entrance into the Sanatorium as a "patient" and the medical diagnosis of apoplexy. The suicide note which cites marital dissatisfaction as a major cause of her death is never publicised but retained by a remorseful husband—though it is significant that the addressee of the note does read it in its entirety in this instance. Collins's interest in the suicides of married women ensures that Lydia's posthumous advice to Midwinter locates her death in the recognition of her inadequacy as a wife and her inability to rise above her lower social origins:

Forget me, my darling, in the love of a better woman than I am. I might, perhaps have been that better woman myself, if I had not lived a miserable life before you met with me.

(Collins, *Armada*, 665-6)

The use of the adjective “miserable” in both the explanation of her death and the note expresses her status as both victim and working-class woman. It is in part a confession of Lydia’s criminal tendencies and her admission that they are inappropriate for marriage: “you will know what a wretch you married when you married the woman who writes these lines” (666). Paradoxically, the explanation reinforces the class-based assumptions Collins sought to deconstruct, as if her death does fix her into her forgotten social identity. The potential links between respectability and suicide are given scant attention, as the self-murder of respectable women could not easily be assimilated into received ideas of female behaviour.

The categorization of the death as a suicide is also avoided for Sara. The plot revolves around Valeria’s desire to disprove that her husband murdered his first wife and the unsettling of gender categories produced by the revelation that Sara poisoned herself. As the reconstruction of Sara’s suicide note provides the true explanation, she becomes complicit in the silencing of the scandal of female suicide: “my one desire was to hide it from the public view!” (395). As Barbara Gates has attested, “The true secret of [the novel] is that rejection in love followed by suicide is a verdict more terrible than murder not proven” (57). As in *The Moonstone*, women’s “nightmare narratives” are only discovered and pieced together by detectives who then become instrumental in concealing the implications of their discoveries, dismissing the evidence of women’s anger, desire and emotional distress in order to preserve ideologies of wayward femininity. Eustace takes his second wife’s advice and never reads Sara’s final pleas for forgiveness and recognition, remaining untouched by her anger. Both novels then imply that the narratives of women’s suicidal impulses and the connections between middle-class marriage and the loss of female identity are hidden from the public view so that the threat of “disruptive” femininity can be contained (Pykett, 22).⁴

Rather than offering the expected comment on the sexual irregularities of lower-class women, fictional representations of female suicides often expressed women’s dissatisfactions and anger, which medicine and the law struggled to explain. The difficulties of interpreting the deaths of all three women in Collins’s novels testify to the inadequacies of explaining the act of violence purely in terms of class or insanity. Serving to undermine prevalent assumptions about the wayward femininity of suicidal women, Collins’s plots address issues around respectability, the experience of servants, middle-class marriage, and depression, responding to changes in ways of thinking about self-destruction. It was perhaps his

⁴ This is adapted from Pykett’s argument about *The Woman in White*, in which she suggests that the conclusions of his texts typically function by “containing disruptive femininity.” This means that transgressive women, who refuse to honour the boundaries of the proper feminine, are kept under control.

focus on the suicidal impulses of respectable women which was most radical; as Gates argues, “[he] was sensational because he pointed out to the bourgeoisie that suicide among them was more pervasive than they cared to believe” (59). Unlike the silent women who are the subjects of the sensationalized narratives in the press, Collins’s women are given the chance to tell their own stories in the detailed suicide notes, despite attempts to conceal the evidence of their crimes.

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Hunger for Closure in *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armada*

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In the mid-nineteenth century, in an attempt to regulate the behavior of the newly enlarged novel-reading population, one of the ways literary critics in England discussed reading was to conceptualize it in terms of eating.¹ The problem critics were addressing was that people were both writing and reading novels compulsively, and the urgency with which critics reacted to this phenomenon was commensurate with the reading public's fervor for the next installment or volume of the latest commercial success. The sensation novel posed a particular problem for critics, who acted as moral guardians. The prevailing argument circulating in periodicals in the 1860s was that the sensation novel's lack of moral substance would leave the reader hungry for another novel, and that the sensation novel would therefore predominate as the public's preferred genre of reading. In other words, critics feared that since readers "devoured" novels that did not "nourish," they would "hunger for another" of the same kind ("The Vice of Reading," 253).

In this essay, I argue that the eating tropes that recur in Victorian criticism of the sensation novel were more than merely a convenient means for critics to express the sensation novel's moral shortcomings. By examining Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1861-62) and Wilkie Collins's *Armada* (1864-66), I suggest that the language of hunger captures a subtlety of the way in which sensation novels were written: they tend to leave readers' expectations for closure unfulfilled. While critics appealed to eating tropes in order to constrain readers' preferences for sensation novels, in their fiction Braddon and Collins used this very metaphorical language based in hunger, I suggest, in an effort to *inspire* in readers longings for plot details. They did so by using associations related to eating as part of a larger system of formal organization; that is, they

¹ For a general theoretical discussion of the metaphor of reading as eating, see Radway. For Victorian considerations of this metaphor, see Flint or Gilbert. In addition to offering a comprehensive inquiry into Victorian critics' belief in the addictive and diseased qualities of the sensation novel, Gilbert offers a reevaluation of the generic organization of *Lady Audley's Secret*.

made the development of plot dependent, in large part, upon eating scenes and used the ingestion of food as a plot device for figuring the intake of knowledge. An analysis of Braddon's and Collins's novels within the framework of Victorian critics' use of eating tropes illuminates an important relationship between literary critical discourse and novelistic practice. For at issue in both genres was the reading public's imagination, a faculty that critics and novelists alike attempted to capture.

The important difference between literary critical and novelistic concerns, however, is that the insatiable hunger that critics were identifying as a problem with the content of the sensation novel was a function of the narrative structure of deferral that the practice of serialization made both possible and profitable for novelists. It was in Braddon's and Collins's economic best interest to maintain and renew readers' curiosity, which they figured as hunger, both during the serialization of individual novels and throughout their *oeuvre*. In suggesting that Braddon and Collins developed the trope of hunger as a narrative technique in response to the exigencies and opportunities of serialization, this essay contributes to recent work on Victorian publication history.² First, I discuss *Lady Audley's Secret* as a seminal sensation novel regarding the trope of hunger in order to suggest that Braddon and her critics, in their different ways, shared an assumption about reading. Later in the essay, I argue that by the time Collins wrote *Armadale*, when the critical discourse of reading as eating was circulating widely in periodicals, hunger had not only become a predominant trope in writing *about* the sensation novel but also a convention of the genre.

“The taste [for sensation novels] grows on that which feeds it”

“Intoxicating Reading,” *English Woman's Journal*

Braddon was certainly aware of her contemporaries' use of a discourse relating to eating to discuss popular fiction. At times, in her letters and journal articles vindicating popular fiction, Braddon herself uses language related to eating. In an often-quoted letter to Bulwer-Lytton she recognizes the difficulties of “reconciling literary values with market demands” (Robinson, 112):

I have learnt to look at everything in a mercantile sense, & to write solely for the circulating library reader, whose palette [sic] requires strong meat, & is not very particular as to the quality thereof.

([May 1863], reprinted in Wolff, 14)

² For a discussion of Braddon's publication strategies, see Carnell and Law, who point out that Braddon's productivity was not simply a matter of financial necessity. For a discussion of Collins and the practice of serialization, see Law.

Through both deferring closure and selectively providing closure, Braddon, an author of over eighty novels, capitalizes on one of the assumptions about reading behind critics' fear that readers would have an insatiable hunger for sensation novels: the idea that an individual novel is part of something greater than itself. As Linda Hughes and Michael Lund point out in *The Victorian Serial*, it was very likely that Victorian readers were reading more than one novel at once; furthermore, "each individual text in its separate monthly part, single volume, or periodical installment was surrounded by other stories" (9). Braddon uses the manifold nature of Victorian reading practices to her advantage, as a strategy to keep readers interested in not only her next installment of *Lady Audley's Secret* but also in her next novel. Considering *Lady Audley's Secret* according to Braddon's assumptions about reading enables me to reevaluate the critical commonplace that the novel ends inadequately.

By repeating promised eating scenes that seem designed to facilitate closure, Braddon borrows the connotations of hunger for food and satiety of appetite to figure the process of gaining knowledge about stories.³ Early in *Lady Audley's Secret*, one of the secrets that the novel strives to disclose—who is Lady Audley and what has she done?—is on the verge of being narrated by means of a proposed dinner at Audley Court. The invited guests are Robert Audley and his friend George Talboys, who are staying at an inn in the town of Audley. When Sir Michael invites the two men over for dinner, Lady Audley lazily echoes his suggestion: "You will come and dine with us to-morrow, and bring your interesting friend?" (55). As the word "to-morrow" indicates, Lady Audley desperately wants to put off meeting Robert's "interesting friend," particularly under the watchful eyes of her family. For at the proposed collective meal at Audley Court, George would see that his wife Helen Talboys has taken a new identity as Lucy Audley, and the other characters—and the reader—would realize that Lady Audley is a bigamist. However, Lady Audley's life as an upper-class woman depends upon her secret being kept from the Audley family; the "advantageous match" that she has made with Sir Michael has ensured her "no more dependence, no more drudgery, no more humiliations" (12). Furthermore, she is enamored of the fine things she has acquired through her marriage—things such as clothing, art, and jewelry.⁴ Lady Audley therefore must avoid this dinner, which her husband, Sir Michael, repeatedly proposes. Paradoxically, deferral is an immediate means by which she can avoid arousing suspicion.

³ Narrative theorists in general, as well as critics discussing this novel in particular, have conceptualized readers' and characters' drive for closure in terms of desire. See Gilbert, "Madness", or Nemesvari.

⁴ For a discussion of Lady Audley as consumer, see Montwieler.

Like Lady Audley, Braddon's narrative needs to delay this dinner. For Braddon, however, deferral works because it *creates* suspicion and, at the same time, creates a story to tell. If the dinner at Audley Court were to occur, the story of Lady Audley's identity would be told in the first volume of the novel, and there would be no need for a continued story. In contemporary critical language, since it would "answer the specified narrative question," the secret is what D.A. Miller would call a "nonnarratable element" because of its "incapacity to generate a story" (5). In economic terms, this revelation would inhibit the possibility of Braddon's selling future installments and further volumes. Therefore, in order to ensure that the dinner will not take place as planned, that Lady Audley's life as an upper-class woman will remain intact, and that the narrative will continue, Braddon has Lady Audley instigate a plan by which she will receive during breakfast a telegram calling her away from town the day of the dinner. Lady Audley's plan having been carried out successfully, Braddon indicates: "So the dinner at Audley Court was postponed, and Miss Alicia had to wait still longer for an introduction to the handsome young widower, Mr. George Talboys" (61). The postponement of the dinner and, consequently, of the formal, public introduction of George and Lady Audley, means that the reader will have "to wait still longer" for closure. As Braddon is well aware, in the paradigm she establishes, the hunger, or curiosity, that begins with the deferral of the proposed dinner leads to even more hunger for the characters and the reader.

"What could there be so extraordinary in the simple fact of a gentleman being late for his dinner?"

Landlord at the Sun Inn, *Lady Audley's Secret*

Since the proposed dinner at Audley Court does not take place, someone needs to take steps to expose the secret the dinner would have revealed. The person who does so, Robert, loves dinners. In fact, it is Robert's hearty appetite that is partially responsible for leading him to Audley Court and for bringing George to the site of the narrative action. Throughout the course of the novel, Braddon narrates Robert's conversion from eater to investigator largely by means of his changing appetite;⁵ she structures the many scenes in which Robert is faced with a choice between eating and finding knowledge about Lady Audley and George such that Robert at first halfheartedly confronts food and then eagerly turns to his pursuit of knowledge. Since, as Patrick Brantlinger points out, "once detection begins, the information supplied to the reader tends to be reduced to the information discovered by the detective" (45), the reader's experience of coming to know the novel's secrets parallels Robert's

⁵ For a discussion of Robert's developing identity as a barrister, see Petch.

investigation. Robert eventually becomes so involved in the pursuit of facts that he prefers gratifying his curiosity to satisfying his appetite, and his experience of trying to discover the secret becomes associated with hunger and its extreme form, starvation. This metaphorical substitution of reading for eating suggests that while Robert has lost his appetite for food, he nonetheless retains an intense appetite. As the *OED* records, the word “anorexia,” which in its most common usage means want of appetite, has an alternative meaning: “to reach after, to desire.” As a metaphorical anorexic, Robert “reach[es] after,” or hungers for, knowledge regarding George’s fate. The identification that Braddon creates between Robert and the reader is the key to her metaphorical system, for it tells the reader how to feel: the reader should feel as Robert feels—hungry—for this is a trope for wanting more knowledge.

The metaphor of hunger is, however, something that Braddon experiments with at a price. To make use of it successfully, she must appear to provide the reader with a definitive answer to the question of Lady Audley’s mysterious behavior regarding the dinner. She does so in the final pages of the novel when Lady Audley finally confesses “the story of [her] life” to Sir Michael and Robert in the library at dinner time (347). To the extent that this timing symbolically transforms the details that Lady Audley provides into food, it suggests that the reader’s hunger is being satisfied. After all, Lady Audley discloses quite a bit: she reveals that her mother was mad, that she married George, that she feigned her identity, that she faked her death, and that she believes she killed George. Yet secrecy and hunger are nonetheless intertwined, this time through the experience of Alicia, who anxiously awaits the family in the dining room. Alicia remarks: “Is papa coming to dinner? . . . I’m so hungry; and poor Tomlins has sent up three times to say the fish will be spoiled” (360). This dinner-time confession provides an incomplete, or fragmented, denouement to the novel. While it addresses questions about Lady Audley’s identity, it does not fill all of the narrative lacks, especially the crucial matter of George’s fate.⁶

The rest of the story is left for George himself to narrate over a shared meal with Robert in a chapter entitled “Restored.” During this meal, the final complete meal of the novel, George supplies the missing pieces of the story: how he escaped from the well and where he has been all these months. As the parallel between George’s presence and this shared meal suggests, Robert is no longer hungry; his patient hunger is rewarded by George, knowledge, and food simultaneously. To emphasize further the satiety in Robert’s story, the final chapter jumps forward two years from the shared meal between Robert and George to a reunion of the principal

⁶ Many sensation novels employ this strategy of providing a semblance of closure to the novel’s primary mysteries, at the same time leaving an undercurrent of unanswered questions about larger concepts such as gender, fate, or madness.

characters of the novel in a “fairy cottage” (445). The concluding domestic image of Clara and Alicia summoning the gentlemen to “drink tea, and eat strawberries and cream upon the lawn” demonstrates that in Robert’s circle of friends and family no one is left hungry (446). Moreover, the alignment throughout the novel between the reader’s appetite and Robert’s encourages the reader to feel satisfied as well.

The logic of hunger—in which an absence can be filled by the presence of what was missing—may seem to simplify the logic of narrative suspense. If hunger can suddenly go away after a meal, are there limitations to a narrative paradigm drawn from associations related to eating? The answer is that hunger does not simply disappear. Rather, according to the language that Victorian critics used, hunger for the sensation novel is ever-renewing—much to their dismay. The author of “Penny Fiction” reflects the notion that the sensation novel as a genre tends toward problematic closure in the following remark: “the popular appetite for it seems to be practically inexhaustible” (164). This conception of hunger speaks to a complexity in the closure of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, which is also a function of Braddon’s elaborate plotting. Just as the narrative structure works through a network of substitutions between eating and knowing, this final chapter fulfills one appetite, or story, at the expense of another. Braddon satiates Robert’s hunger and completes his story. But with respect to Lady Audley’s story, the reader’s hunger remains.⁷ Lady Audley’s death of *maladie de langueur*, or wasting disease, not only symbolizes the lingering hunger in her story but also constitutes an insufficiently narrated plot event.

In skipping ahead two years and presenting the domestic rewards of Robert’s investigative efforts, Braddon elides Lady Audley’s experience at Villebrumeuse, the *maison de santé* to which Robert brings her after her confession. Although Braddon accounts in advance for this lapse in narration—“However verbose I may be in my description of her feelings, I can never describe a tithe of her thoughts or her sufferings” (314)—contemporary critics of the novel have not found this reasoning satisfying. As Chiara Briganti explains, “even though the mystery of George’s disappearance has been solved . . . the mystery continues to circulate” (“Gothic Maidens,” 189). This continued circulation of mystery, beyond the confines of this individual novel, is effective for Braddon, for if readers wanted to know more about Lady Audley’s feelings, thoughts, and sufferings they could read *Aurora Floyd*, which she was working on while finishing *Lady Audley’s Secret*. In his survey of the sensation genre, H.L. Mansel crystallizes the idea that a writer’s characters are interchangeable:

⁷ Pamela Gilbert makes a similar observation in “Madness and Civilization: Generic Opposition in Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*.” She suggests that Braddon’s focus on Robert’s narrative occludes Lady Audley’s experience.

“Aurora Floyd, as a character, is tame after Lady Audley. The ‘beautiful fiend,’ intensely wicked, but romantic from the very intensity of her wickedness, has degenerated into a fast young lady, full of stable talk . . .” (492). Even as Mansel writes to contrast the heroines, he assumes that one character easily metamorphoses into another.

Braddon conveys the premise motivating this conception of character, the idea that stories or books blend together. In further defense of her refusal to describe Lady Audley’s feelings, she explains:

She suffered agonies that would fill closely printed volumes, bulky with a thousand pages, in that one horrible night. She underwent volumes of anguish, and doubt, and perplexity; sometimes repeating the same chapters of her torments over and over again; sometimes hurrying through a thousand pages of her misery without one pause, without one moment of breathing time.

(Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, 314)

This passage raises issues that are important to the success of Braddon’s works: secrecy, repetition, and rapidity. By figuring Lady Audley as a book filled with repetitions, Braddon implies that if the reader picks up another “closely printed volume” he or she may come closer to the secret. The repetitive nature of her novels’ plots is Braddon’s tool for promising to feed the appetite left unsatiated; perhaps the next time the reader will pick up on something that explains part of a previous work. The rehashing of plots, from one’s own works, others’ works, and newspapers, is another object of the Victorians’ criticisms of the sensation novel. Mansel scoffs at the simple recipe for sensation-novel writing:

Let him only keep an eye on the criminal reports of the daily newspapers. . . . Then, before the public interest has had time to cool, let him serve up the exciting viands in a réchauffé with a proper amount of fictitious seasoning.

(Mansel, 501)

Mansel uses the image of re-seasoned “viands” in a “réchauffé,” what we could call leftovers, to suggest that what readers actually need, and should want, is fresh food, cooked slowly and carefully.

Braddon, however, prefers rapid production, even and especially if it involves reheating plot twists and character types. The writer of an essay entitled “The Vice of Reading,” published in *Temple Bar* in 1874, articulates a connection between prolific writing and hunger, which helps

explain Braddon's writing practices. The writer explains the problem with popular fiction:

But the mischief is, it is produced in the most prolific manner, and it is not read merely, it is devoured. People do not wait to read it until they are tired, overworked, and jaded, or till holiday time comes round. They rush to the circulating libraries for it the moment it is announced, apply for it, clamour for it, and never rest until they are devoting themselves to its perusal. Having finished it, they hunger for another.

("The Vice of Reading," 253)

While a premise of most Victorian criticism was that there was something about the content of the sensation novel that makes it unsatisfying for the reader, the *Temple Bar* writer offers another possibility, that the conditions under which sensation novels were written could affect readers' experiences. By suggesting a vital relationship between the writer's production and the reader's consumption, he goes so far as to imply that the writer's productivity in fact incites the public's ravenousness. If that is the case, then Braddon, a notoriously prolific writer, is in luck. "Without one pause, without one moment of breathing time," Braddon, like Lady Audley, will "repeat the same chapters . . . over and over again," and her readers will be waiting, hungry, shillings in hand.

"Is any feast so good as that which we imagine?"

E.S. Dallas, *The Gay Science*

In 1865, Bishop Thirlwall makes an observation similar to the *Temple Bar* writer's when he reacts to an installment of Collins's *Armada*, which was serialized in *Cornhill Magazine* (1864-66): "On the whole, I consider this class of novels as an unhappy invention, creating an insatiable demand which must be met by less and less wholesome food" (145-46). The Bishop's suggestion that the quality of sensation novels is degenerative may seem to imply that they are "less and less" satisfying. On the whole, however, that is not the case. As I have shown, the very problem is just how appetizing the sensation novel is for the English readership—the fact that, after reading a novel like *Lady Audley's Secret*, the reader will keep hungering for more sensation novels. One of the paradoxes of the sensation novel that both *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Armada* exploit is that sensation novels are appetizing precisely because they do not satisfy.

A critic from *The Westminster Review* suggests that one of the reasons *Armada* is unsatisfying is that it is a meal whose ingredients are all too recognizable. After comparing *Armada*'s offenses to those of *Lady Audley's Secret*—a tactic that exemplifies critics' tendency to consider

sensation novels as a group—the critic discusses the way in which Collins’s “story” is “put together”:

Mr. Wilkie Collins informs us that he has very properly spared no pains in ensuring accuracy on all questions of Law, Medicine, and Chemistry. But we must add it is not artistic to tell this to the reader. *The process of watching our dinner being cooked takes away our appetite.*

(Unsigned review, *Westminster Review*, 159-60, emphasis added)

The critic uses a cooking metaphor to suggest that *Armadale* is one of Collins’s most contrived novels, or a novel that exposes its methodology, a complaint that surfaces in criticism then and now.⁸ Assuming that the public shares his quirks of appetite, he admonishes the review reader: this book *will* take away your appetite. As the often-quoted fact that the publisher did not regain his outlay on *Armadale* indicates, the reading public certainly did not have as much interest in it as for a novel such as *Lady Audley’s Secret*.⁹

Yet, given that the remark this critic refers to is included in Collins’s appendix to the novel, his suggestion that Collins’s exposure of his cooking process has an effect on one’s reading experience is problematic. This comment seems more likely to refer to what makes the structure of *Armadale* different from other popular sensation novels, the fact that it reveals its primary secret right away. In taking for granted that readers will also lose their hunger for food when they see it prepared in front of them, *The Westminster Review* critic raises the idea that if something is present, whether a secret or a meal, then one’s desire for it is absent. As I have shown, in piquing the reader’s hunger by teasing the reader with dinner, Braddon bases the narrative structure of *Lady Audley’s Secret* upon the assumption that hunger derives from absence. Collins, in contrast, may seem to leave little to the reader’s imagination or appetite, for he provides the reader early on with two documents that foretell what is to come—Mr. Armadale’s letter and Allan’s dream manuscript—both of which he figures as food. However, these two documents nevertheless play a crucial role in creating suspense, as is apparent in Collins’s organization of the serialized form of the novel, where he ends at least a quarter of the twenty

⁸ While Sue Lonoff suggests that *Armadale* has “obtrusive mechanics of plot” (120), and Winifred Hughes deems it “surely one of the most over-plotted novels in English literature” (155), Peter Thoms contends that *Armadale* is innovative for its self-consciousness about its design.

⁹ Lonoff provides several possible reasons for *Armadale*’s lack of commercial success: Collins’s use of omniscient narration, frankness about sexuality, excessive plotting, and decision to serialize in an upper-middle class publication.

installments by referring to written documents such as letters and diary entries.¹⁰

Early in the novel, Collins associates storytelling with eating and secret disclosure with feeding by means of a structural substitution of story for food. Right before Mr. Neal starts reading Allan Armadale, Senior's letter containing the secret of his life, which is the secret of the larger narrative, a dinner bell rings (27). Appropriately, Mrs. Armadale, who is not permitted to hear the reading of the letter, has a "hungering suspense" for it. This manuscript feeds both the characters and the readers the secret story of Mr. Armadale's past—how he murdered his namesake, Allan Armadale—and, by suggesting that past crimes can ramify into the future, establishes the grounds for the novel's suspense. The rest of Midwinter's life, and the rest of the novel, will be affected by the father's plea: "Never let the two Allan Armadales meet in this world: never, never, never!" (48). For Midwinter will continually struggle with the possibly dangerous implications of tampering with fate, and the novel will keep raising the question of whether Midwinter will heed his father's warning. *Armadale's* interest, then, stems from what *will* or *might* happen in the future when or if the principal characters reach a full understanding of the significance of what happened in the past.¹¹ In other words, the novel's suspense depends upon the reader's ability to imagine the future possibilities. By using meals as symbolic forms for the disclosure of the two documents, Collins, in effect, provides the reader with a menu that details the meals to come and, in doing so, encourages the reader to imagine how the food he provides will taste for the characters.

"The next serious question . . . the question of breakfast"

Allan, Armadale

Throughout the novel, Collins uses eating scenes to frustrate the revelation of Midwinter's secret and, consequently, to intensify the reader's appetite for knowledge. On several occasions, Allan is so consumed by his hunger that he allows it to interfere with Midwinter's attempts to discuss his origins. When "Midwinter stepped out from the shadow, and came nearer to Allan than he had come yet," rather than talk of "the past and future," as Midwinter would like to, Allan asks Midwinter if he has

¹⁰ For example, installment number one ends with Mr. Armadale's letter placed "in the post" and, similarly, number two ends with Mr. Armadale's son, Ozias Midwinter, putting the same letter, which was posted nineteen years earlier, on the table for Mr. Brock to read (*Cornhill Magazine*, November, December 1864).

¹¹ As Jenny Bourne Taylor explains in "*Armadale: The Sensitive Subject as Palimpsest*," the plot "depends for its sensation on fulfilling the very expectations that have been rendered problematic" (150).

considered the “next serious question...the question of breakfast” (130-31). Not only does Allan’s interest in satisfying his present bodily needs prevent Midwinter from disclosing his family secret but it also keeps the reader hungry for the answer to the question that drives the narrative forward: what will happen if Allan finds out who Midwinter is?¹²

Collins narrates the “strange contrast of character between” Allan and Midwinter in a description of their behavior at breakfast:

One of them sat at the well-spread table, hungry and happy; ranging from dish to dish, and declaring that he had never made such a breakfast in his life. The other sat apart at the window; his cup thanklessly deserted before it was empty, his meat left ungraciously half eaten on his plate.

(Collins, *Armadale*, 139)

Taken within the context of the plot’s development, Allan’s and Midwinter’s relationship to food translates into the subtleties of their ability to find, or in Midwinter’s case, to reveal the secrets of the story. For example, when Allan receives a letter informing him that he has inherited Thorpe-Ambrose, the family estate, he finishes breakfast before reading the letter (77). When Midwinter, in contrast, receives important correspondence regarding Miss Gwilt, the novel’s villainess, he is late for breakfast (208). More concerned with the pursuit of knowledge than he is with food, Midwinter “deserts” his meal when he has important questions to think about. Sue Lonoff has noted that one of Collins’s “most effective techniques is to create counterparts or doubles for his readers in the text, characters whose activities correspond or intersect with those of the audience” (121). In *Armadale*, Midwinter is the reader’s double, for, like the reader, he is hungry not for food but for knowledge. Moreover, Midwinter’s consistent attempts to reveal his past to Allan enact the reader’s curiosity about what will happen if Midwinter tempts fate.¹³

¹² Allan does eventually become curious about something other than the way food tastes. Regarding Miss Gwilt’s past, “curiosity filled him, which he half-longed and half-dreaded to satisfy” (344). On one occasion, he even forgets about breakfast while thinking about the scandal surrounding her. However, his interest is confined to details regarding her story, and, since he does not know that the two stories intersect, he therefore still does not seek knowledge about Midwinter.

¹³ David Blair makes a similar observation in his article, “Wilkie Collins and the Crisis of Suspense.” He writes: “Midwinter’s interest in only what pertains to his anticipated doom is an extreme correlative for the reader’s voraciousness for a resolution” (40-1). Throughout his article, Blair uses language related to eating to conceptualize the reader’s curiosity, without explicit reference to *Armadale*’s structure or metaphors.

In this same breakfast scene, the metamorphosis of appetite for food into appetite for knowledge, which takes place for both Midwinter and the reader, occurs symbolically. Just as the document relating to the past—Allan Armadale, Senior’s, letter—is read as the dinner bell rings, the document relating to the future—the dream manuscript—also becomes associated with a meal. When the dream manuscript is spread on the breakfast-table for Mr. Hawbury to interpret, it slides into the position habitually occupied by food (141). Like the father’s letter, the dream-manuscript serves as a warning of what is going to occur in the future. Fed to the characters and the reader in hypothetical form, it remains to be experienced, or tasted. While Midwinter considers the epistemological implications of the dream, Allan tries to blame his dream on a “badly-cooked supper” (117). If the dream does not result from indigestion, then the question that arises is whether it is a result of a supernatural force such as fate, a possibility that Allan refuses to contemplate.¹⁴ His insistence that his dream is a product of the food he has eaten suggests that his body-centered value system conflicts with his ability to interpret the novel’s mysteries.

Allan’s consistent attempts to use food to hinder discussion about anything “serious” have a parallel in Collins’s method of revealing to the characters the novel’s secondary secret, that of Miss Gwilt’s identity. Although Allan and Midwinter do not know that Miss Gwilt is the maid who was responsible for carrying out the deceit that ruined both of their fathers’ lives, Collins has let the reader in on this secret. He has not, however, told the reader the entire story of her past. In another breakfast scene, James Bashwood, the amateur detective who investigates Miss Gwilt’s past, uses his appetite to taunt his father, who waits anxiously for the news his son has found. After telling his father that he has the “whole story of her life” in his hands, James warns: “I hav’n’t done breakfast yet. . . . Gently does it, my dear sir.” When his father responds, “I can’t wait!” James continues: “If you’ll sit down again, I’ll tell you. If you won’t, I shall confine myself to my breakfast” (519). As the elder Mr. Bashwood waits, James torments him with a cruel display of the knowledge he possesses: “Bashwood the younger finished his breakfast slowly, out of pure bravado; lit a cigar, with the utmost deliberation; looked at his father, and, seeing him still as immovably patient as ever, opened the black bag at last, and spread the papers on the table” (520). Once Collins provides the reader with the papers spread on the breakfast-table, the hunger inspired by James’s deferred revelation intensifies. For, since Collins once again presents the food to the reader but does not yet allow the principal characters to taste it, he encourages the reader to imagine what Miss Gwilt is capable of doing.

¹⁴ For a discussion of interpretations of the dream manuscript in relation to Victorian psychological discourse, see Taylor.

Having gradually refocused the suspense generated from the Midwinter-Armadale identity story to the Miss Gwilt story, Collins ensures that the story that takes place in the present of the narrative achieves final closure; at the end of the novel the reader learns that Miss Gwilt is dead. At the same time, however, the abrupt ending of this villainess's life of crime and secrecy by means of suicide resembles the strategy by which Braddon ends Lady Audley's story. In both cases, the heroine's death provides something that resembles closure even though the ending does not answer all of the reader's potential questions. Emphasizing the indeterminacy of the ending, Collins confirms that Midwinter's secret has been preserved; he does so through three perspectives: Midwinter's, the narrator's, and Allan's. When Allan asks: "Who knows what great things may happen before you and I are many years older?", Midwinter answers "Who *need* know" (677). Collins, I suggest, knew exactly "who *need* know": the reader.

Collins preserves suspense even after the novel ends by leaving the two morsels of food—Mr. Armadale, Senior's, letter and the dream manuscript—untasted and undigested. As he explains in his appendix, he leaves the reader the task of imagining what will happen in the future:

My readers will perceive that I have purposely left them, with reference to the Dream in this story, in the position which they would occupy in the case of a dream in real life—they are free to interpret it by the natural or the supernatural theory, as the bent of their own minds may incline them.

(Collins, *Armadale*, 678)

As Collins's reference to a choice between "the natural or the supernatural theory" suggests, what the reader is capable of imagining depends upon his or her interpretation of the major question that Collins leaves unanswered, that of the "Great Doubt—the doubt whether we are, or are not, the masters of our own destinies" (48). Even as the novel's peaceful ending undermines the power of fate in affecting Midwinter's and Allan's future, the possibility remains that fate will intervene eventually.

Aside from Peter Thoms, who sees this fatalistic ambiguity as the point of *Armadale*, most twentieth-century critics have found the ending of *Armadale* problematic.¹⁵ David Blair would explain the unsatisfying resolution that Collins provides in terms of "a crisis for the identity of the novel" (37). He suggests that "Midwinter and Armadale . . . enact a crisis

¹⁵ Caroline Reitz, for example, interprets critics' discomfort with the instability of the ending of *Armadale* as a function of the form in which twentieth-century critics read the novel and suggests that the peripheral text accompanying the original serialized form of the novel addresses the larger colonial questions the novel raises (93).

between two novels,” in which *Midwinter* is aligned with classic suspense and *Armadale* is aligned with light romantic comedy, and that “the reader’s expectations derive from his sense of the type of novel he is reading” (41). I want to suggest that the problem that Blair sees as indicative of an identity crisis for the novel gets to the very heart of the novel’s identity as a sensation novel. Even though nothing sensational happens to *Midwinter* and *Allan*—no murders, no poisonings, no catastrophes—conventions of the sensation novel predominate in the reader’s imagination by their very absence. The absence of a sensational outcome to *Midwinter* and *Allan*’s story fosters the convention that I am arguing has become a hallmark of the genre, the tendency to end inadequately and to leave the reader hungry. Collins’s failure to fulfill the reader’s expectations for sensation ensures that the exercise of the reader’s imaginative faculty, a curiosity that is likened to hunger, will exceed the limits of this individual novel. The reader’s insatiable hunger is thus not simply an accident of content but rather a triumph of a form that regularizes continuation both on the level of individual parts and entire novels.

The fatalistic structure of the novel—in which past fears determine the course of the future and in which the name *Allan Armadale* circulates outside the confines of an individual’s life—is regenerative in much the same way that “hungering suspense” for the implications of *Mr. Armadale*’s secret is ever-renewing throughout and beyond the novel. As the revelation of the two fatal messages during meal times suggests, the narrative functions of fate and hunger are similar. Collins brings together these two themes in *Miss Gwilt*’s letters and diary entries, which offer clues to the interconnectedness of fate and hunger in the novel’s structure. In a chapter entitled “Lurking Mischief,” *Miss Gwilt*, the self-proclaimed prime-mover of the plot (426), explains a difference in tone in one of her letters: “I wrote the first time, after a horrible night. I write, this time, after a ride on horseback, a tumbler of claret, and the breast of a chicken. Is that explanation enough? Please say Yes—for I want to go back to my piano” (166). To the extent that *Miss Gwilt*’s letters are affected by what she eats, her writing offers a metacommentary on Collins’s narrative structure and the ways in which the plot hinges on what is revealed during meal times.

While the above example makes the relationship between food and writing seem coincidental, in a diary entry *Miss Gwilt* explains how she conscientiously uses food as a way of gauging what will occur in her future with *Midwinter*. In a chapter entitled “She Knows the Truth,” *Miss Gwilt* writes:

I never longed in my life as I longed to see him again, and put these questions to him. I got quite superstitious about it as the day drew on. They gave me a sweetbread and cherry pudding for dinner. I actually tried if he would come back by the stones in the plate! He will, he won’t, he will, he won’t—and so on. It ended in ‘he won’t.’ I rang the bell, and had the things

taken away. I contradicted Destiny quite fiercely. I said, 'He will!' and I waited at home for him.

(Collins, *Armada*, 413)

Here, food is directly implicated in both writing and plot outcome, as it is throughout *Armada*, especially since Miss Gwilt uses her dinner to penetrate the mysteries of fate. At the same time, her symbolic gesture of having the cherry stones removed from the table and contradicting "Destiny" attenuates the role of both principles that organize the novel, fate and hunger; the clearing of the plate clears the way for the reader's interpretation. Since Collins leaves the central narrative question inadequately answered, after finishing the novel, the hungry reader, like Miss Gwilt, can sit down with a plate of cherry stones and imagine whether Midwinter will ever tell Allan his secret: "he will, he won't, he will, he won't—and so on." The potential significance that Collins lends to the cherry stones in this scene encapsulates a concept that critics of the sensation novel were reacting to: writing that is fruitless can generate further expectations by means of its promise of future food. By closing inadequately, *Armada*, like *Lady Audley's Secret*, contains the seed for another story to grow—and for another appetite to hunger.

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“A twisted piece of paper . . .
half-burned upon the hearthrug”:
Depictions of Writing in *Lady Audley’s Secret*

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A familiar device in Gothic fiction is the fragmented manuscript, conveying a narrative marred by ellipses, a tale within a tale that must be reconstructed by the protagonist (and the reader) into a coherent account. These manuscripts provide details crucial to resolving questions of identity—details about murders or usurpations of property. Critics such as David Punter have long noted the Gothic’s influence on both the Newgate novel of the 1830s and 1840s and the sensation novel of the 1860s (Punter, 214-20). It is therefore not surprising that the novel of sensation often relies on the reconstruction of past events by means of hidden or damaged written evidence. In the novels of Wilkie Collins, this written evidence is often buried, as Tamar Heller notes in her fascinating study.¹ Mary Elizabeth Braddon, too, frequently employs a motif of damaged or distorted writing. In the typical Gothic novel, however, the physical damage has been caused by the passage of time—the manuscripts are often decades or even centuries old when they are discovered; in Braddon’s novels such alterations are usually wilful and designed to conceal past transgressions.

Robert Audley, the detective figure in *Lady Audley’s Secret*, must reconstruct the true history of Lady Audley, who has married his uncle, out of a sequence of written evidence—newspapers, letters, telegrams, book inscriptions, grave inscriptions, and even luggage labels. These traces are subject both to concealment and a range of damaging alterations, including tearing, burning, and adulteration with dirt or grease. Yet despite all these attempts to alter or erase written evidence, Robert Audley ultimately succeeds in constructing the narrative of Lady Audley’s movements that determines her identity. Similarly, Eleanor Vane in *Eleanor’s Victory*

¹ Heller observes that images of buried writing by authors either female or having “a ‘female’ constitution” abound in Collins’s novels, and argues that they are associated with “social and textual marginality” (1). She suggests that “[t]he image of buried writing could well stand for Collins’ own literary reputation, since critics . . . have been discovering his previously marginalized works” (4). Here I want to take a rather different approach with regard to Braddon’s distorted texts.

attempts to come to terms with her father's death in a gaming house by constructing the meaning of his suicide note, torn from top to bottom, with the remaining fragment missing the ends of his sentences. Eleanor keeps this torn note with her as she pursues her investigation in the face of the opposition of her friends, who question whether such an activity is "womanly or Christian-like" (71). For Eleanor, the fact that her father's death was the result of suicide is less important than determining the identities of those who swindled him and thus precipitated his death. George Vane has written a text that his daughter can read only incompletely. His narrative is fragmented and "very wildly and incoherently worded" (69), and she must create coherence. In the same way, the fateful marriage license in *Aurora Floyd*, proof of Aurora's bigamy, is "folded double" and concealed in the lining of her first husband's waistcoat (252). After his murder, the license is discovered to be "so much blood-stained as to be undecipherable" (302).

What do these images signify—these torn, folded, spindled, mutilated and stained writings, all of which prove significant to the resolution of the plot as well as the solution to the crime? This essay will explore the recurring images of damaged writing in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's fiction and will suggest that these images encode a series of discourses: on sensation fiction (including discourses by Braddon as well as by her critics); on the integrity of material evidence and its role in solving crimes; and on representation, including writing as deferred presence. Although the emphasis of this essay is placed on *Lady Audley's Secret*, other Braddon novels from the 1860s will be briefly considered.

Much contemporary criticism of Victorian sensation fiction expressed concerns about its lurid details of murder, bigamy and other crimes, often committed by the married women who presided over the domestic sphere. Many critics saw sensation fiction as threatening, not just to literature, but to the moral integrity of society. H.L. Mansel's often-cited 1863 review of two dozen sensation novels expresses the typical view:

Excitement, and excitement alone, seems to be the great end at which they [the writers] aim. . . And as excitement, even when harmless in kind, cannot be continually produced without becoming morbid in degree, works of this class manifest themselves as belonging, some more, some less, but all to some extent, to the morbid phenomena of literature—indications of a widespread corruption, of which they are in part both the effect and the cause; called into existence to supply the cravings of a diseased appetite, and contributing themselves to foster the disease, and to stimulate the want which they supply.

(Mansel, 482-3)

Kate Flint (277) quotes an unnamed critic, also writing in 1863, who expressed fears "about women's mental impressionability" and complained

that sensation novels “drugged thought and reason” and adversely affected women’s nerves. Such fiction could “open out a picture of life free from all the perhaps irksome checks that confine their own existence.”²

This was the contemporary response to novels such as Collins’s *The Woman in White*, Mrs. Henry Wood’s *East Lynne* and Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*, which Jonathan Loesberg (115) credits with founding the genre of sensation fiction in the early 1860s. Ann Cvetkovich (15-16) has shown that, in addition to the popularity of the circulating libraries, a marked increase in serial publication between 1820 and 1860, together with an influx of melodramatic material from lower-class publications, caused anxiety among critics about a decline in literary value. These concerns were doubtless exacerbated by the lurid reports of divorces appearing in newspapers after the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, noted by both Kate Flint and Thomas Boyle (Flint, 280; Boyle, 109-10). Braddon was certainly aware of these concerns. Writing to her mentor, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, in December 1862, she observed wryly:

I do an immense deal of work which nobody ever hears of, for Half penny & penny journals. This work is most piratical stuff, & would make your hair stand on end, if you were to see it. The amount of crime, treachery, murder, slow poisoning, & general infamy required by the Half penny reader is something terrible. I am just going to do a little paracide [*sic*] for this week’s supply.

(Wolff, “Devoted Discipline”, 130)³

I want to argue in this essay that, in her early novels, Braddon articulated her response to contemporary critical concerns about popular writing through her depiction of written communication—fiction, newspapers, the telegraph and letters. Later, after 1863, her response would take the form of a new strategy of composition, but during 1861-2 her complex and conflicting views on the act of writing are encoded within the novels themselves.

At the time of *Lady Audley’s Secret*, Braddon was writing to support herself and her mother, serializing her novels in magazines, and was on her way to a successful career as a novelist (Wolff, *Sensational Victorian*, chs.

² Flint cites the *Christian Remembrancer* 46 (1863). However, Ann Cvetkovich (210n5) gives the source of the same passage as *The Living Age* 78 (22 Aug 1863).

³ In fact, as Jacqueline Howard has suggested (45), Braddon’s “piratical stuff” is part of what M.M. Bakhtin terms “the diversity of social speech types” that comprise the novel. These include: “social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour” (Bakhtin, 262-3).

3-4; Carnell, ch. 3). While Braddon seems to have enjoyed her commercial success, she also had aesthetic aspirations, attempting to write both sensation and “serious” fiction, and was apparently sensitive to the critics who derided both her work and the genre itself. Writing to her mentor, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, on 16 January 1866, she complains, “I believe that if I listened to the howling of the critics and abandoned what they call sensation I should sink into the dullest namby-pambyism” (Wolff, “Devoted Discipline”, 130). A few years earlier (on 13 April 1863), she had written to him, “I fear I shall never write a *genial* novel. The minute I abandon melodrama, & strong, coarse painting in blacks & whites, I am quite lost & at sea” (13). Yet, referring to the circulating library members, she confessed to Bulwer-Lytton: “I want to serve two masters. I want to be artistic & to please *you*. I want to be sensational & to please Mudie’s subscribers” (14). Her writing strategy from 1863-5 is thus self-consciously dialogic, engaging two distinct audiences by writing two novels each year, “deprecating one of the pair and pinning on the other her hope for literary recognition” (Wolff, *Sensational Victorian*, 158).⁴ I suggest that the prototype for Braddon’s dialogic strategy was her articulation of her conflicting views of writing within the same novel, particularly (and appropriately) her two early “bigamy novels” (*Lady Audley’s Secret* and *Aurora Floyd*). These views are expressed in the discourses on written communication—fiction, newspapers, the telegraph and letters—that pervade these novels.

Walter M. Kendrick (21) notes that one of the aspects of sensation fiction that outraged mid-Victorian critics “came from their perception that the value of the elements in such a novel depended primarily, like that of links in a chain, on their relation to other elements in the same novel.” This principle of plotting is what Loesberg calls “inevitable sequence” (117). In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, writing both comprises circumstantial evidence and documents its existence. Robert Audley calls circumstantial evidence:

“that wonderful fabric which is built out of straws collected at every point of the compass, and which is yet strong enough to hang a man. Upon what infinitesimal trifles may sometimes hang the whole secret of some wicked mystery, inexplicable heretofore to the wisest upon the earth! A scrap of paper, a shred of some torn garment, the button off a coat, a word dropped

⁴ The novels that she esteemed during this period were *John Marchmont’s Legacy*, *The Doctor’s Wife* and *The Lady’s Mile*. The “deprecated” novels were *Eleanor’s Victory*, *Henry Dunbar* and *Only a Clod*. But Braddon could not always predict either the popular or critical response to her novels. *Henry Dunbar*, which she called “the sloppily told story of a murderer’s adventure,” proved one of her greatest financial successes. And *Eleanor’s Victory*, which “bitterly disappointed” her (Wolff, “Devoted Disciple” 17) was praised by the *Saturday Review*, which saw it as her best novel (Wolff, *Sensational Victorian*, 158).

incautiously from the over-opening of a door, a shadow on a window-blind, the accuracy of a moment tested by one of Benson's watches—a thousand circumstances so slight as to be forgotten by the criminal, but links of iron in the wonderful chain forged by the science of the detective officer. . .”

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 81)

Robert's fascination with circumstantial evidence is in accord with what Richard D. Altick calls “the prevailing temper of the time,” which he characterizes as “positivistic, scientific, rationalist” (78). For example, Altick points out that:

there was serious scientific interest in the faces and heads of famous criminals. For the devotees of the then-fashionable branches of physiognomy and phrenology, death masks and casts were taken of the heads of executed murderers. . . The *doyen* of the phrenologists, George Combe, made a cast of [the notorious mass-murderer, William] Burke's head, reporting, *inter al.*, that his bump of amativeness was “very large,” that of destructiveness “very large,” that of benevolence “large,” and of conscientiousness “rather large,” although that of wit was “deficient.”

(Altick, 64)

But the scientific establishment was divided over these practices, the debate often being conducted in the newspapers (Altick, 65), even as the sensationally detailed news coverage of the Palmer trial in 1856 had shaken public confidence in the medical establishment. That Palmer, a trained surgeon, had apparently carried out a number of murders by poisoning was unnerving enough, but the conflicting testimony by several medical experts at the coroner's inquest was even more unsettling (Boyle, 63-76). Such conflicts subject the façade of objective truth to a multitude of minute fractures.

In Braddon's sensation novels, we see signs of this in the way that writing, while apparently occupying a privileged position, often embodies its own contradictions. As a form of representation, writing is curiously subject to distortion. Sometimes written information is unreliable or misleading; sometimes it has been physically damaged; and sometimes it has been concealed. Events often turn on the presence or absence of a piece of writing, and its interpretation by the characters. These “messages,” and their interpretation, are seen to be highly problematic, and Braddon often exploits the comedic possibilities. The correct interpretation is not always associated with class or intelligence. When *Aurora Floyd's* Steeve Hargraves (“the Softy”) discovers the fateful marriage license in Conyers's waistcoat, he has considerable difficulty in reading the paper, but eventually comprehends its import. This is conveyed in a passage that parodies the process whereby signs are assembled and meaning synthesized:

Elean He leaned over the light with his elbows on the table and read the contents of this paper, slowly and laboriously, following every word with his thick forefinger, sometimes stopping a long time upon one syllable, sometimes trying back half a line or so, but always plodding patiently with his ugly forefinger.

When he came to the last word, he burst suddenly into a loud chuckle, as if he had just succeeded in guessing that difficult enigma which had puzzled him all the evening.

"I know it all now," he said. "I can put it all together now. His words; and hers; and the mooney. I can put it all together and make out t' meaning of it."

(Braddon, *Aurora Floyd*, 252)

What adds to the irony of this passage is the realization that, at this point, "the Softy" knows more than the reader; though it may be possible to guess, we do not know for certain what it is that Hargraves has just read.

Difficulties inherent in interpretation are illustrated by George Talboys's Australian venture, which also refracts a series of discourses on writing as deferred presence. George leaves his wife and child to make his fortune, writing "a few brief lines, which told her that I never had loved her better than now, when I seemed to desert her." George's abandonment of his family is not consistent with the love expressed by his written words, an incongruity he notes, and, once at sea, he does not write a line to her for three and a half years, until his last night in Sydney. George explains "I could not write and tell her that I was fighting hard with despair and death" (Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 15), as if writing were fit only for good news. But for George writing is a cruel mistress. At the coffee house where he expects to meet his wife, he refuses to believe that there is no letter from her, and has the waiter check the incoming letters again. Upon hearing once more that there is no letter, "George's face blanched to a deadly whiteness" (24). The absence of the sender has been revealed and intensified by the absence of a letter from her, and it is the confirmation of this absence that provokes a *physical* reaction in George (the absence of blood in his face). Thus he is already in despair when he "mechanically" takes up "a greasy *Times* newspaper of the day before from a heap of journals," staring blankly at the same paragraph for some time "before his dazed brain took in its full meaning," i.e., that his wife Helen is dead (24-25). Now he has had confirmation of disaster from both the absence and the presence of writing. The newspaper is a day old; it is greasy, lying ignominiously on a pile of "journals," all qualities attesting to its ephemeral nature. He picks it up only "mechanically," and stares at the paragraph without comprehending it for some time. The article in question is a representation of death. And, as we learn later, the information contained in the article is false. Even a news item, a death notice, can be faked.

A strikingly similar incident occurs in *Aurora Floyd*, when Aurora reads the story of her jockey husband's supposed death in a copy of *Bell's Life*, which is characterized as "dirty . . . crumpled, and beer-stained, and emitting rank odours of inferior tobacco" (73). In both novels, Braddon emphasizes the very physicality of these pieces of writing—the way they look and feel and smell testifies to their material presence in the world, to their *reality*, and yet the information they convey is entirely false. Even detective Grimstone's notes of witness interviews in *Aurora Floyd*, which are presumably accurate since they help him to solve the crime, are recorded in a "greasy little memorandum book" (420).

Given such examples of the unreliability and even distastefulness of written communications, it is not surprising that, at times, characters cannot decide what to do with them. Alicia Audley's reply to Robert's request to visit Audley Court, written "in an indignant running hand," informs Robert that he and George are not welcome. Robert "twist[s] the letter into a pipe-light for his big meerschaum," and is about to burn it in the grate, when:

changing his mind, [he] deliberately unfolded it, and smoothed the crumpled paper in his hand.

"Poor little Alicia!" he said, thoughtfully; "it's rather hard to treat her letter so cavalierly—I'll keep it;" upon which Mr. Robert Audley put the note back into its envelope, and afterward thrust it into a pigeon-hole in his office desk, marked *important*.

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 34)

This passage whimsically illustrates the instability of textual interpretation. In the space of a moment, Alicia's letter goes from being fit only to light his pipe to being classified *important*; yet, at the same time, it is pigeon-holed, a term already taking on connotations of bureaucratic process.⁵

A pipe-light that really *does* prove important appears in chapter 12 of *Lady Audley's Secret*. Robert, visiting Georgey and his grandfather, is looking for something with which to light his cigar, when he discerns "[a] twisted piece of paper . . . half burned upon the hearthrug" (63). This paper

⁵ This is far from being an anachronistic interpretation. The *OED*, besides giving several definitions for the noun form of *pigeon-hole*, gives four meanings for the verb form. The earliest, whose example dates from 1848, means to divide into pigeon holes; the latest, dating from 1870, refers to a process of classification; but two other definitions are particularly intriguing and almost exactly contemporaneous with *Lady Audley's Secret*: to delay by filing away for future reference (1861; the example is from the *Saturday Review* for 20 July ["We do not doubt that Lord Lyveden, by duly pigeon-holing the complaint, added another to the long list of his public services in that line"]); and a rare usage, "[t]o deposit (a corpse) in a columbarium" (1858).

is revealed to be a telegraphic message, the date and name of the sender having been burned away, whose remaining contents are, “—alboys came to last night, and left by the mail for London, on his way to Liverpool, whence he was to sail for Sydney.” Robert responds to this cryptic message by exclaiming, “My God . . . what is the meaning of this? I shall go to Liverpool to-night, and make inquiries there!” The message carries meaning, but because it is mangled and incomplete, it must, like all signifiers, be interpreted in the context of other information, just as “the Softy” had to interpret the marriage license in the context of “[h]is words . . . and hers . . . and the mooney.” This time, the elevation of a piece of paper from a virtual match to an *important* document (and from a fragile, half-burned fragment to an iron link of evidence) is not ironic. Robert subsequently begins to compile a written record, called “*Journal of Facts connected with the Disappearance of George Talboys, inclusive of Facts which have no apparent Relation to that Circumstance.*” The journal is written “in short, detached sentences, which he numbered as he wrote”:

In spite of the troubled state of his mind, he was rather inclined to be proud of the official appearance of this heading. He sat for some time looking at it with affection, and with the feather of the pen in his mouth. “Upon my word,” he said, “I begin to think that I ought to have pursued my profession, instead of dawdling my life away as I have done.”

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 67-8)

It is the title of the document alone—its “official” appearance—that provokes this self-congratulation, but for Robert, this is progress. For five years, his name has been “inscribed in the law-list” as a barrister, even “painted upon one of the doors in Figtree Court” (21). Yet even as one kind of writing represents him as a barrister, he has never fulfilled the professional requirements of that position, as he has never “had a brief, or tried to get a brief, or even wished to have a brief.” But now Robert is going to take positive action. Beneath the proud title of his signifying process, he subsequently lists fifteen items that document the mystery of George’s disappearance, writing “with great deliberation,” pausing many times for reflection and to make editorial changes. But when he has completed this task, he places this paper alongside Alicia’s letter in the pigeon-hole marked “*important.*” The proximity of Alicia’s letter to his *Journal of Facts* taints the latter, or at least undercuts its importance.

The multivalent nature of written evidence is reinforced in chapter 19, entitled “The Writing in the Book,” when Robert examines the contents of his friend’s trunk in an effort to solve the mystery of his disappearance. Besides a few garments, most of the items in the trunk are various forms of writing, and the narrator repeatedly uses terms that suggest decay and ephemerality. There are:

old play-bills, whose biggest letters spelled the names of actors who are dead and gone; old perfume-bottles, fragrant with essences, whose fashion had passed away; neat little parcels of letters, each carefully labeled with the name of the writer; fragments of old newspapers; and a little heap of shabby, dilapidated books, each of which tumbled into as many pieces as a pack of cards in Robert's incautious hand.

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 101)

These items are characterized as a "mass of worthless litter, each scrap of which had once had its separate purpose." But the purpose is absent; these are for the most part empty signifiers, whose signifieds no longer exist. Also absent is the packet of letters from George's wife that Robert had hoped to find. He looks for clues among George's "no very brilliant collection of literature"—*Tom Jones*, *Don Juan*, Greek and Latin texts, "a French pamphlet on the cavalry sword-exercise" and a mysterious "fat book in a faded gilt and crimson cover" (102). Thus, in addition to what Bakhtin would call *heteroglossia*, or the novel's profusion of voices (those of the characters and the narrator, uttered in dialogic relationship with Braddon's society, including journalists, the reading public and the critics) and of genres (including telegrams, letters, obituaries and grave markers) we see the *polyglossia* (many tongues) of French, Greek and Latin texts (Bakhtin, 50-1, 61-5). Here the multitude of languages and genres suggests incomprehensibility, empty signifiers. The books are tattered and faded, the cover of *Tom Jones* hanging by a thread. The narrator draws out the suspense, forcing us to wait while the housekeeper clears away the remains of Robert's meal. As we wait, Robert, addicted to the "yellow-papered fictions" of French novels, notes that he now finds them "stale and profitless" in comparison to the excitement of the real mystery he is working to solve, the tattered books of George's that await him in the corner of the room, and even the vision of "his uncle's wife's golden curls."

The revealing evidence of Lady Audley's past life is not contained in the text of the books themselves, but in an inscription in her hand, and the description of this discovery is couched in heavy irony. The fatal evidence is in an *annual* from 1845, the engravings faded and mildewed, "the costumes grotesque and outlandish; the simpering beauties faded and commonplace" (103). Robert has to cut apart the pages to reveal Helen Maldon's inscription, for they are stuck together, presumably from mildew. The book is thrice-used, originally an award for "habits of order" and "obedience" to authorities—an ironic gift for a bigamist and (attempted) murderer—a faded hand-me-down whose representations of female beauty seem to invite comparison to the vibrant Pre-Raphaelite portrait of Lady Audley. Even this contrast subtly underscores the larger problem of representation to which the discourses on written evidence belong. Chiara Briganti points out that the portrait is "misleading," since "the abundance of crimson, its pre-raphaelite pouting lips, bespeak of a passionate nature, of burning sexuality," and yet Lady Audley reveals no signs of an active

sexuality (Briganti, 201).⁶ Yet the painting, like the mildewed annual, is another link to “that fatal chain” of circumstantial evidence that will convict the young wife of Robert’s uncle (Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, 102).

George’s letter to Clara, written three weeks after his marriage, constitutes both another link in the chain of evidence and another discourse on representation. The letter contains a detailed description of George’s wife, “a description in which every feature was minutely catalogued” (138). Braddon seems to parody the issue of representation in several ways. First, *catalogued* suggests a rational, scientific process, not an affair of the heart, an incongruity Robert notes after he has read the letter three times. Braddon also clearly means us to recall the painting once more. But she distances herself from the written description of the woman, which her narrator never gives us directly; the narrator only tells us how complete it is, how it contains “every feature . . . every grace of form or beauty of expression . . . every charm of manner.” We don’t see the representation; we only hear about it, and it sounds suspiciously perfect. The resemblance is troubling for Robert. He knows that this written description carries death—George’s, as he believes, and therefore probably Lady Audley’s also. Reflecting that if George could have known how his lovingly detailed description would ultimately be used, “surely his hand would have fallen paralyzed by horror” (138).

More fatal physical evidence is provided by Helen’s hatbox, left behind with Miss Tonks. The hatbox bears “scraps of railway labels and addresses which were pasted here and there upon the box,” (157) written representations of journeys. Like much of the other written evidence in the novel, these too have been distorted, battered and torn by travel, but Robert recognizes from a foreign label and the letters “TURI” that the box has been to Turin, Italy. (Like Eleanor Vane’s father’s suicide note, the ends are absent and must be supplied.) Removing some of the labels with a sponge, he is able to determine “enough to convince [his] uncle that he has married a designing and infamous woman” (157).

The novel questions the concept of writing as deferred presence by demonstrating that Lady Audley’s presence will not be deferred, at least in the hands of a skilled detective who can reconstruct the past. More written links attest to this. The date of Helen’s departure from Wildernsea is established by her letter to her father, enclosed in his letter to his landlady, Mrs. Barkamb, who notes that she has “the whole business [of his indebtedness] in black and white.” Mrs. Barkamb’s mahogany desk

⁶ Briganti also observes that Lady Audley’s rooms at Audley Court are where she is most often depicted, Braddon placing “great emphasis on Lady Audley’s physical situation in the house,” yet notes that “on the two occasions when this space is subjected to the gaze of others, she is absent” (20).

“suffer[s] from a plethora of documents, which oozed out of it in every direction. Letters, receipts, bills, inventories and tax-papers were mingled in hopeless confusion”(164), a description nearly duplicated in Mellish’s “littered paraphernalia of account-books, bills, receipts, and price-lists” in *Aurora Floyd* (262). Helen has left behind what we would now call a “paper trail,” but it is confused and chaotic, requiring organization and interpretation.

Further undercutting all these links in Robert’s fatal chain is the implication that, once again, written “evidence” is not always reliable. It can be manufactured, as is the inscription on the headstone, ironically by George Talboys and Robert Audley themselves:

Sacred to the Memory of
HELEN,
THE BELOVED WIFE OF GEORGE TALBOYS,
Who departed this life
August 24th, 1857, aged 22,
Deeply regretted by her sorrowing Husband.
(Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, 29)

This is a fascinating message. It corresponds to, and seems to corroborate, the death notice in *The Times*. Someone is indeed buried there, but not the person signified by the inscription. Helen Talboys’s presence in the grave has been deferred. Even the sentiment itself is ambiguous: What is the subject of “regretted”? Her death, presumably, but the syntax admits other possibilities, and further subverts the stability and reliability of the language.

Just as writings such as the headstone inscription do not always point to the right person, messages in *Lady Audley’s Secret* are not always from the persons to whom they are attributed. When Lady Audley learns that Robert and George have arrived in Essex, she has Phoebe Marks send her the telegraphic message purporting to be from her former schoolmistress, Mrs. Vincent, that precipitates her sudden departure and delays her discovery (39-40). It is only much later, as Robert painstakingly retraces her movements to establish his chain of evidence, that he learns from Mrs. Vincent that she never sent a “telegraphic dispatch.” Nor did the illness the message described exist at all (154). During that interview, Robert also learns that the former Lucy Graham subverted the practice of using written references to secure employment: “Miss Graham waived the question of salary; I could not do less than waive the question of reference” (155). By declining to negotiate the financial terms of her employment, in effect she purchases both her employment and favorable references that can be used for subsequent identification and character establishment—appropriately enough, the Victorians called a letter of reference a *character*.

The letters written by George Talboys as he was preparing to depart for Australia, after he was nearly murdered by Lady Audley, raise a number of questions and illustrate Braddon's skill at exploring the implications of written communications. First, the letters did not arrive at their destinations when they were supposed to: Robert had already departed and Luke Marks had no forwarding address. (Marks has no marks to represent Robert.) The letters establish that George is alive, but Luke realizes that they also would undermine his plans for Luke and Phoebe to get "started in life by [Phoebe's] missus" (278), so he withholds them. When the dying Luke finally turns the letters over to Robert, the barrister at first is reluctant to read them because he does not recognize the handwriting, and he questions Marks's motives. "'Suppose you read 'em first,' said Mr. Marks, 'and ask me questions about them afterwards'" (272). The letters purport to be written by George, but are not in the handwriting that Robert knows so well. The handwriting is distorted, since it was written with George's left hand, his right having been broken by Lady Audley. By themselves, they cannot attest to George's presence (and hence the fact that he is alive). But this absence is filled by Luke Marks's swearing to the authenticity of the letters, his death-bed confession presumably reinforcing his veracity. Luke's claimed presence when the letters were written provides the missing attribute of *presence* that writing lacks. Braddon even subverts all the *sinister* characteristics of left-handedness, and the delay in the letters' delivery makes possible most of the events of the novel.

As he did when he reacted with disbelief to George's left-handed letters, Robert frequently responds to the physical *appearance* of a letter without regard to its contents. We see two examples of this when he receives letters from Clara. In the first instance, Clara's letter forwarding two of George's letters, the narrator tells us that "[h]e contemplated the envelope for some minutes before opening it—not in any wonder as to his correspondent, for the letter bore the postmark of Grange Heath . . . but in that lazy dreaminess which was a part of his character" (138). In the second example, much later in the novel, Robert's response is even more dramatic:

There were three letters waiting for Mr. Audley at his chambers. One was from Sir Michael, and another from Alicia. The third was addressed in a hand the young barrister knew only too well, though he had seen it but once before. His face flushed redly at the sight of the superscription, and he took the letter in his hand, carefully and tenderly, as if it had been a living thing, and sentient to his touch. He turned it over and over in his hands, looking at the crest upon the envelope, at the post-mark, at the color of the paper, and then put it into the bosom of his waistcoat with a strange smile upon his face.

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 260)

Robert's fetishistic response to Clara's letters recalls his earlier response to

Lady Audley's letter, which the narrator described as "a pretty, fairy-like note, written on shining paper of a peculiar creamy hue":

"What a pretty hand she writes!" said Robert, as his cousin folded the note.

"Yes, it is pretty, is it not? Look at it, Robert."

She [Alicia] put the letter into his hand, and he contemplated it lazily for a few minutes . . .

"It is the prettiest, most coquettish little hand I ever saw . . ."

(Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 43)

Robert's preoccupation with the physical characteristics of writing are in marked contrast to its other network of associations, as mentioned previously: dirt, grease, ashes, beer and the rankness of "inferior tobacco." These two conflicting sets of associations add to the discursive tension that characterizes writing throughout the novel.⁷

A final example of Robert's fetish for the physical appearance of letters is the arrival of "a black-edged letter, written upon foreign paper" (Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, 286). This letter announces, and thus represents, the death of "a certain Madame Taylor." Lady Audley is finally dead, but the reader's assurance of this is troubled by the pattern of unreliability that has characterized previous written evidence of death, and is heightened by the curious remoteness of the evidence, the last written evidence in the novel. Lady Audley has had so many identities—Helen Maldon, Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham, Lady Audley, Madame Taylor—all of which have been supported by written evidence. We literally do not know what to call her; she is never what she seems, always the trickster figure. In fact, there was more "evidence" of Helen Talboys's death than of that of Madame Taylor.

Ann Cvetkovich (50) suggests that "sensationalism derives its power

⁷ In fact, the sensory detail used to describe the letters of Clara and Lady Audley may have originated in Braddon's childhood fascination with the materials of writing. As she writes in "My First Novel" (19):

Far back in the distinctness of childish memories I see a little girl who has lately learnt to write, who has lately been given a beautiful brand-new mahogany desk, with a red velvet slope, and a glass ink-bottle . . . Very proud is the little girl, with the Kenwigs pigtails and the Kenwigs frills, of that mahogany desk, and its infinite capacities for literary labour, above all, gem of gems, its stick of variegated sealing-wax, brown, speckled with gold, and its little glass seal with an intaglio representing two doves—Pliny's doves, perhaps, famous in mosaic, only the little girl had never heard of Pliny . . .

Armed with that desk and its supply of stationery, Mary Elizabeth Braddon—very fond of writing her name at full length . . . began that pilgrimage on the broad high road of fiction. . . .

from rendering concrete or visible what would otherwise be hidden; the image of the beautiful and transgressive woman becomes sensational when we know that she is evil and we both see and don't see her criminality in her appearance." At the end of the novel, Lady Audley is not present and we do not *see* her death; it is only a letter from a foreign land and its black edge that we see, a representation of the death of "*a certain* Madame Taylor" (emphasis added).

Despite Robert Audley's belief in "that wonderful fabric" of circumstantial evidence in *Lady Audley's Secret*, the fabric, like many of the books, letters and telegraphic messages in the novel, is subject to the ravages of fire, wrinkling and mildew. It is also subject to deception, concealment and misinterpretation. These ambiguities seem consistent with what Jenny Bourne Taylor calls "the absence of any stable reference point for defining insanity." Taylor notes that "Lucy's 'insanity' is both the revelation of a truth and an extension of her ability to continually transform herself, confound the distinction between appearance and reality" (11-2). If such a distinction can be so confounded, then it is no wonder that the attempt to construct a model of reality through a series of written representations is so fraught with uncertainty. These written representations can be twisted into pipe-lights, or they can be marked *important* (and subsequently pigeon-holed).

In exploring the limitations, not just of genre, but of language itself, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, like her mercurial heroine, is also able to transform herself. Even this early in her career as a novelist, even in so unabashedly sensational a novel as *Lady Audley's Secret*, she confounds the distinction between the artistic and the sensational, a distinction she playfully engages and ultimately transcends.

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~~Reviews~~

Deborah Wynne, *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001. pp. x + 202. (ISBN 0-333-77666-6).

Deborah Wynne is concerned with both the material production of fiction and the experience of reading. In this informative study of the sensation novel in the 1860s, she reminds us that these two things are closely inter-related, and in ways which make *our* reading of Victorian novels quite different from the ways in which they were read by their first readers. More often than not the twenty-first century “reader” of a Victorian novel will first encounter it, as did many of its first “readers”, in the form of a dramatic adaptation—although in our case the adaptation will be for the screen (small or large), rather than the stage. If we consume the novel in a printed version, it will usually be in the form of a single paperback volume—with an attractive cover adorned with a still from the screen version, or a reproduction of a suitable nineteenth-century painting—which we may polish off in as many or as few sittings as we choose. However, in the nineteenth century, and especially in the 1860s, many novels would first have been encountered in “tantalising portions” in the pages of family magazines, those weekly or monthly miscellanies which ran serialized versions of one, two, or more novels alongside poems, short stories, and essays on various subjects, for the entertainment and instruction of their middle-class or upwardly mobile working class readers.

These Family magazines, like all periodicals, Wynne argues, “exist as sites of simultaneity in that they present a cluster of apparently unrelated texts at the same point in time and space, all having the potential to be read in relation to each other” (20). Was this potential realized, and, if so, with what results? Wynne inclines to the view that readers did ‘sample all the different texts on offer’, rather than singling out one or two features and ignoring the rest. Her evidence is, in part, intuitive: she thinks it likely that Victorian readers would have read everything in a particular issue of a magazine on the grounds that this was an age of thrift and recycling, and, in a period of relatively expensive print, they would have wanted to drain every drop of entertainment potential from each issue of the magazine purchased. She also adduces internal and (occasionally) external textual evidence to demonstrate that some editors—notably Dickens—deliberately orchestrated the contents of individual issues of a magazine around the lead serial. The result of the realization of the magazines’ potential for simultaneity was a particular form of intertextuality and a particular mode

of reading which Wynne explores by means of a careful and often illuminating analysis of seven sensation novels in the context of the periodical texts in which they first appeared.

Collins and Dickens are the central figures in Wynne's study, which suggests that their joint work for *All The Year Round* played a (perhaps *the*) leading role in developing a "discourse of sensation" in the 1860s. Chapter 2 links the sensational import and impact of *The Woman in White* to its "interaction" with the sensational journalism of Dickens's *All The Year Round* which reinforced Collins's narrative with further stories of wrongful imprisonment, and articles on the treatment of the insane, the health and safety of the modern middle classes, and the rise of the gentleman criminal and the "solitary clever detective" (54). Chapter 4 looks more closely at Dickens's work as an editor, and reads *Great Expectations* both as a sensation novel which sought to capitalize on Collins's success, and in the context of *All The Year Round*'s construction of a sensationalist discourse around the natural selection debates and other "anxiety stories" related to origins and degeneration. Chapter 5 shows how Dickens as the "conductor" of *All The Year Round*, sought to intensify both the sensationalism and the realism of Collins's *No Name* by supporting its main themes with essays on the plight of young girls living "outside the shelter of the respectable family" (99), and on theories of race and degeneracy. Chapter 8, on the other hand, looks at the different intertextual readings of the sensational *Armada* that were offered by its appearance in the upmarket *Cornhill Magazine*, alongside the domestic realism of Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters*, and, subsequently, Trollope's *The Claverings*—a juxtaposition which brings into sharp focus the hybridity of the sensation novel, and its particular mixture of "middle-class domestic realism and lowbrow melodrama" (165).

Wynne also sheds fresh light on a number of other successful sensation novels which have been much discussed in the recent revival of critical interest in this genre. By relocating *East Lynne* in its original context in the pages of the *New Monthly Magazine*, a periodical with a largely male readership, Wynne challenges some recent feminist readings of this novel and offers an interesting reading of its class positioning—as resolutely, if politely championing middle-class values. An examination of *Once A Week*'s "sophisticated approach towards cultural analysis in its discussions of literature, art, and the theatre" (114-5), underpins a persuasive discussion of Braddon's "spirited defence of melodrama and sensation fiction" (114) in *Eleanor's Victory*. A mercifully brief chapter on Charles Reade's *Very Hard Cash* in the context of *All The Year Round* gives a few reasons why this novel was even less successful as a serial that it was in its revised volume form.

Although this book only focuses on one aspect of Collins's oeuvre it will be of great interest to students of his work, throwing fresh light on the nature of his achievement as a sensation novelist. It also has much to say to

students of nineteenth-century fiction more generally, as well as to students of the periodical press. Sensation novels were sometimes criticised by their first reviewers for being “newspaper novels”. This book succeeds in clarifying the nature of the links between the sensation fiction of the 1860s and some aspects of contemporary journalism, by demonstrating how sensation fiction was “shaped and defined by its periodical publishing space” (168). In doing so it also begins to sketch in a lateral mode of reading in which the nineteenth-century reader learned (or was led by an editorial conductor) to dance through apparently “disconnected items of temporary intelligence” (C.H. Butterworth, quoted on p.13), in a way which “extended the boundaries of the serial novel by encouraging the reader’s engagement with its accompanying texts” (168).

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Christopher GoGwilt, *The Fiction of Geopolitics: Afterimages of Culture, from Wilkie Collins to Alfred Hitchcock*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000. pp. xiii + 265. (ISBN 0-804-73726-6).

In the argument of this book, “twentieth-century paradigms of geopolitics” relate to nineteenth-century concepts of culture (3), and the title points to the idea that “discourses of geopolitics are constituted and sustained through essentially fictive forms” (7). The “fictive forms” that sustain geopolitics here are both novelistic and cinematic, and GoGwilt studies novels by Wilkie Collins (*The Moonstone*) and Olive Schreiner (*The Story of an African Farm*), before moving on to writings by and portraits of R.B. Cunningham-Graham and a final chapter on sabotage in Joseph Conrad and Alfred Hitchcock. The author of *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford, 1995), GoGwilt is particularly interesting on images associated with cartography and geography, and his first chapter, which treats the probably unfamiliar but important figures of H.J. Mackinder, Friedrich Ratzel, and Elisée Reclus, will reward readers interested in a different way of approaching nineteenth-century culture. GoGwilt is also to be thanked for good discussions of Schreiner, who is only now gaining some of the critical attention that she deserves, and of Cunningham-Graham, another relatively unknown character. Wilkie Collins’s *Moonstone*, in fact, is probably the most canonical and most familiar work under inspection here, so productive has been the machinery of Wilkie Collins studies in the last ten years. Since the focus of this Journal is on Wilkie Collins, it is on that chapter that I will

primarily center this review, although I will certainly encourage the reader to have a look at GoGwilt's opening chapter on "the geopolitical image," which makes for an interesting comparison to the brilliant use of maps in Franco Moretti's *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900* (Verso, 1998).

At "the heart of the overall argument," as GoGwilt puts it, is an emphasis on the visual image: this "provides the opportunity for reexamination of the long 'ocularcentric' tradition of European enlightenment thinking" (7). Thus GoGwilt aligns his project with that of Jonathan Crary, in *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (MIT: 1996).¹ Crary's main predecessors in his extraordinarily detailed and wide-ranging work are Foucault and Benjamin—the two outstanding pioneers, perhaps, in the field of nineteenth-century visuality. GoGwilt's methodology is more eclectic, less theoretical, in comparison with Crary. In his chapter on Collins, GoGwilt begins with a brief discussion of "culture" in Matthew Arnold and then lingers over a painting by David Wilkie, *Sir David Baird Discovering the Body of the Sultan Tippoo Sahib, after having captured Seringapatam* (1790). David Wilkie is Wilkie Collins's godfather, after whom he was christened, so we have both a family and a thematic connection from this picture to the book. Painters and painting are touched on frequently in Collins, not surprisingly, since his father, William Collins, was also a painter, and Collins's first book writes his father's memoirs (1848). GoGwilt treats well the role of the "paint-stain" in *The Moonstone*, the smear of paint that implicates Franklin Blake in the theft, but he is more interested in the "stain" than the "paint," the "blot" on culture—a "story of dirty linen," as D.A. Miller calls it.² One might, however, have pursued the "painterly" dimensions of the novel further, regarding the "smear of paint" as not only a metaphor for scandal but as a species of allegory on aesthetics. Readings of *The Moonstone* which foreground and provide the particularities of British imperialism already, in effect, regard the book as an allegory, and so one might read the allegory both ways, pursuing the interchangeable figures of politics (stain) and aesthetics (paint) with equal diligence.³ The aesthetics of the sensation novel work away from the monumental and towards the impressionistic, so that one might think further about the "decoration of the door," which occupies so much of our attention in the first part of the novel, and link that image perhaps with

¹ Page references to *The Moonstone* in the text refer to Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (New York: Bantam, 1982). Another recent discussion of the visual in the nineteenth century is Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

² D.A. Miller, "From roman policier to roman-police: Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*" in *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 34.

³ The readable grammar of political allegory in Collins' "romance" (following on Scott) is emphasized by Ian Duncan, "*The Moonstone*, the Victorian Novel, and Imperialist Panic," *Modern Language Quarterly* 55 (1994) 298-9.

notions of memory, or Franklin Blake's complete lack of memory ("I threw a dozen portraits, at least, of the man with the piebald hair . . . into the wastebasket" [335]). It is not surprising that Collins's novels will blur and blot Arnoldian divisions of culture, since they do not so much look back to the pastoral scenes of his father as look ahead (with a more melodramatic aspect) to the expressions of moment and light in Whistler (whose *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* was regarded by Ruskin as "flinging a pot of paint in the public's face").

I have argued elsewhere that the study of nineteenth-century visuality would benefit by focusing on architecture and interior design over against our current tendency to look at the pre-cinematic.⁴ GoGwilt rightly, I think, situates *The Moonstone* in the tradition of a "country-house novel," as related in Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*. GoGwilt writes, "as with Collins's other novels of the 1860s, the social space of the English country house provides a prime location for plotting troubled family legacies" (62). As a student of the visual and the territorial, GoGwilt could, once again, much more rigorously pursue the associations of interior space in *The Moonstone*. Not only is the "boudoir" with its decorated door an object to which the narrative returns, so is the library ("What might you want in the library at this time of day?" I inquired" [86]). As D.A. Miller points out, in detective fiction "the layout of the country house [is] frequently given in all the exactitude of a diagram," and every room in *The Moonstone* radiates with memory and significance. "I wish certain parts of the house to be reopened, and to be furnished, exactly as they were furnished at this time last year" (381), commands Ezra Jennings, in order to re-create the original crime scene. GoGwilt could do more, then, to help us to envision maps of the Victorian household, which are just as weighted, figurative, and "geopolitical" as the maps of Europe. In his attention to interior design, as with painting, a more focused approach to Victorian visuality might have been more productive.

GoGwilt's chapter on *The Moonstone* is a good discussion, but not as detailed, focused, and original as essays by D.A. Miller, Tamar Heller, and Ian Duncan.⁵ Other parts of GoGwilt's book do help us organize and see things differently, but his *Moonstone*, in the end, seems a little too familiar. Collins is a clearly a central figure in the multiple discourses of Victorian visual culture and there is still much interesting work to be done in this new and developing field.

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⁴ Steve Dillon, "Victorian Interior," *Modern Language Quarterly* 62 (2001) 83-115.

⁵ Tamar Heller, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1992).

Graham Law, *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press*. Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York: Palgrave, 2000. pp. xxii + 300. (ISBN 0-333-76019-0 / 0-312-23574-7)

Because much primary material concerning newspaper fiction in the Victorian period did not survive, because no archival survey is ever complete, and because definitions of genre are not universal, Graham Law has rigorously, precisely, and consistently qualified every assertion he makes in this book. And yet *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* has irreversibly recast the shape of literary history in the nineteenth century.

This book corrects the traditional history of the novel in the nineteenth century, which has been organized by volume publication. As Law points out, that critical choice has misrepresented the reading of fiction in that time: "It now seems likely that, for almost the whole of the Victorian period, a significant majority of 'original' novels published as books had appeared previously in monthly or weekly instalments, as independent numbers, in magazines, or in the pages of the newspapers that are our particular interest here" (13). Especially unrecognized and unmeasured have been the serial novels placed in provincial newspapers by emerging syndicates: "Indeed, it seems likely that virtually every community in Britain would have been served by some form of newspaper consistently featuring fiction material before the end of the century" (181). For the interest of this journal, we should note that "Mary Braddon and Wilkie Collins were the two Victorian novelists of name who sold their work to syndicates of provincial newspapers earliest and most consistently" (170).

Law defines his subject precisely: "Above all this book is concerned with the nature and role of the provincial fiction syndicates, and the reasons for their rise and demise" (34). And his thesis fits this subject within established scholarship: "the syndication of serial fiction in newspapers represents an important but overlooked transitional phrase between the 'Gentlemanly Publishing' of the mid-century, with its cloth-covered volumes and literary monthlies, and the mass-market magazines and paperbacks of the turn of the century" (34). Because Collins is a central figure in this "overlooked transitional phrase," we are encouraged by Law's book to rethink his contribution to the history of the Victorian novel.

Law begins his sweeping study by sketching a more pervasive use of serialization in the eighteenth century than is often acknowledged and then moves to installment publication in the Victorian period, which he divides into three overlapping periods: early (1830s to 1850s), middle (1850s to 1870s), and late (1870s to 1890s) (14). The impetus for the trend of publishing fiction in periodicals is the elimination of 'Taxes on Knowledge,' with one of the largest effects coming "in the provincial press, where there was an explosion of new newspapers" (31). Law presents the data of serialization in more than a dozen detailed tables (thirty pages of

which appear in the appendix), acknowledging that “in the end this book remains more closely attached to the tradition of empirical study of the development of the publishing industry, the reading public, and popular fiction by such scholars such as Graham Pollard, Richard Altick and Louis James” (xiv) than to more theoretical studies (i.e., Norman Feltes’s *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels*). There are also ten pages of illustrations showing authors and sample pages of newspapers with fiction.

The central figure in Law’s study is W.F. Tillotson, who with John Maxwell in 1873 “created the first syndicate of British provincial newspapers systematically covering most of the country for new work by an author with a reputation already established in the metropolitan book market” (43). The Fiction Bureau set a “trend which would lead to an entirely new phase in the periodical publication of Victorian fiction” (43). Collins was perhaps “the biggest catch” in the 1870s for the Bolton firm, one of “a new group of established metropolitan authors who had no formal connection with John Maxwell, and who were a cut above the general run of his protégés” (77). Such organizations as the Fiction Bureau provided new outlets for authors. Law traces the dynamic local contexts in which novels appeared (rivalry between the *Sheffield Independent* and the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, for instance) in order to understand national trends. He concludes, for instance, that “newspapers, both generically and individually, must be seen to create as much as to discover their readership” (126). Drawing evidence from surges in sales and from reader correspondence, Law concludes that serialization in provincial newspapers meant reaching many more readers than volume publication, “over half a million sales in Britain alone” (131). Though not all might read the fiction, it would be “rash for us not to assume that the large circulation figures for the weeklies run by Tillotsons and W.C. Leng and Co. themselves, and for those of many of their clients, indicated a large and enthusiastic following for much of the fiction they were offering” (136-7). Among other aspects of increasing trade in fiction taken up by Law are: the influence of Scottish developments on the English provincial newspaper market (especially the career of writer David Pae), the importance of new juvenile and female markets, and the expansion of colonial outlets.

While it is often assumed editors and publishers of installment works forced writers to abandon artistic standards, Law contends that “the most consistent pressures exerted on the later Victorian novelist by the mode of initial publication in newspapers were generic” (200), that is, adapting to the traditions of sensation, mystery, or adventure fiction, not to the demands of editors or publishers. Even the famous case of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess*, reconsidered here by Law, suggests that, if “provincial syndicators, and the journals they served, were less likely to tamper with texts to avoid giving offense to prudish readers, they seem at the same time to have been far more likely to do so by adding a veneer of sensationalism, by deleting material perceived as tedious, or simply by making pragmatic changes

according to pressures of space” (195). The role of gender in publishing is not dramatically altered by Law’s research. For instance, in “the weekly news-miscellanies becoming common by the 1870s, there is a growing recognition of females readers, but often as belonging [in] a separate sphere, meriting specific women’s pages and features” (141).

Later in the century, competition to syndicates led to expansion abroad: Tillotsons “seems to have established regular business relations with eight American newspapers by late 1885” (73), as well as ties to Australian, Canadian, and European newspapers. The competition faced by syndicates, which was in some ways healthy for the industry, included: authors working out their own arrangements with newspapers; rival syndicates like Cassell, Leaders, and the National Press Agency; American syndicates offering American writers in England (and British writers in America); literary agents like A. P. Watt, who, for instance, arranged for newspaper syndication of Collins’ *Heart and Science* in 1882 and “*I Say No*” the following year, both simultaneously with appearances in metropolitan monthly magazines.

Wilkie Collins broke ground in the complexity of contracts he developed with syndicates, taking on such matters as simultaneous release, regional limitations, and colonial syndication (167-8). In fact, his attention to such detail can be considered a phase in the development of the literary agent, who negotiated such rights for authors. Law admits that Collins turned to syndication for money; yet he “was also attracted by the idea of escaping the Grundyism of the London editors, library proprietors, and reviewers, and directly addressing a new mass reading public measured in hundreds rather than tens of thousands” (171). Still, Collins viewed people like Tillotson as beneath him in class and education. “The tensions visible in the intercourse between Collins or his representative and the popular newspaper syndicators and proprietors are symptoms not only of the growing divide between romantic and professional views of authorship, and between ‘gentlemanly’ and ‘commercial’ modes of fiction production, but also of Collins’s confusion as to which side of the divide he was on” (176).

Law does not ignore the limitations of the provincial newspaper format or the syndication process; but he sees the demise of these entities in the late 1880s as also involving loss: “While the provincial syndicates had permitted a range of narrative modes and themes, the shift of the balance of power back to the metropolitan press encouraged a considerable narrowing and hardening of the dominant modes of serial fiction” (214). Rather than “narrowing” or “hardening” current scholarship, Law’s book opens up for new scrutiny an important transitional period in the history of the novel and provides a wealth of new information about authors reaching audiences with serial fiction in the Victorian Age.

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Marlene Tromp, *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation, and the Law in Victorian Britain*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000. pp. 288. (ISBN 0-8139-1949-5).

"I was alone with him, Marian—his cruel hand was bruising my arm—what could I do?"

"Is the mark on your arm still? Let me see it."

"Why do you want to see it?"

"I want to see it, Laura, because our endurance must end, and our resistance must begin today. That mark is a weapon to strike him with. Let me see it now—I may have to swear to it at some future time."

Every Collins scholar and fan has already read this passage from Marian Halcombe's diary in *The Woman in White*, probably—given our age of highly publicized cases of domestic violence—without stopping for a thick analysis. For one thing, no details vivify the bruise on the page. But what did it mean to Victorian readers for Lady Laura Glyde, gentlewoman, to expose a bruise inflicted by her upper-class husband? In what other social, legal, and literary conversations did this scene participate? How did the fact of this scene's occurrence in a "sensation" novel affect its cultural significance? Marlene Tromp's *The Private Rod* builds a multi-layered and eloquent answer to these wide-ranging questions. The book explores the relationships between violence in the "real" domestic life of the Victorian middle classes and its representations in fiction and the law, asserting that "[s]ensation fiction ... participated in, shaped, and was shaped by the political-legal debates of the era ... over what was real, what was legislatable." It shows that that this interplay among sensation novel, realist novel, and law gradually changed what could be imagined in fiction and articulated in law about physical violence within married life (71). As well as providing material for Victorian scholarship on gender, class, and genre, this study wants to make us think about how we continue to imagine and legislate against marital violence in the present century.

Tromp frames her discussion of two key sensation novels (*The Woman in White* and Braddon's *Aurora Floyd*) with chapters on other works that prepare the way for sensation and (after the 1860s) mark its impact on literary and legal culture. *Oliver Twist* makes a bridge between the *Newgate Calendar* and sensation fiction, dramatizing and humanizing violence against working-class women and marking fiction as a space for the critique of laws that failed to protect them. Dickens's narrative of Nancy's redemption, however, is anchored to "her monetary worth to her social betters," and part of the value of her visible, beaten body is its ability to locate and naturalize violence in a realm apart from the upper and middle classes (16). The bodies of gentlewomen are kept invisible and thus unimaginable as vulnerable to marital abuse.

All this changes in the novels of Collins and Braddon, which explore the real and the legislatable within middle- and upper-class marital violence. The Lady Caroline Norton case and other public events had drawn attention to the insufficiency of legal protection for abused married women; the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 evaded the problem by figuring the violent husband as a drunken, brutal, working-class man and this representational narrowness limited its protection of middle and upper-class women.

The Woman in White (1860) breaks open this law's figuration of marital violence, primarily through the character of Sir Percival Glyde, a brutal but (supposedly) aristocratic husband. Tromp's discussion anatomizes the novel's psycho-social portrait of marital violence, exposing how complex and indirect are sensation fiction's messages about marriage, violence, and class. When Glyde turns out to be illegitimate, for example, one has to ask with what class identity he bruises his wife, especially when his brutality locates him in the working classes, "the only kind of violent man Parliament defined" (73). Tromp deepens the issue of class instability, and its effect on Glyde himself, through her reading of the shifts in his ability to perform his assumed social role with each turn of the plot. Tromp eloquently contrasts the public bruise as figure for Glyde's inability to manage his place in the circuits of domestic and financial power with Count Fosco's chillingly expert use of the "private rod."

But Tromp is also original in her reframing of the middle-class English hero Walter Hartwright as a third variety of violent man. Neither a corrupt aristocrat (albeit a fake one), nor an "odious foreigner," this gentle wielder of paintbrushes and pens and defender of women is himself a creature of violence. Walter's violence, however, does not register as relevant because it is performed in condoned social contexts: while he is traversing the wilds of Central America, or protecting English gentlewomen. Most provocatively, Tromp offers a critical reading of Walter's attempt to save Glyde from the fire in the chancel, arguing that his actions serve rather to make that death inevitable; he thus participates in Glyde's execution. So, while *The Woman in White* returns the gentlewoman's body to textual visibility, publicizes her vulnerability to marital violence, and posts an active critique of the Divorce Laws, Tromp shows how the novel works to "screen [Walter's] violence and label the violence of others as illegitimate" (97). Amid its disruptions of the imagined "real" of the domestic lives of gentlewomen, the novel preserves "the sanctity of middle-class identity" by marking all the perpetrators of marital violence as belonging to a criminal caste that transcends nationality but not social class (17).

This shoring up of the middle-class home, of course, is never complete in a sensation novel. A final section, "(Wo)manly Anger," addresses the fantasies of violent justice on the part of women characters, notably Marian Halcombe. Marian's anger falls within her consistent coding as a "masculine" woman (who even carries a "manly umbrella,"

significant amid the recurrent canes and whips in the novels discussed). It nonetheless represents “the potential for violence in other women characters as a response to the violence enacted on them” (101). Emblematic of the suggestive (because just real enough to take seriously) excess of the sensation novel, characters like Marian make “the threat of women’s access to power” visible, proposing “alternative ways of enacting and responding to violence in the home” and new ways of imagining gentlewomen (101-2).

The outright “dangerous” woman is the focus of the next chapter’s discussion of *Aurora Floyd* (1863), which (like other early Braddon novels) features middle-class women characters explicitly associated with retributive violence against husbands and fiancés. Tromp reads *Aurora Floyd* with and against the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1857-70, whose rhetoric the novel replicates “imperfectly,” enough to complicate the questions of where danger originates and what are the gender and social identities of its victims. (It would be fascinating to bring this chapter’s insights to bear on *Armadale* and other fictions of dangerous women by Wilkie Collins.)

Realist fiction’s representations of marital violence, Tromp argues, were indelibly marked by sensation fiction. Oliphant’s *Salem Chapel* and Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda*, for example, are written against sensation but clearly invoke its techniques. While the relationship between the sensational and the real is not a new theme, Tromp’s contributions make significant inroads into discussions of exactly what that generic relationship is. Rather than reading *Salem Chapel*’s sensation subplot as interfering with the realist one, Tromp argues that “Oliphant’s use of language, madness, and the woman’s body offers us the means to see both realism and the undefiled middle class contaminated by sensation,” indicating that the generic boundaries (on which many critics still base their analyses of Collins) are considerably blurred by the time of this novel (18). Tromp’s impressive reading of *Daniel Deronda* culminates the analysis of how sensation transformed realism. Eliot’s portrayal of Grandcourt’s gentlemanly violence solidifies the imagining of marital violence in fashionable homes as a reality. Eliot portrays his violence as a perceptual and expressive problem for Gwendolen (and the courts) that Gwendolen can only articulate in the linguistic and performative space of madness; this is not an example of moments of failed realism but rather testimony that “the real itself must be read and understood through the sensational” (19).

The conclusion looks at the late-century Clitheroe Decision, a marital rights case that, Tromp argues, not only reveals the continuing cultural tensions about how to imagine and interpret evidence of marital violence, but also marks the changes from the mid-century:

Sensation participated in the evolution of the discourses regarding the domestic space, sexuality, and violence, and, by contaminating realism, by

revealing the fissures in its logic ... redefined what was identified as realism, along with Victorian "truths" about marital violence. (242)

Tromp's discussions of law and literature are fullest and most historically particular in the chapters on Collins and Braddon. A more sustained focus on these "mutually constitutive discourses," which would exceed the space of this already ambitious volume, might include the multiple and productive interconnections between the two professions and their discourses (often in the same body, as in the case of Collins and Stevenson). The discussions of empire (a natural, considering the date of 1857, shared by the Matrimonial Causes Act and the Sepoy Rebellion) and the performance of gender (fleshed out with reference to Judith Butler) are other examples of provocative threads that emerge and recede, inviting the reader to take them up elsewhere (or wait for Tromp to write more).

The book's strongest feature is Tromp's inspired and nuanced readings of scenes of subtle and explicit violence in Victorian sensation fiction: Laura's bruises, Aurora Leigh's beating of the stablehand Softy, Gwendolen Harleth's whipping of the rhododendron as she talks to the physically restrained and terrifying Grandcourt—and her sharp and provocative connections between these scenes and the larger cultural patterns in which they participate. The book articulates how violence within a "gentle" marriage was a linguistic and representational problem for individuals, novelists, and the law, but also how the production of words had and has the potential to change the problem of marital violence. Sensation novels, Tromp argues, exposed and disturbed the invisible scripts of violence in the "gentle" home. As well as creating a space, language, and narrative framework in which women readers might place and articulate their own experiences, the sensation novel contributed to a process of re-imagining that changed not only the novel but also the law.

The book exhorts contemporary critics to participate in the continued re-imagining of this and other social issues. "There are no innocent words," Tromp reminds us, nor texts that live in an ideology-free zone (1). When we position the sensation novel as a site where no serious traffic in ideology takes place, we contribute to the continuing "invisibility of some cultural, intellectual, and fictional patterns," among them the naturalization of marital violence (2). Tromp's productive denaturalization of the fictions of marital violence, the relationships between sensation and realism, and the conversations between fiction, the law, and the critics will interest a wide range of readers, including those interested in exploring another rich layer in Collins's fiction.

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Ronald R. Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [2000]. pp. xviii + 341. (ISBN 0-521-65303-7).

Ronald Thomas begins playfully enough, with acknowledgments to colleagues who are likened to a series of “equally culpable suspects” in a mystery story and with a dedication to his “partner in life if not in crime” (xvii, xviii). But readers will quickly recognize in this book a weighty contribution to the acclaimed interdisciplinary series, the Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, under the general editorship of Gillian Beer. Thomas, it is true, offers us “a series of investigations” (4) of paradigmatic instances of fictional detection reflecting both British and American traditions, from Poe’s “Murders in the Rue Morgue” (1841) to Christie’s *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934), but not in the form of a looseleaf literary casebook. Rather the investigations are tightly bound together by the concern with developments in forensic technology over the same period, and the legal and political ramifications of their role in “reading the symptoms of criminal pathology in the individual body and the social body” (3). The theoretical debts are, above all, to Michel Foucault:

The centrality of the detective narrative for the nineteenth century is based on its crucial role in the process of making and monitoring the modern subject. (8)

and to Benedict Anderson:

Anglo-American detective fiction appears in a post-revolutionary environment when the heroic status of the rebel or the criminal is transferred to the detective and the police. Since these narratives generally involve the identification of some criminal singled out as a distinct “other” who poses a threat to a new sense of the social order, they must also be seen as part of the history of nationalist discourse during a critical period of the nineteenth century. (10)

Thomas, however, leaves quite a bit of room for literary manoeuvre by distancing his approach from that of critics who see the ideological function of the detective as “singular and monolithic”. In contrast to, most notably, Franco Moretti in “Clues” (from *Signs Taken for Wonders*, 1983) and D.A. Miller in *The Novel and the Police* (1988), Thomas insists that “detective literature both reinforces and resists the disciplinary regime which it represents” (14).

The narratives discussed reveal interpretations of the category of detective fiction both narrow (Poe, Doyle, Christie, Chandler) and broad (Dickens, Hawthorne, Twain, Conrad). They reflect three distinct stages of development—the emergence of the form in the mid-Victorian decades, its hardening into a popular genre around the turn of the century, and finally its parody and contestation between the wars. Yet the overarching structure of

this book is determined not by these moments but by the development of three key “devices of truth”—the lie detector, the mug shot, and the fingerprint. In some of the narratives analyzed, the use of the devices is reflected directly, as in the portraits which play such an important part in the plot of both Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Doyle’s “A Scandal in Bohemia.” Here, as we might expect given the author’s track record in the fields of photography and film, Thomas is especially sharp. In other narratives the operation of these devices is shown to be strangely foreshadowed, as when Poe’s “Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) finds a “bizarre mechanical incarnation” in Cesare Lombroso’s polygraph fifty years later (21), or when the bloody fingerprint in Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) briefly anticipates the introduction of this system of identification by the metropolitan police in 1894.

The chapter on “The letter of the law in *The Woman in White*,” naturally of particular interest to readers of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, falls into the section devoted to the lie detector. Though “no mechanical devices are used to detect the network of lies” pervading Collins’s novel, the reliance on “the machinery of the Law”, which Walter Hartright announces in his prefatory remarks to the narrative, is seen to prefigure their operation (59). Thomas’s thesis is that, in this novel, as indeed in all sensation novels, “[i]nterrogations into the moral ‘character’ and motivations of suspicious persons . . . gradually give way to investigations into their ‘identity’” (59-60). (This helps to explain why the English literary establishment exhibited so much anxiety about the emergence of sensation fiction and directed its anger especially against its perceived “failures in the area of character development” [62]) The shift towards the understanding of subjectivity in terms of physical embodiment requires the presentation of documents recording the history of the body—certificates of birth, marriage, and death, and so on. These in turn demand a new class of professionals to endorse them—like the “solicitor of great experience in his profession” to whom, in his own preface, Collins claims to have submitted the proofs of the novel for vetting before publication. Thus *The Woman in White* bears witness to a moment when the machinery of authority starts to expand beyond “the identification of criminals to all of us” (60).

Thomas’s study is thus a rich and complex one to which it is difficult to do full justice in the space available here. However, I cannot conclude without expressing a slight feeling of regret that this volume does not talk more about the French contribution to the development of detection and detective fiction. By offering a comparative as well as an interdisciplinary approach, by focussing not on two but three “national traditions” (7), this very good book might have been made even better. The forensic work of Bertillon in Paris is discussed at some length, but there is no attempt to focus on the detective narratives of, say, Balzac, Gaboriau, or Leblanc, and their relations to the French “disciplinary regime.” More surprisingly, there

is not a single mention of Régis Messac's monumental *Le "Detective Novel" et l'influence de la pensée scientifique* (1929), which—though it obviously belongs to a very different intellectual universe—can make a claim to have been the first work of modern scholarship to stake out the ground that Thomas maps so precisely here. But perhaps, with so much already on offer, it might seem mere greed to ask for more.

Graham Law
Waseda University

Recent and Forthcoming Books
among those to be reviewed in the following issue of the
Wilkie Collins Society Journal



Phyllis Weliver

*Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1860-1900:
Representations of Music, Science and Gender
in the Leisured Home.*

Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, January 2001

Hardcover ISBN: 0-7546-0126-9 340 pages \$79.95

Lillian Nayder

Unequal Partners:

Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship.

Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, January 2002

Hardcover ISBN: 0-8014-3925-6 248 pages \$35.00

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New Series, Volume 5, 2002

Contents

~Articles~

- My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins*
PAUL LEWIS 3
- "Black and White": British and American Versions*
CASEY A. COTHRAN 24
- Lady Audley: The Woman in Colour*
CLAIR HUGHES 36
- Collins and Chattos: The Reading Papers*
GRAHAM LAW 49

~Reviews~

- Unequal Partners* by Lillian Nayder
MARK KNIGHT 57
- Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction* by Phyllis Weliver
BARBARA ONSLOW 59
- Wilkie Collins's Library* by William Baker
STEVE DILLON 63

Editors' Note

The 2002 issue of the *Journal* focuses especially on two areas in Wilkie Collins studies: bibliographical questions, and issues concerning the interface between fiction and other forms of expression prominent in Collins's work. These forms of expression notably include the drama, at the center of Casey Cothran's article on the different printed versions of the melodrama "Black and White," and painting, which lies at the heart of Clair Hughes's account of Braddon's response to *The Woman in White*. Here there is a supplement in the form of reviews of books by Phyllis Welliver and Lillian Nayder, which respectively foreground Victorian music and Victorian journalism. The bibliographical side is represented mainly by Paul Lewis's detailed analysis of the letters of Dickens to Collins, which takes advantage of the recent publication of the twelfth and final volume of the Pilgrim edition of *Letters of Charles Dickens*. Here, in addition, we have Graham Law's inventory and discussion of the papers relating to Collins in the Chatto & Windus archive at Reading University, plus a review of William Baker's reconstruction of Collins's library. We hope you enjoy reading this collection and welcome your comments.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins

Paul Lewis
Independent Scholar, London

This essay is a bibliographical study into the letters written by Charles Dickens to his close friend Wilkie Collins. The publication in 2002 of the final volume of the Pilgrim edition of *The Letters of Charles Dickens* enables us to catalogue the known letters which Dickens wrote to Collins and collate them with previous sources (see Table 1). Four further letters not in PILGRIM are identified.¹ Careful study of the extant letters allows us to draw some conclusions about the relationship between Dickens and Collins and how it changed over time.

I Letters

The Victorians had ambiguous feelings about letters. They valued the frequent, rapid, and reliable postal service which had followed the introduction of the penny post – paid by the sender not the recipient – in 1840.² But they feared the permanent testament which letters made of their intentions, views and wishes. Burning letters was almost a national pastime and when Dickens joined in he did it with his typical verve. On 4 September 1860, Dickens wrote:

Yesterday I burnt, in the field at Gad's Hill, the accumulated letters and papers of twenty years. They sent up a smoke like the genie when he got out of the casket on the seashore; and as it was an exquisite day when I began, and rained very heavily when I finished, I suspect my correspondence of having overcast the face of the Heavens.³

The weekend before he wrote that letter, Dickens had finally left his home, Tavistock House in London,⁴ and moved his final possessions to Gad's Hill Place – a house near Rochester in Kent which he had bought more than four years earlier, in March 1856, but did not take possession of until March 1857 (Watts, 21-3). The infamous bonfire at Gad's Hill was just the first step. Five years later Dickens wrote “now I always destroy every letter I receive – not on absolute business, – and my mind is, so far, at ease.”⁵

The letters he burned were, of course, those written to him. He could not control those written by him to others. As he consigned letters from Thackeray, Tennyson, Carlyle and, of course, Wilkie Collins to the flames he is reported as

¹ Abbreviated references to collections of letters (such as “PILGRIM”) are explained in the list of Works Cited.

² For a useful summary of how the postal system worked before and after this revolutionary change, see Dauntton, ch. 1.

³ To W.H. Wills, 4 September 1860, PILGRIM IX 304.

⁴ To Mrs Davis, 1 September 1860, PILGRIM IX 300.

⁵ To William Charles Macready, 1 March 1865, PILGRIM XI 21-2.

saying “Would to God every letter I had ever written was on that pile” (cited in Storey, 107).⁶ Like many of Dickens’s wishes, this one was not fulfilled. Within ten years of his death, hundreds of his letters were published, and as the years went by subsequent editions added more letters until finally the editors of *PILGRIM* have published a total of 14,252 (*PILGRIM* XII, viii). Of these, *PILGRIM* identifies 165 letters to Wilkie Collins, 1.15% of the total.

The earliest source for letters from Dickens to Collins was the two volume edition of Dickens’s letters published in 1880 and edited by his eldest daughter, Mary (Mamie), and Georgina Hogarth, his wife’s sister and Dickens’s housekeeper for much of his married life. This “careful selection from his general correspondence” was intended as a supplement to Forster’s biography of Dickens and would be “supplying a want which has been universally felt” (MDGH I, vii). The “want” existed because Forster’s biography contained many letters which Dickens had written to him, but almost none Dickens had written to anyone else.

The original MDGH volumes contained just 21 letters to Collins but in the preface the editors acknowledged Collins’s assistance:

A separate word of gratitude, however, must be given by us to Mr. Wilkie Collins for the invaluable help which we have received from his great knowledge and experience, in the technical part of our work, and for the deep interest which he has shown from the beginning, in our undertaking.

(MDGH I, viii-ix)

Collins was the only person Georgina consulted about the edition and she told her friend Annie Fields in 1879 that she had followed his suggestions of a “few trifling alterations ... very good ones and easily made” and Collins finally gave his “unqualified approval”.⁷ Collins arranged a meeting with Georgina Hogarth on 16 October 1878 to talk to her about the project.⁸ The following March he was advising Georgina on whether some letters should be included,⁹ and in July he was consulting the publisher George Bentley about the price to be charged for the two volumes of letters:

I think I told you that I was advising Miss Hogarth and Miss Dickens, in the business of editing Dickens's Letters. They ask me to help them to decide the question of price. The book will be in two volumes demy oct: and each volume will contain 456 pages. – Thirty shillings or Two pounds – which is the wisest selling price to decide on? Do you think I am right or wrong in supposing that the lower price (£1..10..-) is the safest price to ask in these times?¹⁰

In October 1879 he thanked Georgina for an early copy of the *Letters* and

⁶ Storey’s account is based on talks with Dickens’s daughter Kate who died in 1929.

⁷ Georgina Hogarth to Annie Fields, 16 June 1879, HUNTINGTON. See also Adrian, 212 & 291n24.

⁸ Wilkie Collins to Georgina Hogarth, 11 October 1878, PARRISH.

⁹ Wilkie Collins to Georgina Hogarth, 18 March 1879, B&C II 420-1.

¹⁰ Wilkie Collins to George Bentley, 27 July 1879, B&C II 423. Bentley must have supported Collins’s view as the set was in fact sold at the lower price. I am grateful to Bill McHugh of Northwestern University Illinois for this information.

reminded her “I am still entirely at your service. Don’t sanction small advertisements. One ‘across columns’ in the weekly newspaper, (one big one) is worth a dozen little ones—and costs less.”¹¹ A month later he was advising on dealing with Bernhard Tauchnitz concerning an edition in continental Europe.¹² A further volume was published in late 1881, which contained just one more letter to Collins, making 22 altogether, and all three volumes were republished as one chronological sequence in two volumes in 1882. Shortly before his death in 1889 Collins was still advising Georgina – this time on what to do with the remaining copies of various editions of the book.¹³

Wilkie Collins died on 23 September 1889 and within weeks his literary agent Alexander Pollock Watt suggested to Georgina Hogarth that a volume containing more of Dickens’s letters to Collins would be worthwhile. Shortly after that a list of known letters from Dickens to Collins was drawn up by Watt.¹⁴ This, along with some associated documents, is now in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, and lists 136 letters to Collins, one letter to Augustus Egg¹⁵ – included because it is the letter which led to Dickens meeting Collins in March 1851 – and another from Dickens to Collins’s brother Charles.¹⁶ The list is in five columns – year, number of pages, month and date, a short summary, and signature details.

Watt seems to have changed his mind about the list as he wrote it. The format changes from page to page and although he included the earliest ten letters already published in *The Letters of Charles Dickens* he then appears to have decided to omit the subsequent 12 letters, dated from 13 July 1856, published there. There is also a separate document, apparently in Watt’s hand, which lists four additional letters as follows

The following I recommend should not be sold.

August 16, 1859. This letter contains references to Messrs Bradbury, Evans & Co, & to Mrs Dickens, about the time of the separation. It is signed in full and contains 4 pages.

December 29 1861. A letter of 4 pages, which contains a reference to Sheriff Gordon of Edinburgh, & his habits. Signed C.D.

July 20 1862. This contains a reference to Miss Georgina Hogarth’s health. Contains 4 pages, & is signed C.D.

April 22 1863. This contains references to various people which I think it would be inadvisable to allow to fall into other hands.

These four letters were handed back to Georgina Hogarth and her receipt dated

¹¹ To Georgina Hogarth, 23 October 1879, B&C II 423-4. The book was published on 21 November 1879 – see Adrian, 214. Two editions of the letters were in Wilkie’s library on his death, one inscribed “with love from the editors”. See Baker, 100.

¹² To Georgina Hogarth, 28 November 1879, B&C II 424. Tauchnitz published *The Letters* in February 1880 in three volumes – see Todd and Bowden, 299.

¹³ To Georgina Hogarth, 2 April 1889, ILLINOIS.

¹⁴ Undated MS on Watt’s headed paper and in Watt’s hand, entitled “Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins,” 7 pages, BERG 7284908.

¹⁵ Dickens to Augustus Egg, 8 March 1851, PILGRIM VI 310.

¹⁶ Dickens to Charles Collins, 19 November 1859, PILGRIM IX 164-5.

13 February 1890 is also in the collection. It reads “Received from A.P. Watt four letters of the late Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins dated respectively 26th August 1859 [sic, not 16 August]; 29th December 1861; 20th July 1862; and 22nd April 1863.” Above the receipt in Georgina Hogarth’s hand is added “These I should wish to cancel – to destroy if possible!” Of these four letters the first two have disappeared, perhaps destroyed by Georgina Hogarth. The last two are found in the Free Library of Philadelphia and are published in PILGRIM (X 109 and X 236). Indeed, the last letter was published in part by Georgina herself in *The Letters of Charles Dickens* omitting the personal references she found objectionable (MDGH II 198-9). Of the 169 letters from Dickens to Collins which modern scholarship has identified, 151 were either in this list, were scheduled for destruction or had been published in 1880. Only 18 others have either come to light or been identified in the following 122 years.

Watt paid Georgina Hogarth ten guineas for her work “revising the letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins”.¹⁷ The letters were edited with commentary by Lawrence Hutton and he wrote in the preface “Miss Hogarth selected the following specimens as being quite as characteristic and fully as interesting as any she gave to the public in her own volume, and they have been printed here under her own supervision.” They were first published in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* over three months from September 1891. Publication in book form followed shortly by Harper in New York and by Harper’s London publisher, James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Co. in London, the edition cited here. The text was identical in all three – the same letters to Collins, the same few letters to other people to give context, and the same commentary. It contained 108 letters from Dickens to Collins of which six had already appeared in MDGH,¹⁸ leaving 102 which were newly published. All but one, 6 February 1858, were in the Watt list.

So by the end of the nineteenth century, 124 letters from Dickens to Collins had been published, though a number had some passages cut. Although MDGH was reissued many times, and some new letters to individuals were published in specific volumes such as Dickens’s letters to William Henry Wills, Thomas Beard, and to his wife Catherine,¹⁹ no further letters to Collins were published until Walter Dexter’s three volume edition of Dickens’s letters in 1938 for the Nonesuch Dickens. This added another 20, bringing the total to 144, though three of those were only noted without any content²⁰ and one was misdated.²¹

¹⁷ Receipt on Watt’s headed paper dated 25 February 1890 and signed Georgina Hogarth, BERG 7284908.

¹⁸ In HUTTON: 8 July 1855, 14 October 1862, in full; 13 July 1856, 6 September 1858, 7 January 1860 (wrongly dated as 1859), and 25 January 1864 (wrongly dated as 24 January), in summary only.

¹⁹ See WILLS, BEARD, and CATHERINE.

²⁰ 20 January 1852, DEXTER II 371; 13 December 1856, DEXTER II 815; 14 May 1859, DEXTER III 103

²¹ To Collins, 8 January 1853, DEXTER II 547, misdated [1854].

Table 1. Known and Identified Letters from Dickens to Collins

Date	Subject	Salutation ¹	Sign off ²	MDGH 1880 vol.pg	Watt 1890 ³ p	HUTTON 1892 page	DEXTER 1938 ⁴	PILGRIM 1988-2002 ⁴	1st ⁵	Notes
12 May 1851	Re Ward's brother seeing the play	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Yours always		1	6-7	II 309	VI 385	H	
31 Oct 1851	Ticket sales mean Play will run extra day								@	Deduced from WC to CD 2/11/51
20 Jan 1852	Thanks for book, poor children	My Dear Collins [Tavistock]	Ever Faithfully Yours				II 371	XII 638-9	P	PILGRIM VI 579 as to W.J. Collins. DEXTER lists.
20 Dec 1852	Thanks for Basil and invite out	My dear Collins	Always faithfully Yours	I 294	1		II 435-6	VI 823-4	M	
23 Dec 1852	Arrangements to dinner and forage	My Dear Collins	Always Faithfully Yours		1	11-12	II 436	VI 833	H	Last para and sig in Yale added in PILGRIM
8 Jan 1853	Publication details of Oliver Twist	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Yours Ever				II 547	VII 5	D	DEXTER has date as [1854]
18 Jan 1853	Re meet for a play and dates of Italian trip	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		1	12-13	II 445	VII 12-3	H	
28 Jan 1853	HW business and meeting with Lemon	My Dear Collins			1		II 446	VII 17-8	D	Letter ends abruptly
24 Jun 1853	Invite to join him there	My Dear Collins			1	13-14	II 467	VII 101	H	Sig cut off
30 Jun 1853	Illness and hopes he will still come	My Dear Collins			1	14-16	II 472	VII 108	H	Not new in PILGRIM. Sig cut off.
14 Dec 1853	Loans to WC on Italian trip	My Dear Collins	Ever faithfully [DEXTER]		1		II 525	VII 226	D	Sig cut off
16 Dec 1853	Accts.re Italian trip WC owes £43-11-8	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully Yours		1		II 525	VII 228	D	
24 Feb 1854	Montaigne pieces + invite to Rochester	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Yours always		1	16	II 543	VII 280	H	
24 Apr 1854	Invites to dinner and Boulogne	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		1	17	II 555	VII 322	H	
23 May 1854	Accepting dedication	My Dear Collins	Always Faithfully Yours		1			VII 335	P	
6 Jun 1854	Joke ticket to Tunbridge Wells	My Dear Collins			2	18	II 560	VII 347	H	No sign off
7 Jun 1854	Invite for Sunday	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2	18-19	II 561	VII 348	H	
12 Jul 1854	Dissipation London and Boulogne	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 358-9	2		II 565-6	VII 366-7	M	
26 Sep 1854	Long account of domestic detail	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 362-5	2		II 590-2	VII 423-5	M	
3 Nov 1854	Reply about Scott Russell	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2		II 604	VII 458	D	
11 Nov 1854	Meeting at Garrick for Theatre	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Always		2			VII 463	P	
17 Dec 1854	Jerrold & Lemon; Xmas pantomime	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours		2	20-1	II 609-10	VII 485-6	H	
24 Dec 1854	Part in pantomime	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2	21-2	II 610	VII 488-9	H	
20 Jan 1855	Proposes trip to theatre and to Paris	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Ever		2			VII 506-7	P	Watt dates 26/1/55
30 Jan 1855	Invite to birthday dinner	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2			VII 515-6	P	
3 Feb 1855	Travel details to Paris	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Ever		2			VII 520-1	P	
8 Feb 1855	Rooms booked in Paris	Mon cher Collins	Vote fidele		2			VII 526	P	Written in French

4 Mar 1855	Re plays & WC's health, proposing to visit	My Dear Collins	Always Cordially Yours		2	23-5	II 638	VII 554-5	H	
19 Mar 1855	Criticism of Sister Rose etc	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2	26-2	II 643-4	VII 570-1	H	
24 Mar 1855	His trip, Dinah Mulock etc	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours (Normally)		2	28-30	II 645-6	VII 575-6	H	
4 Apr 1855	The Leader, his health, Pantomime	My Dear Collins	Ever faithfully		2	30-2	II 650-1	VII 585-6	H	
15 Apr 1855	Meeting and Sister Rose printing error	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Always		2	32-3	II 654	VII 593	H	
11 May 1855	The Lighthouse, Paris, Wills and gas	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		2	35-6	II 660-1	VII 616	H	
24 May 1855	Details of The Lighthouse	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 397	3		II 666	VII 628	M	
31 May 1855	Rehearsal next day	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Ever		3	36-7	II 666	VII 635	H	HUTTON wrongly has 21 May; DEXTER 24 May
9 Jun 1855	Rehearsal	My Dear Collins	Ever Heartily Yours		3	37	II 669	VII 644	H	
24 Jun 1855	Invite to a play	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours		3	38-9	II 674	VII 657-8	H	
8 Jul 1855	Future and success of The Lighthouse	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	III 171-2	3	39-41	II 677-8	VII 669-70	M	
17 Jul 1855	Invite and account of riding accident	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 400-1	3		II 680-1	VII 675-6	M	
30 Sep 1855	News and permission for After Dark	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 403-4	3		II 693-4	VII 711-2	M	
14 Oct 1855	Address in Paris, Xmas number	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully Yours		3	41-2	II 696-7	VII 721	H	
19 Oct 1855	Correcting address in Paris.	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully					VII 721-2	P	On envelope of previous letter.
12 Dec 1855	Arrangements and Xmas number	My Dear Collins	Ever faithfully		3	43-4	II 713-4	VII 762	H	Watt out of order follows 30/9/55
19 Jan 1856	Photograph, visits to him etc.	My Dear Collins	Ever Cordially	I 419-3	3		II 732-4	VIII 28-31	M	
30 Jan 1856	Arrangement to meet in London	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully (working hard)		3	44-5	II 738-9	VIII 39	H	
12 Feb 1856	WC delays in visit to Paris	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		3	45-6	II 744	VIII 53	H	
24 Feb 1856	Regretting delay	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully [MDGH]		3	46-7	II 748	VIII 62	H	PILGRIM: Sign off missing
3 Mar 1856	Joke re writer's block			I 427	3		II 749	VIII 67	M	Joke so no sign off
13 Apr 1856	Collins's journey, life in Paris etc	My Dear Collins	Ever faithfully		4	48-2	II 757-9	VIII 86-7	H	
22 Apr 1856	Collins's health, life in Paris etc	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	53-8	II 761-3	VIII 95-7	H	
30 Apr 1856	Collins's health, Howland St visit	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours		4	59-60	II 768-9	VIII 105	H	
6 Jun 1856	Biography	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully	I 437-9	4		II 777-8	VIII 130-2	M	
13 Jul 1856	Visit, Anne Rodway, domestic life	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours	I 448-50		60-1	II 791-2	VIII 161-3	M	Extract only in HUTTON
29 Jul 1856	Arrangements and HW contribution	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	61-3	II 793-4	VIII 167-8	H	
13 Aug 1856	Title of To Think or be Thought For	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours		4		II 796-7	VIII 175-6	D	
12 Sep 1856	Frozen Deep plot	My Dear Collins	Ever Cordially		4	64-5	II 798-9	VIII 184-5	H	
13 Sep 1856	Frozen Deep plot	My Dear Collins	Ever Yours		4	65-6	II 799	VIII 186	H	
9 Oct 1856	Changes in The Frozen Deep	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	66-7	II 805	VIII 203	H	
15 Oct 1856	Offering part in play	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	67-8	II 806	VIII 207	H	

26 Oct 1856	Social arrangements	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	68-9	II 808-9	VIII 214	H	
1 Nov 1856	Frozen Deep production details	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	69-2	II 809-10	VIII 217-8	H	
14 Nov 1856	Books and meeting	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	72-3	II 811	VIII 222	H	
13 Dec 1856	Tauchnitz	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4		II 815	VIII 237	P	DEXTER II 815 predicts
16 Dec 1856	Invite to amateur play	My Dear Collins	Ever Cordially		4	73-4	II 816-7	VIII 240	H	DEXTER wrongly indexed 815-6
10 Jan 1857	Dance and meeting	My Dear Collins	Ever Cordially		5	74	II 825-6	VIII 256	H	Watt out of order
19 Jan 1857	Dinner invite	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	78	II 828	VIII 263	H	
5 Feb 1857	Frozen Deep performance	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4		II 833	VIII 275	D	
14 Feb 1857	Trips and galleys	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		5	78-9	II 835	VIII 282	H	Watt out of order
4 Mar 1857	Trip [to Brighton] and Dead Secret	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	79-80	II 838	VIII 294	H	
11 May 1857	Visit	My Dear Collins	Yours Ever		4	80-1	II 846	VIII 322-3	H	
17 May 1857	Inaugurating Gad's Hill Place	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully				II 847	VIII 327	D	DEXTER is only source of this
22 May 1857	Looks forward to Sybarite nights	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4	81-3	II 848-9	VIII 329-30	H	
1 Jun 1857	Meeting and Gad's Hill Place	My Dear Collins	Faithfully Ever		4	83	II 852	VIII 338	H	
12 Jun 1857	Frozen Deep and meeting	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		4			VIII 348	P	
16 Jun 1857	Meeting	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		5	84	II 857	VIII 354	H	
19 Jun 1857	Adding him to committee	Dear Sir	We are Dear Sir Faithfully Yours					VIII 355	P	
26 Jun 1857	Frozen Deep	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		5	84-5	II 858	VIII 361	H	
2 Aug 1857	Frozen Deep in Manchester - actresses	My Dear Collins	In haste, Ever Faithfully		5	85-6	II 866	VIII 394-5	H	
17 Aug 1857	Cast for Manchester	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		5	86-7	II 871	VIII 413-4	H	
29 Aug 1857	Restless plans, misery amazing	My Dear Collins	Ever Faithfully		5	87-8	II 873	VIII 423	H	
22 Oct 1857	Silver Mines	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5		II 892	VIII 470	D	
1 Nov 1857	Xmas No.	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5			VIII 475	P	
17 Jan 1858	Incident	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully	II 40			III 3	VIII 505	M	
5 Feb 1858	Birthday and Lyceum	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5		III 7	VIII 516	D	
6 Feb 1858	Bound Xmas No.	My Dear Wilkie	Faithfully Ever			76-8	III 7	VIII 517	H	HUTTON out of order
21 Mar 1858	Pieces and Doncaster	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5		III 14	VIII 535-6	D	
17 Apr 1858	Invite to reading	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5			VIII 547	P	
29 Apr 1858	Piece he has written	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		5		III 19	VIII 553-4	D	
25 May 1858	Friendship and chat	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affectionately		5	89	III 24	VIII 567	H	
1 Aug 1858	Tour and CAC piece	My Dear Wilkie	With kind regard, Ever affecy.		5	89-90	III 34	VIII 616	H	
11 Aug 1858	Unknown Public and reading tour	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affectionately		5	90-2	III 38	VIII 623-4	H	

6 Sep 1858	Reading tour, Xmas No., publishing	My Dear Wilkie	Ever My Dear Wilkie Affectionately Yours	II 67-9		93-4	III 50-1	VIII 649-51	M	HUTTON extract only
9 Nov 1858	Tour, invite, Xmas No., misc	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		5	94-5	III 70	VIII 700-1	H	
13 Nov 1858	Dinner	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		5	96	III 72	VIII 703	H	
26 Jan 1859	Titles for ATYR	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy		5	97-9	III 90	IX 16	H	
3 Feb 1859	Changes to 'Burns'	My Dear Wilkie	Affecy Ever		5		III 93	IX 24	D	
6 Feb 1859	Invite to Brighton with girls for birthday	My Dear Wilkie	Yours Affecy					IX 25	P	
9 Apr 1859	AYR No. 1 Sure to Healthy etc and Occasional Register	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Faithfully		6	99-100	III 98	IX 48-9	H	
14 May 1859	Dinner after Sale	My Dear Wilkie	Ever		6		III 103	IX 64	P	DEXTER predicts.
12 Jun 1859	When is he coming to Gad's Hill	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affecy.		6	100-1	III 106	IX 76	H	
17 Jul 1859	Invite to Gad's Hill	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affecy.		6	101	III 112	IX 94	H	
16 Aug 1859	Writing, Woman in White title, rowing	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately				III 115-6	IX 106-7	D	WC had written to Wills
25 Aug 1859	Weather, Broadstairs plans	My Dear Wilkie	Love from all. Ever affectionately		6	102-3	III 119	IX 110-11	H	
26 Aug 1859	Bradbury & Evans and Kate Dickens				D				W	Also dated 16 August 1859
16 Sep 1859	Reunion, Caroline, accidents	My Dear Wilkie	Love from all. Ever affecy.	II 101-2			III 123-4	IX 122-3	M	
6 Oct 1859	Rejects WC on A Tale of Two Cities	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	103-5	III 124-5	IX 127-8	H	
7 Jan 1860	Praise and advice on The Woman in White	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.	II 110-11		96-97	III 145	IX 194-5	M	HUTTON extract only, out of order and wrongly dated 1859
25 Jan 1860	Meeting for theatre	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6		III 148	IX 201	D	
2 Jun 1860	Copy of Frozen Deep and Antonina	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6			IX 258	P	Watt dates 22/1/60
29 Jul 1860	End of TWIW, dinner, Alfred dead	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		6	105-6	III 169	IX 276	H	
26 Sep 1860	[Invite to dinner with Reade on 5 October]							IX 318	P	Deduced from letter 26/9/60 to W.H. Wills PILGRIM 318-319
24 Oct 1860	Wishes he was in Paris with WC	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.	II 129-32			III 188-9	IX 329-31	M	
24 May 1861	Wilkie's speech, jokes	My Dear Wilkie			6	107-9	III 221-2	IX 419-20	H	Sig cut off
23 Jun 1861	Xmas No., meetings	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affy,		6	110-11	III 225	IX 428	H	
12 Jul 1861	Awaiting boys, Broadstairs, Frank ill	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		6	111-13	III 229-30	IX 438-9	H	
28 Aug 1861	Whitby, work	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately	II 146-7			III 231-2	IX 447-8	M	
31 Oct 1861	Xmas No. and readings	My Dear Wilkie	Until then and ever Believe Me		6	113-17	III 247-8	IX 489-90	H	More in HUTTON
29 Dec 1861	Sheriff Gordon of Edinburgh				D				W	
5 Jan 1862	Meeting, health, Office of ATYR	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	117-19	III 275-6	X 5	H	Watt and HUTTON have 4 Jan

24 Jan 1862	No Name - crit. And title	My Dear Wilkie	Kind regards Ever affecy.[blank MDGH]		6	119-122	III 282-3	X 20-21	H	Not new in PILGRIM
25 Mar 1862	Won't propose literary club							X 58	P	Does not sound like letter to WC
10 May 1862	[Encloses note from lawyer F Pollock]							X 81	P	Deduced from letter to Frederick Pollock 10 May 1862
13 Jul 1862	Accepting dinner invitation				6				W	
20 Jul 1862	Domestic, mentions No Name, GH health	My Dear Wilkie	yours ever affectionately		D			X 109-10	P	GH wanted to destroy
27 Jul 1862	Invites all including Caroline, Georgina ill	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		6	122-3	III 300-1	X 113	H	
30 Jul 1862	Dinner meeting	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.				III 301-2	X 115	D	
20 Sep 1862	Loves No Name, Xmas No. GH health	My Dear Wilkie	Ever My Dear Wilkie Affectionately Yours		6	123-6	III 304-5	X 128-9	H	
4 Oct 1862	Christmas number	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affecy.		6	126-7	III 306	X 134	H	
8 Oct 1862	Xmas No. visitors, poison case	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affecy.		6	128-31	III 307-8	X 137-8	H	
12 Oct 1862	Proofs, trip to Paris	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6		III 308-9	X 139-40	D	
14 Oct 1862	Comments on No Name proofs	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	131-4	III 309-10	X 140-1	H	
14 Oct 1862	WC's illness, offering to help	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy	II 182-3		134-6	III 310	X 142-3	M	
1 Jan 1863	No Name great, go to baths for gout	My Dear Wilkie	Yours ever affecy.		6	136-8	III 333	X 186-7	H	
20 Jan 1863	Paris readings and refs to Ellen Ternan	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately					X 198-9	P	
29 Jan 1863	WC ill, may visit, Frank Beard	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		6	138-9	III 337	X200-1	H	
22 Apr 1863	Accounts of various people, death of Egg	My Dear Wilkie	Your affectionate	II 198-9	D		III 348-9	X 236-9	M	GH wanted to destroy. Extract only in MDGH and DEXTER
28 Jun 1863	Health and Collins's return	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately		6	140-1	III 355-6	X 263-4	H	
9 Aug 1863	WC health and events at GH	My Dear Wilkie	Ever My Dear Wilkie Affecy Yours		6	141-2	III 359-60	X 280-2	H	HUTTON has big cuts
24 Sep 1863	WC health and GH extension	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	143-4	III 363	X 292	H	
25 Jan 1864	Xmas No., news of Gad's Hill + friends	My Dear Wilkie	Ever my Dear Wilkie Affecy. Yours	II 209-11		144-5	III 378-9	X 346-9	M	HUTTON extract only. MDGH and HUTTON have 24 Jan
00 Oct 1864	[Can't visit Paris can WC come to Dover]							X 433	P	Deduced from to Mrs Birmingham 12/10/64 PILGRIM X 437 and to Georgina Hogarth 12/10/64 PILGRIM X 438
10 Jan 1866	Wants Armadale proofs, back to AYR	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	145-6	III 454	XI 135	H	
10 Jul 1866	Armadale play	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affectionately		6	146-9	III 476-7	XI 220-2	H	Watt and HUTTON have 9 July as letter is dated.
4 Oct 1866	Frozen Deep scenery	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affectionately		6	149-50	III 487	XI 251-2	H	Watt has 24 October
12 Feb 1867	Charles Reade and Readings	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	151-3	III 507-8	XI 312-3	H	

20 Feb 1867	Charles Reade and Readings	My Dear Wilkie	Affectionately Ever		6	153-6	III 510-1	XI 317-8	H	Watt has 29 February
13 Mar 1867	Let Reade see letter	My Dear Wilkie	Ever UnPatrick-iotically		6	156-7	III 515	XI 332	H	
1 May 1867	Proposes Xmas No.	My Dear Wilkie	Ever Affectionately		6	157-8	III 525-6	XI 360	H	
4 May 1867	Moonstone and Xmas No.	My Dear Wilkie	Affectionately Ever					XI 361-2	P	
2 Jul 1867	Xmas No.				6	158-9	III 535	XI 387	H	
23 Aug 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	159-60	III 541-2	XI 413	H	
28 Aug 1867	No Thoroughfare visit	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy. Yours					XI 414	P	
9 Sep 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		6	160-1	III 546	XI 422-3	H	
10 Sep 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		7	161-3	III 546-7	XI 423-4	H	
18 Sep 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		7	164-5	III 552-3	XI 434-5	H	
23 Sep 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		7	166-7	III 553	XI 436-7	H	
5 Oct 1867	No Thoroughfare detail and meeting	My Dear Wilkie	Affecy Ever		7	167-8	III 557	XI 445	H	Watt out of order after 28/11/67
9 Oct 1867	No Thoroughfare detail	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy.		7	168-9	III 559	XI 451-2	H	
28 Nov 1867	Dramatization of No Thoroughfare	My Dear Wilkie	Ever My Dear Wilkie Your affectionate		7	169-72	III 573-4	XI 491-2	H	
2 Dec 1867	Dramatization of No Thoroughfare etc	My Dear Wilkie			7	173-5	III 576-7	XI 498	H	
3 Dec 1867	Tremendous success last night		Ever My Dear Wilkie Your always affectionate			175-6	III 577	XI 498	H	Postscript to 2 Dec
24 Dec 1867	Content of drama of No Thoroughfare	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately,		7	176-8	III 588	XI 520-1	H	
12 Jan 1868	No Thoroughfare and Webster murder	My Dear Wilkie	My dear Wilkie, yours ever affecy	II 332-3			III 599-600	XII 7-9	M	
31 Jan 1868	No Thoroughfare and readings	My Dear Wilkie	God bless you. Ever affectionately		7	178-9	III 612-3	XII 30-31	H	
4 Jun 1868	Paris production of No Thoroughfare	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy		7	179-81	III 653	XII 125-126	H	
8 Dec 1868	Readings	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affectionately	II 396-7			III 681	XII 234-5	M	
15 Feb 1869	Criticism of Black and White	My Dear Wilkie	Ever affecy		7	181-3	III 706	XII 289-90	H	Watt has 25/2/69. redated DEXTER and PILGRIM from 25th. DEXTER indexes at 707
27 Jan 1870	Rights to pieces in HW and AYR	My Dear Wilkie	Faithfully Yours always		7	184	III 762	XII 472	H	
27 Jan 1870	Enclosing above and about WC's health	My Dear Wilkie	Affectionately always		7	185	III 762	XII 471	H	
169	169	158	153	22	140	108	144	165	169	

Notes

1. Taken from PILGRIM except where stated; capitalisation varies in different editions and may be standardised even in PILGRIM.
2. Where "Affectionately" is abbreviated, PILGRIM has "Affecy," DEXTER normally has "affecy.," and MDGH and HUTTON have "affc'ly."
3. The MS numbers the pages but not the letters; D = on the list of four returned to Georgina Hogarth.
4. Italicised entries are merely listed in DEXTER or PILGRIM, but with no transcription.
5. First publication or, if not published, first mention; @ = in the present article.

Over the next decades a small number of previously unrecorded Dickens letters appeared in auction and dealers' catalogues but they remained uncollected until the *PILGRIM* edition, begun in 1965. The first letters to Collins appeared in volume VI in 1988, and the series was completed in 2002. *PILGRIM* attempts to be definitive. It includes full transcripts of every extant Dickens letter and also adds in untraced letters the existence of which can be deduced from the content of the extant correspondence. Out of the 14,252 letters from Dickens, *PILGRIM* identifies 165 letters to Wilkie Collins, publishing the text of 162 and listing another three which are known only from references in other letters.²² *PILGRIM* claims that 20 of the published letters are new. In fact two of those claimed by *PILGRIM* are not new,²³ while six others, not claimed by *PILGRIM* as new, in fact are,²⁴ leaving 24 which were newly published or identified. *PILGRIM* also claims that a further 9 letters are published in full for the first time, previous editions having omitted more or less significant sections. That claim is not examined here. Two of the letters to Collins in *PILGRIM* still have no source apart from their first publication in 1880,²⁵ and another only has Dexter as its source.²⁶

Comprehensive as *PILGRIM* is, it omits a further four letters from Dickens to Collins.

- Two letters which Georgina Hogarth wanted to “destroy if possible” (26 August 1859 and 29 December 1861)
- One letter in Watt’s list for which no other reference has been found. It is described there as “1862, July 13, 2pp, Accepting invitation to dinner, signed C.D.” This letter is a bit of a puzzle. Dickens went to Paris “on short notice” on 10 July 1862,²⁷ and for the entire surrounding period Collins was in Broadstairs. It is possible the letter is misdated by Watt – several in the list are, though no others are assigned to the wrong year.
- A newly identified letter written around 31 October 1851, the evidence for which is in one of the three extant letters from Collins to Dickens. Dated 2 November 1851 it reads in part: “The report of the great sale of tickets at Bristol had reached me here, before I received your letter. I am delighted – for the sake of the Guild to hear that a second performance at Bristol is to take place...”²⁸

²² Dickens to Collins 26 September 1860, *PILGRIM* IX 318; 10 May 1862, *PILGRIM* X 81; and October 1864, *PILGRIM* X 433.

²³ 30 June 1853 and 24 January 1862, both published in HUTTON.

²⁴ 20 January 1852 was listed in DEXTER but only published in *PILGRIM* XII 638-639; 19 October 1855 counted as a separate letter of a different date written on the envelope of 14 October 1855, *PILGRIM* VII 721-2; 26 September 1860, listed only, no transcript, *PILGRIM* IX 318; 25 March 1862, *PILGRIM* X 81; early October 1864, listed only, no transcript, *PILGRIM* X 433.

²⁵ 17 January 1858, *PILGRIM* VIII 505; and 8 December 1868, *PILGRIM* XII 234-5.

²⁶ 17 May 1857, *PILGRIM* VIII 327.

²⁷ See to Osborne 16 July 1862, *PILGRIM* X 105-6; and to Mrs Henry Austin, 8 July 1862, *PILGRIM* X 105.

²⁸ Collins to Dickens, 2 November 1851, B&C I 75 summary. Beginning with that cited here, a number of the extracts from the letters of Wilkie Collins are taken from transcripts carried

Another letter listed in *PILGRIM* as to Collins gives some concern. It is dated 25 March 1862 and the evidence comes only from an Anderson Galleries catalogue of December 1936. In it Dickens refuses to add his name to a proposal for founding a literary club and refers to Mr Fowle Walton, who *PILGRIM* takes to be Joseph Fowell Walton. It is a curt letter without salutation and of a different tone to letters written to Collins. He was at the time deeply involved in writing *No Name* and none of the known letters by him around this time relate to the subject matter of this letter.

As Table 1 indicates, the final arithmetic leaves us with 169 possible letters to Collins. Of these, **three** owe their existence to deductions in *PILGRIM* from other letters; **two** were returned to Georgina Hogarth and probably destroyed; **one** from Watt's list appears never to have been published, has now disappeared and may or may not be misdated; **one** is deduced in this essay from a letter by Collins to Dickens; and **one** is in *PILGRIM* but may not be to Collins at all. From the remaining 161, securely to Collins and with known contents, what can we deduce?

II My Dear Wilkie

Wilkie Collins met Charles Dickens in the afternoon of Wednesday 12 March 1851 at the house of John Forster, a close friend of Dickens who later was his first biographer.²⁹ Collins had been invited to take a small part in an amateur production of a play written by Bulwer Lytton called *Not So Bad As We Seem*. The vacancy had arisen when Dickens's sub-editor and friend William Henry Wills had turned the part down. From that day until Dickens died in 1870, Collins was his friend, often his confidant and throughout most of the time his literary collaborator. They travelled together, dined together, drank together, grew beards together, went to plays together, wrote together, and walked the streets in London and Paris together. But in the few months from the autumn of 1857 to the spring of 1858, their relationship became much closer.

The new comprehensive list of letters from Dickens to Collins provides us with the salutation in 158 letters and the sign off in 153 – several signatures were cut off for autograph hunters. The 158 salutations show that up to the letter of 29 August 1857 Dickens began his letters "My Dear Collins." From the next letter, 22 October 1857, he had changed that to "My Dear Wilkie," a form he retained for the rest of his life. For the next six months, up to 28 April 1858, Dickens continued to sign off his letters as he always had, using the word "faithfully" and usually writing "Ever Faithfully." But from 25 May 1858 he

out by my fellow editors on the forthcoming Pickering & Chatto edition (BGLL), Andrew Gasson, William Baker and Graham Law. I am grateful for their permission to publish these passages here.

²⁹ To Augustus Egg, 8 March 1851, *PILGRIM* VI 310; and to Mrs Watson, 9 March 1851, *PILGRIM* VI 312.

changed to “Ever Affectionately” and the word “affectionately” or its abbreviation appears in the sign off in every subsequent letter he wrote to Collins except for two – one of which was a letter “on absolute business”.³⁰ How significant was this change? In writing letters Dickens addressed few people outside his family by their first name. Exceptions were Mark Lemon (whom he began addressing as “My Dear Mark” early in 1851), and Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton (who moved in two stages from “My Dear Sir Edward” to “My Dear Bulwer” also in 1851). Other close friends such as Douglas Jerrold and Frank Stone were consistently addressed by their surname; Daniel Maclise and Clarkson Stanfield by nicknames: “My Dear Mac” and “My Dear Stanny.” His subeditor William Henry Wills remained stubbornly “My Dear Wills” throughout decades of close acquaintance.³¹ The very few extant whole letters to John Forster – most are available only in Forster’s own extracts published in his biography of Dickens – begin “My Dear Forster,” raising a question over the closeness of the two. Dickens was freer with closing a letter “affectionately” rather than “faithfully.” Forster, Frank Stone, and William Macready merited “affectionately” despite their surname in the salutation. Even Wills got the occasional “affectionately.”³² But only three people outside the family – Mark Lemon, Daniel Maclise, and Clarkson Stanfield – were addressed by first or nick-names and parted with “affectionately.” It was into this group that Wilkie Collins was admitted in 1857-8.

The twelve months from spring 1857 were turbulent ones for Dickens. He worked on his new house, fell in love, separated from his wife, fought with his publishers, broke off his relationship with several friends, and started the public readings which were to take much of his energy and generate most of his income until his death in 1870.

The key events began unspectacularly. In March 1857 Dickens took full possession of Gad’s Hill Place, which became his home until his death. Early in June his friend Douglas Jerrold died unexpectedly and Dickens decided to raise money for his family by reviving an amateur production of Wilkie Collins’s play *The Frozen Deep*. The cast included friends – Collins among them – as well as his daughters Kate and Mamie and his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth. Despite the visit of Queen Victoria to one of the four performances at the Gallery of Illustration in Regent Street the play failed to raise the £2000 which Dickens had hoped for. At the end of July Dickens went to Manchester to read *The Christmas Carol* to raise more money. After a deputation from the Mayor and acclaim from the audience he decided to perform *The Frozen Deep* there too. As he returned on Sunday he wrote to Collins:

³⁰ The two letters were 9 April 1859, PILGRIM IX 48-49, and 27 January 1870, PILGRIM XII 472.

³¹ The last known letter to him begins ‘My Dear Wills’ – 26 February 1870, PILGRIM XII 482.

³² See to Wills, 14 September 1863, PILGRIM X 289, for the first identified occurrence; it became more common towards 1870.

As our sum is not made up, and as I had an urgent Deputation and so forth from Manchester Magnates at the Reading on Friday night, I have arranged to act *The Frozen Deep* in the Free Trade Hall on Friday and Saturday nights, the 21st and 22nd. It is an immense place, and we shall be obliged to have actresses...³³

It was not just the size of the Free Trade Hall that necessitated the changes in the cast. To many, actresses were not far removed from prostitutes. The respectable ladies of Dickens's family could not appear on the public stage. So he was "obliged to have actresses". After a couple of false starts, the actresses chosen were Frances Ternan and her two daughters, Maria and Ellen. Rehearsals were scheduled for 18 and 19 August before travelling to Manchester on the 20th. So on Tuesday, 18 August 1857 at the Gallery of Illustration in Regent Street,³⁴ the poor and relatively unknown actress Ellen Ternan, aged 18, met the rich, famous and successful 45-year-old writer Charles Dickens. Two days later the entire cast, together with Dickens's wife Catherine and her sister Georgina, went to Manchester. The play was performed for three nights, not two – and it is now clear that Dickens always had the extra Monday night in mind after the Friday and Saturday performances and even considered taking posters for the extra night down with him and playing it without a licence from the Lord Chamberlain.³⁵

In those four days in Manchester Dickens became besotted with Ellen Ternan. Collins was among the first to know. Four days after returning from Manchester he wrote to his friend:

Partly in the grim despair and restlessness of this subsidence from excitement, and partly for the sake of *Household Words*, I want to cast about whether you and I can go anywhere – take any tour – see any thing – whereon we could write something together. Have you any idea, tending to any place in the world? ... We want something for *Household Words*, and I want to escape from myself. For, when I do start up and stare myself seedily in the face... my blankness is inconceivable – indescribable – my misery, amazing ... Shall we talk at Gad's Hill? What shall we do?³⁶

Dickens soon knew what he was to do. Collins and he went to the North of England to write a piece together for *Household Words*. But he was less than honest with his friends when he wrote to them about this trip. He signed himself "Your faithful friend" when he wrote to Hannah Brown on 4 September: "We start on ... Monday Morning, and have not the least idea where we are going to."³⁷ And the next day he told his long-time friend, Angela Burdett Coutts: "I have decided on a foray into the bleak fells of Cumberland".³⁸ They did start by going to Allonby on the Cumberland coast. But before he composed those letters he had already written on 3 September to

³³ To Collins, 2 August 1857, PILGRIM VIII 394-5.

³⁴ See to Fairbairn, 13 August 1857, PILGRIM VIII 409

³⁵ To John Deane, 12 August 1857, PILGRIM VIII 407.

³⁶ To Collins, 29 August 1857, PILGRIM VIII 423.

³⁷ To Mrs Brown, 4 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 430.

³⁸ To Angela Burdett Coutts, 5 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 432.

book rooms for himself and Collins from 13 September in the town of Doncaster, 120 miles south east of Allonby.³⁹ So Dickens knew perfectly well where and when he was going to end up – Doncaster in the week of the St Leger horse-race, where Ellen Ternan and her mother and sister were acting at the theatre. One can only conclude that the whole expedition was engineered with that in mind.

On Monday 7 September they set off by train to Carlisle. Only then did Dickens write to his sister-in-law and his sub-editor to tell them that Doncaster was their final destination: “We shall not arrive at Doncaster until Sunday night ... we have a grotesque idea of describing the town.” This in race week when a room could not be had for less than 12 guineas. Clearly to Dickens it was worth every penny.⁴⁰ Throughout the trip Dickens did not write a word to his wife (at least, no letters to her survive) nor send his love to her through his letters to her sister, though he assiduously sent kisses to his children.⁴¹ The presence of Collins, Dickens and the Ternans is confirmed by *The Doncaster Gazette* and *The Doncaster Chronicle*.⁴² Claire Tomalin, in her biography of Ellen Ternan (ch. 7), finds evidence that they met in two rather Delphic references in letters to Wills describing the actress as “the riddle”;⁴³ and also in two passages in the five part fictional account which Collins and Dickens wrote about the trip. This was “The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices” which was published in *Household Words* with Dickens in the role of Mr Goodchild and Collins depicted as Mr Idle. In particular:

Mr. Goodchild would appear to have been by no means free from lunacy himself at “t’races”, though not of the prevalent kind. He is suspected by Mr. Idle to have fallen into a dreadful state concerning a pair of little lilac gloves and a little bonnet that he saw there. Mr. Idle asserts, that he did afterwards repeat at the Angel, with an appearance of being lunatically seized, some rhapsody to the following effect: “O little lilac gloves! And O winning little bonnet, making in conjunction with her golden hair quite a Glory in the sunlight round the pretty head, why anything in the world but you and me!”⁴⁴

Ellen herself was described later by Kate Dickens as a “small fair-haired rather pretty actress” (cited in Storey, 93). Tomalin (ch. 7) concludes that whatever Dickens proposed to Ellen he was, at that time, rejected. Whoever knew, or did not, about the real purpose of the trip, Collins must have. And in the first

³⁹ To the Master of the Angel Hotel, Doncaster, 3 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 429.

⁴⁰ To Georgina Hogarth, 7 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 438, and to Wills, same date, PILGRIM VIII 438-9.

⁴¹ See to Georgina Hogarth, 9 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 441-2; 12 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 443-5; 15 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 447-8.

⁴² See, for example, *The Doncaster Chronicle*, Friday, September 18, 1857, 5 col.1.

⁴³ To Wills, 17 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 448-9, and 20 September 1857, PILGRIM VIII 450-1. Both references were excised in all editions before PILGRIM.

⁴⁴ *Household Words*, 16 (31 October 1857) 411-2, in Chapter the Fifth, which refers to the time in Doncaster. The other passage refers to the rowdy behaviour of theatre-goers towards the actresses (412).

surviving letter to Collins written after it was over,⁴⁵ Dickens adopts the “My Dear Wilkie” salutation – which he kept for the rest of his life. Shared intimacies had brought Collins one step towards a new closeness with Dickens.

Dickens certainly was troubled by his feelings for Ellen and they affected his marriage. In October 1857 he ordered the doorway between his dressing room and the bedroom he had shared with his wife to be “fitted with plain white deal shelves”. In future he slept alone in the dressing room on “a small iron bedstead”.⁴⁶ Two months later he wrote to Mrs Lavinia Watson, a long-time friend:

I weary of rest, and have no satisfaction but in fatigue ... I wish an Ogre with seven heads ... had taken the Princess whom I adore – you have no idea how intensely I love her! – to his stronghold on the top of a high series of Mountains, and there tied her up by the hair. Nothing would suit me half so well this day, as climbing after her, sword in hand, and either winning her or being killed.⁴⁷

Early in 1858 he sent Collins a specially bound copy of the Christmas number they had written together,⁴⁸ with the message:

Thinking it may one day be interesting to you – say when you are weak in both feet, and when I and Doncaster are quiet and the great race is over.⁴⁹

And then again six weeks later:

The Doncaster unhappiness remains so strong upon me that I can’t write, and (waking) can’t rest, one minute. I have never known a moment’s peace or content, since the last night of the Frozen Deep. I do suppose that there never was a Man so seized and rended by one Spirit.⁵⁰

Noone knows precisely what crisis caused his final separation from his wife. But we do know that things came to a head in the week of 17 May 1858. It may have been precipitated when a piece of jewellery ordered for Ellen Ternan was mistakenly delivered by the jeweller to Catherine.⁵¹ But by the beginning of June it was settled. Dickens provided Catherine with a house and £600 a year and he remained in Tavistock House with Catherine’s sister Georgina and all the children except the eldest, Charley, who went to live with his mother.

That led to rumours that Dickens had separated from Catherine because he “preferred his wife’s sister to herself”. Others associated him with an “actress” and a “professional young lady”.⁵² On 25 May he wrote to Collins:

⁴⁵ 22 October 1857, PILGRIM VIII 470.

⁴⁶ To Anne Cornelius, 11 October 1857, PILGRIM VIII 465.

⁴⁷ To Mrs Lavinia Watson, 7 December 1857, PILGRIM VIII 488.

⁴⁸ “The Perils of Certain English Prisoners”, *Household Words*, Christmas Number, December 1857.

⁴⁹ To Collins, 6 February 1858, PILGRIM VIII 517.

⁵⁰ To Collins, 21 March 1858, PILGRIM VIII 536.

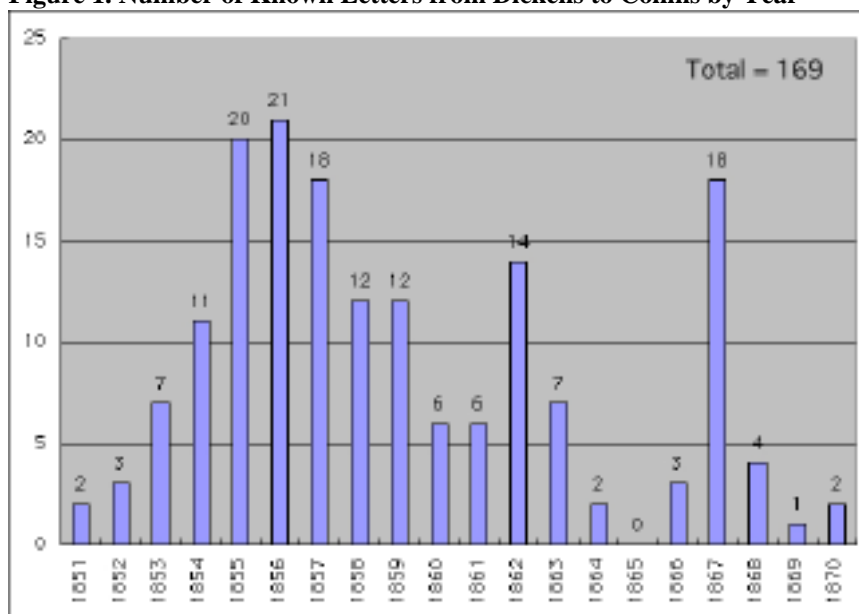
⁵¹ There is a full account of the separation in Slater (135-62), where it is related to Dickens’s psychology and writings. There is also a well-documented account of this difficult period and the bracelet incident in Johnson, pt. 8 ch. 9.

⁵² See the various letters in PILGRIM VIII 739-45.

A thousand thanks for your kind letter: I always feel your friendship very much, and prize it in proportion to the true affection I have for you ... Can you come round to me in the morning ... before 12. I can then tell you all in lieu of writing. It is rather a long story—over, I hope, now.⁵³

For the first time he signed the letter “Ever affectionately” – a form of closing he kept for the rest of his life. The rumours continued and Dickens decided to repudiate them in a personal statement which he persuaded *The Times* to run,⁵⁴ and which he repeated in *Household Words*.⁵⁵ However, his friend Mark Lemon refused to print the statement in *Punch* which he edited. Lemon had also reluctantly taken on the job of advising Catherine. In addition to the break with Bradbury & Evans who published *Punch* as well as *Household Words*, the split ended the friendship between the two men. Dickens did not write again to Lemon for ten years. By then “My Dear Mark ... Ever Affectionately CD” had become “My Dear Lemon ... Faithfully Yours Charles Dickens.”⁵⁶ Thus he remained. As Collins entered the closest circle, Lemon left.

Figure 1. Number of Known Letters from Dickens to Collins by Year



⁵³ To Collins, 25 May 1858, PILGRIM VIII 567.

⁵⁴ *The Times*, 7 June 1858.

⁵⁵ *Household Words* 17 (12 June 1858) 601.

⁵⁶ To Lemon, 6 October 1868, PILGRIM XII 195.

Collins stood by Dickens throughout the separation and was clearly seen by him as on “his” side. But Collins continued to be warm to Catherine, in 1862 sending her an affectionate note and photograph for an album she compiled, and in 1871 giving her an author’s box ticket to see *The Woman in White*.⁵⁷ Based on documents such as Dickens’s letters to others – notably that to W.H. Wills of 26 July 1868, with its description of *The Moonstone* as “wearisome beyond endurance” (PILGRIM XII 159) – all Collins’s major biographers have assumed that the friendship between him and Dickens cooled towards the end of Dickens’s life (see Robinson 215, Davis 257-8 & 265, Clarke 127-8, 138, and Peters 311-2). Other evidence for the cooling, notably in the collaborative efforts of the two men, has recently been presented by Lillian Nayder (chs. 5-6), who sees it as indicating a deepening rivalry rather than a falling out. What is remarkable, though, is that the letters from Dickens to Collins provide no concrete support for the idea of the cooling relationship.

As Figure 1 shows, the frequency of the letters peaked in the mid-1850s when Dickens and Collins were working and travelling together. Collins was a staff writer on *Household Words* and then *All The Year Round* from October 1856 to early in 1862. As Collins’s independent fame grew – after *The Woman in White* was published in 1859-60 – the two friends undoubtedly spent less time together, both socially and for work, and Collins left *All The Year Round*. He was wealthy enough to travel independently and much of the time he spent abroad trying to cure his various ailments. From around 1865 he had relationships to sustain with Martha Rudd as well as his companion since 1857, Caroline Graves, and his first child was born in November 1869. Dickens’s public readings took him around the country and to the United States of America. The number of letters inevitably fell, only to grow again in 1867 when they reunited for their last collaborative work *No Thoroughfare*.⁵⁸ Indeed in 1867 there are 18 known letters – the third highest total for any year.

After 1867 there are few letters – just seven in the next two and half years. Evidence for a cooling in the relationship has been seen in Dickens’s last letter to Collins which closes “I don’t come to see you, because I don’t want to bother you. Perhaps you may be glad to see me bye and bye. Who knows!”⁵⁹ But the words before those do not indicate animosity. Dickens wrote, “I have been truly concerned to hear of your bad attack; but I have two hopes of it; first that it will not last long; second, that it will leave you in a really recovered state of good health.” The slightly melancholy tone is no more than that of a letter eight years earlier when Collins left his seven-guineas-a-week job at *All The Year Round* to earn £5000 from the publisher Smith & Elder for his next novel, *Armada*: “I am very sorry that we part company (though only in a literary sense), but I hope we shall work together again, one day.”⁶⁰ When Dickens

⁵⁷ Collins to Catherine Dickens, 7 April 1862 and 18 October 1871, PM; BGLL.

⁵⁸ “No Thoroughfare,” *Household Words*, Christmas Number, December 1867.

⁵⁹ To Collins, 27 January 1870, PILGRIM XII 471.

⁶⁰ To Collins, 5 January 1862, PILGRIM X 5.

wrote in January 1870, Collins was unable to see anyone – literally. He had written to his lawyer Tindell two days earlier, “As for me, the gout has got me in the eye. I am confined to my room blinded for the time being.”⁶¹ Barely three months earlier Collins had

... had a day at Gadshill, a little while since. Only the family. Very harmonious and pleasant – except Dickens's bath, which dripped behind the head of my bed all night. Apropos of Gadshill, your cutting from the *New York Times*, has been followed by a copy of the paper and a letter from Bigelow. I don't think Dickens has heard of it – and I shan't say anything about it, for it might vex him, and can do no good. Why they should rake up that old letter now, is more than I can understand. But then a people who can spell Forster's name without the “r”, are evidently capable of anything.⁶²

The “old letter” referred to here is that written by Dickens in May 1858 to his friend Arthur Smith concerning his separation. This is the so-called “violated letter” that Dickens claimed he had not intended to be published, but merely to be shown to people who questioned what had happened (Forster, bk 8 ch. 2). However, to his dismay it was published in an American newspaper on 16 August 1858 and was then widely reprinted in America and Britain. For some reason, eleven years later, the *New York Times* had published it once more under the heading “Why Charles Dickens Separated From His Wife: His Own Statement. From The Boston Folio.”⁶³ Clearly this would have upset Dickens greatly if he had learned of it, and Collins's considerate action in concealing the news hardly seems the stuff of enmity. Further, a newly published letter to Charles Fechter also shows that Collins visited Dickens at Gad's Hill Place barely two weeks before his death.⁶⁴ He is also reported to have been planning another visit in June when he had finished *Man and Wife*, an appointment only prevented by Dickens's death (Robinson, 242; Davis, 265; Peters, 317).

Writing to a friend in 1888, towards the end of his own life, Collins recalled being “... with Dickens at Paris in 1855. We saw each other every day, and were as fond of each other as men could be. Nobody (my dear mother excepted, of course) felt so positively sure of the future before me in Literature, as Dickens did.”⁶⁵ The new evidence presented here suggests that they died as they lived, the closest of friends. Earlier conclusions about the cooling relationship may thus need to be reappraised.

⁶¹ Collins to Tindell, 25 January 1870, MITCHELL; BGLL.

⁶² To Frederick Lehmann, 25 October 1869, B&C II 326-327.

⁶³ *The New York Times*, 28 September 1869, 5 col. 5; the misprint “Foster” is found around half way down the column.

⁶⁴ To Charles Fechter, 28 May 1870, PILGRIM XII 536-538

⁶⁵ Collins to Robert du Pontavice de Heussey, 15 March 1886, PARRISH; BGLL.

III My Dear Dickens

The other side of this correspondence is missing. Letters to Dickens from Collins, like all the rest, were burnt in the fire at Gad's Hill and subsequently. Only three remain. One is a letter which fulfils Dickens's criterion of a letter "on absolute business". On 7 August 1860 Collins accepts an engagement to work for two years as a writer on Dickens's periodical *All The Year Round* on a salary of seven guineas a week plus a share in the profits.⁶⁶ The others are small letters. One, cited above, is about a play they were performing. The other asks leave to come and stay at Gad's Hill. Both somehow survived. All are addressed "My dear Dickens" but their sign offs change from "... attached and obedient servant W. Wilkie Collins" in 1851 to "Ever yours Wilkie Collins" in 1860 to "Ever your afftly W.C" in 1864.⁶⁷

But that is not the end of the Collins side of the correspondence. There is one final secret waiting to be discovered in these 169 letters. Almost every one either replies to a letter from Collins or invites a reply – some do both. From these clues we can reconstruct something of the missing half of this correspondence. That will be the subject of a second essay, which will also return to the claims that their relationship cooled towards the end of Dickens's life.

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⁶⁷ Collins to Dickens, 2 November, B&C I 75, and 8 September 1864, B&C I 249.

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Black and White: British and American Versions

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Wilkie Collins's 1869 play *Black and White* was written together with Charles Fechter and first performed on the stage of London's Adelphi Theater on 29 March 1869. In her biography of Collins, Catherine Peters is dismissive of the collaboration, describing Fechter's plot as "preposterous" and Collins's denouement as "nothing but melodrama" (314-5). Yet, like other critics who have discussed *Black and White*,¹ Peters focuses on the British production and does not consider the play's run in Boston or the American version of the text. In consequence it has yet to come to scholarly attention that there are two distinctly different versions of this play. This critical oversight should be rectified.

Black and White has recently gained popularity among scholars for its surprisingly radical portrayal of racial injustice. The story concerns Maurice de Layrac ("de Leyrac" in the American version), a French Count who sails to the island of Trinidad to woo the woman he loves. There, Maurice learns that he is the son of a female slave and a white plantation owner and thus, though ostensibly "white," technically a slave. During the course of the drama, his lover's initial revulsion toward his black heritage is overcome, Maurice escapes the schemings of a vindictive rival who wishes to bind him into slavery, and the play concludes with an interracial marriage. In the process, it provides many examples of the various ways, prejudiced as well as progressive, in which Wilkie Collins approached issues of racial difference in his writing.

Black and White, like many of Collins's plays, has not been republished. However, if one compares the American and British printed versions of the play, it quickly becomes apparent that, although the two plots are basically the same, the written texts vary significantly. Certainly it may be argued that dramatic scripts published and performed in the nineteenth century were subject to frequent revisions during the course of their "run." However, as scholarly interest in Collins's textual treatment of race increases and as more critics discuss this particular play, the differences between these two editions need to be recognized, especially so as the two versions of the play provide readers with differing images of slavery and black identity. Additionally, modern scholars may be interested in yet a third printed version of the play: the "Licensor's Copy." This document, perhaps the original form of Collins's drama, can be found in the British Library.

¹ See, for example, Robert Ashley (80) on the poor reception of the play in Britain, or William M. Clarke (117-9) on Collins's response to it.

Three different nineteenth-century publishers produced copies of *Black and White* for acting purposes. The play was printed by C. Whiting in London in 1869, by De Witt Publishers in New York in either 1869 or 1870, and by The Dramatic Publishing Company in Chicago around the turn of the century.² Close reading proves that the Chicago and New York editions of the play are identical.³ Obviously the Chicago edition was not reset but reproduced either from stereotype plates or photographically. Other than a distinctive title page announcing the publisher and graced with unique decorative flourishes, the wording and appearance of these two editions of the play are the same, line for line.

Conversely, differences between the London text and the New York text are immediately visible. Where the title page of the London edition reads *Black and White: A Love Story, in Three Acts*, that of the New York edition bears the designation *Black and White: A Drama, in Three Acts*. A further early indication that the form of the New York edition departs from the London printing is the note that appears on the title page, beneath the title of the play and the names of the two authors. The passage reads:

As first performed at the Adelphi Theatre, London, under the management of Benjamin Webster, esq., on Monday, March 29, 1869. To which is added a description of the costumes – cast of the characters – entrances and exits – relative positions of the performers on the stage, and the whole of the stage business.

(*Black and White*, New York and Chicago, title page)

Unlike the London edition of the play, the New York edition has five pages of detailed notes and stage directions at the front of the text, complete with five different drawings of the stage; it also boasts a “synopsis” of the story printed at the end of the script. Furthermore, the text of the play itself is full of directions for the actors’ movements, expressions, entrances and exits, and relationships to various stage props, few of which are found in the London printing of the play.

In the absence of documentary evidence in Collins’s correspondence or elsewhere, it is difficult to provide a definitive explanation for these differences. However, because Charles Fechter left England for America at the end of 1869 and was involved in the Boston production of the play, it seems

² No date appears on either of these American acting editions. As performances of the play began in Boston’s Globe Theatre on 26 December 1870, it may be assumed that this version of the play was printed by De Witt either in 1869 or in 1870. Kirk H. Beetz (49) dates the Chicago edition as “around 1900.”

³ There are several “points” that provide conclusive evidence of this. The same asymmetrical lines appear in the diagrams of the stage (found under the heading of “Scenery”) that were drawn by hand. On page 11, the typing of Miss Milburn’s lines “For you to come all the way from Paris on my account, across I don’t know how many oceans! Oh, how very absurd!” is noticeably uneven; the letter “y” in the word “very” is placed in an odd position, with the bottom of the tail of the letter “y,” rather than the joining of the two diagonal lines, resting on the same line as the r. Also, on page 15, the reader will note a typesetting error: Maurice’s question “Is she here” is followed by a colon rather than a question mark.

possible that it was he who edited Collins's written text for its publication in America.⁴ Fechter, along with Dickens, had previously edited Collins's play *No Thoroughfare* for its Paris production. In addition, one might conclude from the abundance of stage directions in the American version that an actor (as Fechter was) may have penned this draft of *Black and White* for publication in the United States. Fechter certainly was known for his fondness for dramatic physical expression. In her brief discussion of his career, Catherine Peters writes, "In his short career on the London stage ... Fechter probably did more to change the style of English acting than any other single actor at the time. Wilkie's account of Fechter's preparation ... suggests he was a nineteenth-century forerunner of Method acting" (288). She also claims, "As the villain Obenreizer in *No Thoroughfare*, Fechter was at his best. The story ... is full of stage 'business,' more visual than verbal, with Swiss settings that drew on Dickens' and Wilkie's memories of the journey to Italy" (288-9). Such an individual seems likely to have emphasized dramatic action and stage directions in his work. Furthermore, Fechter had played the part of Maurice in London and during the play's provincial tour of Britain. His memory of the script, as an actor, also might explain the many odd discrepancies between the written lines of the two texts. Lines recited by actors during performances of the play may very likely have deviated from the exact wording of the printed script.

Of course, this is not the only conceivable explanation. Certainly the name of "Benjamin Webster, esq." appears prominently (and perhaps needlessly) on the title page below the names of Wilkie Collins and Charles Fechter in the New York edition. The director of the London production might have altered elements within the drama during rehearsal. Or, Collins himself could have done this. He poured a great deal of money into the British productions of *Black and White*; he also may have attended rehearsals and made suggestions for changes in dialogue. Finally, it is even possible that someone in the audience at a London production of the play scribbled down a rough copy of it during a performance in order to republish it for a profit in America. Although this scenario seems least likely, one might note a "paraphrased" quality in some of the passages that suggests that they were only loosely recorded. This too might explain why the written texts vary so noticeably.

However, whatever truth lies in these speculations, it is certain that there are large sections of the New York text where Collins's text is rewritten or rearranged. One of many curious examples is a speech where Maurice prepares himself to explain to Miss Emily Milburn, the love of his life (and the privileged daughter of a plantation owner), the fact that his mother is a slave. The London version of the text reads:

The sun shines brightly; the sounds of day are abroad in the air; my weary eyes rest on the beauty and the luxury of this room – and still my mind sees nothing but the ghastly moonlight and the squalid hut; my ears are

⁴ For a brief discussion of Fechter's travels, see Peters, 357.

deaf to all but my mother's dying words. (*He looks towards the side entrance.*) Oh, you whom I love, come, with your soft footfall and your gentle smile! Emily! Emily! give me the courage to tell you what I heard last night!

(*Black and White*, London, 25)

The American versions read:

The sun shines brightly, and the fruit and flowers gleam, but I freeze in the ghastly moonlight of last night – the night my mother died! All seems dead to me now, and yet I breathe, I think, I move and live! (*music*) Ah! you whom I love! Emily! come to me with your light footfall and your gentle smile! come and give me the courage to tell you what I learnt last night! (*music for MISS MILBURN'S entrance.*)

(*Black and White*, New York and Chicago, 19)

One could certainly claim, after noting the “ghastly” quality of the descriptive writing in the American version, that the London edition seems the better written of the two texts. However, despite this fact, the New York script manages to advance certain themes, particularly those involving relationships between blacks and whites, that might be termed “underdeveloped” within the London version of Collins's play. The American version of the text may be considered a corruption of Collins's original work; however, one might also argue that the differences between the two editions reflect the two audiences' national expectations and cultural preoccupations. Ultimately, within the American *Black and White*, sentimental language and a focus on feeling are used to intensify larger political themes concerning systems of slavery. Such mechanisms were used liberally both in the literature and in the non-fictional works on slavery appearing at this time in America, specifically in the wake of Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential 1852 work *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.⁵ In the British acting edition of *Black and White*, the audience's sympathy is aligned with the hero of the story, and less dramatic emphasis is placed on the tragedies of the slaves, notably Ruth. The fact that the longer “Licensor's Copy” of Collins's text itself offers a less restrained discussion of interracial romance may suggest that the drama Collins originally wrote had already been tempered for a British audience.

Indeed, the ideological messages generated by these editions are greatly affected by their textual variations. For example, the New York version of the text seems to have been “Americanized.” This is most obviously seen in the names of the island's slaves. In each text, it is established that slaves have

⁵ Many scholars have noted the various ways in which Stowe's novel became an American cultural phenomenon for decades after the Civil War. For example, in his discussion of the theatrical renditions of the novel, Alfred Kazin points out that “garish dramatizations ... flourishing in one provincial ‘opery house’ after another ... emphasized the most melodramatic, seemingly improbable incidents in the novel” (vii). Collins's play actually suffered in Britain as a result of the proliferation of dramas that reenacted Stowe's work. Andrew Gasson (19) notes that Collins considered that the play “achieved only limited success because English audiences had been saturated with adaptations of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.”

taken “lustrious” names for themselves; Mr Plato argues, “we don’t see why de dam white man should hab all de good names to hisself” (London, 14; New York and Chicago, 13). In the London edition of the play, the slaves are Messrs. Plato, Socrates, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Milton, but in the American versions, along with other alterations, Mr. Homer is replaced by Mr. Washington. However, these are far from being the most significant changes in the American version. The New York text, with its copious stage directions and extravagant language, is more melodramatic and exaggeratedly theatrical than the London version. Nevertheless, because of the reinforced sentimentality in the American edition of *Black and White*, the stand against slavery and against racial prejudice is more pronounced.

Of course, black characters in both texts are mocked for taking a “radical” position in the name of the “sacred right ob freedom”; the blacks on the island plan either to kill all the whites or to form a coalition by which they might unite themselves “in one great conspiracy to learn no lessons, and to do no work” in an effort to drive the white man off the island (*Black and White*, London, 13-14). Nevertheless, black characters in the London version of the text are repeatedly shown to take pleasure in serving whites. This becomes obvious at the beginning of the play as the slave woman Ruth goes out of her way to please a spoiled and unappreciative mistress, in spite of the fact that she herself is seriously ill. The scene reads as follows:

(Enter RUTH, with ices on a tray.)

MISS M. (to RUTH). Why are you still here? You know how ill you have been – I told you you were not fit to wait at the party. Go home – do pray go home!

RUTH. Yes missy – yes. I only waited to give you your ice. Take the pineapple ice. I made them, and I know which is best.

MISS M. (taking an ice from the tray, and then putting it back again). No! now it has come, I don’t want it. I don’t know what I want! It isn’t your fault Ruth – I’m sorry I troubled you.

RUTH. I’ll find something you like, missy – never fear!

(She goes out.)

MISS M. (looking after RUTH). I wonder whether there is anybody – except that poor old Quadroon – who really loves me? I spoke to the doctor about her this morning, Jane. He said she had got a heart-complaint; and, at her age, he owned frankly there was nothing to be done.

MRS. P. Is Ruth your slave?

MISS M. No. She is a slave on a plantation close to mine, called “The Upper Croft.” The owner has been absent for years – and Ruth is allowed to earn a little money by making ices for any one who will employ her. She does her best, poor thing! But the ices in Trinidad are not to be compared with the ices in Paris.

(*Black and White*, London, 5-6)

In this segment of dialogue, the reader becomes aware of the condescending pity and the keen desire to please that characterize the relationship between Miss Emily Milburn and Ruth. Ruth is shown to be “needy” and eager to

garner approval from the self-aggrandizing Emily Milburn, who looks down on her unParisian ices. Although Plato's band of rebels speaks of overthrowing the whites on the island, Ruth rushes to find "something" that will please her mistress, despite her illness.

However, in the New York version, the relationship between Emily and Ruth appears more equitable. This may come as a surprise to the modern critic; after all, it was the Americans, not the British, who continued the practice of slave-ownership until the mid-nineteenth century. Of course, this disparity may result from romantic American fantasies about the positive, loving relationships existing between some masters and their slaves as against traditional British notions about the ways in which masters and servants interact in a well-ordered house. Nevertheless, in the American version of Collins's text, slaves do not simply assume it is an honor or duty to serve whites. Accordingly, in this edition of the script, the scene communicates quite a different impression:

Enter, R.U.E. and by C.D.F., RUTH, with bunch of flowers. Drops on one knee and offers flowers to MISS MILBURN.

MISS M. Ruth! (*takes flowers.*) Why, you ought not to be here. Thank you. You are not strong enough to be out. Do go in, do go in.

RUTH. I only wanted to see you and bring you these, with my sincere wishes for your happiness on your birthday.

MISS M. My happiness! (*bitterly, almost in tears*) I can't bear it! I'll go away – I am only plagued more and more. (*kindly*) But don't you be pained – it is not your fault, Ruth!

RUTH. I did not mean to grieve you, miss. (*kisses MISS MILBURN'S hand, and exits D.P. and off R.U.E.*)

MISS M. Poor old Ruth! poor girl! I was speaking to the doctor about her – he says she is dying of a heart broken, nothing else. Even a slave can love (*sighs*) Ah!

MRS. P. But you have not told me what ails your heart.

(*Black and White, New York and Chicago, 8*)

In the London version, Emily chastises Ruth as she meekly puts forth her offering of a pineapple ice and then orders her (rather brusquely) to go home. In this version, Emily seems more concerned about Ruth's health. She welcomes her into her own house, and she specifically urges Ruth to go inside to rest. Here, Ruth brings flowers – a gift on her birthday. Although she goes down on one knee to present them and although she kisses Emily's hand, she does not wait upon Emily. Their connection is one of feeling, not economics, and in this scene, Ruth does not appear to be employed. She seems to be more an independent agent and less an object of charity. Here Emily genuinely appears to care for Ruth, and Ruth travels to the plantation in order to visit a friend, rather than to work. It provides a contrast to the London version, where Ruth specifically plays the role of an anxious inferior.

Still, perhaps the most striking difference between these two scenes is the description of Ruth's illness. In the London version of the text, Ruth is dying of old age and of a "heart-complaint." In the New York edition, Ruth is dying "of

a heart broken, nothing else,” a significant variation on the original story. In the American version of *Black and White*, “even a slave can love.” This sort of language endows Ruth’s character with a humanity that is missing from the London edition of the text. In the New York script, Ruth is an individual of passion and feeling; in addition to mothering and serving, she participates in a romantic narrative. Although her relationship with Maurice’s white father is discussed in the London version of Collins’s text, the American script’s emphasis on her broken heart reinforces her character as a secondary heroine rather than merely as an individual whose past actions shape the course of the plot.

It is Collins’s original dramatic framework, however, that provides the basis for the new American interpretation of this story. Indeed, one may argue that the political nature of Collins’s text lends itself to further interpretation by audiences, by adaptors, and even by plagiarists, and that Collins himself might have originally intended to place greater emphasis on racial issues.

A document that gives further evidence of the play’s radical potential is an additional printed copy of the play – the Licensor’s Copy – a factor that further complicates issues of critical interpretation for the modern Collins scholar. According to nineteenth-century British Law, all plays were required to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain’s office for approval before they could be publicly performed. This third edition of *Black and White*, also printed by C. Whiting and now held in the British Library, appears to be the copy sent to the licensor’s office before the opening of the play. “Licencers copy [sic]” is written in cursive on the cover, as is Benjamin Webster’s signature and the note “Received, March 17.”

According to the *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (674), the text of *Black and White* was licensed on 18 March 1869. However, the printed London version of *Black and White* that is available today differs in many respects from the copy that was turned in to the licensor’s office on 17 March 1869. There are no records available in the British Library of comments that may have been made by a censor on Collins’s play; nevertheless, it is possible that parts of the play that appear in this version (and not in the London edition) may *not* have been approved. Under the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 (and in conjunction with the Lord Chamberlain’s regulative capacity, which dated back to the Licensing Act of 1737), the Lord Chancellor was authorized to prohibit the acting of a play *or* the performance of specific lines, acts, or scenes within a play.⁶ Such censorship could be carried out whenever the Lord Chamberlain

⁶ According to the *Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, “In Great Britain the wide powers of supervision and control over the stage which were vested in the Lord Chamberlain, until they were abolished by the Theatres Act, 1968, derived originally from the function of a minor official in the Royal Household, the Master of Revels ... first appointed in the reign of Henry VII” (143). Zygmunt Hubner writes, “The Licensing Act proved unbelievably handy. It endured for more than two centuries, regulating theatrical matters – with some minor changes ... introduced in 1843 by the Theatre Regulation Act – until the Theatres Act of 1968 put an end to prior censorship” (40).

was of the opinion that it was “fitting for the preservation of good manners, decorum, or the public peace to do so” (“Report from the Joint Select Committee,” 47). Such may have been the case with some of the lines within *Black and White*. For example, a brief conversation between Maurice de Layrac and his arch-enemy Stephen Westcraft (which happen to contain a few disparaging comments about London and the British) do not appear in either the London or the New York versions of the play. The missing lines read:

MISS M. (*trying to quiet* WESTCRAFT) Stephen! The Count brings the latest news from Europe. (*To MAURICE*) There are troubles expected in France, are there not?

MAUR. (*seriously*) Yes. Some people see the signs of a new revolution before long.

WEST. How like the French! One revolution is not enough for them.

MAUR. (*with a momentary irritation*). Pardon me, sir, it's more like the English. One revolution wasn't enough for you!

MISS WEST. (*to her brother*). Stephen!

WEST. (*impatiently*). Yes! yes! (*To MAURICE.*) Our revolutions, Mr. Count, happened a long time ago. We consider it in cursedly bad taste to refer to them now.

MAUR. Such is English gratitude for English liberty!

(*Black and White*, Licenser's Copy, 9-10)

The action of *Black and White* is set in the year 1830 and the above passage makes an interesting statement about the ways in which English society was then attempting to silence (through censure) noises of revolution. Although one revolution wasn't (and isn't) enough, it is considered “cursedly bad taste” to speak of it. Additionally, the audience is encouraged to think that Westcraft has no appreciation for the ideals of liberty. The British gentleman wants to enslave Maurice de Layrac and to dominate Emily Milburn; additionally, he is shown to be the owner of many black slaves. In *Black and White*, the black, French gentleman is the hero; the English colonizer is the villain.

In his discussion of censorship in Britain, Zygmunt Hubner writes (48), “[u]sually the censor objects to the theater's using universally understood symbols, such as the cross, national emblems and colors, military uniforms, and even makeup and costumes that could be taken as a direct allusion to real people in political life.” Technically, British censors were directed to remove these symbolic elements, as well as potentially controversial references to British politics, from plays that were to be performed in front of public audiences. Accordingly, one might conclude that the above discussion of British revolution may have been censored. Nevertheless, it is difficult to know how strict late-century censors were in handling plays that were submitted to them for approval. In addition, this passage does not seem exceptionally offensive. Thus there arises the possibility that Collins himself chose to rework his text at some point.

Indeed, the above excerpt is only one of a number of passages of dialogue that do not appear in the printed London edition of the play. Although censors in the Lord Chancellor's office clearly had the power to force an author to

change or to cut segments of the dialogue, it is quite possible that Collins made these changes himself. Perhaps changes were made in the interests of time or artistic quality; perhaps Collins chose to tone down a few of his more subversive passages. Whatever the motivations for these changes may have been, the Licenser's Copy of this play provides the modern scholar with an interesting look at some of the additional ways in which Collins's drama might have recognized injustice and questioned the social frameworks regulating relationships of love and desire.

Possibly the most interesting of the passages included in the Licenser's Copy but omitted in the London edition are those that address issues concerning women and race. Particularly remarkable are the segments that discuss the relationship between Ruth and Mrs. Brentwood, her white lover's wife. In the Licenser's Copy of *Black and White*, Mrs. Brentwood emerges as a particularly vengeful and hateful character.⁷ In all three versions of the play, the wife (perhaps not surprisingly) disapproves of her husband's affair with the slave woman, Ruth. Nevertheless, serious consequences result from Mrs. Brentwood's successful efforts to prevent her dying husband from freeing both Ruth and her husband's son by Ruth. Ruth laments this action in the London edition of the play; however, in the Licenser's Copy, her response to the actions of the "jealous wife" are much stronger. At one point she exclaims "Keep the letter – it proves that the jealous wife had her sin to answer for – sin against *me*" (*Black and White*, Licenser's Copy, 24). In this edition of the drama, the actions of the wife are labeled as "sin," and Ruth openly declares to her son her feelings of condemnation and anger.

In the printed London version, the actions taken by Mrs. Brentwood and her feelings of regret on her deathbed are quickly related over the course of a paragraph (*Black and White*, London, 22-23). However, in the Licenser's Copy, the entire story of the wife's guilt is divulged by Ruth in great detail. The passage reads as follows:

RUTH. They say she repented of it afterwards – when her time came to die. The clergyman who was with her, wrote down what she had said about me on her death-bed. You will find it under my pillow.

MAUR. (*taking a letter from the pillow*). This?

RUTH. Yes. I kept the letter – if we ever met again – for you to see. Turn to the second page, and read what the clergyman has written there.

MAUR. (*reading*). "I have now to tell you what passed between us, word for word. I asked Mrs. Brentwood if she remembered injuring or wronging any one. She admitted, Ruth, that she had wronged *you*. She had destroyed a letter which her husband left to be given to you, after his death. I asked what

⁷ For example, additional lines not present in the London version read:

MICH. He tried to communicate with your mother—

MAUR. And his jealous wife prevented it. He left a letter to be given to my mother, after his death – and his jealous wife destroyed it.

(*Black and White*, Licenser's Copy, 32-33)

the letter contained. She became violently agitated – convulsions seized her – and death silenced the confession that was trembling on her lips.”

RUTH. Is there no more?

MAUR. Yes – a few words more.

RUTH. Read them.

MAUR. (*reading*). “I thought it my duty to mention what I had heard to Mrs. Brentwood’s executors. I asked them to let me know if they found anything among her papers relating to Ruth, the Quadroon. They found a pocket-book, which had once belonged to Mr. Brentwood. It contained an entry alluding to a duplicate letter, which Mr. Brentwood had hidden – the copy, I suspect, of the letter which his wife destroyed.” (*Maurice looks up.*) Where is that copy?

(*Black and White*, Licenser’s Copy, 23-24)

Here, Mrs. Brentwood’s actions against Ruth are repeatedly shown as immoral. She is unable to make her final “confession” because she is seized with wild convulsions, convulsions the audience assumes are brought on either by terrible guilt or raging hatred, neither of which bode well for her spirit’s coming voyage into the realm beyond. Although audience members may conclude that the wife has some reason for her feelings of anger, Mrs. Brentwood is condemned by Collins for suppressing the evidence that Ruth should be freed. Despite her position as Brentwood’s wife, she is not justified in keeping her husband and her husband’s true love apart while he is on his deathbed. Certainly Collins seems to argue that she is wrong to vent her anger by taking revenge on Ruth and on her husband’s son.

Two additional lines within Maurice’s vow never to be separated from his wife Emily (on account of his status as a slave) elaborate on this theme. In the Licenser’s Copy, Maurice announces, “I acknowledge no bargain that allows you to come between us. I bow to no custom which helps you to bend a man’s spirit by breaking a woman’s heart.”⁸ These lines are missing from the official London edition of the play; nevertheless, they illuminate one aspect of the play’s theme. Romantic love takes precedence over legal, social, and religious decrees. Because of their complex and passionate romantic relationships, Ruth and Maurice are shown to be justified both in rejecting the laws that designate them as slaves and in defying the religious codes and social contracts that prevent their unions.⁹

In addition to those already mentioned, other small differences appear between the Licenser’s Copy of the text and the printed London version. For example, the last lines of the London edition read as follows:

THE PROV. MAR. (*contemptuously*). A man like you always disputes the truth.

⁸ *Black and White*, Licenser’s Copy, 57. The same speech, minus the two aforementioned lines, appears on pages 54-5 of the London edition of the play.

⁹ Interestingly, it is announced early in the play, before Maurice’s arrival, that Emily Milburn and Stephen Westcraft are already engaged to be married (*Black and White*, London, 4). Maurice and Emily, of course, marry regardless of this previous contract.

WEST. I'll spend my last shilling in disputing it!

MICH. You can't do that, Mr. Westcraft. You have spent your last shilling on my estate.

(WESTCRAFT looks at MICHAELMAS with a cry of baffled rage, and goes out. MAURICE and MISS M. come down to the front; MISS M. having the letter in her hand.)

MISS M. Oh, Maurice! can you realize it yet? Free!

MAUR. (taking her hand). No. Yours!

THE END

(Black and White, London, 56)

The ending in the Licensor's Copy is longer, and it pays more attention to the reactions of the black characters. It reads:

THE PROV. MAR. (*contemptuously*). A man like you always disputes the truth. Release us from the sight of you!

MICH. I beg your pardon, sir – do the gentleman justice! I'm sure he has done the generous thing by *me*. Thank you, Mr. Westcraft, for spending all your money on my estate!

(*The people laugh.*)

WEST. (*looking round him with impotent rage*). Mark my words! I'll be even with some of you yet!

(*He goes out, followed by WOLF and his negroes.*)

MAUR. (*looking up from the letter*). Michaelmas! (*He tries to speak – his emotion chokes him.*) Friend! Come to my heart!

MISS M. My turn next! Friend! there's a kiss for you! (*She kisses him on the cheek. MICHAELMAS stands bewildered.*)

MR. PLATO. (*piteously*). Not one word ob tanks to de black gentleman who's at de bottom ob it all!

MICH. (*aside to PLATO*). Hush! My master will give the black gentleman that ten-pound note.

MISS M. (*while MAURICE folds up the letter*). Oh, Maurice! can you realize it yet? Free!

MAUR. (*taking her hand*). No. Yours!

THE END

(Black and White, Licensor's Copy, 58-59)

Here, instead of "baffled rage," Westcraft is a victim of "impotent rage," roundly scolded and rejected by the authority of the Provost Marshall. Moreover, Mr. Plato enters the dialogue. Despite the fact that his intervention is a comic one, there is truth in the statement that there will be little or no thanks to the "black gentleman" who has made this happy ending possible. Plato has provided crucial information to the main characters within the play; additionally, he has worked with the whites to bring about a marriage of racial assimilation rather than joining with the "Liberal" blacks on the island who wish to escape from oppression by killing all the whites.

Each of these three versions of the text thus has something different to offer the modern Collins scholar. Despite variations in wording and tone, each version of the play attempts to express, in its own way, a frustration with the laws that specifically enforce racial inequality and the social customs that deny individuals the right to pursue romantic fulfillment. Indeed, by paying attention to the variety of texts that have evolved from the original collaborations of Collins and Fechter, scholars can come to appreciate the multiplicity of discourses that developed around this complex and interesting drama.

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Lady Audley: The Woman in Colour

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Mary Braddon, in a magazine interview, acknowledged the debt her hugely successful novel of 1862, *Lady Audley's Secret*, owed to Wilkie Collins's novel of 1860, *The Woman in White*. In her novel she had reversed Collins's central situations: her criminal is female, her victims male: Anne Catherick and Laura Fairlie are rescued from a lunatic asylum, Lady Audley is consigned to one at the end of the novel. But as Toru Sasaki points out, and as these reversals suggest, "she was also expressing opposition to [Collins]. ... Lady Audley was clearly meant as a protest against the passive and angelic heroines of the period" (Sasaki, xii). Extending the idea of reversal or protest to the novel's title image, I wish to suggest that Lady Audley is a Woman in Colour, but that her colours are bound up with her "secret."

I

Even Collins's admirers must have found Laura Fairlie, the heroine of *The Woman in White*, irritating. A needlessly supine victim of men, Laura, like so many of Collins's ostensible heroines, is bleached into nonentity. She is pale, fair and blue-eyed, and the bleaching effect is doubled in her alter ego, Anne Catherick, whose face is "colourless," whose hair – like Laura's – is "a pale brownish-yellow" (Collins, 20). The frequent confusion of these women with wraiths further undercuts their physicality. Laura's single concession to colour is in the "delicate" blue stripe on one of her otherwise white dresses – and for her last evening with Walter before her marriage she wears blue silk. Anne always wears white.

Laura is wisely kept absent during much of the action. Often too weak to leave her room, ill, believed dead, incarcerated in a lunatic asylum, and then reduced to such infantilism that even speech fails her, she becomes what Alfred Hitchcock called "the Macguffin" – a catalyst for the actions of others. One of the most attractive of those others is, of course, Marian Halcombe, her dark and voluptuous half-sister. Marian dresses more interestingly, in rich yellow silk for evening, but when she climbs out of her window onto the roof to eavesdrop on Count Fosco's plot against Laura, she compounds the unfemininity of the action by removing not only her silks but her petticoats – there would have been many in the heavily-crinolined 1860s – to stand in the rain in coarse dark flannel and a black cloak. Count Fosco in the novel is one of literature's more appealing villains, not least because he admires Marian, "this magnificent woman" whom he compares with "that poor flimsy pretty blonde," Laura (Collins, 331). But Collins confuses gender stereotypes and quickly scotches Marian's sexual attractions for the hero, Walter Hartwright, by giving her a

moustache. If this masculine attribute frees her to become the intelligent and resourceful protagonist who rescues Laura, it does not radically challenge the blonde/brunette oppositions of popular literature.

Collins himself seemed to be pleading against such formulae in 1856 when he wrote that he wanted to “revolutionize our favourite two sisters. ... Would readers be fatally startled ... if the short charmer with the golden hair appeared before them as a serious, strong-minded, fierce-spoken, miserable, guilty woman?” (cited in Carnell, 154). Readers, as we know, were in fact delighted in their millions when in 1862, Mary Braddon gave them Lady Audley, a heroine with Laura Fairlie’s looks and Count Fosco’s wicked ingenuity and energy. Laura/Anne had been the Woman in White. How then would Helen Maldon/Lucy Graham/Lady Audley colour her multiple personalities? The colouring is, as I hope to show, not just a matter of dress and complexion, but a matter of description, representation and associated properties.

II

Braddon’s heroine wears the white summer dress appropriate to an unmarried woman when, at the sunny start of the novel, as the humble young governess, Lucy Graham, she wins the love of Sir Michael Audley. As Lady Audley, however, she appears in a sequence of highly-coloured, lavishly-dressed set-pieces. The change in style and colour of dress reflects, on the most superficial level, her altered social and (apparent) marital status, from poor spinster governess to wealthy aristocratic wife; but the way Braddon dwells on these scenes, in a novel she wrote at high-speed, suggests there is more to it than this. Collins’s title concealed the fact that there were *two* women in white; equally Braddon’s title teased the reader with the question of just *what* Lady Audley’s awful secret was – there seem to be several. She’s a bigamist, possibly a murderer, she has a baby, her father is an alcoholic, she’s a forger, she may be mad – but most of these facts are revealed well before the end. Only hereditary madness is offered with any sense of revelation. Under that first white dress, however, she wears a trinket on a black ribbon, “but whatever the trinket was, she always kept it hidden under her dress” (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 8).

While working on *Lady Audley* Braddon was also writing *Aurora Floyd*, a novel in which Aurora’s appearance is frequently noted, but the focus is almost entirely on hairstyles and headgear; dress is registered in brief colour-notes. Aurora too has her secret, but it is not really bigamy she conceals, it is a traditionally angelic heart beneath a hoyden’s surface. Elsewhere Braddon chose to describe dress precisely enough to date a novel. For example, the costume in which Lesbia intends to elope in *Phantom Fortune* (1884) is described minutely, from her “little blue silk toque” down to the toes of her “dainty little tan-coloured boots” (Braddon, *Phantom Fortune*, 256). In *Lady Audley’s Secret*, however, Braddon gives us neither a single telling detail nor a fashion-plate, but instead focuses on dramatically loaded effects. Henry James

accused her in a review of 1865 of “getting up” her “photograph” of Lady Audley with “the small change ... [of] her eyes, her hair, her mouth, her dresses, her bedroom furniture” (James, 744-5): it is not, however, photography she has in mind but, quite specifically, Pre-Raphaelite painting. The deliberate references in the novel to this other, earlier, popular “sensation” seem worth exploring.

III

Before Robert Audley meets Lucy Audley, he and George Talboys enter her apartments while she is absent. Making their way through the intimacies of discarded dresses and untidy toilet-table, they penetrate her boudoir, where they face not her but her portrait: “I am afraid the [painter] belonged to the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, for he had spent a most unconscionable time upon the accessories of this picture – upon my lady’s crispy ringlets and the heavy folds of her crimson velvet dress” (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 69). First Robert, then George, look at the picture:

No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion and a strange sinister light to the deep blue eyes... I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend.

Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed, the crimson dress, the sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colours of each accessory of the minutely painted background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one.

(Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 70-71)

We should note that the demonic hints in these paragraphs are the narrator’s. The focus is on colour but is selective, what the French critic Denis Apothéloz terms a *découpage*, where face, hair and dress are “cut off from [their] surroundings” (cited in Hughes, *Reading Novels*, 58) – which are described only as “minutely painted.” George Talboys says nothing, Robert Audley says he dislikes the portrait; but in the novel’s final pages, visitors to Audley Court wonder about “the pretty, fair-haired woman” in the portrait (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 446).

Braddon was evidently familiar with the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, who had first shocked the London art world in 1848. Though they were controversial and claimed to be radicalizing British art, in their first phase they simply brightened and intensified its colour-range while creating a rage for medieval subjects. Otherwise they continued to produce the detailed moral narratives that typified Victorian art. In fact, with Ruskin’s support, they were

soon fashionable, though they maintained a reputation for outrage and modernity. It is worth asking just what Pre-Raphaelite paintings Braddon could have seen, with which works she might expect her readers to be familiar, and what associations these would have had.

As we now know from Jennifer Carnell's biography, at the time of the Pre-Raphaelite exhibitions of the 1850s, Braddon was pursuing a career as an actress, mainly in Brighton, but occasionally in London and the north (Carnell, 287-375), so she could have visited any London exhibitions in which she was interested. That she had more than a passing interest in art is suggested by her 1865 letter to a fringe-Pre-Raphaelite, Alfred Elmore, suggesting titles for a work of his she had evidently seen before it was offered for exhibition (Carnell, 178). In Elmore's picture, *On the Brink*, a woman is the focus of a morally ambiguous drama, a scene characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite work after 1860. Pre-Raphaelite images of women before this betray few obviously sinister aspects: Rossetti's early pictures feature pure if etiolated virgins; Holman Hunt's seductive shepherdess, in his much-discussed *Hireling Shepherd*, is a cheerful, bouncing brunette.

Braddon's focus, in Lady Audley's portrait, on a meticulously painted head of golden hair, blue eyes and a pale face against a brilliant dress does recall, however, two of the most popular works exhibited by the P.R.B. at the Royal Academy: Arthur Hughes' *April Love* (1856) and his *Long Engagement* (1859). Ruskin rhapsodised over *April Love* in his *Academy Notes*, praising its sweetness and use of colour. The girl at the centre of both pictures conforms to the angelic stereotype – blue eyes and a tremulous, child-like face framed by fine gold hair. Both wear vivid violet blue clothing (a colour we will see on Lucy Audley, and very fashionable at the time) – velvet in one case, silk in the other – set against a sharp green backdrop. The violent colouring runs oddly counter to the otherwise ideally angelic appearance of the women, and in both cases their vividness almost obliterates the background males. Though never exhibited, Hughes' *Aurora Leigh* of 1860 takes the image further: blonde Aurora in her acid-green dress overwhelms her dim suitor. Ellen Heaton, who commissioned the work, wanted a more traditional white dress, but Hughes held out for green. Ruskin, urging Heaton to commission a work from Hughes, assured her that he was "quite safe – *everybody* will like what he does" (Bowness, 190).

These popular images have nevertheless none of the hell-fire Braddon hints at in Lady Audley's portrait. The essence of Braddon's plot, however, is the success with which Helen Maldon inhabits her successive roles. She is not simply an actress, putting her costumes on and off; she *becomes* her other personae, and Braddon never uses her earlier, "real" name, as she moves from one identity to another. There is no suggestion that she is anything other than a model governess to the Dawsons, and a loving and attentive wife to Sir Michael. Alicia Audley's dislike of Lucy is based not on any perceived threat, but contempt for her childishness and china-doll looks. Lucy's sunny kindness

is welcomed by her husband's tenants and no demons are visible until she feels threatened by the boorish Luke Marks and misogynistic Robert Audley. I would suggest, then, that it is part of Braddon's scheme to remind the reader of actual Pre-Raphaelite icons of blue-eyed, golden-haired, blameless girlhood, an ideal to which Lucy Audley, in life, seems to conform, while at the same time colouring the fictional portrait in sinister lights. To be really dangerous Lady Audley must seem utterly innocent.

The strength of a novel, as opposed to a painting, is that several images can be held by the mind at once, denying a single viewpoint on which to rest. As Lyn Pykett has argued, *Lady Audley's Secret* "is staged as a spectacle, just as within the narrative the character is staging herself" – and, furthermore, being *re-staged* as a painting. The heroine becomes the object of our gaze, but as Pykett points out, there is "no single ideological perspective" nor even "a coherent range of perspectives," but a series of conflicting views – "if the sensation heroine embodies anything, it is an uncertainty about the definition of the feminine" (Pykett, 89, 81, 82). Nina Auerbach, in her study of 19th century iconography, *Woman and the Demon*, describes strategies for maintaining angelic faces in mid-19th century fiction: among Dickens' pure angels, Little Nell dies young to stay intact; Sheridan LeFanu's Carmilla, while a cat-vampire, keeps an angel face; Thackeray's demonic Beatrix Castlewood lives side by side with the ageless angel, Rachel. Auerbach notes that Braddon "employs with scholarly precision angelic iconography for demonic purposes ... it requires only the fire of an altered palette to bring out the contours of the one latent in the face of the other" (Auerbach, 107).

Indeed the novel's Pre-Raphaelite colouring pales the morning after the viewing of the portrait, when Lady Audley appears in pink muslin, seen within the classic Victorian frame for a domestic "Queen" – in the garden, gathering roses. The sinister suggestions of the night before are overlaid and confused by this very different style of female imagery. But we return to P.R.B. tones in the scene where she gives Luke Marks fifty pounds on his marriage to her maid Phoebe: "Lady Audley sat in the glow of firelight ... the amber damask cushions of the sofa contrasting with her dark violet velvet dress, and her rippling hair falling about her neck in a golden haze." When Marks insolently demands more, she realizes he knows something of her secret, and confronts him, "her clear blue eyes flashing with indignation" (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 108-9). Shortly after, when Robert Audley menacingly recounts his suspicions of her role in George Talboys' disappearance, she faints against the amber cushions, and "shadows of green and crimson [fall] upon my lady's face from the painted escutcheons in the mullioned windows" (120). The colours are exotic rather than demonic, and recall John Millais' popular painting of Tennyson's long-suffering *Mariana*, of 1851.



Arthur Hughes "The Long Engagement" (1853-5)
 Courtesy, Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery.



Holman Hunt "The Awakening Conscience" (1853-7)
 Courtesy, Tate Gallery.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti "Bocca Baciata" (1859)
Courtesy, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti "Lady Lilith" (1868)
Courtesy, Delaware Art Museum.

IV

It is always a risky exercise to nail a factual detail to a fictional account; Mary Braddon was not a note-book novelist nor even as meticulous about train-timetables as Wilkie Collins. She wrote at speed, which sometimes led to slips. (In a later novel she calls the Italian police “carbonari” – a nice confusion of cuisine and law-enforcement.) She does, however, refer specifically to one painter, Holman Hunt, in a later scene in the novel, after Lady Audley has left the bedside of her sick husband and returned to the boudoir, whose inner recess contains her Pre-Raphaelite portrait. These two descriptions – the portrait and the boudoir – occasioned James’s criticism of the novel. The description of the boudoir runs to over a page and is so overloaded with accounts of *objets d’art*, furniture, rich colours – as well as references to notorious Frenchwomen, the whole bathed in firelight, with a storm howling outside – that Braddon might reasonably be accused of overkill. I have elsewhere criticised Braddon for using descriptive details indiscriminately (Hughes, *Henry James*, 11), but it might well be suggested in defence of her style that this particular description has its equivalent in Holman Hunt’s *The Awakening Conscience*, a work that had a sensational reception at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1854 and with which readers of the novel would be familiar.

Virginia Morris rightly notes in her study of murderous Victorian heroines, *Double Jeopardy*, that “there is no Hunt work as evocative of the sense of feminine evil that Braddon is trying to create” (Morris, 162). She suggests alternatives: either Rossetti’s *Lucrezia Borgia* or Burne-Jones’s *Sidonia von Bork*, both of 1860, as sources for Lady Audley’s “portrait.” There seems to be some confusion here between two very different parts of the novel: on the one hand there is the portrait of Lady Audley, on the other there is a description of Lady Audley in her boudoir (which happens to contain a reference to Holman Hunt).

Chris Willis points to the same Burne-Jones work as possibly “the original of Lady Audley’s Pre-Raphaelite portrait,” relating it to the first description of Lady Audley, though she acknowledges the colour is wrong (Willis). *Sidonia von Bork* is indeed gorgeous and sinister, but as Pykett says, Braddon’s image of Lucy Audley is always ambiguous, and the image of Sidonia could never have been described at the end of the novel as “the pretty fair-haired woman” of the portrait. Moreover, Burne-Jones was almost unknown at this time; this apprentice watercolour was bought by a Newcastle magnate, James Leatheart, and not exhibited until 1892 (Wilson, 123). As for Rossetti, he exhibited only once, privately, in the 1850s – though his work at this time has a significance to which I will return.

V

In turning, then, to a consideration of *The Awakening Conscience*, I wish to make clear that the woman at the centre of the work bears no resemblance to Lucy Audley. Hunt’s Fallen Woman, moving out of her lover’s

clasp, is undergoing a repentance that has been stirred by memories of lost innocence, symbolised by the sunlit natural world seen through the window of her “love-nest.” Lucy Audley is alone and unrepentant to the last. Hunt’s Brunette wears a loose, ivory gown in the Aesthetic style, but Braddon describes Lucy only briefly, and in sensual rather than fashionable terms – “the rich folds of drapery [fell] in long undulating lines from the exquisite outline of her figure.” She is beautiful, “but made bewilderingly beautiful by the gorgeous surroundings” (*Lady Audley*, 295). As is clear from Ruskin’s defense of *The Awakening Conscience*, it is the fevered, magnified focus on the details of the *setting* in this painting that draws the eye, not the rather vacuous central figure: “nothing is more notable”, Ruskin wrote, “than the way in which even the most trivial objects force themselves upon the attention”. He felt there was something especially sinister in “the terrible lustre ... the fatal newness of the furniture,” most evident in the piano at which the girl sits (Ruskin). Her sheet music lies on the piano and on the floor; beside the piano, is an embroidery frame, whose coloured silks also tumble to the floor. Behind her is a gilt-framed mirror that reflects her figure within a window-frame, against a garden-view.

In Lady Audley’s “elegant chamber” the piano is open, “covered with scattered sheets of music ... my lady’s fairy-like embroideries of lace and muslin, rainbow-hued silks and delicately-tinted wools littered the luxurious apartment; while the looking-glasses, cunningly placed at angles and opposite corners, multiplied my lady’s image.” The reference to Holman Hunt follows, after which Braddon intensifies the account of the room by listing china, gold, ivories, cabinets, figurines, Indian filigree, pictures, mirrors and drapery. The image concludes with Lady Audley looking not at a redemptive garden, but “into the red chasms in the burning coals” (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 294-5). The devil is – we might say – in the details. This account of her background reverses the *découpage* of the portrait description; Lucy Audley’s figure is now placed within a surrounding mass of objects, which are recorded in one sweeping unselective gaze, a bonfire of the vanities – almost an English version of Delacroix’s *Death of Sardanapalus*.

As she had reversed Collins’s situations in *The Woman in White*, Braddon now takes Hunt’s modern moral subject of a Kept Woman, clad in near-white, saved from the “wages of sin” (all those shiny new things) by a vision of Eden, and reverses it while she protests at its implausibility. Lady Audley is fixed and defined by the “wages” of her respectable marriage, by even more shiny new things. The notion of giving it all up for an epiphany of grass and trees, trusting to the mercies of the patriarchal world of Robert Audley, is mocked by the sound of the wind in the leafless branches outside Lady Audley’s window. Her figure, left unrealised amidst the intensely realised welter of rich objects, is neither evil nor sympathetic, but more simply, disturbing.

The Garden of Earthly Delights in which Lucy Audley now finds herself has become a nightmare. She has seen no reason why a determined and

competent woman should not only be able to survive by her wits but also amass the trophies of success, the paintings and *objets d'art* of a Victorian consumerist world.¹ Denied legitimate masculine paths to material rewards, she has worked through the means available to beautiful women – men – and has arrived at her goal, her connoisseur's boudoir, which is now also her trap. To keep it she has to “wade in blood” much deeper, for repentance is not really an option. And so, as Dr. Musgrave diagnoses, she is “not mad ... she is dangerous” (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 379), an uncertifiable and more alarming condition.

VI

Hunt's art is avowedly there in the text. But we may also return to Rossetti, whose images of female beauty have so often been evoked in relation to Braddon's heroines. Indeed, Jennifer Carnell records that Braddon's favourite stage version of *Lady Audley's Secret* was that of 1863, with Ruth Herbert, who had also modelled for Rossetti (Carnell, 196-7). As I have said earlier, Rossetti did not exhibit during the 1850s. It cannot, then, be a question of Rossetti influencing Braddon, but rather of an idea – that of the Dangerous Woman – whose time had come, an idea which Braddon and Rossetti had begun to explore simultaneously. What Hughes's blonde angels lacked were “the strange-coloured fires” of Braddon's first “portrait” (*Lady Audley*, 71). In the unrealised figure of Lady Audley in the second description “it requires only the fire of an altered palette,” the slumbering volcano of a Rossetti woman, to emerge from behind Hunt's white girl, to reveal the true colours of Braddon's heroine.

By the 1850s the original Pre-Raphaelite group had disbanded; Rossetti had withdrawn, the movement had acquired new members and could now be seen as moving towards Aestheticism, or, as has recently been suggested, a British version of Symbolism (Wilton). Rossetti had begun to experiment with Italian Renaissance subjects and a simplified colour range, and, among a series of watercolours featuring the Borgias, is *Rossavestita*, of 1851, a single female figure against a plain background, in voluminous crimson dress, with the mass of gold hair that would become Rossetti's signature. There can be no actual connection between this sketch and that first Pre-Raphaelite description of Lady Audley, but there they both are – startlingly crimson and gold heralds of things to come.

Rossetti moved back into oils in the late 1850s, and, phasing out his anorexic maidens, decided to “exploit the more voluptuous style of Titian and Venetian art in general” (“The Rossetti Archive”). Big, blonde Fanny Cornforth also entered Rossetti's life at this time and displaced ailing Elizabeth Siddal as model and mistress. The pivotal work in his new style was *Bocca*

¹ There were now, in fact, numerous women art-collectors – Ellen Heaton, Lady Trevelyan, Martha Combe, for example – and coincidentally, they collected Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic works rather than mainstream art.

Baciata, painted in 1859 and exhibited in 1860 at the Hogarth Club. This innocent/seductive half-length figure of Fanny, trapped between a parapet and a dark floral background, richly dressed and jewelled with flowing red-gold hair, marks the emergence of the distinctive Rossetti Woman. Placed in “hieratic scenes of various kinds” these pictures “arrange themselves in a dialectic of ‘Madonna and Whore’ figures” (“The Rossetti Archive”). There followed a succession of increasingly dangerous, beautiful females – *Fazio’s Mistress*, 1863; *Morning Music* and *Venus Verticordia*, 1864; *The Blue Bower* and *Il Ramoscello*, 1865; *Monna Vanna* of 1866; *Lady Lilith*, started in 1864 and finished in 1868. They don’t stop there, of course: like Mary Braddon’s women they have many years of life, but these sirens of the 1860s, who “turn traditional portraiture on its head” (Wilton, 19), share enough characteristics with Lucy Audley – who turned traditional heroines on their heads – to make my point.

Perhaps the first thing to note is that the paintings are without attendant males – as are the two central descriptions of Lady Audley. What drives Lucy Audley is not sexual desire, after all – the man is only her means to an end, which is the possession and enjoyment of luxury. “Luxury,” as Lyn Pykett puts it, “is erotic to Lady Audley” (Pykett, 101). Rossetti’s women are most frequently shown at dressing tables, usually alone, gazing into mirrors, or abstractedly out at the spectator – or, as Andrew Wilton suggests, “into their own soul” (Wilton, 19). Rossetti said of the first of these self-caressing women, *Fazio’s Mistress* of 1863, that the picture “was chiefly a piece of colour... done at a time when I had a mania for buying bricabrac, and used to stick it into my pictures” (cited in Rossetti, 69). With their vibrant colour, nets of golden hair and “bricabrac,” *Fazio’s Mistress*, *Lady Lilith* or *Monna Vanna* might sit at the vacant centre of Braddon’s version of *The Awakening Conscience* – and reverse Hunt’s intentions. Hunt called Rossetti’s new style “remarkable for gross sensuality of a revolting kind,” and there is indeed nothing redeemed or redeemable about these big, brooding women, who threaten unnameable things if once allowed out.

Rossetti’s women have not abdicated as Queens in Gardens or Angels in Houses, but the fiction of power attached to such empty titles now threatens to become real. His Liliths, Pandoras, Proserpines and Marianas are far too big for their spaces, and they push up against and out of parapets, windows, curtains and high hedges. Rossetti’s rendering of dress has moved from an archaeological approach to a much less specific treatment, in which voluptuously draped figures can inhabit Titian’s Venice, Winterhalter’s mid-19th century Europe or the medievalising modes of late 19th century British Aestheticism. Shown in half-length and close to the picture surface, demanding the spectator’s attention, Rossetti’s women display symbols of the World, the Flesh and quite possibly the Devil: jewels, bottles, mirrors, brushes, textiles, and, above all, hair.

Braddon's concluding account of Lucy Audley is similarly selective: the dreary room in the mad-house has a "faded splendour of shabby velvet and tarnished gilding"; what appear to be mirrors turn out to be "wretched mockeries of burnished tin" (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 389) – and a mockery of her luxurious boudoir. The light of a single candle illumines her figure, which rises out of the darkness in a defiant blaze of diamonds and golden hair; while her dress, undescribed, merges with the gloom. Confronting her adversary, Robert Audley, she plucks "at the feathery golden curls as if she would have torn them from her head. It had served her so little after all, that gloriously glittering hair; that beautiful nimbus of yellow light" (391-2). I resist defining Lady Audley by a single image, because I believe Braddon uses multiple images to confuse rather than define, but Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* contains enough suppressed violence, moral ambivalence, self-caressing sensuality – and hair everywhere – to make one wonder if he had not recently read *Lady Audley's Secret*. The companion poem Rossetti wrote for the painting speaks of Lilith winding round Adam's heart "one strangling golden hair."

Like Lilith of pre-Christian legend, Lady Audley is a capable and intelligent woman, who sees herself the equal of the male, who refuses to lie down under a series of early reverses and, bent on self-improvement like David Copperfield or Julien Sorel, sets out, like them, to secure much more than bare survival. Those are her transgressive secrets. For a woman in mid-19th century Britain the means to this end is a man, and, as she says, the means to a man are her golden-haired, blue-eyed good looks and the meanings society attaches to them. Angelic virtue only becomes a problem when things go wrong. Her angel self is still a workable pretence until Sir Michael consents to her incarceration, after which she confesses to hereditary madness as her "secret."

VII

Braddon, as I have indicated, uses a montage of conflicting images to convey ambivalence. The portrait within Lady Audley's boudoir contains the artist/creator's insight – the prototype Rossetti woman in blazing red and gold – but other images drawn from the art of her time, and *beyond* her time, co-exist and often conflict with that portrait. Images late in the novel are left unrealised, inviting the reader to colour them according to the way they have read the woman within her surroundings: there is, as Lyn Pykett says, "an uncertainty about the definition of the feminine." I have said that both Rossetti and Braddon continue to explore the *Femme Fatale*; I should perhaps qualify that by adding that Braddon's Lucy Audley is – as far as I have read in her immense oeuvre – the only consistently ambivalent and therefore memorably dangerous woman: the rest conform or die. Although Braddon mentions Lucy Audley's death, years later, our last image is of her blazing defiance, and of a "pretty, fair-haired woman" in a portrait, in the novel's final pages (Braddon, *Lady Audley*, 390).

The ambivalence is then not only Lucy Audley's but Braddon's own ambivalence over her creation – she didn't paint such a colourful portrait again,

though she had dealt a fatal blow to the old Woman in White. The precarious trajectory of Braddon's own career – from poverty, to bare subsistence as an actress, to mistress then wife of an improvident man, and then hard-won security in respectable Richmond – did not invite further risks. It needed, in fact, a Rossetti – a man, most importantly – but also an outsider, a self-styled hedonist, who both shocked and seduced Victorian England with his images of women, to write tenderly and frankly of his mistress while she slept,

I lay among your golden hair
Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
These golden coins.

(D.G. Rossetti, *Jenny*, 1860)

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Collins and Chatto: The Reading Papers

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In February of this year, with the generous assistance of the Archivist Michael Bott, I was able to spend two days studying the materials relating to Wilkie Collins in the Chatto & Windus archive at Reading University.¹ This was in connection with the preparation of a forthcoming edition of Collins's as yet unpublished letters.² The following brief article has no greater pretensions than to provide an inventory of the Reading papers,³ and to suggest their potential interest for scholars of Victorian literary and publishing history.

I

The firm of Chatto & Windus came into being following the premature death of the publisher, John Camden Hotten (1832-73). Hotten had set up as a bookseller in Piccadilly in 1855 and by the mid-1860s had gained a somewhat unsavoury reputation as a publisher that today seems hardly deserved.⁴ Andrew Chatto (1841-1913) had joined Hotten's firm almost from the beginning. At the time of Hotten's death, he was general manager and decided to purchase the publishing house from the widow, Charlotte Hotten, for £25,000, with the minor poet W.E. Windus as his rather inactive partner. Percy Spalding joined the new firm in 1876 and took over the financial arrangements, leaving Chatto in command of the literary side. As Simon Eliot has shown, Hotten had been very much a "general publisher," with little in the way of original fiction on his lists.⁵ Andrew Chatto continued to develop the general list but soon became known also for his series of "Piccadilly Novels." By the end of 1876, he had not only acquired much of the stock and copyrights formerly held Henry G. Bohn, but also arranged to take on the fiction of

¹ The Chatto & Windus archive is owned by Random House. Permission to view the materials and to inventorize them here is gratefully acknowledged.

² Edited by William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, and Paul Lewis, to be published in 4 vols in 2005 by Pickering & Chatto as *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*. For details, go to <<http://www.pickeringchatto.com/wilkiecollins.htm>>.

³ The book historian Alexis Weedon has already made excellent use of many of these materials in analysing changing book production costs at Chatto & Windus. However, the listing she provides is incomplete and includes a number of errors, most notably misdatings of the publishing agreements for *The Fallen Leaves*, *Jezebel's Daughter*, *Heart and Science*, and *The Evil Genius* (Weedon, "Watch This Space," 179-82).

⁴ See Warner, 2-11, and, especially, Eliot, "Hotten: Rotten: Forgotten?", in which Hotten's reputation as a pornographer and swindler is discussed extensively.

⁵ Hotten's most characteristic publications were perhaps his own scholarly works such as *A Dictionary of Modern Slang* (1859), the poetry of Swinburne, and unauthorised reprints of American authors such as Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mark Twain.

popular names like “Ouida,”⁶ James Payn, the Besant-Rice partnership,⁷ and, of course, Wilkie Collins.

Until then Collins had never enjoyed a stable relationship with a single publisher – in part because of his tendencies to sell to the highest bidder and to make combined deals for both serial and volume rights. After his lack of financial success through both Tinsleys (with *The Moonstone* in 1868) and F.S. Ellis (with *Man and Wife* in 1870), Collins had returned after a gap of eighteen years to his original publishers, Bentleys. But, conscious of his deteriorating health and declining fame, Collins was concerned to find a publisher who would build a coherent backlist of his works, produce them elegantly, and sell them efficiently. Here he found the ideal match in Andrew Chatto’s new firm.

The relationship began in the autumn of 1874, and thereafter Chatto & Windus not only issued virtually all of Collins’s new fiction in volume form,⁸ but also acquired the rights to his earlier works as soon as available.⁹ The general pattern was for Collins to lease for seven years the rights to publish his novels in all available formats down to the cheap “yellowback” edition.¹⁰ The remuneration he received in the case of new works in three volumes dropped from £1500 for *The Law and the Lady* in 1875, to £600 from *The Fallen Leaves* in 1879, and finally to £500 from *I Say No!* in 1884. Collins earned £2000 from the lease of thirteen previously published works in 1874, but only £1000 when that lease was renewed. Near the end of his life, financial worries forced him to sell outright his copyrights to twenty-four works for £1800, although he had refused an offer of £2500 for only nineteen back in 1883. In the end, and perhaps inevitably, the publishers probably got the better of the deal. But Chatto & Windus was also a periodical publisher, having acquired *Belgravia* in 1876 and *The Gentleman’s Magazine* the following year. None of Collins’s works appeared in the *Gentleman’s*,¹¹ but two of his novels ran as serials in *Belgravia* (*The Haunted Hotel* and *Heart and Science*), in addition to half-a dozen of his short stories written initially for American journals. Perhaps more importantly, Andrew Chatto was to encourage the author to attempt the

⁶ See Weedon, “From Three-Deckers.”

⁷ See Eliot, “Unequal Partnerships.”

⁸ *The Guilty River* in a single volume from Arrowsmith of Bristol, following its appearance as Arrowsmith’s Christmas Annual for 1886, is the only real exception.

⁹ Chatto & Windus were only able to acquire publication right to *A Rogue’s Life* from Bentleys in 1889, and to *Armada*, *No Name*, and *After Dark* from Smith, Elder in 1890, following the author’s death.

¹⁰ Collins’s novels began to appear after the author’s death in the sixpenny format in colourful paper covers, of which Chatto & Windus were one of the pioneer publishers, beginning in 1893. See *Sixpenny Wonderfals*.

¹¹ Though, when Collins made his Christmas tale “A Shocking Story” available while *The Haunted Hotel* was still running in *Belgravia*, he wrote to Chatto to ask “whether you will put me into ‘The Gentleman’s Magazine’ this time. I must do something for the Gentleman’s Magazine – so as to call myself a fellow-contributor with Doctor Johnson!” (30 September 1878, Parrish Collection, Princeton).

latest and most remunerative mode of serialization – syndication in British provincial newspapers (Law, 78 & 102-3).

II

The materials in the Chatto & Windus archive at Reading serve a variety of interests. As Weedon has shown, the agreements and publishing ledgers provide key data concerning changing modes of production and marketing in the later Victorian publishing industry (“Watch This Space”). The miscellaneous documents accompanying the contracts shed a more refracted light on what were then ancillary issues but which were soon to assume a rather greater importance. These include: the trading of rights and stock between publishers; the insertion of advertising material in books; and even the sale of film rights to fictional material.¹² Not least, though, the correspondence between author and publishers preserved at Reading reveals a fascinating mixture and of personal and business concerns.

Table 1. Extant Letters of Wilkie Collins to Chattos

Location	Personally to Andrew Chatto	Impersonally to Chatto & Windus	TOTAL
Parrish Collection, Princeton	92	48	140
Chatto & Windus Archive, Reading	12	7	19
State Library of Victoria, Melbourne	2	2	4
Other*	4	2	6
TOTAL	110	59	169

* The two addressed to Chatto & and Windus are found at the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, and at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Of the letters to Andrew Chatto, one is found in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, one at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and one is in private hands. The present whereabouts of the fourth is unknown, though a transcription is found in Wolff, 2:262.

With the lion’s share in the Morris L. Parrish Collection at Princeton (as Table 1 shows), only a small proportion of Collins’s letters to the firm are held in the Chatto & Windus archive.¹³ In contrast, the copies on flimsy in the firm’s letterbooks seem to all that have survived of the other side of the correspondence.¹⁴ Collins discriminates scrupulously between addressees.

¹² See Weedon, “From Three-Deckers.”

¹³ Only those letters constituting or accompanying contracts, and those tipped in to the outgoing letterbooks, remain. Those among the files of incoming letters were presumably dispersed to be sold. We should also note here that the handwritten indexes to the letterbooks are not always entirely accurate or complete, and that a small number of outgoing letters might have been overlooked.

¹⁴ The ratio of outgoing letters to Collins (25 from Andrew Chatto to 20 from Chatto &

Letters to “Messrs Chatto & Windus”- mainly aimed at Percy Spalding, who is referred to as “the financial partner” in Collins’s letter to Andrew Chatto of 30 December 1878 (Parrish Collection, Princeton) – are formal and business-like. There the author is quick to complain about slow payment of his dues or sloppiness by the printers. These are far outnumbered by letters to “Andrew Chatto Esq”, the literary partner, which are always gentlemanly in tone and become increasingly intimate as time goes by.¹⁵ There we find many examples of references to mutual acquaintances, social invitations, and personal banter, plus evidence that the publisher frequently called on the author at home, while the author often popped in to see the publisher at his office in Piccadilly. Clearly Collins’s personal relationship with his literary publisher Andrew Chatto, as indeed with his literary agent A.P. Watt,¹⁶ was a psychological mainstay of the author during his declining years.

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Windus), which differs so markedly from the ratio in the case of letters *from* Collins as shown in Table 1, suggests that many of Andrew Chatto’s letters to Collins may have been written privately and not on the firm’s notepaper.

¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was only on 19 March 1883 that WC suggested to AC that they “leave off ‘mistering’ each other” (Parrish Collection, Princeton).

¹⁶ See the many letters from Collins to Watt held at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and the flimsy copies of Watt’s side of the correspondence in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library.

An Inventory of the Main Documents relating to Wilkie Collins in the Chatto & Windus Archive, University of Reading

Abbreviations

AC = Andrew Chatto

ALS = Autograph letter signed

APW = A.P. Watt (WC's agent from 1881)

C&W = Chatto & Windus, publishers

HPB = H.P. Bartley (WC's solicitor from 1877)

LB = Letterbook

TLS = Typed letter signed

WC = Wilkie Collins

WT = William Tindell (WC's solicitor to 1877)

(A) Publishing Agreements signed by WC or his executors

- 1) 9 Sep 1874, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *The Law and the Lady*
- 2) 19 Nov 1874, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re 13 named works, previously issued by other houses (*Antonina; Basil; Hide and Seek; The Dead Secret; The Queen of Hearts; The Woman in White; The Moonstone; Man and Wife; Poor Miss Finch; Miss or Mrs?; The New Magdalen; The Frozen Deep; My Miscellanies*)
- 3) 3 Aug 1876, Unstamped Letter memorializing Agreement re *The Two Destinies* [=C2]
- 4) 20 Feb 1878, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *The Haunted Hotel*
- 5) 25 Jun 1879, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *The Fallen Leaves*
- 6) 19 Feb 1880, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *Jezebel's Daughter*
- 7) 7 Apr 1881, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *The Black Robe*
- 8) 1 Feb 1882, Stamped Letter memorializing renewal of Agreement re *The Law and the Lady* & Agreement re *Little Novels* [=C12]
- 9) 27 Mar 1883, Stamped Memorandum of New Agreement re 13 named novels (as in A2)
- 10) 3 April 1883, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *Heart and Science*
- 11) 20 Oct 1884, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *I Say No!*
- 12) 8 Sep 1886, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *The Evil Genius*
- 13) 15 Mar 1887, Stamped Letter memorializing Agreement re *Little Novels* [=C15]
- 14) 23 April 1888, Stamped Receipt memorializing renewal of Agreement re 5 named novels (*The Two Destinies; The Haunted Hotel; The Fallen Leaves; Jezebel's Daughter; The Black Robe*)
- 15) 7 Aug 1888, Stamped Receipt memorializing Agreement re *The Legacy of Cain*
- 16) 2 April 1889, Stamped Memorandum of renewal of Agreement re 24 named novels (as in A1, A2, A14, plus *Heart and Science; I Say No!; The Evil Genius; Little Novels; The Legacy of Cain*)
- 17) 30 Sep 1889, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *Blind Love* [signed by APW as executor]
- 18) 1 Nov 1889, Stamped Memorandum of Agreement re *A Rogue's Life* [signed by APW as executor], previously issued by Bentley

(B) Documents accompanying Publishing Agreements

I. Up to 1889

Relating to A1

- 1) Signed and stamped receipt to C&W in WC's hand with his signature, 21 Jan 1875, for £500 as first instalment of payment for *The Law and the Lady*

Relating to A2

- 2) Handwritten draft of agreement re 13 named novels (see A2), dated 5 Nov 1874, not signed by WC

- 3) Detailed Lists of stock, stereotypes, and illustrations of 8 named novels (*Antonina*; *Basil*; *Hide and Seek*; *The Dead Secret*; *The Queen of Hearts*; *The Woman in White*; *The Moonstone*; *Man and Wife*), purchased by C&W from Smith, Elder in Jan 1875, at valuation of George Bell
- 4) ALS from George Bell to [WT?], of 6 January 1875, giving his valuation of Smith, Elder's stock, etc
- 5) ALS from WT to C&W, 6 Jan 1875, accompanying valuation by George Bell and Smith, Elder's lists
- 6) ALS from Spottiswoode & Co. (printers to C&W) on their headed notepaper, 16 Jan 1875, acknowledging receipt of stereotype plates from Smith, Elder (of *Hide and Seek*; *The Woman in White*; *The Moonstone*; *Man and Wife*)
- 7) Invoice signed by Horace Davenport, dated 23 Feb 1877 and stamped 27 Feb 1877, for the insertion of a full-page advertisement for the patent medicine Chlorodyne (Dr J. Collis Browne's Chlorodyne, manufactured by Davenports of 33 Gt. Russell St) in 14 unnamed books by WC for two years at 7gns per insertion, probably on the flyleaves

Relating to A8

- 8) Undated memo in AC's hand in black ink on a torn sheet of watermarked paper headed "Little Novels" listing royalties (totalling £147/5) on sales of the work, with ink jottings on the reverse, which probably dates from around the time of the author's death

Relating to A16

- 9) Memo signed by AC, 28 Mar 1889, of offer to WC of £1800 for all residual rights to 24 novels (also £500 for all residual rights to new novel [*Blind Love*])
- 10) Page 6 from C&W printed Trade Catalogue (of c1888—last listed work is *Little Novels*), listing reprint editions of 23 WC novels, annotated in ink (red and later black) with the dates at which C&W's interest in the works expires
- 11) Cutting from C&W printed Trade Catalogue (of c1889—last listed work is *The Legacy of Cain*), listing various editions of 24 works by WC, annotated in red ink on 28/3/89 with the dates at which C&W's interest in the works expires
- 12) Torn leaves containing 9 pages of calculations in AC's hand in black/red ink relating to the value of WC's residual copyrights (lists of copies bound, sales, stock in hand, payments to the author etc, regarding 24 novels in all)
- 13) Page 61 from C&W printed Trade Catalogue (of c1888—last listed work is *Little Novels*), listing WC's 23 Piccadilly Novels, annotated in ink (red and later black) with the dates at which C&W's interest in the works expires
- 14) Page 34 from Librairie Hachette printed Trade Catalogue (of c1889—last listed work is *Je dis non*), listing French translations of 13 works in 19 vols by WC available at 1F 25c, annotated in ink (black then red), with heading "Ap 7 89"

Relating to A18

- 15) ALS from APW on his headed notepaper to C&W, of 31 Oct 1889, re *A Rogue's Life*

II. 1890 onwards

Relating to Novels

- 16) Handwritten Statement to Smith, Elder, dated 13 Oct 1890 and stamped as paid 23 Oct 1890, for the sale of the copyrights, stock, plates etc in 3 WC novels (*Armada*, *No Name*, & *After Dark*) for a total of £632/1/7
- 17) Hand-written list of 28 numbered works by WC in three columns from *Antonina* 1 to *A Rogue's Life* 28 (includes all works to which C&W hold copyright from 1890 onwards except *Blind Love*), undated

- 18) TLS from the Customs House, London, to C&W, 15 May 1891, re discrepancies concerning the date of expiry of the copyright to 3 of WC's works (*Antonina*, *The Dead Secret*, *Basil*)

Relating to WC's dramatic works

- 19) ALS from APW on his headed notepaper to Mr Hytah (of C&W), of 12 Jul 1890, re which works by WC have been dramatized
- 20) TLS from APW to AC, 16 Oct 1901, re management of WC plays, with pencil annotation giving C&W reply
- 21) TLS from APW to C&W, 19 Oct 1901, re management of WC plays
- 22) ALS from H. Calfsens (?) of Antwerp to C&W, 4 Oct 1897, re rights to a dramatization in Flemish of *The New Magdalen*
- 23) C&W official memo, undated but c1904, "Cut from the proof slips of Adam's 'Dictionary of the Drama'" [by W.A. Adams, first volume only (A-G) published by C&W in 1904], has pasted on entry for WC bearing annotations in red ink
- 24) Typed postcard from J.B. Mulholland (of the King's Theatre, Hammersmith) to C&W, of 24 July 1919, re dramatic rights he holds in *The New Magdalen*, enclosed in folded sheet of C&W notepaper, with caption on reverse

Relating to the stories in Little Novels

- 25) ALS from APW on his headed notepaper to Mr Hytah (of C&W), of 13 Jan 1891, re publication of "The Ghost's Touch" (= "Mrs Zant and the Ghost" in *Little Novels*) in the periodical *Sequah*, and Tillotsons' rights in the story
- 26) Handwritten memo with pencil annotations headed Wilkie Collins' Little Novels, undated but referring to LB24:29, 9 Mar 1891, re the serial rights held by Tillotsons of stories in that volume, notably "Mrs Zant and the Ghost"
- 27) TLS from Tillotsons of Bolton on their headed notepaper to C&W, 11 Jun 1896, re the fact that they do not hold German rights to any stories in *Little Novels*
- 28) Three versions of typed C&W receipt, all with annotations, 29 Aug 1919, to Messrs White, Langner, Stevens, & Parrry for £78/15 for a 5 year licence to film the story "She Loves and Lies"/"Mrs Lismore and the Widow," first published in *Belgravia/Little Novels*

(C) ALSs from WC

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) To AC, 8 Feb 1875 [relating to A1 & A2] | 11) To AC, 1 Feb 1882 [with D24] |
| 2) To C&W, 3 Aug 1876 [=A3; with D4] | 12) To C&W, 1 Feb 1882 [=A8] |
| 3) To C&W, 12 Jan 1878 [relating to A3] | 13) To AC, 28 Mar 1883 [relating to A9] |
| 4) To C&W, 25 Jun 1879 [relating to A5] | 14) To AC, 20 Apr 1883 [relating to A10] |
| 5) To AC, 26 Jun 1879 [relating to A5] | 15) To AC, 15 Mar 1887 [=A13] |
| 6) To C&W, 20 Feb 1880 [relating to A6] | 16) To AC, 23 Apr 1888 [relating to A16] |
| 7) To C&W, 7 Apr 1881 [relating to A7] | 17) To AC, 7 Aug 1888 [relating to A14] |
| 8) To AC, 18 Aug 1881 [with D21] | 18) To AC, 27 Mar 1889 [relating to A15] |
| 9) To C&W, 18 Aug 1881 [with D21] | 19) To AC, 2 Apr 1889 [relating to A15] |
| 10) To AC, 29 Jan 1882 [with D24] | |

(D) Back copies of letters to WC or his agents

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) AC to WC, 18 Dec 1874 (LB8:41) | 4) C&W to WC, 2 Aug 1876 (LB8:694) |
| 2) AC to WC, 6 Feb 1875 (LB8:78) | 5) AC to WC, 25 Oct 1876 (LB8:787) |
| 3) C&W to WC, 3 Mar 1875 (LB8:106) | 6) C&W to WC, 7 Nov 1876 (LB8:815) |

- 7) C&W/AC to WC, 9 Oct 1877 (LB9:187)
- 8) AC to WC, 15 Mar 1878 (LB9:416)
- 9) AC to WC, 21 Oct 1878 (LB10:716)
- 10) C&W to WC, 5 Nov 1878 (LB10:741)
- 11) C&W to WC, 19 Nov 1878 (LB10:767)
- 12) AC to WC, 21 May 1879 (LB11:252)
- 13) AC to WC, 24 Jun 1879 (LB11:290)
- 14) C&W to WC, 30? Jun 1879 (LB11:296)
- 15) C&W to WC, 19 Feb 1880 (LB12:220)
- 16) AC to WC, 9 Mar 1881 (LB13:488)
- 17) AC to WC, 18 Mar 1881 (LB14:10)
- 18) C&W to WC, 6 Apr 1881 (LB14:63)
- 19) C&W to WC, 7 Apr 1881 (LB14:67)
- 20) C&W to WC, 11 Aug 1881 (LB14:342)
- 21) C&W to WC, 18 Aug (LB14:354)
- 22) C&W to WC, 9 Sep 1881 (LB14:388)
- 23) AC to WC, 8 Nov 1881 (LB15:65)
- 24) C&W to WC, 30 Jan 1882 (LB15:235)
- 25) C&W to WC, 3 Feb 1882 (LB15:257)
- 26) AC to WC, 9 Mar 1883 (LB17:289)
- 27) AC to WC, 27 Mar 1883 (LB17:332)
- 28) AC to WC, 3 Apr 1883 (LB17:349)
- 29) AC to WC, 19 Apr 1883 (LB17:397)
- 30) AC to WC, 5 Aug 1884 (LB18:872)
- 31) C&W to WC, 19 Aug 1884 (LB18:894)
- 32) AC to WC, 18 Jun 1885 (LB19:571)
- 33) AC to WC, 8 Sep 1886 (LB20:473)
- 34) AC to WC, 23 Sep 1886 (LB20:508)
- 35) AC to WC, 23 Mar 1887 (LB20:906)
- 36) C&W to WC, 31 Mar 1887 (LB20:921)
- 37) AC to WC, 1 Jun 1887 (LB21:55)
- 38) AC to WC, 10 Oct 1887 (LB21:322)
- 39) C&W to WC, 8 Aug 1888 (LB22:15)
- 40) AC to WC, 13 Dec 1888 (LB22:289)
- 41) AC to WC, 1 May 1889 (LB22:696)
- 42) AC to APW, 25 Sep (LB23:137)
- 43) AC to HPB, 2 Oct 1889 (LB23:158)
- 44) C&W to APW, 6 Oct 1889 (LB23:181)
- 45) C&W to APW, 16 Oct 1889 (LB23:203)

(E) Publishing Ledgers (folios relating to the printing of WC's works)

- The Two Destinies* 3:90; 3:654; 4:716; 6:16; 8:302
- The Woman in White* 3:127; 3:375; 3:638; 4:365; 4:777; 5:280; 5:465; 5:587; 5:862; 6:57; 6:268; 6:411; 8:157; 8:273; 9:65; 9:582
- The Dead Secret* 3:128; 4:824; 5:528; 5:446; 6:230; 6:273; 8:371; 8:392; 9:313
- Hide and Seek* 3:129; 4:628; 4:59; 5:242; 8:729
- Antonina* 3:130; 4:134; 5:337; 5:340; 6:713
- Basil* 3:131; 4:287; 4:549; 5:341; 6:934
- The Queen of Hearts* 3:132; 4:517; 5:536; 9:4
- The Moonstone* 3:133; 3:435; 4:666; 4:518; 5:159; 5:280; 5:586; 5:647; 6:50; 6:411; 6:415; 6:949; 8:320; 8:706
- Man and Wife* 3:134; 3:604; 4:270; 4:436; 5:410; 5:834; 5:585; 6:558; 9:66
- Poor Miss Finch* 3:135; 4:138; 4:693; 5:422; 6:714; 8:204
- Miss or Mrs?* 3:136; 4:86; 4:533; 5:243; 9:8
- The New Magdalen* 3:137; 3:543; 4:314; 4:699; 5:21; 5:682; 6:127; 9:6
- The Frozen Deep* 3:138; 4:321; 5:423; 6:284; 8:454
- My Miscellanies* 3:139; 4:532
- The Law and the Lady* 3:140; 4:144; 4:511; 5:500; 6:660; 8:369
- The Haunted Hotel* 3:229; 4:437; 5:540; 6:776; 6:840; 9:5
- The Fallen Leaves* 3:286; 4:256; 5:526
- Jezebel's Daughter* 3:323; 3:617; 4:154; 5:777; 9:3
- The Black Robe* 3:419; 3:644; 4:402; 4:464; 5:858; 8:676
- Heart and Science* 3:670; 4:128; 8:304
- I Say No!* 3:881; 4:398; 5:130; 6:454
- The Evil Genius* 4:240; 4:379; 6:577
- Little Novels* 4:291; 4:460
- The Legacy of Cain* 4:423; 4:655; 6:444; 8:435
- A Rogue's Life* 4:545; 6:132
- Blind Love* 4:550; 6:573
- Armada* 4:629; 5:810; 6:63; 6:755; 8:641
- After Dark* 4:630; 5:897; 9:7
- No Name* 4:631; 5:184; 6:49; 6:173; 8:184

~Reviews~

Lillian Nayder. *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002. pp. xvi + 221. (ISBN 0-8014-3925-6).

Unequal Partners explores a range of material arising out of the relationship between Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, from direct collaborative works such as “The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices” and “No Thoroughfare”, to different versions of *The Frozen Deep*. Hitherto, this material has received relatively little attention from critics. More recently, scholars (including Anthea Trodd and John Bowen in a collaborative project funded by the Leverhulme Trust) have begun to give this material the attention it deserves, and it is in this context that Nayder’s work asserts a series of important claims. As the introductory chapter to *Unequal Partners* makes clear, the collaborative work of Dickens and Collins is significant on a number of levels. Not only does it shed light on the changing relations between Dickens and Collins; it offers an insight into the Victorian publishing industry, as well as addressing “their collaborations in the larger context of Victorian labor disputes and political unrest, to which their stories explicitly and self-consciously respond” (5).

Having used the introduction to identify the themes with which her book is concerned, Nayder’s first full-length chapter considers the Victorian publishing business, paying particular attention to the way in which economic factors determined its overriding values. In contrast to the view of Dickens as a benevolent figure who sought to promote the careers of other writers in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* (a view that Dickens was keen to encourage), Nayder insists that the “conductor” of these periodicals was primarily a producer who placed his own commercial interests before those of fellow writers. The case that Nayder constructs is one that some Dickensians are likely to find disconcerting, but it is hard to ignore the overwhelming evidence that she presents. Although more might have been said about other writers who suffered at the hands of Dickens (including Gaskell, who is only mentioned in passing), the material that Nayder outlines is damning enough. Among other things, the chapter challenges the notion that *Household Words* gave Collins his major break as a writer, arguing instead that “in becoming Dickens’s staff member, Collins did not simply join the ranks of professional writers. He also gave up his connection to the *Leader*, became affiliated solely with *Household Words*, and made his subordination to Dickens official, as one of the satellites of ‘Jupiter,’ as a contemporary reviewer put it” (33).

Yet this subordination to Dickens was something that Collins became increasingly resistant of in the years that followed. Nayder examines different

collaborative works in the middle four chapters of her book, and in each case, she locates various stages in the deteriorating relationship between Dickens and Collins. Chapter two looks at “The Wreck of the Golden Mary” and reads it in terms of the dissension among the management team at *Household Words*. We are informed that “Dickens would take the central authoritative role in the new story, that of the heroic captain, while reserving the roles of passengers and crew members for his subordinates at *Household Words*” (35). While Dickens’s work on the story is described as an attempt to redefine and defuse the threat of an insubordinate labor force, Collins’s contributions, though not openly rebellious, are seen to question the authority of Captain William George Ravender, Dickens’s fictional persona, and raise questions about the allegiance of the crew (and, by implication, the workers at *Household Words*).

The critical framework that Nayder uses in chapter two is one that she returns to in the next three chapters. Increasing tensions between Collins and Dickens are explored, respectively, through variants of *The Frozen Deep*, the collaborative fiction of 1857, and “No Thoroughfare”. Each of these chapters offers sophisticated readings which show how Collins challenged the authority of Dickens through constructing more subversive narratives than the conservative Dickens was willing to accept. The hermeneutic that Nayder uses throughout is commendably wide ranging, and if the discussion threatens to become slightly laboured in a couple of places, it is due more to the amount of detail that she attempts to squeeze in than any inherent restrictions in her critical outlook. Indeed, one of the strengths of this book is the way in which it combines detailed biographical and textual research with stimulating theoretical accounts of gender, class, and imperial concerns. The diversity of Nayder’s critical approach facilitates the perceptive interpretations to be found in her writing about “The Perils of Certain English Prisoners” in chapter four and “No Thoroughfare” in chapter five.

Another strength of Nayder’s writing is the way in which she combines an extensive knowledge of existing criticism with her own original perspectives. This bears fruit in chapter six when she turns her attention to two texts dealing with empire – Collins’s *The Moonstone* and Dickens’s *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. A considerable amount of work has already been written on the imperial dimensions of these works, much of it conflicting, but Nayder’s discussion avoids merely going over old ground. Reminding us that of “the four central crimes committed” in *The Moonstone*, Collins “mitigates only one – that of the Brahmins” (170), Nayder contends that Collins is seeking to highlight the crimes of the empire through his novel. She goes on to argue that Dickens’s novel was intended as a corrective to Collins, revealing a “different set of concerns on Dickens’s part” that “more clearly points to the dangers of imperial decline than the criminality of empire building” (182).

The shift in chapter six to two novels that, though not directly collaborative, are “the last and most acrimonious in a series of exchanges that began nearly two decades before” (165) offers a rich and fitting conclusion to

the discussion of the relationship between Dickens and Collins. At the same time, it raises questions about why Nayder does not look for similar collaboration in the novels that the two published earlier in the 1860s. Chapter five considers *No Name* briefly by way of a prelude to the discussion that ensues of illegitimacy in “No Thoroughfare”, but it would have been interesting to hear more about the parallels between three extremely influential novels that were published in *All the Year Round* between 1859 and 1861 – *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Woman in White*, and *Great Expectations*. It is not difficult to see why Nayder has chosen to use the limited space available to focus on neglected material rather than works frequently discussed by critics, yet the absence of any serious discussion of this crucial stage in the relationship between the two authors remains an unfortunate omission. However, the failure to say everything that might be said should not detract from the important things that are said. *Unequal Partners* is a considered and authoritative contribution to our understanding of Dickens, Collins, and mid-Victorian authorship, and one that those working in this area are advised to consult.

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Phyllis Weliver. *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction, 1869-1900: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home*. Aldershot, Hants. & Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000. Series: Music in 19th-century Britain. pp. x + 330. (ISBN 0-7546-0126-9)

The cliché of the female musician in the Victorian drawing-room is epitomized by William Orchardson’s painting, *Her Mother’s Voice*, with its pensive father, pausing from his newspaper to listen as his daughter plays the piano and sings to her lover. The role of parlour performances within middle-class courtship rituals certainly has its place in Phyllis Weliver’s *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction*. Her study, however, sets out to complicate this stereotypical image with reference both to fictional and to real-life women musicians. Whilst the piano was a mark of Victorian respectability, and society encouraged young women to display their musical accomplishments to audiences within the domestic environment, Weliver argues that, from 1860 onwards, there was, in fiction, a shift towards depicting some musical women as positively dangerous – as likely to signify the “demon” as the “angel” in the house.

Her investigation of fictional representations of female musicians in the period 1860-1900 focuses upon changing gender roles, actual musical practices and scientific discourses. As the author herself acknowledges, *Women Musicians* is not the first scholarly study to deal with music in Victorian

literature. She cites, among others, Alison Byerly's *Realism, Representation and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 1998). Weliver, however, emphasizes music's function as an "important component of mental science and a central metaphor for explaining and conceptualizing theories of consciousness" (8). It is this emphasis that leads to the dominance of George Eliot's works in her book.

Explorations of the angelic and demonic, and of music's relationship with nineteenth century writings on such topics as mesmerism, hypnotism, multiple consciousness and double personality, all lend themselves quite naturally to analyses of the sensation novels: Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and Charles Dickens's *Edwin Drood*. Equally, George Du Maurier's 1890's *Trilby*, a strikingly dramatic example of the "mesmerized female musician," the tone-deaf *grisette* who, under Svengali's power, becomes a great professional singer, provides an apt conclusion to the book. This chapter works particularly well, both chronologically, and in its linking of those "mental science" topics to Weliver's early discussion of the actual musical practice, amateur and professional, of Victorian women.

On the other hand, when it comes to a well-known novelist of the time, who might be shown to draw upon theories of music, aesthetics and evolutionary biology, and who was known to be familiar with the writings and ideas of Arthur Schopenhauer Charles Darwin, Ludwig Feuerbach, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Herbert Spencer and James Sully, there is perhaps only one credible contestant – George Eliot. Devoting three chapters to Eliot, and treating in detail three of her novels, when two chapters must suffice to cover Collins, Dickens, Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood, may leave some readers who come seeking an overview of "Victorian women musicians in literature," with a sense of imbalance. Indeed the Dickens chapter focuses largely upon the *male* musician, the villain, John Jasper, a variant of the Fosco type, "the diabolical, foreign male musician who practices animal magnetism." Jasper is particularly insidious because his position as an English clergyman masks his "criminality, mesmerism and Eastern orientation," enabling him to infiltrate a girls' school without arousing suspicion. (116).

Weliver's scope, however, includes a wider range of Victorian texts than simply fiction, and, whilst women feature prominently, it is the gendered concept of the musician as "other", rather than the female music maker *per se*, which is her main concern. Her subject matter is perhaps more accurately summarized as the issues implied by her subtitle, "*Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home*." It is their interrelationships in Victorian culture and society, and how they are exemplified in fiction, that is the thrust of this book. The intriguing and informative illustrations further emphasize this. Here are no reproductions of *Her Mother's Voice*. The bias is, instead, scientific: anatomical Venuses and Dr Elliotson "playing" the brain of his mesmerized female patient, rather than the female singers and violinists whom the book

celebrates as precursors and examples of the “New Woman.” The few images of historical musicians are all of men – Paginini, in dramatic pose, exhibiting all the alienating characteristics of the “foreign musician,” and an 1864 cartoon of Berlioz and Wagner “in a recognized position of mesmerism” (fig. 11).

In fact the great strength of the book lies in Weliver’s interdisciplinary approach, which should make it attractive to scholars from varied backgrounds. She makes use of a commendably broad range of sources, including contemporary periodicals; and though she chooses to restrict herself to a handful of novels for detailed discussion, references throughout the text to other fiction – Madame Pratolungo in *Poor Miss Finch* and Lydia Gwilt’s passion for Beethoven in *Armada*, for instance – testify to the author’s extensive knowledge. Moreover, the focus upon the leisured home of the middle classes is contextualized by her outlining of the role of music in the lives of workingmen and women.

The early chapters, dealing with real-life musical women in England between 1860 and the end of the century, and with the links between music and the theory and practice of mesmerism, should be of interest to researchers in women’s studies as well as musicologists. It may surprise some to see the number of prominent professional women instrumentalists (mainly, but not exclusively, pianists), singers and composers, who continued to practise their careers after marriage. Of particular note is Weliver’s convincing evidence for the importance of her musical activities in Caroline Norton’s professional career, a facet of her life which receives little attention from feminist historians. The chapter “Music, Mesmerism and Mental Science” draws upon the practice of mesmerism in Britain to explain how it was that fiction, in expressing contemporary anxieties about foreign immigrants and influences, particularly upon innocent English girlhood, found in the discourses of music, mesmerism and the occult, such potent images. Weliver’s discussion provides illuminating insights into the many instances found in sensation fiction of the seductive power of music, and its relation to the unconscious.

Readers of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* may well be familiar with the central discussion of “Female Power in Sensation Fiction” since much of the material relating to *The Woman in White* first appeared here in 1999. Fosco offers an obvious example of the villainous, musical foreign charmer, just as Mary Braddon’s accomplished Lady Audley is a prototype of the demonic siren, capable of destroying the domestic harmony over which she ostensibly reigns as “angel.” Weliver’s study of their musical displays and the part played by music in the lives of characters such as Lucy Audley, Maggie Tulliver and Rosamund Vincy enable her to throw new light upon Laura Fairlie. Weliver offers a subtle reading of Laura’s exploitation of her “cultural capital,” her musical sensitivity, knowledge and skill, to woo Walter, the man she loves, whilst overtly engaging in a dutiful courtship with Percival Glyde. Laura’s responsiveness to music is, unlike that of *Middlemarch*’s well-trained, but imitative, Rosamund Vincy, whose playing deceives as it ensnares Lydgate,

integral to Laura's sense of identity. It is this part of her identity which is the price she pays for domestic happiness with Walter. Weliver shows how her music both assists and demonstrates Laura's strength, but that ultimately Walter Hartright masters the woman he loves by silencing her. She is one of those Victorian "angels in fiction, like young women in reality, [who] ... relinquished music upon marriage" (114-5).

The role of music in affecting the subconscious is further explored in Eliot's works. The powerful influence of sound and music upon Maggie Tulliver's psychological development makes her "both exemplary and undesirable" (184), stimulating her human sympathy and sense of the divine, but also inspiring forbidden passion, and ultimately leading to an unresolvable conflict. In the chapter "Sexual Selection and Music: *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda*" Weliver shows how Eliot skilfully deploys the social phenomenon of parlour performance as an agent of courtship rituals. *Deronda* also gains from the earlier account of actual Victorian professional practice, enhancing our understanding of the novel's practitioners, Klesmer, Gwendolen, Alcharisi and Myrah. Weliver revisits earlier feminist views of this novel's portrayal of the female singer, suggesting that in *Daniel Deronda* "the activity of creating personal meaning by making music ... might be seen as a more accurate feminist reading ... than that of focusing on independence, freedom or career" (237). In such detailed interpretation of her theme the author risks seeming occasionally over ingenious. This reviewer remains sceptical of the idea that there is at one point in *Middlemarch* an intended pun on the name of *Will* Ladislav who "understands the musical aspect of Schopenhauer's *das Will*" (221). But one need not be convinced by every suggestion to find Weliver's book a stimulating reading.

The scholarly apparatus is impressive. As well as detailed references and an extensive bibliography, the non-musician will appreciate the appendix of musical terms, and even readers familiar with Weliver's contemporary sources will find it convenient to have to hand her appendix of relevant extracts. To those for whom this is virgin territory, these "Source Readings" should prove a most valuable addition to the book.

Barbara Onslow
University of Reading

William Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library: A Reconstruction*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. Series: *Bibliographies and Indexes in World Literature*, #55. pp. xv + 192. (ISBN 0-3133-1394-6).

The Victorian library is a very interesting institution, and also a very interesting room. The nineteenth century saw the founding of numerous public libraries in England, and so far there have been few attempts to extend Roger Chartier's extremely important work on the subject into Victorian England.¹ Did Wilkie Collins ever go to the library? William Baker does not tell us. But libraries are found in private households as well, and especially in need of critical analysis.² The library is traditionally gendered male, and often connected to the smoking room or the billiard room; books are sometimes collected for reading, but more often as objects of luxury and ostentation.³ Baker's reference book begins with a few pages on the importance of libraries in Collins' novels, but this compelling topic soon gives way to the bibliography itself.

Baker's library is "reconstructed" from two auction catalogues of Collins' books which were sold after his death. Baker devotes ten pages to describing the dispersal of Collins' books—the buyers, the prices (5-14)—and he notes how consistently low the prices paid for the books were. Baker attributes these low prices to "an agreement amongst established dealers and booksellers to allow the prices to be kept down," a "classic 'ring'" (10). Baker then goes on to provide an analysis of the make-up of Collins' library (as drawn from these catalogues) in terms of "presentation/association volumes," "imprint" (publication dates), "place of publication," "language," and "subject." The bulk of Baker's book consists of an alphabetical listing of all the books in the auction catalogues.

What Baker is after in his description of books is not stated theoretically, nor even very clearly.

The purpose of the present reconstruction is to combine these two catalogues containing information on books in WC's library, so that identification of them can take place, to give some sense of their nature and contents, and to indicate what their importance may have been for him. Wherever possible, from the evidence available, the exact editions owned by WC, as well as the identification of works themselves, has taken place.

(70)

¹ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

² See my "Victorian Interior," *Modern Language Quarterly* 62 (2001), 83-116.

³ For a discussion of Victorian floor plans and their ideological implications, see Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

The uncertain syntax of the second sentence may be said to reflect a general uncertainty as to what to do with all this bibliographical exactitude. What happens, in practice, is that entries are annotated by a sentence or two of who's who about the author, with an occasional apt quotation from Collins' letters, or a suggestion about how this or that book may have provided a source for one of Collins' novels. Baker says that his bibliography does not proceed in the manner of W.W. Greg or Fredson Bowers, but rather "in the tradition of my own *The Libraries of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes*" (70). Unless one wants to spend ten years copying down Collins' marginalia, I'm not sure that the information provided in Baker's entries can actually be improved. The main question is: what to do with such a list?

The libraries of Eliot and Lewes, for example, are going to provide a much more obviously useful list. As two of the most erudite and deeply read authors in Victorian England, whose works almost inevitably represent enormous labors of research, it is very helpful to know what Lewes and Eliot had readily available to them. What scholars will be able to do with this list of Wilkie Collins' books, however, is less apparent. We know that he did research at various clubs (65), and there are major authors gone missing from this list (there is not one volume of Trollope, for instance). So one can't conclude definitively, one way or the other, as to whether Collins is familiar with a book not on the list. The collection itself is "eclectic," as Baker says, with a tendency towards the "popular" (a more theoretical analysis of the categories of "high" and "low" culture in the mode of Pierre Bourdieu might be possible). So how this reference book might assist in future Collins scholarship is an open question. I personally prefer reading around in the obscure titles of Robert Browning's library, but it is probably important for students of Victorian literature to remind themselves periodically of the still quite varied reading of a less "intellectual" man of letters.

Steve Dillon
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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



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Contents

~Articles~

- Madame Rachel's Enamel: Fatal Secrets of Victorian Sensational Mirrors
LAURENCE TALAIRACH-VIELMAS 3
- Textual/Sexual Masquerades: Reading the Body in *The Law and the Lady*
PATRICIA PULHAM 19
- Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of
Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon
ANDREW MANGHAM 35

~Reviews~

- Alexander Grinstein, *Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination*
CATHERINE PETERS 53
- A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. William Baker and Kenneth
Womack; *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Patrick Brantlinger
and William B. Thesing; *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian
Novel*, ed. Deirdre David
LYN PYKETT 56
- Carolyn Oulton, *Literature and Religion in Mid-Victorian England*
NORMAN VANCE 60
- Wilkie Collins, *Blind Love*, ed. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox
GRAHAM LAW 62

Editors' Note

We are very pleased to bring you the articles and reviews in this year's *Journal*. The three essays included reveal the continued significance of gender studies to scholarship on the Victorian novel, sensation fiction in particular, and the complex cultural insights that this intersection makes possible. In his analysis of *Armada*, Laurence Talairach-Vielmas considers the function of cosmetics and fashion as both feminine weapons of subversion and the means of investigating and controlling women, focusing especially on the motif of the mirror and its ability to inspire the transgressive plots of Lydia Gwilt while also "framing" her. Patricia Pulham examines the issue of masquerade in *The Law and the Lady* as well as the textual instabilities and "disorderly femininity" that masquerade allows. In Pulham's view, the transgressive uncertainties of social and sexual identity mirror the interpretive uncertainties of the text, as Collins challenges the seeming authority of the "facts," only to reimpose narrative and social order at the conclusion of the novel. Turning from Collins to Braddon, the third essay, by Andrew Mangham, highlights the contradictions and inconsistencies that informed mid-Victorian constructions of hysteria. Mangham examines the relation between this "part-ideological construct" and the culture that produced it, and shows how Braddon used formulations of hysteria to critique the marginalization of women and, particularly, subjective accounts of their "pathology," to look beyond the "social division of labour" that proves "as problematic and pathological as hysteria itself."

The reviews included in this issue, taken together, provide a survey of recent work on Collins and his contemporaries, from monographs on the single author to encyclopedic guides to Victorian fiction. Catherine Peters discusses Alexander Grinstein's *Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination* (2003); Lyn Pykett considers and compares three companions to the Victorian novel, published by Greenwood Press (2002), Blackwell (2002) and Cambridge University Press (2001); Norman Vance examines Carolyn Oulton's *Literature and Religion in Mid-Victorian England* (2003); and Graham Law reviews Broadview's *Blind Love*, edited by Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox (2003). The appearance of Collins's little-known last novel in a scholarly edition, as well as his evident significance to Victorian fiction generally in the sweeping companions to the field, suggest that Collins studies remain in a vigorous and flourishing state. The essays in the present volume also testify to that fact. We hope you enjoy reading the volume.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

~~Articles~~

Madame Rachel's Enamel: Fatal Secrets of Victorian Sensational Mirrors

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas
University of Toulouse-Le Mirail

FRAMPTON'S PILL OF HEALTH

Price 1s. 11d. and 2s. 9d. per box

This excellent family medicine is the most effective remedy for indigestion, bilious and liver complaints, sick headache, loss of appetite, drowsiness, giddiness, spasms, and all disorders of the stomach and bowels; and for elderly people, or where an occasional aperient is required, nothing can be better adapted.

For FEMALES these pills are truly excellent, removing all obstructions, the distressing headache so prevalent with the sex, depression of spirits, dullness of sight, nervous affections, blotches, pimples, and sallowness of the skin, and give a healthy, juvenile bloom to the complexion.

Sold by all medicine vendors. Observe "Thomas Prout, 229, Strand, London," on the Government Stamp.

("The Englishwoman's Advertiser")

If few of us have heard of it today, Frampton's Pill of Health was nevertheless part and parcel of the Victorian scene, its advertisements in magazines and newspapers being found among many others for quack medicines seeking to deceive credulous customers with their wondrous powers. What is at stake here, though, is not so much the efficacy of Frampton's pill as such but the way in which this advertisement conflates the fields of medicine and cosmetology, and genders the product according to its different audiences. In fact, Frampton's Pill resonates with ideological meaning: remedying the female skin (claiming to cleanse and improve the complexion), the female mind, and the female body (renewing menstruation by dislodging "obstructions"), the pill and its advertisement highlight a definition of femininity which this article will investigate. Throughout the nineteenth

century, the idea of “womanliness” underwent significant changes. Focusing on one of Wilkie Collins’s novels, *Armada*, which works to disrupt dominant discourses on femininity as it journeys through beauty parlours and medical institutions, I will examine the invisible scripts dictating traditional gender roles and consider how the novel positions its female characters within a patriarchal economy. As we will see, *Armada* manifestly investigates the limits of female aestheticization, reworking the language of advertising to show the extent to which consumer culture empowered women and changed them into threatening Victorian *femmes fatales*.

Shopping Around: the Victorian lady and the fashionable stage

“You go to the tea-shop, and get your moist sugar. You take it on the understanding that it *is* moist sugar. But it isn’t anything of the sort. It’s a compound of adulterations made up to look like sugar. You shut your eyes to that awkward fact, and swallow your adulterated mess in various articles of food [...] You go to the marriage-shop, and get a wife. You take her on the understanding – let us say – that she has lovely yellow hair, that she has an exquisite complexion, that her figure is the perfection of plumpness, and that she is just tall enough to carry the plumpness off. You bring her home; and you discover that it’s the old story of the sugar again. Your wife is an adulterated article. Her lovely yellow hair is – dye. Her exquisite skin is – pearl powder. Her plumpness is – padding. And three inches of her height are – in the boot-maker’s heels. Shut your eyes and swallow your adulterated wife as you swallow your adulterated sugar – and, I tell you again, you are one of the few men who can try the marriage experiment with a fair chance of success.”

(Collins, *Man and Wife*, 94-95)

As Sir Patrick argues in *Man and Wife*, the Victorian marketplace in the 1860s was an ambiguous semiotic site where appearances hardly ever matched reality.¹ As a booming consumer society, Britain was revamped into a *theatrum mundi* inhabited by performing actors and actresses concealed beneath masks and costumes. In an era of shows and exhibitions, the shop windows displayed the latest fashionable products, which guaranteed the transformation of the plainest woman into the perfect lady. Sir Patrick’s “adulterated wife” may well indeed have just come out of one of the many beauty salons selling miraculous cosmetics and promising that their clients would be “Beautiful for Ever.” Quack nostrums were publicized everywhere.²

¹ Adulteration was common throughout the nineteenth century due to lack of state regulation, and dangerous additives were introduced in all kinds of foodstuffs, from beer to dairy products, as well as in drugs (see Altick).

² The practices of Captain Wragge in Collins’s *No Name* provide a typical example of the widespread use of advertisements in the quack-medicine trade: “They can’t get rid of me and my Pill – they must take us. There is not a single form of appeal in the whole range of human advertisement, which I am not making to the unfortunate public at this moment. Hire the last new novel – there I am, inside the boards of the book. Send for the last new Song – the instant you open the leaves, I drop out of it. Take a cab – I fly in at the window, in red.

Dr James's Pills for the Complexion promised women ethereal beauty, whilst Parr's Life Pills even claimed to grant eternal life. Madame Rachel sold her "Arabian Bath," her "Magnetic Rock Dew Water of Sahara," her Arabian perfume mouth wash, and other creams, soaps, hair washes, elixirs, or ointments. While enamelling the face and removing wrinkles, Madame Rachel, otherwise Sarah Rachel Levenson (or Levison), professed to make women look young again, though at an extortionate price (see "Madame Rachel," 322-24; and Altick, 540-45).

As a sensational example of the widespread objectification of the female body in the Victorian period, Madame Rachel's practices and her products allow us a clear insight into the constitution of the female self as a "commodity spectacle" (Richards, 196), shaped by corsets, trendy hairstyles or pills of all sorts. Rachel's career started shortly after 1859, when she was stricken with fever and had to shave off her locks. One of the doctors of King's College Hospital gave her a lotion to make her hair grow again rapidly, and furnished her as well with the recipe. This particular product helped her start a commercial career in New Bond Street, where the three-times married woman opened up a shop in the 1860s. Her first attempt as an enameller was under-capitalized and sent her to Whitecross Street Prison for debt. But she was again in business in 1862, and very successful by 1863, as her shop-front and pamphlet "Beautiful for Ever" attracted gullible female customers. Yet the effects of her miraculous rejuvenators (mere mixtures of carbonate of lead, starch, Fuller's earth, hydrochloric acid and distilled water) and baths of bran and water did not last. She was tried at the Old Bailey in 1867 for swindling a client, undertaking to make her young again in order for her to charm a nobleman. Not just a swindler, Rachel was also suspected of providing a front for blackmailing and procuring, and perhaps even of operating an abortionist racket at her shop.

Madame Rachel's fraudulent experiments with female bodies enable us to grasp the changes in the construction of womanliness in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Margaret Beetham argues, the new Victorian feminine ideal tended to be "centred on appearance and dress," thereby "threaten[ing] to rewrite not only class distinctions but a definition of femininity in terms of the domestic and the moral" (Beetham, 78). Consumer society had made dangerously fragile the clear ideological line separating morally dubious female figures from ideally virtuous ones. In the 1860s the Victorian ideal was more and more self-made, seeking public exhibition; it was therefore far less "natural" and, as a result, more likely to verge on waywardness. In this way, Coventry Patmore's Angel in the House came hazardously close to the equivocal figure of the actress or even the blatant one of the prostitute.

Buy a box of tooth-powder at the chemist's – I wrap it up for you, in blue [...] The place in which my Pill is made, is an advertisement in itself. I have got one of the largest shops in London" (Collins *No Name*, 710-11).

Significant examples of the power of female fashion to blur the boundaries between contradictory constructions of womanhood could be found in the sensational trials of the time. In the 1850s, as Mary S. Hartman has shown, the murder cases of Marie Lafarge and Euphémie Lacoste in France, and of Madeleine Smith in Britain, all involved arsenic intake, thus locating criminality in typically feminine cosmetic practices. The consumption of arsenic was prevalent in the Victorian period. It was used to improve appearance, giving full and rounded shapes and a blooming complexion and could be found in many tonics (see “The Narcotics We Indulge In,” 687-90). Madeleine Smith, for example, accused of poisoning her lover by putting arsenic in his food, claimed to have bought arsenic to use in a face-wash for her complexion. Lacoste used a cure-all, Fowler’s Solution, a mixture of oil of lavender, cinnamon and arsenic. Modes of female education and of training in “fine ladyism” often came into question during the trials (Hartman, 57). Such practices were often denounced for teaching girls deception so as to remain competitive in the marriage market. According to Hartman, Smith was an avid reader of women’s magazines and knew how to emulate the stereotype of the respectable and dutiful schoolgirl. In her *liaison* with L’Angelier while engaged to marry a more socially suitable party, she was deliberately “acting out a romantic drama with herself in the leading role” (65). Even in the courtroom, Smith’s skills in role-playing could be read in her display of ladylike manners, her “fashionable clothes,” and her “most attractive appearance” (Unsigned article in the *Spectator*, 27), which impressed the jury and almost cleared her of the murder charge: Smith’s physical appearance acted as a visual evidence of her innocence, leading to the equivocal verdict of “Not Proven.”

As these examples show, female fashion and female role-play mingled, fusing polarized versions of femininity. Thus the image of the fashionable Victorian lady gradually became an apt means to question traditional gender definitions. The figure seems indeed to have inspired the popular literature of the time. Allotting the main roles to heroines eager to satisfy their own ambitious desires, sensational narratives were based on female characters well bred in the art of dressing, masquerading at all times to hide their identities and fool rich suitors. In the world of sensation fiction, female characters change dresses as they change names, and perform new parts while the male detectives try to decipher their real identities.³ Here, indeed, is the main interest of most sensational stories: to grasp the characters’ role-play and unmask their identities, thus engaging in a narrative strip-tease.

Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon are the sensational authors whose narratives most clearly play upon the theme of the sham lady, embedding it within mysteries which demand the detective’s decoding of the

³ The relevance of the theme of theatricality is even more striking as the novels themselves tend to be structured as plays: some of the novels are divided into scenes instead of chapters. For a study of sensational theatricality, see Litvak.

artful heroine and her construction. In their novels, the figure of the woman-actress appears to engage current definitions of the feminine. In Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), for instance, the whole narrative focuses on the character of Lucy Audley, who mimics the domestic ideal to conceal her identity as bigamist and murderess. Even though Lucy Audley is naturally beautiful, Braddon repeatedly evokes Madame Rachel in describing her,⁴ thus providing clues to her eponymous heroine's usurped identity. In her boudoir, crammed with bottles of perfume, hair-brushes and other womanly contrivances, Lucy Audley changes dresses as the detective comes closer to the truth. Thus, creams and female accessories become incriminating motifs pointing both at the actress and at the fashionable lady. Similarly, *Aurora Floyd* (1863) uses the figure of the stage actress to intimate the heroine's potential duplicity: Aurora's mother is an actress of limited talent, hired in part to exhibit her body on the dirty boards of a stage in order to please the male audience, when she is spotted by her future husband, Sir Archibald Floyd. Typically, the actress's dirty spangles are expected to taint the daughter's fate, leaving an unfeminine and improper tinge on the heroine, who is in danger of becoming a "fast" woman. In the same way, in Collins's *No Name* (1862), Magdalen Vanstone is an actress, but she plays her parts not only on the stage but also in real life, using paints and cosmetics to alter her face and complexion whilst wigs, bonnets and padded cloaks disguise her body.

Featuring actresses or female characters playing parts, all these novels heighten the paradoxical construction of womanhood, so perfectly illustrated by the actress herself. Simultaneously embodying feminine beauty and female fashion, the actress breaks out of the woman's sphere in working on the public stage. In her study of Victorian actresses, Tracy Davis analyses how women of the theatre, stigmatized by their exhibitionism and sexual desirability, violated traditional standards and yet matched to perfection expectations of womanliness (105). Records of the money actresses spent on their wardrobes testify to the bond between them and the world of fashion, and inevitably mark the professional actress "as a social adventuress, flaunting her beauty to accrue influence and wealth," like the *demi-mondaine* or the prostitute (Davis 32, 85). In Collins's *Armada* (1866), the narrative, revolving around the twin themes of female duplicity and role-play, blurs significantly the divide between antagonistic models of femininity. In this novel in particular, readers are

⁴ For example, the detective defines femininity in the following terms: "Imagine all the women of England elevated to the high level of masculine intellectuality; superior to crinoline; above pearl powder and Mrs. Rachel Levison" (Braddon *Lady Audley's Secret*, 223). The narrator also underlines woman's duplicitous nature by referring to the artificiality of Levison's cosmetics: "[A lady's maid] knows when the ivory complexion is bought and paid for – when the pearly teeth are foreign substances fashioned by the dentist – when the glossy plaits are the relics of the dead, rather than the property of the living; and she knows other and more sacred secrets than these. She knows when the sweet smile is more false than Madame Levison's enamel, and far less enduring – when the words that issue from between gates of borrowed pearl are more disguised and painted than the lips which help to shape them" (336).

granted access to the backstage of feminine construction where the epitome of womanliness and the socially inferior actress become one and the same. By displaying Lydia Gwilt's correspondence with her personal adviser, Mrs Oldershaw, who is modelled on Rachel Levenson, as well as Lydia's own diary to which she confides her murderous plots and her multiple identities, *Armada* offers a survey of duplicitous female practices. Women's appearances become the leitmotiv of the detective narrative, and the criminal woman, whose looks deceive and charm the beholder, takes us into the artful world of pretence and acting. As the reader is led into the universe of women's secrets, three main accessories appear fundamental to the creation or recreation of women's beauty: cosmetics, clothes, and mirrors. If cosmetics point overtly at female duplicity, clothes and mirrors undermine more radically the construction of femininity. The glass in particular, as a site of surveillance which shapes and controls the image of woman as surface, and prevents her escape, quickly comes to encompass a criminal and spectacular femininity. As the favourite accomplice to female aestheticization, the mirror simultaneously frames *and* reveals the fraud, turning the domestic boudoir into a secret room behind the scenes or a perverse beauty parlour designed to fashion *femmes fatales*.

Fashioning the Commodity Woman: women's magazines and fashion-victims

As is generally the case with Collins's fiction, the thematics of *Armada* are mediated through minor characters. In *No Name* Mrs Wragge serves as the naive fashion-victim who takes advertising leaflets to bed and becomes hysterical whenever she hears the word "shop," while in *Armada* the character of a jealous middle-class wife whose looks have faded humorously presents the dangers of the changing definitions of womanliness. Mrs Milroy, vainly trying to look younger by applying thick layers of make-up or using fashionable frills and flounces to reshape her femininity, acts as a foil to the heroine while anchoring the character of Lydia Gwilt in a consumer culture obsessed with women's looks and appearances:

It was the face of a woman who had once been handsome, and who was still, so far as years went, in the prime of her life. [...] The utter wreck of her beauty was made a wreck horrible to behold, by her desperate efforts to conceal the sight of it from her own eyes, from the eyes of her husband and child, from the eyes of even the doctor who attended her, and whose business it was to penetrate to the truth. Her head, from which the greater part of her hair had fallen off, would have been less shocking to see than the hideously youthful wig, by which she tried to hide the loss. No deterioration of her complexion, no wrinkling of her skin, could have been so dreadful to look at as the rouge that lay thick on her cheeks, and the white enamel plastered on her forehead. The delicate lace, and the bright trimming on her dressing-gown, the ribbons in her cap, and the rings on her bony fingers, all intended to draw the eye away from the change that had passed over her, directed the eye to it on the contrary [...]. An illustrated book of the fashions, in which women were represented exhibiting their

finery by means of the free use of their limbs, lay on the bed from which she had not moved for years, without being lifted by her nurse. A hand-glass was placed with the book so that she could reach it easily.

(Collins *Armadale*, 311-12)

Contributing to the novel's debate on the definition of femininity that the plot draws upon, this scene manifestly denounces Mrs Milroy for her grotesque masquerade and turns the sacrosanct Victorian hearth into a stage. Ironically enough, the caricature of the woman who has overused make-up and costume seems to underscore the slippery borderline between the respectable middle-class mother and the Girl of the Period, "who dies her hair and paints her face, whose sole aim is unbounded luxury and whose dress is the chief object of such thought and intellect as she possesses" (Linton, 339-40). Nonetheless, Collins's debunking of female self-fashioning does not simply show how the private domestic world overlaps with the modern public world of sensuous female exhibitions. More importantly, it exposes the underside of woman's objectification. Mrs Milroy's use of cosmetics to improve her appearance is turned back upon itself, showing the reverse side of women's attempts at self-definition. The more Mrs Milroy tries to control her reflection, the more her image slips and cracks. Hence, as this example suggests, instead of empowering women, their aestheticization and objectification may sometimes yield power to others rather than enabling them to wield it themselves.

Collins's play on cosmetics in *Armadale* is thus two-fold. Simultaneously blurring and enhancing the divide between the natural and the artful woman, cosmetics can invisibly ensure woman's subservience to the male order. With its portrait of a domestic invalid, confined in bed and magnifying female passivity, *Armadale* highlights cosmetics as both dangerous weapons and policing tools. In a novel where the naturally beautiful heroine relies on a beauty specialist to stage her theatrical parts, Collins uses cosmetics and fashion to investigate and challenge the heroine's claims to self-definition.

Unlike Mrs Milroy, who fails to hide the ravages of time, Lydia Gwilt knows how to "trad[e] on [her] good looks" (Collins *Armadale*, 435), and manipulates female aestheticism to her advantage. Gwilt is a genuine villainess, a plotting actress whose sole ambition in life is to secure financial independence through marriage. Like Braddon's Lucy Audley, Lydia Gwilt wears dresses as so many stage costumes and plays with her mirror to exhibit her sensuality. In addition, the narrative depends on Gwilt's concealment of her age, since her true identity must remain unknown if she is to make her fortune by marrying one of the two Allan Armadales. Yet, interestingly enough, although modelled on Madeleine Smith,⁵ Collins's heroine is unwilling to

⁵ The recurrence of allusions to the case of Madeleine Smith in Collins's novels testifies to the links between sensation fiction and contemporary news which Richard Altick draws attention to in *The Presence of the Present*. In *Armadale*, Lydia Gwilt's trial overtly draws on Smith's. The references to Madame Rachel and her beauty parlour advance the

follow her accomplice's advice recommending cosmetic application. Collins had already pointed to make-up as a practice in *No Name*, where Captain Wragge applies paint to Magdalen Vanstone's neck to conceal the two moles which give away her true identity. But *Armadale* reveals more significantly the art of woman's masquerade. As a matter of fact, *Armadale*'s most striking feature lies in the way the novel displays female correspondence as a means to denounce role-playing. The first appearance of the heroine is managed by means of an exchange of letters between herself and Mrs Oldershaw in which the two characters share their plans. Through feminine writing, the construction of femininity is disclosed, with the beauty parlour and the female boudoir as main loci of fraud. Drawing ambiguous links between the private domestic sphere and the public commercial site, the novel conflates female theatricality and impersonation with female appearance and its improvement: the domestic woman hence becomes both fashionable artifact and skilled actress.

The confusion of spheres in fact is triggered by Collins's allusions to Madame Rachel. Mrs Oldershaw, writing her letters from her beauty parlour, the Ladies' Toilette Repository, imparts a transgressive feminine fragrance to the narrative. While Oldershaw, like Rachel Leverson, hides disgraceful wrinkles, "making up battered old faces and worn-out old figures to look like new" (160), the narrative connects women's looks with female treachery. For even before Lydia Gwilt has appeared, Oldershaw's letter mentions Lydia's plan of marrying Armadale to gain his fortune, and promises her success if she follows a few pieces of advice to improve her appearance. Thus the correspondence between the two women sets up a space where daring female advice can be requested and given. That the advice should particularly revolve around the themes of clothes and make-up reinforces the relevance of Oldershaw's salon in the detective narrative. Dresses and creams are turned into criminal accomplices contrived to mould femininity:

If you follow my advice about dressing, and use one or two of my applications privately, I guarantee to put you back three years more. I will forfeit all the money I shall have to advance to you in this matter, if, when I have ground you young again in my wonderful mill, you look more than seven-and-twenty in any man's eyes living – except, of course, when you wake anxious in the small hours of the morning; and then, my dear, you will be old and ugly in the retirement of your own room, and it won't matter.

(Collins *Armadale*, 160-61)

While Oldershaw exposes female duplicity by enhancing the dramatic gap between public appearance and private reality, her hyperbolic rhetoric ("I guarantee," "I will forfeit all the money I have") and striking metaphorical images ("I have ground you young again in my wonderful mill") also sound explicitly theatrical. As in the women's magazines of the time (see Beetham),

comparison, as we shall see. As E.S. Dallas noted generally in his review of *Lady Audley's Secret*, sensation narrative tended to draw its scenarios from the criminal courts, recycling those "mysteries that every now and then fill the newspapers" (Dallas, 8).

artful femininity is here publicized as both subversive and normative: designed by cosmetics and dresses, the female body is forged and framed by Oldershaw's advice, reduced to pearl powder and objectified as an artwork. Seen from this perspective, Gwilt – who has been invisible so far – is shaped as a female magazine reader: she is given a voice and may write to the editor, but Oldershaw's letter fashions her as a commodified woman who exists, in part, by and through the cosmetics and dresses she buys. The characterization of Oldershaw and the significance of her salon in the criminal narrative simultaneously signal Gwilt's duplicitous power and potential villainy and limit her chances of success. The arsenal of female villainy frames as it transforms woman, changing her into a puppet in the hands of the beauty specialist.

As a matter of fact, Gwilt's indirect presentation as a commodified doll is sustained later on in the text when Bashwood's son recounts Gwilt's story. Her past becomes a discourse of fashion:

Miss Gwilt's story begins [...] in the market-place at Thorpe Ambrose. One day, something like a quarter of a century ago, a travelling quack-doctor, who dealt in perfumery as well as medicines, came to the town, with his cart, and exhibited, as a living excellence of his washes and hair-oils and so on, a pretty little girl, with a beautiful complexion and wonderful hair. His name was Oldershaw. He had a wife, who helped him in the perfumery part of his business, and who carried it on by herself after his death.

(Collins *Armada*, 520-21)

Connected to the market-place as she is to a woman who sells beauty products, Lydia Gwilt exhibits the deceitful aspects of femininity. Even if the quack doctor's miraculous washes and hair-oils have never been tried on the naturally beautiful young girl, Gwilt is defined against the backdrop of consumer discourse and makes explicit womanliness as a fiction and woman as a born actress. Fashioned as a spectacle, as a commodity produced by art and chemistry, she becomes a walking advertisement. As Lori Anne Loeb demonstrates, Victorian advertisements linked consumer culture with the sham lady playing parts. According to Loeb, if "advertisements were thought to advance fraudulent claims; to promote products of poor quality," they also reflected the social ideal: "[t]he advertisement suggested that with the acquisition of creams to whiten the complexion, fringes to improve the coiffure, and corsets to mold the female figure it was possible to create the illusion of the 'perfect lady,' a beacon of Victorian affluence" (10).⁶ Once again, the fraudulent and the ideal are superimposed, and the advertised female body is structured like a poster: a mere surface ruled by a set of visual codes.

As usual with sensation fiction, however, Gwilt's portrait constantly blurs the line between natural and artificial femininity, suggesting that the

⁶ Note how Oldershaw is an expert at spotting advertisements, which may suggest her own relationship with them: "I take in *The Times* regularly; and you may trust my wary eye not to miss the right advertisement" (168).

natural version can be even more dangerous when it matches artfully constructed models. Loeb argues that the advertisers' models copied "artists who intended to construct a view of the antique world in which the aspiring middle class could see themselves reflected" (35) – artists such as Frederic Leighton or Alma-Tadema, for example. In a similar way, Gwilt is described as a classical goddess:

This woman's forehead was low, upright and broad towards the temples; [...] her eyes [...] were of that purely blue colour, without a tinge in it of grey or green, so often presented to our admiration in pictures and books, so rarely met with in the living face. [...] The lines of this woman's nose bent neither outward nor inward: it was the straight delicately moulded nose [...] of the ancient statues and busts. [...] 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.

(Collins *Armada*, 277)

Whether Collins is referring to fashion magazines is unclear, but Gwilt's taintless body meets the demands of their codes of advertising. By refusing to betray inner depravity, her outward classical perfection enables her to evade all kinds of physiognomical or phrenological readings. The enigma of her image is precisely that it is so naturally smooth and unblemished that it points more to the world of make-believe and advertising than to un-constructed femininity. For Gwilt systematically refuses to let cosmetics control her image: "Keep your odious powders and paints and washes for the spotted shoulders of your customers; not one of them shall touch my skin, I promise you" (162). Ambiguously positioned at the heart of a consumer culture but denying the scripts of feminine cosmetology, Gwilt attempts to secure her identity and her autonomy, plotting her financial independence with the help of her mirror only. Used in a grotesque vignette, the glass becomes the leitmotiv of the murderous plot. Indeed, while Lydia Gwilt condemns the artificiality of cosmetics, the mirror is turned into a technical adviser in her criminal plots, a tool designed to inspire her when she devises her new roles. Instead of framing and controlling a reflection of woman, the panoptical motif which haunts many a Victorian narrative and symbolizes the surveillance of woman reveals criminal depths and spectacular stories whose parts the heroine will soon willingly play.

Lydia Gwilt's Murderous Accomplice: the voice of the magic glass

Armada [...] gives for its heroine a woman fouler than the refuse of the streets, who has lived to the ripe age of thirty-five, and through the horrors of forgery, murder, theft, bigamy, gaol, and attempted suicide, without any trace being left on her beauty.

(Unsigned review of *Armada*, *Spectator*)

Armada shocked contemporary critics by dissociating physical features from moral character, thus allowing cosmetics and costumes that conceal female sins to fulfill a subversive function. Dresses pace the plot, functioning as disguises that confuse investigators and inspire deception.

Gwilt's first plan consists in exchanging her dress with that of Oldershaw's maid to escape Mr Brock. Then, Gwilt's idly going through her dresses leads her to reread some old letters and furnishes her with her next scheme (Collins *Armada*, 444). But dresses can also incriminate. Towards the end of the novel, when Gwilt goes to the milliner's to kill time by trying on her summer dress, the dress gives Gwilt away, since Scotland Yard detectives trace her to the shop: "The cleverest women lose the use of their wits in nine cases out of ten, where there's a new dress in the case – and even Miss Gwilt was rash enough to go back" (518). Similarly, Mrs Milroy, in trying to discover Gwilt's identity, bribes her maid with clothes (318). Gwilt's use of make-up and her apparently genuine beauty are also double edged. Setting his story against a background of beauty salons, Collins confuses the natural and the artful woman, revealing the woman without make-up as "the worse woman morally" (313), a paradox which is largely conveyed by the ambivalent motif of the mirror. The mirror simultaneously fashions sham femininity and incarcerates womanhood in an ideal two-dimensional image. It fixes and disrupts categories, suggesting that the beautiful reflection may be severed from its owner. In this way, the glass appears to serve the same function as make-up, polishing faces into seamless surfaces *and* hinting at artifice. Whilst Oldershaw promotes make-up and lures credulous female customers to buy her wares, Gwilt turns the glass into a criminal adviser which prompts her to commit sins.

"Am I handsome enough today?" she asks (428), like the Wicked Stepmother in *Snow White*. Gwilt uses her mirror both to reflect her beauty and check the advances of passing time, and to imagine new stories: "I must go and ask my glass how I look. I must rouse my invention, and make up my little domestic romance" (489). As in the fairy tale, the mirror becomes the site which encapsulates treacherous female nature, inspiring Gwilt with new plots and reflecting woman as an actress staging the scenes of her life. Inviting female display, the mirror also enhances the objectification of Gwilt's body. Relevant to our discussion here is the feminist reading of the Wicked Stepmother and the mirror's voice by Gilbert and Gubar (36-40). For Gilbert and Gubar, the magic looking-glass is a cultural weapon that enforces patriarchal sentences on women and locks them up in "crystal prisons" (36-37). The Queen's obsession with her own reflection suggests less the woman's self-absorption and narcissicism than it discloses the King's appraising gaze. As Gilbert and Gubar posit, "his, surely, is the voice of the looking-glass, the patriarchal voice of judgment that rules the Queen's – and every woman's – self-evaluation" (38). Arguing that the Queen both abides by and tries to escape the patriarchal voice of the mirror, Gilbert and Gubar read her as an actress subjected to the stage-manager's directions yet eager to stage her own independence, playing deceptive parts and inventing new means to murder Snow White. Ironically, the Queen's anxiety over her own loss of physical attractiveness is displaced onto Snow White, her mirror image, with the murder plot reflecting Snow White's "training" in femininity before marriage. The very plots the Queen invents – especially the poisoned comb, the suffocating set of tight laces, and the poisoned apple cooked in a secret kitchen – all turn

out to be weapons in the arsenal of feminine cosmetology. Thus the wicked actress, like a Madame Rachel who adds arsenic to her lotions, in fact merely reenacts the controlled male scripts she wanted to wipe off the surface of the glass: Snow White is crystallized by the glass coffin, murdered by her own aestheticization.

In *Armadale*, however, Gwilt does not seek to murder Snow White (that is, another version of herself). Unlike the Queen, she projects the sadistic voice of the mirror onto the two male protagonists, and plots to kill the two Armadales. She will marry Midwinter under his real name, kill Allan to claim his fortune, and then break Midwinter's heart by denying she is his wife. Hence Gwilt intends to undermine the patriarchal ideology expressed by the voice in the mirror. However, like the Wicked Stepmother in *Snow White*, Gwilt is led to multiply her plots. Her three vain attempts at murder convey a message about femininity which Gwilt refuses to hear.

First, in a revised version of the poisoned apple plot, Gwilt tries to poison Armadale by pouring a dose of arsenic in his brandy. The scene is fraught with references to the case of Madeleine Smith. Given Gwilt's relationship with Oldershaw, who supplies her with laudanum, we may speculate that the arsenic she uses comes from Oldershaw's beauty parlour, drawing an even stronger parallel between Gwilt and the alleged murderess. But as fate would have it, Armadale is allergic to brandy and faints before swallowing it. Gwilt's trick casts doubt on her innocence when Midwinter recognizes one of the murder scenes from Allan's dream: "I saw her touch the Shadow of the Man with one hand, and give him a glass with the other. He took the glass, and handed it to me. At the moment when I put it to my lips, a deadly faintness came over me" (Collins *Armadale*, 563). Not only does Midwinter's hand hold the poisoned glass, but the dream manuscript also intimates the heroine's guilt: she becomes the Shadow of the Woman in Allan's prophetic dream, as if the male text had captured the shape of her body and engraved it on the paper. Like the mirror in *Snow White*, which fixes female beauty and frames femininity the better to enforce patriarchy's sentences, the dream manuscript traps the murderess, coercing woman's subservience and hinting at her inevitable failure in a male-dominated world.

Having failed in her poisoning plan, Gwilt then asks her former lover Manuel to embark on Armadale's ship and drown him. Once again, her criminal plot depends on male hands and is bound to fail, all the more so because it merely reenacts the father's murder scene a generation before. The woman's murderous design can never be achieved; she cannot hold the pen to write the end of the story. Male texts only serve to capture Gwilt, dictating and imposing her fate and silencing her voice. After putting on her "widow's costume from head to foot" in order to play "[her] new character" (594), and turning "to the glass" to check the effect (599), Gwilt hears that Armadale has escaped unscathed. While the glass marks the woman's failure as a plotter, the arch-actress still cannot decipher the male narrative located there. As if mesmerized by her own reflection and too confidently convinced of her

seductive powers, she blindly devises her ultimate plot: to trap Armadale in Dr Downward's (or Le Doux's) sanatorium – an institution meant to cure neurasthenic female patients – and use one of the doctor's gases to murder Armadale while he sleeps.

The attempted murder in the sanatorium is the most telling one since it encapsulates the patriarchal precepts Gwilt has tried to evade and that keep haunting her. Gwilt intends to turn Downward's disciplinary establishment to her advantage, using the doctor to kill Armadale. The glass once more inspires her (619), and Downward agrees to give her his aid on condition that she stays in his sanatorium “in the character of a Patient” (618) and impersonates his “First Inmate” (636).

Downward's establishment hosts female patients suffering from “Shattered nerves – domestic anxiety” (636). The sanatorium uncannily recalls Oldershaw's beauty parlour,⁷ since both impose Victorian gender ideologies under the guise of improving women's bodies or curing them of their ailments. But fashioning and framing the female body is now in the hands of the medical institution. If women were in part enabled to engage in an artful masquerade whilst invisibly enacting patriarchal scripts in Oldershaw's salon, they are unambiguously and unquestioningly monitored in Downward's sanatorium. Its panoptical architecture carefully separates every room from the next and every floor from the one above; the rooms can all be observed, opened and oxygenated by the quack physician. Poisons and gases are used to heal the patients. Like Oldershaw's cosmetics which “grind” female flesh, Downward's poisons subdue unruly womanhood;⁸ and pseudo-chemistry even more powerfully controls the definition of woman.

Mirroring Oldershaw and her enamelling establishment, Downward, the stereotypical Victorian quack, foregrounds medicine as a stage show ruled by a market economy. His sanatorium smelling of “damp plaster and new varnish” (587), is a monstrous product of capitalism, advertised during his “Visitors’

⁷ In Pimlico, Oldershaw's salon and Downward's office are part of the same building, and the suggestion that Downward may be an abortionist strengthens his links with Madame Rachel's fictional twin: “At one side was the shop-door, having more red curtains behind the glazed part of it, and bearing a brass plate on the wooden part of it, inscribed with the name of ‘Oldershaw.’ On the other side was a private door, with a bell marked Professional; and another brass plate, indicating a medical occupant on this side of the house, for the name on it was ‘Doctor Downward.’ If even brick and mortar spoke yet, the brick and mortar here said plainly, ‘We have got our secrets inside, and we mean to keep them’” (Collins *Armadale*, 340). As we have seen with the example of Frampton's Pill, cosmetics and medicines intended for the female body all hinted at female sexuality. The pill's power to renew menstruation suggests that the pill acted as an abortifacient (see Porter *Quacks*, 132).

⁸ The world of free-market medicine was associated with sexually improper behaviour. Some patches and cure-alls (most containing arsenic, which was also believed to be an aphrodisiac) were meant to conceal or cure venereal infections (Hartman, 40; Porter *Bodies*, 78). Humorously enough, Oldershaw's former name, Mrs Mandeville, may recall Bernard Mandeville and his *Treatise on the Hypochondriac and Hysterical Diseases* (1730), in which he encouraged sexual fulfilment.

day[s]” (635) and attracting “spectators” (635). In his Dispensary, where he prepares such mixtures as “Our Stout Friend,” Downward displays the placebo-drugs preferred by quack doctors.⁹ Supposedly, “Our Stout Friend” is a harmless liquid which produces a poisonous gas when brought into contact with “a certain common mineral substance” (642). But Collins undermines any belief we might have in the efficacy of Downward’s well-advertised and well-labelled product when the narrative depicts him changing the contents of the flask and filling the bottle with water and “certain chemical liquids” (632) to create a “carefully-coloured imitation” (642). With his dubious nostrums, Downward thus appears a male version of the cosmetics dealer, enticing gullible women with wondrous products and promises of escape from domesticity, the better to mould them in accordance with Victorian gender ideologies.

In *Armada*, both the beauty parlour and the medical establishment highlight the dangers of woman’s aestheticization and commodification. Tempted by the promise of subversive power or by proposed days of rest from the demands of domesticity, women constantly come under the yoke of patriarchy. Mrs Wragge, in *No Name*, could well testify to the imprisoning power of medicalized readings of femininity: her portrait is engraved on all the wrappers of her husband’s miraculous Pill. Efforts to improve or heal the female body thus imprint the marks of patriarchal ideology upon it. A “commodity spectacle,” the female body is constantly subjected to social scrutiny, or, in Foucault’s terms to “omnipresent surveillance” (24). The fatalistic structure of Collins’s plot functions as a warning against female waywardness in a male-dominated society. Captured within the precast scenarios “dreamt” by men, Gwilt can but abide by their dictates and enact woman’s prescribed roles. Consequently, Gwilt’s criminal experiments in chemistry are bound to fail. Gwilt is in fact naively led to obey the doctor’s orders, since Downward has already prepared the deadly fumigation with which she will try to kill Armadale. Far from escaping the patriarchal voice of the mirror, Gwilt signs her own death warrant by choosing the sanatorium as her last murder scene. Midwinter and Armadale have exchanged rooms and the deadly fumes she lets out through the funnel is killing the man she loves. Her last role is the most melodramatic of all; Gwilt saves Midwinter before locking herself up in the poisoned room. The plot invokes the whole paraphernalia of

⁹ The patent medicine men were all charlatan-physicians who made pills, tinctures, or potions of all sorts and asked for a government patent to keep their trade secrets (see Richards, 169). After the Apothecaries Act of 1815, which specified that qualified apothecaries should be in possession of a licence issued by the Society of Apothecaries (involving courses, experience and examination), general practitioners still complained about unfair competition from unqualified druggists and quacks. One of these unqualified druggists and quacks, Downward reminds us of the lack of governmental regulation of medical practice and the sharp division within the profession. Eventually, the Medical Act of 1858 created a single public register for all legally recognized practitioners. It then became illegal for those who were not on the Medical Register to claim to be medical practitioners, although they could still legally practice healing (see Porter *Disease*, 47-48).

female duplicity the better to underline its limits: the female actress is after all the victim of fate, or rather, a mere puppet in the hands of patriarchy.

* * *

Using typically sensational motifs and the theme of female treachery, Collins's novel furthers the genre's investigation of its spectacular society. Whether women visit the beauty parlour, or the milliner, or the doctor, the male gaze distinguishes the actress from the lady even as the female characters collapse the difference between the two. A few years later, Collins again examines the commodification of women and its consequences, in a novel in which an ugly lady commits suicide through an overdose of arsenic. With woman's complexion as the main motif of *The Law and the Lady* (1875), Collins once more shows us the dangers that await women within the looking-glass of Victorian domesticity yet treats the question of male responsibility for these perils with more ambiguity than he does in *Armada*, reaching the verdict of "Not Proven."

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Textual/Sexual Masquerades: Reading the Body in *The Law and the Lady*

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In recent years a number of Wilkie Collins's lesser-known works have been republished, among them *The Law and the Lady* which initially appeared in the *Graphic* and was subsequently published by Chatto and Windus in three volumes in 1875. It is a novel which seems to have received little critical attention despite offering a dramatic story line, an intrepid amateur lady detective, and a fascinating cast of characters whose social and sexual identities are continually in flux. This essay aims to explore the textual and sexual worlds of *The Law and the Lady*, which, I claim, revolve around the issue of masquerade: the text itself functions as a form of novelistic masquerade offering a subversive "free space" which is characterised by a disorderly femininity. I will argue that in this novel we, as readers, are required to "read" and interpret the bodies (both textual and physical) with which we are presented and that these are always feminized, potentially dangerous, and therefore, ultimately, in need of regulation and restraint.

The Law and the Lady, like so many of its predecessors, hinges on mysteries hidden in the domestic space. Shortly after her marriage to Eustace Woodville, Valeria Brinton, the novel's main protagonist, discovers that her husband's true name is Macallan, a fact he has concealed in order to prevent her from discovering that he has been married before, and tried for the murder of his first wife in the Scottish courts which delivered the inconclusive verdict of "Not Proven." The narrative, written by Valeria, re-presents the evidence given at the trial, follows her detective trail as she attempts to unravel the mysteries surrounding Sara Macallan's death, and introduces the reader to a range of eccentric characters which include the wheelchair-bound Misserimus Dexter, his taciturn cousin Ariel, Valeria's family clerk, Benjamin, and the flirtatious lady-killer, Major Fitz-David. Playing with legal evidence in various forms, *The Law and the Lady* highlights the instability inherent in the process of reading and interpretation. It foregrounds the association between detecting and reading that is to be found in detective fiction, which often manifests itself in the genre's self-conscious intertextuality. Other, more private, textual forms such as letters, journals, and diaries, also play a significant part in the construction of the narrative: the marriage register, letters, Eustace's diary, the operatic "texts" of *La Sonnambula* and *Domino Noir*, Misserimus Dexter's story-telling, Benjamin's *Enigmas* and Sara Macallan's suicide note, all have their function both in the development of Collins's tale, and in the apparent

resolution of what is ostensibly the novel's central mystery - did or did not Eustace Macallan kill his first wife? But perhaps the most interesting instabilities in the text stem from the masquerades which inform Collins's novel. In the text, Collins himself "masquerades" as a woman, employing the narrative voice of "Valeria Macallan;" and the story itself "masks" another beneath its words for critics have been quick to point out the similarity between Eustace Macallan's fictional trial and that of the notorious Scottish case of Madeleine Smith in 1857 which was widely reported in the press.¹ Yet one might argue that the most disturbing "mask" belongs to the character of Valeria herself.

From the moment Valeria signs her name incorrectly in the marriage register, her identity is uncertain. Who is Valeria? Is she Valeria Brinton? Valeria Woodville? or Valeria Macallan? Moreover, Valeria herself changes her name at will according to her purpose. She does so when she meets Lady Clarinda as "Mrs Woodville." Although this is perfectly acceptable within the context of the story, it is nevertheless disturbing in Valeria's autobiography. A genre which is meant to present the self and authenticate the narrative is undermined by the shifting nature of its subject and, by implication, its text. It is perhaps necessary, then, to question not only the representation of Valeria, but also those texts, such as the transcript of Eustace's trial, which she presents for our consideration. Interestingly, Valeria herself uses textual evidence to support the validity of this document. She writes:

Turning to the second page of the Trial, I found a Note, assuring the reader of the absolute correctness of the Report of the proceedings. The compiler described himself as having enjoyed certain privileges. Thus, the presiding Judge had himself revised his charge to the jury. And again, the chief lawyers for the prosecution and the defence, following the Judge's example, had revised their speeches, for, and against the prisoner. Lastly, particular care had been taken to secure a literally correct report of the evidence given by the various witnesses. It was some relief to me to discover this Note, and to be satisfied at the outset that the Story of the Trial was, in every particular, fully and truly told.

(Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 124)

However, this apparent assertion of the truth is, as Jessica Maynard observes, undermined by the content of the note itself:

How [she asks] are we to read the fact that judge and advocates have "revised" their speeches? Could they, in checking for errors, have also altered what they originally said, albeit inadvertently? With each "revision," the distance between this transcription and the original speeches which it attempts to reproduce only widens.

(Maynard, 191)

¹ For a full discussion of the similarities, see Taylor, xix-xx

That the transcript's veracity is called into question by our own and not Valeria's reading of the text leads us to reexamine the validity of her own narrative and, if we look closely, we find that Valeria, too, manipulates this text. She refuses, for example, to quote the Indictment in full so that we may see it for ourselves, and informs us:

I shall not copy the uncouth language, full of needless repetitions (and, if I know anything of the subject, not guiltless of bad grammar as well), in which my innocent husband was solemnly and falsely accused of poisoning his first wife. The less there is of that false and hateful Indictment on this page, the better and truer the page will look to *my* eyes.

(Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 125)

The rest of the trial record receives similar treatment. It is condensed in Valeria's mind into three main questions – Did the Woman Die Poisoned? Who Poisoned her? and, What was his Motive? and the information we are given is correspondingly curtailed. Similarly, she edits the evidence given by Dexter at the trial, telling us that “One question, and one question only” will she repeat in the text (178). Valeria's revision of the trial highlights the instability of her own autobiographical writing which, as we discover later when Misserimus Dexter recounts his experiences at Gleninch in “Autobiographical Style,” can be a form adopted at will to tell a story. Furthermore, it is somewhat disconcerting to find in the last pages of the novel that Valeria writes, “from memory, unassisted by notes or diaries,” for “memory” is a notoriously unreliable faculty (399). A text which is represented as “factual” is, in fact, Valeria's own subjective view masquerading as truth.

In this novel, these ambiguities seem to contaminate the very nature of language itself. Words and names become unstable, harbouring multiple meanings: the “trial” also functions as a “trail”; Eustace's diary, which contains the guilty thoughts that “will hang him”, has the words “My Diary” inscribed in “gilt” letters on its cover (157; 146). Names, too, become ambivalent, often bearing or implying double definitions. Valeria's name, suggestive of “strength and resolution” (Taylor, 420), is coupled with surnames that place her in a state of liminality, for Woodville is Eustace's assumed name, and Macallan bears a stain that is not fully erased by the end of the novel. Dexter's name is apparently appropriate. He explains its significance to the crowd at the trial: “My name, ‘Miserrimus,’ means, in Latin, ‘most unhappy.’ It was given to me by my father, in allusion to the deformity [...] with which it was my misfortune to be born” (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 174). Yet Dexter's surname proves appropriate for other reasons too. As well as being Latin for “right,” (as in right and left), it is also a pun on “writer”: a teller of stories, a weaver of lies (Taylor, 425). The anagrammatic name of Sara Macallan's nurse, Christina Ormsay, suggests that she could “say more,” and in Helena Beaulieu's name we are reminded of Helen of Troy and of the standard of beauty that costs Sara Macallan her life.

Social and Sexual Masquerades

These textual “masquerades” are echoed in Collins’s novel by a number of physical masquerades which destabilize perceptions of character and purpose. In its representation of a textual space in which impulse and excess seem to rule and in which surfaces are deceptive, the dizzying microcosm of *The Law and the Lady* recalls the world of the eighteenth-century masquerade which, in Collins’s text, makes a brief but, arguably, crucial appearance. During Valeria’s interview with Lady Clarinda, the latter provides us with an account of Helena Beaulieu’s escapade whilst at Gleninch which, significantly, she is prompted to recall when she hears the operatic strains of the *Domino Noir*.² She tells us:

One evening [Mrs Beaulieu] was engaged to dine with some English friends visiting Edinburgh. The same night – also in Edinburgh – there was a masked ball, [...] The ball [...] was reported to be not at all a reputable affair. All sorts of amusing people were to be there. Ladies of doubtful virtue, you know; and gentlemen on the outlying limits of society, and so on. Helena’s friends had contrived to get cards, and were going, in spite of the objections – in the strictest incognito, of course; trusting to their masks. And Helena herself was bent on going with them, if she could only manage it without being discovered at Gleninch. Mr Macallan was one of the strait-laced people who disapproved of the ball [...] When the time came for going back to Gleninch, what do you think Helena did? She sent her maid back in the carriage instead of herself! Phoebe was dressed in her mistress’s cloak and bonnet and veil.

(Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 267)

In her essay “The Carnivalization of Eighteenth-Century English Narrative”, Terry Castle notes that the inclusion of a masquerade scene was common in the early novel and employed by the author as a site of danger which could be righteously condemned, thus heightening the moral tone of the story. However, as Castle goes on to point out, “masked [...] behind a textual facade of moralism and ideological decorum” such a scene is “powerfully subversive nonetheless” (*The Female Thermometer*, 102). In Collins’s novel, the inclusion of a masquerade, albeit at a narrative remove, may seem anachronistic. As Castle states, “by the late eighteenth century” the “masquerade set piece [had] all but vanished from the topography of the English novel” (*The Female Thermometer*, 117).³ So why does Collins choose to include such an incident in

² The domino was a “neutral costume.” This simple loose cloak totally envelops the body in its folds and, often worn with a mask, obscures the shape and sex of the person beneath – see Castle *Masquerade and Civilization*, 59. Like the figure of Helena herself, the domino is compelling in its mystery, but often transmits no message at all.

³ Castle suggests that, in the nineteenth-century novel, crowd or mob scenes replace the masquerade as sites of “collective transgression” (Castle *The Female Thermometer*, 118). I would argue that, in the claustrophobic interior atmosphere of *The Law and the Lady*, such a

this text? The answer may lie in the role played by the masquerade in his predecessors' works.⁴ According to Castle, in these novels

the masquerade, the emblem of universal transformation, is linked to the pleasurable processes of narrative transformation [...] Besides being a symbolic epitome of plot – the embedded imago of a world of metamorphosis and fluidity – the masquerade is typically a perpetrator too: a dense kernel of human relations out of which are born the myriad transactions of the narrative [...] The scene may thus be considered a master trope of semantic destabilization [...] the masquerade episode introduces a curious instability into the would-be orderly cosmos of the eighteenth-century English novel. Its moral indeterminacy is paradigmatic; its saturnalian assault on the taxonomies and hierarchies – established fixities of every sort – is the prerequisite, often enough, to a general collapse of the fictional world.

(Castle *The Female Thermometer*, 103)

The masquerade set piece, then, despite its apparent containment within a specified place and time, has repercussions, as its moral and social transgressions seemingly seep into the narrative world outside, often with subversive consequences. One might argue that, appearing over halfway into *The Law and the Lady*, Helena Beaulieu's attendance at a masquerade can have no significant implications for the main story. However, it is important to remember that the event itself precedes the time-frame of the narrative, and one might therefore suggest that the social and sexual instabilities in Collins's novel follow in its wake. Here it certainly seems that the travesties of Helena Beaulieu's masquerade have spilled over into the "external" social world of the text, a sphere in which the boundaries of class, gender, and identity should be clearly demarcated.⁵ If we look closely at the description of the masquerade in the text, it is clear that many of the concerns of the novel, including disguise, female transgression, and class mobility are expressed: the ball is not

scene would seem incongruous, whereas the inclusion of a masquerade heightens and mirrors the tension in the text.

⁴ Castle (*Masquerade and Civilization*, 115) observes that important masquerade scenes appear in, among other works, Defoe's *Roxana* (1724), Richardson's *Pamela* Part 2 (1741), Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749), Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749), and Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791).

⁵ The incident recalls other instances of a similar nature to be encountered in such novels as Collins's *The Moonstone* and in Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, in which the arbitrary nature of class is underlined. In *The Moonstone* Rosanna Spearman writes in her letter to Franklin Blake, "Suppose you put Miss Rachel into a servant's dress, and took her ornaments off - ? [...] it does stir one up to hear Miss Rachel called pretty, when one knows all the time that it's her dress that does it" (350). In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the narrator comments that Lucy Audley's maid, Phoebe, on her wedding day, "arrayed in a rustling silk of delicate grey, that had been worn about half a dozen times by her mistress, looked, as the few spectators of the ceremony remarked, quite the lady" (110).

“reputable” and is likely to be attended by “Ladies of doubtful virtue” and “gentlemen on the outlying limits of society.” Helena herself attends “incognito” and exchanges her clothes with those of Phoebe, her maid. In Collins’s novel, as in those of his eighteenth-century counterparts, the masquerade is associated with sexual impurity, and entry into a space of “moral instability” (Castle *The Female Thermometer*, 107). It is a space in which, as Castle observes, “the high and the low, the virtuous and the vicious” are involved in potential “liaisons dangeureuses” (109). In addition, unmentioned yet implicit in Collins’s use of the masquerade scene, are those shifts in gender and gendered behaviour which unbalance the world of *The Law and the Lady*. As Castle points out, “the masquerade frequently coincides with a peculiar reversal of [...] conventional male-female power relations” which display themselves not only in costume, but also in conduct (111).

In Collins’s novel we have ample examples of both types of gender reversal. In contrast to Eustace’s feminine passivity, Valeria chooses to act in order to clear his name and to legitimate her own. Although her intention places her in a position of moral rectitude in keeping with the strictures of what Lyn Pykett calls “the proper feminine,” her decision to take matters into her own hands negates that position. The “proper” feminine stands for “order, control, regulation, propriety, domesticity,” the “improper” feminine for “chaos, uncontrollability, impropriety, sexuality” (Pykett, 209). Valeria’s impulsive-ness, impropriety, and her social, as well as financial independence are often noted in the text. In a scene where she begs for Major Fitz-David’s help, she recalls, “In the reckless impulse of the moment, I snatched his hand and raised it to my lips” (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 63). Later, replying to Eustace’s farewell letter, she writes with a similar “masculine” insistence:

“I love you - and I won’t give you up. No! As long as I live, I mean to live as your wife.”

“Does this surprise you? It surprises me. If another woman wrote in this manner to a man who had behaved to her as you have behaved, I should be quite at a loss to account for her conduct. I am quite at a loss to account for my own conduct. I ought to hate you – and yet I can’t help loving you. I am ashamed of myself; but so it is.”

(Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 115)

Moreover, rejecting Eustace’s offer of half his income for as long as he lives, Valeria refuses to touch “a farthing of his money” (118). Her transgressions are duly noted: Fitz-David responds to her gesture as if he had received “an electric shock” (63), and of her letter to Eustace, Benjamin exclaims, “It seems the rashest letter that ever was written [...] Oh, dear me, what a letter from a wife to a husband!” (117). Discovering her intentions to remain independent, and her decision to turn detective, her uncle cries, “God help her! [...] The poor thing’s troubles have turned her brain!” (120). Her desire for autonomy, it seems, must be figured as madness.

Interestingly, Valeria's "improper" femininity also harbours other implications, for, as Pykett points out, "A woman who resisted the dominant definitions was held to be 'unwomanly' [...] [or] unsexed - the member of an indeterminate sex" (14). In addition, Valeria's plan to turn detective functions as a transgressive penetration of a masculine domain for, in Britain, the female detective remained a fictional figure until the 1920s when women were first admitted to the CID in that capacity. However, as Lillian Nayder has noted, in Collins's text Valeria is not alone in violating the codes of traditional femininity: Dexter's adoring cousin, Ariel, in spite of being submissive to the point of masochism, also comes under the heading of "improper" feminine.⁶ She is represented as physically masculine. She could be mistaken "for a man in the dark" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 203). She has a "rough, deep voice," which Valeria "should certainly never have supposed to be the voice of a woman" and she wears, "a man's hat", "a man's pilot jacket [...]" and a man's heavy laced boots" (203; 210). Her "proper" femininity, if such we may call it, is reserved for the domestic space in which her animation and unquestioning compliance in Dexter's presence functions as an ironic and disturbing version of the behaviour required of the perfect wife in Victorian society.

And it is not only femininity that is questioned in this novel. In *The Law and the Lady*, "masculinity" is a similarly debatable term. Misserimus Dexter bears feminine features: "His large, clear blue eyes, and his long, delicate white hands, were like the eyes and hands of a beautiful woman" (173). Dexter's femininity is underlined when he tells us that he is "capable of hysterics" (218), for "hysteria," as we all know, is supposedly a female malady. He is adept at womanly pursuits: he embroiders with "the patient and nimble dexterity of an accomplished needlewoman" (236). Furthermore, his primal excesses link him to John Kemble's image of the "improper" feminine. In an article published in the *British and Foreign Quarterly Review* voicing his opposition to the Child Custody Bill of 1837, Kemble sees women as "so many wild beasts" whose lusts and licentiousness run riot "when you have unbarred their cages" (cited in Pykett, 56). It is perhaps Dexter's tendency to openly express, as Valeria observes, "in a very reckless and boisterous way - thoughts and feelings which most of us are ashamed of as weaknesses, and which we keep to ourselves accordingly" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 221), that leads Benjamin to call him "a maundering mad monster who ought to be kept in a cage" (324): a figure reminiscent of the wild and unruly women of Kemble's imagination. But perhaps the most crucial facet of his feminization in the text is his physical body for, as Nayder points out, we are led to suspect that, despite his erotic yearnings, "the 'absolute' absence of Dexter's legs signifies another, more private, deformity" (Nayder, 64).

This feminization manifests itself most noticeably in Dexter's love of costume. He enjoys the process of dressing. His "flowing locks" and "long

⁶ See the discussion of sexual ambiguities in *The Law and the Lady* in Nayder, 63-64. See also O'Fallon, 237-8.

silky beard” are combed, brushed and oiled by the faithful Ariel (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 210). It is clear that he relishes his sartorial eccentricity. His costumes range from the simplicity of a chef’s uniform and the elegance of a black velvet jacket and lace ruffles, to an outlandish ensemble of “pink quilted silk” which he accessorizes with gold bracelets (232). He states clearly his position on the question of male beauty, explaining to Valeria that he despises

“... the brutish contempt for beauty and the mean dread of expense which degrade a gentleman’s costume to black cloth, and limit a gentleman’s ornaments to a finger ring, in the age I live in. I like to be bright and beautiful, especially when brightness and beauty visit me.”

(Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 232)

His desire, then, it appears, is to be a mirror reflection of feminine beauty. Arguably, Eustace and Major Fitz-David are also feminized. Eustace’s chosen role in the war is not that of the hero, but that of the nurse, and his role in the text is predominantly passive. Fitz-David’s successes with the opposite sex seem to be due, in part at least, to his feminine traits. His female friends can consult him on such particular matters as the quality of antique lace, and his interest in the feminine pursuit of self-beautification is evident in his own brown wig, and his “well-painted eyebrows” (189).

Cosmetic Alterity and Conflated Identity

Fitz-David’s use of cosmetics and Dexter’s vanity and love of fancy-dress perform a dual function. Both men are feminized by what are considered female frivolities, yet both also use those frivolities to construct or indicate alternative identities, to “masquerade” as other selves. Stripped of cosmetics, the Major is no longer a British Don-Juan. When Valeria sees him without them after his marriage to the “future Queen of Song,” he is unrecognizable: Valeria “hardly knew him again. He had lost all his pretensions to youth; he had become, hopelessly and undisguisedly, an old man” (408). Dexter’s superficial transformations are echoed in his psychic transmutations. He changes identity as often as he changes his clothes. At times he is Napoleon, at others Nelson or Shakespeare.

These shifts in identity are echoed in the female characters in the text. Intending to meet Fitz-David for the first time, Valeria is careful to choose a becoming dress, and employs her chambermaid’s cosmetic artistry in order to create a pleasing persona. The latter’s “box of paints and powders” endows Valeria’s skin with “a false fairness,” her cheeks with “a false colour” and her eyes with “a false brightness” (57). The result is experienced as an alternative subjectivity: Valeria writes, “From the moment when I had resigned myself into the hands of the chambermaid, I seemed in some strange way to have lost

my ordinary identity – to have stepped out of my own character” (57-8).⁷ This cosmetic transformation of Valeria into “another” woman highlights the apparent interchangeability of women in Collins’s novel, in which feminine identities become conflated as a result of shared characteristics. For Fitz-David, Valeria resembles several other women of his wide female acquaintance. She is like Lady Clarinda in her “firmness” and her “tenacity of purpose”, and she has the “same creamy paleness” as another of his female admirers (193; 194). Recalling a dinner party at Fitz-David’s home, Valeria writes that the Major was “always detecting resemblances” between the ladies that were present (262). Moreover, as both Dexter and Playmore observe, Valeria resembles another woman: there is something in Valeria’s figure, pose, or movement, that reminds them of Sara Macallan. Besides these overt references to the interrelationship between the women in the text, there are other similarities which remain implicit. Valeria inescapably merges with Sara, for she too – at least unofficially – is “Mrs Macallan” (Nayder, 65), and Valeria also functions as a double for Helena Beauly, replacing her as the object of Eustace’s affection. In addition, there are parallels between Sara Macallan and Dexter’s cousin Ariel. Both are perceived as ugly and each loves her man faithfully, but in vain.

Male characters are similarly conflated. Eustace and Dexter both adopt other names at will. Both were, willingly or otherwise, Sara Macallan’s suitors and, later, both desire Valeria. It is suggestive that Eustace and Dexter never appear together in the text, although we may conjecture that they were both present at the trial. When Dexter is at his most active, persuading Valeria of Helena Beauly’s guilt, Eustace lies in a state of delirium. Equally, just as Dexter descends into his final stupor, Eustace recovers. Dexter also seems to usurp the conjugal position relinquished by Eustace in his relationships with both Sara and Valeria. On Sara’s deathbed, it is Dexter and not Eustace who mourns her, and Valeria’s pregnancy becomes apparent only after her erotic encounter with Dexter, in which he catches her hands in his, and devours them “with kisses”: caresses that it is the husband’s prerogative to bestow (299). In Collins’s novel, it seems that we enter a masquerade-like world in which sexual, social, and psychic boundaries are equally uncertain.

⁷ The notions of cosmetic disguise suggested by Valeria recall similar discussions in Mary Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret*, in which Lucy Audley shows that she is well aware of the role played by cosmetics in the construction of identity. When her maid, Phoebe, dismisses Lucy’s suggestion that they share a superficial similarity, with the observation that Lucy is a beauty and she is but “a poor plain creature,” Lucy disagrees and says, “Not at all, Phoebe, [...] You *are* like me, and your features are very nice, it is only colour that you want [...] Why, with a bottle of hair dye, such as we see advertised in the papers, and a pot of rouge, you’d be as good-looking as I any day, Phoebe.” (58).

Reading the Female Body

It is perhaps fitting that the linguistic instability of the text is echoed, as we have seen, in a corresponding ambivalence in the class, gender, and identity of characters in *The Law and the Lady*, for this is a “sensation” novel – a definition “borrowed from the contemporary theatre’s ‘sensation drama’ after which the novels were named” (Rance, 3). This perhaps explains its concern with make-up and with masquerade, whether rhetorical or physical. In the light of this connection with the theatre, it is interesting to observe that Valeria herself “stages” her life. Her memories are tableaux which she recreates as her mind wanders backward and shows her “another picture in the golden gallery of the past” (15). But this association with the stage highlights other instabilities in the text. As in eighteenth-century masquerade balls, theatrical costume can be used to symbolize or to disguise. The body and its clothing become texts to be read, and, like texts, they can be manipulated. One can be read as we choose, or others may read us as *they* choose so that we are interpreted or misinterpreted. It seems significant, therefore, that, in *The Law and the Lady*, masquerade seeps into everyday life and poses significant problems of interpretation. This suggests that the instabilities we accept so readily in the theatre or in the controlled space of the masquerade, become anxieties when they are experienced in the “real” world represented in the novel. Arguably, these tensions relate specifically to the question of urban unknowability. In the eighteenth-century novel the masquerade often operates as a metaphor for the heroine’s first contact with the corruption of the town (Castle *The Female Thermometer*, 106), and it performs a similar function in *The Law and the Lady*. By the nineteenth century this concern with the dangers of urbanization manifests itself in a preoccupation with identification and classification. In *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*, Peter Brooks observes that during this period

... societies become more concerned with the identification of individuals within the group especially in the undifferentiated mass of city dwellers. The identification of malefactors and marginals, such as prostitutes, was an obsessive issue; prostitutes were inscribed on police registers and given a “card” if they were streetwalkers, a “number” if they were in a brothel.

(Brooks, 25)

In the light of Brooks’s comments it seems that, in the nineteenth century, unknowability and its attendant anxieties often centred on the figure of the unruly woman. Fears that, in the eighteenth-century, were concentrated on maintaining the purity of women, shift, in the nineteenth century, to a dread that women themselves might be the primary cause of corruption in mysterious and alluring disguise.⁸ The demystification and control of femininity therefore becomes a primary concern. In *The Law and the Lady* such anxieties are clearly

⁸ Such dread, of course, finds its most powerful public expression in the debate leading to the passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the later 1860s.

located in the feminine body, for those who use cosmetics and/or masquerade are either women or feminized.

Given the widespread nature of such fears, it is unsurprising that the sensation novel should frequently locate its central, and often criminal, mystery in a female body. In Collins's *The Moonstone*, Rachel Verinder and Rosanna Spearman hold the key to the jewel's disappearance; in Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, the connection between Lucy Audley and the supposedly dead Helen Talboys reveals Lucy's duplicity; and, in *The Law and the Lady*, the truth resides in Sara Macallan's body, and is dependent on Valeria's female body for its exhumation. This focus on the female body has narrative implications. In these three texts, as in many others of the genre, narrative desire, that is the desire to discover the truth and to reach the novel's denouement, is, arguably, linked to sexual desire for it is the female body which must be investigated and revealed.

Peter Brooks notes that, psychoanalytically, the "desire to know is constructed from sexual desire and curiosity" (5). This suggests that, in the sensation novel, the body, which is our primary source of curiosity as children, may be linked to the text and to our drive to decipher and uncover the mysteries between its covers. In Collins's novel, this model of narrative curiosity is emphasized by the concentrated gaze on the female body, and by the fact that the truth resides in a woman's corpse. Significantly, the faculty of sight is often linked to truth and "Truth" is often personified as female. As Brooks remarks:

Sight is the sense that represents the whole epistemological project; it is conceived to be the most objective and objectivizing of the senses, that which best allows an inspection of reality that produces truth. "I see," in our common usage, is equivalent to "I know."

(Brooks, 96)

Yet, as Brooks points out, truth is often masked and "is not of easy access; it often is represented as veiled, latent, or covered, so that the discovery of truth becomes a process of unveiling, laying bare, or denuding" (96). Moreover, that which is to be "looked at, denuded, unveiled, has been repeatedly personified as female: Truth as goddess, as sphinx, or as woman herself" (96).

In *The Law and the Lady*, the crucial act of "unveiling" or "denuding" is transposed, I suggest, from Sara Macallan's body onto the text of her final letter. But the letter form itself has interesting associations with the female body for, since the sixteenth century, "when the familiar letter was first thought of as a literary form, male commentators have noted that the epistolary genre seemed particularly suited to the female voice" (Goldsmith, vii). Letter-writing, then, is seemingly perceived as a fundamentally feminine activity. More specifically the letter form is usually associated with female sexuality: it stands "metonymically in the place of the figure of the desiring woman" (Watson, 16):

often symbolizing “that folded, secret place which is always open to violent intrusion” (Eagleton, 54).⁹

The Bad and the Beautiful

In *The Law and the Lady*, then, the search for truth leads directly to the “unveiled” female body (symbolically figured by the letter). However, this search brings its own dangers, for this body represents a significant danger to the male gaze, recalling that first sight of the apparently castrated maternal body and its terrifying wound. In her celebrated essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” Laura Mulvey suggests that the male psyche can avert this threat in two ways:

The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of a guilty object [...] or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous.

(Mulvey, 13-14)

This second option, which Mulvey terms “fetishistic scopophilia,” builds up the beauty of the object, “transforming it into something satisfying in itself” (14). In the light of Mulvey’s theory, the importance of feminine beauty in *The Law and the Lady* compels further examination. It seems significant that Sara Macallan’s ugliness excludes her from the field of vision. In her final letter she tells how she would not have committed suicide had Eustace deigned to look at her. She writes, “I thought to myself, ‘If he looks at me kindly, I will confess what I have done, and let him save my life.’ You never looked at me at all. You only looked at the medicine. I let you go without saying a word” (393). Sara’s words to Eustace recall those of Rosanna Spearman to Franklin Blake in *The Moonstone*. In a letter she confesses her unrequited love for Blake and tells him, “I tried - oh, dear, how I tried - to get you to look at me. If you had known the mortification of your never taking any notice of me, you would have pitied me perhaps, and have given me a look now and then to live on” (349). But like Eustace, Franklin Blake refuses to bestow his gaze on Rosanna even after her death. Having read only part of her letter, he passes it to Betteredge saying, “If there is anything in it that I *must* look at, you can tell me as you go on” (353).

⁹ This traditional association of the female letter with the female body is most clearly expressed in Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa: The History of a Young Lady* (1747-8), in which Clarissa’s physical and emotional distress is displayed in her letters. Those most closely linked to her physical body are the letters written following her rape: these are rent in two, mirroring the violent assault, or “Scratched through,” “defaced” (890), echoing the identity crisis induced by her ordeal, for in one of them she declares, “I shall never be myself again” (895).

Tamar Heller (156) suggests that Blake's refusal to look at Rosanna or her letter is linked to the class divide. However, this does not apply in Eustace's case and I would argue that this refusal to look at the "ugly" woman is embedded in a far more primal fear. If we accept that both Rosanna Spearman and Sara Macallan are repositories of the truth, that their letters are in some way representative of the naked female body, then their "ugliness" can be linked to Mulvey's theory. In the light of this formulation, each becomes a form of Medusa who threatens the male with castration, and whose ugly looks can petrify and kill. It seems significant that, in Sara's case, the only man who offers her his gaze is Dexter, who has nothing to fear as he is arguably already castrated. Yet, according to Mulvey (14), the male gaze often mitigates this threat by substituting "a fetish object" that is a beautiful ideal, so that paradoxically, beauty becomes "the very image of death, castration and repression which it is designed to block out and to occult."

Earlier in this essay I suggested that both Valeria and Sara, despite their differences, are posited as doubles in the text both because Dexter detects certain similarities between them, and because Eustace, in marrying Valeria, has made her a second Mrs Eustace Macallan. Elizabeth Bronfen notes that when such a substitution occurs and the difference between the two women is foregrounded, "the double affirms the first woman's death" (Bronfen, 327). Sara's "ugliness," then, is displaced by Valeria's beauty, which must allay the threat posed by Sara's body. If we look at descriptions of Valeria, we often find that she depicts herself framed in a mirror. Shortly after her marriage, Valeria stops to see how she looks "in the glass over the vestry fireplace" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 10). She watches in the glass as she is transformed by the chambermaid's art before she visits Major Fitz-David, and later, she checks her looks in the mirror in Dexter's ante-room when she visits him a second time. Although not conventionally beautiful (she lacks the "popular yellow hair and the popular painted cheeks") Valeria is nevertheless presented as a beauty (10). She gives pleasure to those who look at her and she is associated with the classical beauty of Venus, whose hairstyle she favours, and bears comparison with those objets d'art, "the Venus Milo and the Venus Callipyge," that grace the Major's home (77). Valeria, then, functions as a form of fetish. Like the locks of hair in Fitz-David's collection, she, too, "symbolizes" the body of a woman. Being a fetishized ideal, she can be looked at with safety. As Bronfen points out,

Beautification and aestheticisation mitigate a direct threat by severing image from its context or reference [...] as in the myth of Medusa, [...] a direct glance at the woman's head turns the viewer into stone while the head reflected in the mirror can be gazed at with impunity.

(Bronfen, 121-2)

While symbolising the Medusan danger of Sara Macallan's ugliness, Valeria's image in the mirror is an idealized image. In *The Law and the Lady* it seems that ugliness must masquerade as beauty in order to moderate the threat implicit in the female body.

Reimposing the Law

According to Kathleen O'Fallon, females, beautiful or otherwise, caused Collins both excitement and concern. She identifies Valeria as one in a series of intrepid heroines by whom Collins "became increasingly intrigued" (229). She argues that Collins "seems to have admired women and wished to promote them to heroic status – or at least centrality" (229). However, this interest had an adverse effect on his male characters. O'Fallon writes:

... even as Collins steadily moves forward in his experimentation with new kinds of heroines, he appears to be very uneasy about the consequent mixing of traditional gender roles. Collins' uneasiness with the new gender roles that he creates may result from his apparent inability to find satisfactory roles for his male characters once he has strengthened the women: the men seem to lapse into impotence or villainy, and readers are left wondering why such interesting, capable women would have anything to do with them. But he may also have been made uneasy by a recognition of the radical nature of his literary project: he was tampering with values at the very heart of Victorian society.

(O'Fallon, 229-30)

It is perhaps because of these dual concerns that Valeria writes, in retrospect, from the confines of domestication. By the time she writes, she is ensconced in her home "with no interests, no pleasures, out of [her] husband's room" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 373): she is a wife once more, and a mother to Eustace's child – a domestic ideal. The masquerade-like freedom which Valeria is allowed to experience in the novel proves to be, like all other masquerades, an organized and controlled affair of short duration that ends in a return to patriarchal law. The "law" with which the lady is coupled in the novel's title is, it seems, as much a social as a forensic law.

However, there is another female body in the text that requires examination. Sara's letter, standing metonymically for her body, is constructed and controlled by the law and by science, for it is Mr Playmore, Benjamin, and the young chemist, who put it together and fill in the gaps where necessary. In the fourth paragraph they are "obliged to supply lost words in no less than three places" and in the "ninth, tenth, and seventeenth paragraphs the same proceeding was, in a greater or less degree, found to be necessary" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 390). In recreating its fragments as they choose, in inserting their own text, I would argue, they protect themselves by "disguising" Sara's meaning with their own: thus they refuse to look at the truth and, by implication, at Sara's naked female body for, as Peter Brooks points out, the "moment of complete nakedness, if it is ever reached, most often is represented by silence, ellipsis" (Brooks, 19). Therefore, it is perhaps those gaps that are most significant, for if Sara's letter symbolizes her corpse "disinterred from [...] [its] foul tomb" (Collins *The Law and the Lady*, 396), the gaps in her text signify those orifices of her Medusan body that are most dangerous, those that threaten to devour and castrate the male spectator. In Collins's novels it appears that this castration is already dangerously in process for, as O'Fallon

points out, his male characters are already rendered impotent by his empowered females. The danger of such castration is perhaps even more threatening in *The Law and the Lady*: a text in which the novel's "transsexual" author writes in autobiographical mode masquerading as a woman. It is unsurprising, then, that Sara, like Valeria, is safely "sealed" away. Her letter, if it is ever read, will lie in the hands of Eustace's son and heir. The novel's ending ensures that order is restored, and that those taking part in its textual and sexual masquerades are contained by convention: the "law" is indeed once more in control of the "lady."

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Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon

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Mid-Victorian constructions of hysteria were defined by inconsistency and contradiction.¹ The period's medical writers would often categorise and diagnose the condition by process of elimination, explaining what it was *not* rather than what it was. In their influential treatises on insanity of the 1830s, for example, both Jean Étienne Esquirol (149, 151, 162) and James Cowles Prichard (157) addressed the issue by differentiating the condition from epilepsy. In 1864, Frederick Skey (32), one of the era's main specialists in the area, admitted in reference to one of his patients: "I had no doubt whatever that it would prove to be a case of hysteria. It appeared obvious that it must be so, simply because it was most improbable that it could be any other disease." Psychiatric accounts of specific symptoms would similarly follow this method of discrimination by characterising the hysterical state as a deviation from standard modes of behaviour or an excess of normative levels of feeling. In a lecture "On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria," delivered in 1866, Julius Althaus claimed that:

All symptoms of hysteria have their prototype in those vital actions by which grief, terror, disappointment, and other painful emotions and affections, are manifested under ordinary circumstances, and which become signs of hysteria as soon as they attain a certain degree of intensity. [...] Tell [a] woman suddenly that the house is on fire, or that she has lost a near

¹ Although the main sources for my historical material are nineteenth-century medical treatises and journals, a number of interesting studies on hysteria have appeared in recent years including, most notably, Showalter *The Female Malady*, Showalter *Hystories*, Micale, and Veith. On hysteria and Victorian literature, see both Small, and Wood. My definition of "hysterical fictions" as texts both fictional and non-fictional that engage with Victorian medical constructions of hysteria through thematic interest, form and motivation, contrasts with Mary Poovey's use of the term "hysterical text." With reference to *Jane Eyre*, Poovey (141) argues that "[b]ecause there was no permissible plot in the nineteenth century for a woman's anger [...] the body of the text symptomatically acts out what cannot make its way into the psychologically realist narrative," namely Jane's aggression towards other characters in the novel.

relation, and you may be sure to observe some of or all the following symptoms. She perceives a feeling of constriction in the epigastrium, oppression on the chest, and palpitations of the heart; a lump seems to rise in her throat and gives a feeling of suffocation; she loses the power over her legs, so that she is for the moment unable to move; and she wrings the hands in a spasmodic manner.

(Althaus, 245)

Seven years previously, another physician, W. Camps, had written of the condition in the following way:

There is observed in such an increased susceptibility to impressions, a great rapidity of movements. [...] There supervene[s] excessive restlessness of the body generally, so that, when out of bed the patient [is] almost always in bodily action, seldom or never sitting, frequently not even when at meals; in motion whilst standing, and very frequently walking hurriedly about in various apartments of the house.

(Camps, 234)

Following the trend set by Esquirol and Prichard's theories of partial and obsession-based psychological disorders earlier in the century, mid-Victorian definitions of hysteria like these reveal a central preoccupation with excessive and fragmented forms of behaviour. In 1855, James Davey combined hysteria with "monomania" – Esquirol's term for the mental condition in which the individual is excessively fixated on a single object – to coin the hybrid term "hysteromania." Davey noted that "no class of patients manifest a more continuous and perverse moral sense than this one" (675). Although Davey's term never entered into scientific or popular currency, it is nevertheless illustrative of how the Victorian concept of hysteria was heavily influenced by the era's psychiatric engagements with the idea of immoderation. Clinical attempts to describe the symptoms and nature of the condition in this way also reveal that a metonymic connection existed between its symptomatology and the hysterical mind itself; both are distinguished as fragmentary, manifold in variety and changeable.

Althaus, for example, noticed the condition's "infinite variety of symptoms," adding:

We find that their multitude and apparent incongruity have perplexed and bewildered observers [...] Rivière called hysteria not a simple, but a thousandfold disease. Sydenham asserted that the forms of Proteus and the colours of the chameleon were not more various than the divers aspects under which hysteria presented itself; and Hofmann said that hysteria was not a disease, but a host of diseases.

(Althaus, 245)

The disorder's medical "observers" thus mimicked the pathological status of their patients in becoming "perplexed" and "bewildered" by the protean nature of the "thousandfold disease." In this article, I argue that such multiplicity and incongruity is essential to understanding Victorian medical classifications of hysteria. Recent studies of the Victorian medical treatment of women have tended to interpret that "treatment" as providing the male population with an

alternative method of regulating women.² By promoting an idea of the “demon medical profession,” such interpretations, I argue, are too simplistic and hardly begin to appreciate the complexity of the nineteenth century’s clinical examinations of femininity. I aim to show, for example, how clinical accounts of hysteria, in particular, expressed a degree of dissatisfaction with the social marginalization of women and a genuine desire to treat a condition that they perceived as real. These same texts, however, simultaneously supported the era’s limitations on female experience through their suggested methods of cure. Rather than being an unequivocal attempt to keep women in their place, however, this was the result of an inability to see beyond the hegemonic influence of the period’s ideology of separate spheres. As a ubiquitous concept that was constantly under revision and redefinition, hysteria was comprehended and employed in a multitude of formats throughout the century. In the later stages of my article, I concentrate on the popular fiction of the same era to explore the more subversive potential of the same set of ideas. Mary Braddon’s novels, I will suggest, fully exploited the protean nature of hysteria, both as a sensational catalyst for her melodramatic plots and as a method of underscoring the pathological, unbalanced nature of the condition and the ideological forces it partly upheld.

As a part-ideological construct, hysteria cannot be considered as separate from the economic and political ambitions of the age, or from the division of labour and the doctrine of separate spheres that those ambitions underwrote. The economical and political values invested in the condition are perhaps most apparent in the idea, often expressed by medical writers on the subject, that hysteria – thought to have reached “little epidemic” status by mid-century (Gairdner, 429) – was not unrelated to the cultural status and class divisions of the age. As has been well-established in recent years, middle and upper class Victorian women, the malady’s main sufferers, were intellectually and physically excluded from the public arena and expected instead to safeguard the nation’s moral wealth in the separate, iconic sphere of home. Not only did the nineteenth-century wife appear to rationalise any suspect business endeavours of her husband, by keeping his moral life apparently secluded from those operations, but she also became a visible signifier of his wealth and success. Languishing at home in her silks and lace, not required to work because of her husband’s financial security, the middle or upper class woman became a living testimony of her husband’s achievements.³ As a result, the era’s medical texts would not infrequently associate the “ornamental members of society” (Skey *Hysteria*, 64), who did suffer from hysteria, with cultural decadence and over-civilisation. In Esquirol’s *Mental Maladies*, for example, the author claims that there are a higher number of hysterical women in France than in England, and suggests:

The vices of education adopted by our young ladies, the preference given to acquirements purely ornamental [...] and want of occupation; are causes

² Showalter’s *The Female Malady* is a prime example, but see also Moscucci.

³ For a discussion of this idea in relation to *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), see Langland.

sufficient to render insanity most frequent among our women. [...] Without doubt, civilization occasions disease, and augments the number of the sick, because, by multiplying the means of enjoyment, it causes some to live too well, and too fast.

(Esquirol, 36, 42)

Drawing on the era's psychiatric obsessions with excessive behaviour, Esquirol argues that the greater number of insane French women is an indication that his nation has developed "too well, and too fast."

By mid century, such connections between hysteria and class economy, though immovable, were drawn even more sardonically. In 1866, for example, Skey delivered a series of six lectures on the disorder to the students of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in which he claimed that:

People without compulsory occupation, who lead a life of both bodily and mental inactivity – people whose means are sufficiently ample to indulge in, and who can purchase, the luxury of illness, the daily visit of the physician, and, not the least, the sympathy of friends – these real comforts come home to the hearts of those ornamental members of society who are living examples of an intense sensibility, whether morbid or genuine, who can afford to be ill, and will not make the effort to be well. [...] A poor man cannot afford this indulgence, and so he throws the sensations aside by mental resolution.

(Skey *Hysteria*, 64-5)

That same year, this cynical portrait of hysteria as a "luxury" prevailing in "those who can afford to be ill," was repeated and extended by Julius Althaus, who also argued that the malady:

... is frequent in the higher classes of society, in ladies who lead an artificial life, who do nothing, whose every wish or whim is often gratified as soon as formed, and who are very apt to go into hysterics at the slightest provocation or contrariety. For them, real honest work, the pursuance of an object in life, such as the education of children or such charitable undertaking, is often the best cure.

(Althaus, 246)

Despite their obvious contempt for the idle lifestyles of wealthy women, both Skey and Althaus leave the ideological status of those lifestyles markedly unchallenged. Althaus recommends, for example, that hysterical women perform characteristically feminine duties, like the "education of children" or a "charitable undertaking," as suitable methods of recovery. While Skey's scathing tone aims to mock those "without compulsory occupation," his lecture nevertheless neglects to suggest any alternatives to their valetudinarian existences. Hence, while mid-Victorian medical writers like Skey and Althaus expressed some awareness of (and frustration with) the cultural and economical foundations of hysteria's etiology, their lack of suggested alternatives to women's inoccupation also reveals an incapacity to see beyond the impetus of those traditional social structures.

In his 1853 book, *On the Pathology and Treatment of Hysteria*, Robert Brudenell Carter reveals how the period's medical negotiations of womanhood

were similarly unable to ignore completely the traditional idea that women, like their mother Eve, were inherently sexual creatures. He writes, for example:

If the relative power of the emotion against the sexes be compared in the present day, even without including the erotic passion, it seems to be considerably greater in the woman than in the man, partly from the natural conformation which causes the former to feel, under circumstances where the latter thinks; and partly because the woman is more often under the necessity of endeavouring to conceal her feelings. But when sexual desire is taken into the account, it will add immensely to the forces bearing upon the female, who is much under its dominion; and who, if unmarried and chaste, is compelled to restrain every manifestation of its sway.

(Carter, 33)

Carter's argument here exemplifies the essentially contradictory and inconsistent nature of the period's medical classifications of hysteria. On the one hand, he appears to launch an attack on the contemporary social inculcations that kept female sexuality concealed and controlled, considering female roles, as did Althaus and Skey, as the direct causes of the condition; yet, on the other hand, the influence of the Victorian ideology of the division of labour reappears in his contention that it is the role of the woman to "feel," while the man's is to "think." While Carter's argument demonstrates a degree of discontent with the narrow social position of women, it is still unable to separate that contention from the ideological belief that men and women have widely different motivating emotions, which, in the female, are of a fundamentally sexual character. What also emerges from his argument is an indication of how the potentially liberating recognition of women's "necessity of endeavouring to conceal [their] feelings" merged with the traditional concept of women as excessively sexual, to form the idea of hysteria as a pressurised, volcanic sexuality – rendered all the more explosive because of those cultural barriers that "restrain[ed] every manifestation in its sway."

As the origins of the word "hysteria" illustrate, the characteristic that had remained constant throughout the disorder's nosological history was its firm links with female sexuality through medical obsessions with the uterus. Althaus observed how, prior to the mid-nineteenth century:

Pressure of the uterus upon the various organs of the body was considered to be the mainspring of all the sufferings of hysterical patients. Where there was a feeling of suffocation, it must be due to the uterus compressing the throat and the bronchial tubes; coma and lethargy in hysterical women proceeded from the womb squeezing the blood-vessels travelling towards the brain; palpitations arose from the uterus worrying the heart; and if there were a feeling of pain and constriction in the epigastrium, it must again be the womb engaged in a relentless attack on the liver.

(Althaus, 245)

By the mid century, such direct links between the wandering uterus and hysteria were being discredited. One correspondent to *The Lancet* observed, in 1853, for example, how it was "a mistake to designate by a uterine name a disease which is not of uterine origin" (Hovell, 219), and the period's most

important studies were eager to demonstrate that men could also suffer from the disorder, although rather more rarely than women.⁴ Paradoxically, while such considerations of hysteria appeared to discount any *direct* links between the uterus and the disorder, the menstrual cycle, as cause, symptom and cure of the condition, seems to have grown in theoretical importance. Althaus, who had dismissed earlier clinical emphases on the womb also claimed in the same lecture that “hysterical attacks occur almost always after [among other things] sudden suppression of the menstrual flow,” adding that “in all cases of hysteria, we must take care that the ordinary functions of life, especially menstruation and alimentation, should be in proper order” (Althaus: 247, 248). Carter also wrote about “faulty menstruation” that:

It will be found that, although affections of this kind often arise consecutively to hysteria, still that women suffering from them are more liable than others, *cæteris paribus*, to be the subjects of the disorder.

(Carter, 36)

Studies like Carter’s often made little or no distinction between “menstrual” and “mental.” As Prichard had suggested:

Sudden suppressions of the catamenia are frequently followed by disease of the nervous system of various kinds. Females [...] undergoing powerful excitements, experience a suppression of the catamenia, followed in some instances immediately by fits of epilepsy or hysteria, the attacks of which are so sudden as to illustrate the connexion of cause and effect.

(Prichard, 157)

Like their predecessors, then, mid-Victorian medical writers believed that the course of hysteria was biologically determined by uterine processes. The difference lay in the theory of a psychosomatic connection between the obstructed menstrual flow and a pressurised volcanic hysterical energy. While not solely Victorian in origin, this connection was characteristic of that era’s belief in the disorder’s links with the contemporary social statuses of women, which allowed no legitimate outlet for emotional and sexual energy. The suppressed catamenial cycle, it was believed, both biologically instigated and metonymically signified a tense, pathological state that would eventually culminate in an excessive bursting forth of hysterics.

Victorian methods of “curing” hysteria were heavily influenced by this perceived explosive sexuality. Besides the reestablishment of the menstrual flow and gruesome “treatments” like Isaak Baker Brown’s clitoridectomy,⁵ it was believed that an intense surveillance was one of the most successful methods of controlling and anticipating the sexual and emotional immoderations central to hysteria’s causality. By keeping excessive female

⁴ See, for example, Skey *Hysteria*, Second Lecture, and Carter, 82.

⁵ This aimed to cure hysteria by “excis[ing] the clitoris” as that “train of nervous disorders is entirely dependent on peripheral irritation (brought on by abnormal practices) of the pudic nerve, especially of that branch of the nerve which is distributed to the clitoris” (Unsigned Review, 485). For a historical study of clitoridectomy, see Showalter *The Female Malady*, 75-8.

emotion, especially when of a sexual character, in constant check, medical professionals (and the male population generally) could prevent and cure hysteria through the utilisation of a watchful supervision. As Althaus remarked (246), no woman was exempt from the onset of hysteria “since the disease indiscriminately invades women of all kinds,” and Carter (58) observed the “extraordinary development of cunning by means of which hysterical women often carry out most complicated systems of deception, and succeed in baffling the watchfulness, even of very close observers.” The physician had to be prepared, it seemed, to enter into a potentially intense investigative contest with the hysterical woman; to simultaneously anticipate and control her turbulent sexuality through his specialist observation. In the preface to his 1860 treatise *On the Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Disorders of the Mind*, Forbes Winslow warns “the practitioner of medicine, that he is not only to watch with the greatest of vigilance for the approach of all head affections, but, if possible, to anticipate their stealthy advance.” (Winslow, ix-x).

Hence, the mid-nineteenth-century’s medical negotiations of hysteria were not unmindful of women’s limited social roles, which they acknowledged as allowing the female population no suitable outlet for powerful emotions, especially those of a sexual nature. The lack of suggestions for alternative roles for women, however, and the recommendation of an intense surveillance of all hysterical, and potentially hysterical, cases, reveal how these medical studies were unable, in many ways, to look beyond their culture’s hegemonic constructions of femininity. The curative measures they employed, though often well intentioned, tended to serve as alternative methods of discipline and control, supporting the ideological roles that their practitioners had also sought to vilify.

Nevertheless, the multifaceted nature of hysteria, a nature it derived from its elusive, indefinite and ever-provisional meaning, ensured that it was experienced, interpreted and defined in a myriad of contradictory ways throughout the century. Male medical theorists were therefore not alone in their considerations of the condition: the female sensation novelists of the 1860s, in particular, were “cognizant of the protean metamorphoses of hysteria” (Coulson, 483). Concentrating on two of Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s less well-known novels, I now argue that such fictional appropriations of the subject as hers present another “anomalous shape which the hysterical affection can assume” (Coulson, 483), this time, however, a shape that launches a much more successful attack on the Victorian marginalization of women than we see in operation in the concurrent, non-fictional material.

Victorian critical reactions to the sensation novel drew on the same categories that medical writers employed to define the symptoms of hysteria. As Sally Shuttleworth has observed (192), “The sensation fiction of the 1860s shared with the emerging science of Victorian psychiatry a preoccupation with psychological excess.” This is certainly apparent in the often cited review by H. L. Mansel, who argued in 1863 that:

... sensation novels must be recognised as a great fact in the literature of the day, and a fact whose significance is by no means of an agreeable kind. Regarding these works merely as an efflorescence, as an eruption indicative of the state of the health of the body in which they appear, the existence of an impure or a silly crop of novels, and the fact that they are eagerly read, are by no means favourable symptoms of the conditions of the body of society. But it is easier to detect the disease than to suggest the remedy.

(Mansel, 512)

Almost reaching fever pitch themselves, Mansel's comments appear to replicate the images used by the medical textbooks with which his piece in the *Quarterly Review* shared a social space. His characterisation of sensation fiction as a psychosomatic, venereal disease, signifying the moral degradation of the society in which it is read, fully exemplifies the tone and main concerns of the period's theories on hysteria. Sensation novels, he claimed, were "both the effect and the cause" of a "wide-spread corruption" (Mansel, 482-3). Forbes Winslow, despite presenting Wilkie Collins, the "Father of Sensation," with a signed copy of his book *Obscure Diseases* (Baker, 160), concurred with Mansel, extending the point even further to suggest that the "moral contamination" at the heart of the hysterical epidemic was partly due to the "perusal of vicious books, sensation novels [...] surreptitiously taken into the nursery" (Winslow, 157).

Sensation novels and non-fictional books on the "little epidemic" apparently raging through the female population, thus form an important part of each other's historical contextualization. Mary Braddon's novels, which, along with those of Collins and Mrs Henry Wood, instigated the sensation phenomenon, were produced in feverish haste. Braddon could write a novel in six weeks and admitted to Edward Bulwer-Lytton that: "I know that my writing teems with errors, absurdities, contradictions, and inconsistencies; but I have never written a line that has not been written against time – sometimes with the printer waiting outside the door" (cited in Hughes, 120-1). With reference to two of the four novels she wrote in the year 1863 alone, namely *Eleanor's Victory* and *John Marchmont's Legacy*, I argue that some of these "contradictions" and "inconsistencies" result from her literary appropriation of the period's medical ideas on hysteria, which, as we have seen, teemed with such incongruities. Braddon's fiction often exploited the period's hysterical concepts, and, through the remarkable characterisations of Eleanor Vane and Olivia Marchmont, in particular, offer a subtle and stealthy expose of the same images' flaws and weaknesses.

Eleanor's Victory is the story of a woman resolved on revenge. After losing the money that was meant for his daughter's education in a card game with a young English artist called Launcelot Darrell, the eponymous heroine's father, George Vane, commits suicide in the opening stages of the book. The plot's main trajectory is Eleanor's attempt to avenge his death by causing Launcelot to be disinherited by his wealthy uncle, Maurice de Crespigny. Aged just fifteen at the time of her father's death, Eleanor is at a critical time in her life, according to the medical texts, as "between fifteen and twenty years of age,

hysteria is most frequent in consequence of the radical change which the nervous system undergoes during that period” (Althaus, 247). Even before she learns that her father is dead, Eleanor experiences her first hysterical paroxysm brought on by his disappearance:

Her thoughts rambled on in a strange confusion until they grew bewildering; her brain became dizzy with perpetual repetitions of the same idea; when she lifted her head – her poor, weary, burning, heavy head, which seemed a leaden weight that it was almost impossible to raise – and looked from the window, the street below reeled beneath her eyes, the floor upon which she knelt seemed sinking with her into some deep gulf of blackness and horror. A thousand conflicting sounds – not the morning noises of the waking city – hissed and buzzed, and roared and thundered in her ears, growing louder and louder and louder, until they all melted away in the fast-gathering darkness.

(Braddon *Eleanor's Victory*, I, 106)

Shortly after this fit, her friends consult “an English doctor” who delivers the following diagnosis:

The anxiety and suspense have overtaxed her brain. Anything would be better than that this overstrained state of the mind should continue. Her constitution will rally after a shock; but with her highly nervous and imaginative nature, everything is to be dreaded from prolonged mental irritation.

(Braddon *Eleanor's Victory*, I, 106-7)

According to this diagnosis, which draws directly on the images used by the medical texts and their symptomatology of hysteria, Eleanor’s adolescent and impressionable mind is unequal to the excessive worry caused by her father’s disappearance. She consequently lapses into a state of extreme “confusion,” fragmentation (“a thousand conflicting sounds”) and experiences a complete loss of volition.

Shortly after hearing that her father is dead, and the manner in which he died, however, Eleanor’s hysteria transforms itself from the “terrible bursts of grief – grief that was loud and passionate in proportion to the impulsive vehemence of Eleanor Vane’s character” (I, 113), into a rigid obsession with revenge:

“Tell me the truth,” she cried vehemently, “did my father kill himself?”

“It is feared that he did, Eleanor.”

The pale face grew a shade white, and the trembling frame became suddenly rigid. [...]

“Sooner or later [says Eleanor] I swear to be revenged upon [Launcelot] for my father’s cruel death.”

“Eleanor, Eleanor!” cried the Signora: “is this womanly? Is this Christian-like?”

The girl turned upon her. There was almost a supernatural light, now, in the dilated grey eyes. [...] She looked, in her desperate resolution and virginal beauty, like some young martyr in the middle ages waiting to be led to the rack.

"I don't know whether it is womanly or Christian-like," she said, "but I know that it is henceforward the purpose of my life, and that it is stronger than myself."

(Braddon *Eleanor's Victory*, I, 117, 123)

Eleanor's mental condition here demonstrates all the monomaniacal and excessive characteristics of the mid-nineteenth century's medical descriptions of hysteria. Her uncontrollable sobbing, choking sensations and trembling continue throughout the novel but are henceforth combined, and not unrelated to, a "desperate resolution" that is "stronger," as Eleanor admits, "than myself." Lyn Pykett (84) has observed how, "it is Eleanor's own deliberate concealments which sustain – and provide the necessary complications for – the narrative trajectory." Indeed, following the murderous exploits of Lady Audley and the passions of Aurora Floyd, Braddon's readers would scarcely have been satisfied with the story of a heroine whose actions remain within the realms of rationality or the usual round of dull, domestic duties. Expanding on Pykett's argument, I argue that the rendering of Eleanor Vane as hysterical, or – perhaps more accurately – hysteronianiacal, equips Braddon with the melodramatic means to drive her novel onward at a feverish pace and to develop her hallmark sensational style. It is unlikely to be coincidental, therefore, that the key scenes in Eleanor's revenge scheme are also her most hysterical. In one such episode, she and her confidant, Richard Thornton, scour through the sketchbook of Launcelot Darrell for clues of his instrumentality in the death of George Vane. Richard, himself an artist, believes that "whatever falsehoods [Launcelot] may impose upon his fellow-men, his sketch-book will tell the truth" (II, 35). He is not mistaken as the search uncovers a sketch of the card game in which George lost the money for his daughter's education. The discovery triggers the following reaction from Eleanor:

Eleanor stood behind [Richard], erect and statuesque, with her hand grasping the back of his chair, a pale Nemesis bent on revenge and destruction. [...] Looking round at the pale young face, Richard saw how terrible was the struggle in the girl's breast, and how likely she was at any moment to betray herself.

"Eleanor," he whispered, "if you want to carry this business to the end, you must keep your secret. Launcelot Darrell is coming this way. Remember that an artist is quick to observe. There is the plot of a tragedy in your face at the moment."

(Braddon *Eleanor's Victory*, II, 47)

With a storm of volcanic passion raging within, yet with a calm exterior bent on cunning and deceit, Eleanor becomes the typical hysterical woman, as the Victorian medical institution characterised her. In a later scene, one that is even more pivotal to Eleanor's revenge, the symptoms of Eleanor's hysteria are drawn much more clearly. Entering the shabby Parisian lodgings of a criminal who holds a will, written by Maurice de Crespigny, that disinherits Launcelot, Eleanor and her half-witted companion, Major Lennard, find the man in a state of "delirium tremens," raving from the effects of alcohol. Believing this is to be the annihilation of all chances to avenge her father's death, Eleanor's "fortitude

had given way before this new and most cruel disappointment. She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed aloud.” Had the details of the succeeding scene been written as a case study in one of the era’s medical textbooks, it would not have been out of place:

Major Lennard was very much distressed at this unexpected collapse upon the part of his chief. He was very big, and rather stupid. [...] He looked piteously at Eleanor, as she sat sobbing passionately, half unconscious of his presence, forgetful of everything except that this last hope had failed her. [...] Her sobs grew every moment louder and more hysterical. [...] The sobbing grew louder; and [the Major] felt that it was imperatively necessary that something energetic should be done in this crisis. A thought flashed upon him as he looked hopelessly round the room, and in another moment he had seized a small white crockery ware jug from the Frenchman’s toilet table, and launched its contents at Eleanor’s head.

This was a [...] master-stroke. The girl looked up with her head dripping, but with her courage revived by the shock her senses had received.

(Braddon *Eleanor’s Victory*, II, 296-8)

The traditional, gendered positions of the man as doer and the woman as the done-to re-emerge in this extraordinary scene played by a delirious drunkard, an idiot and a hysterical woman. The sudden dousing with cold water was considered by mid-nineteenth-century medics to be one of the most effective methods of curing hysteria. “In hysterical attacks,” Althaus admits, “I prefer a drenching with cold water” (248). Although his choice of words leaves it somewhat ambiguous, it is safe to assume that Althaus is speaking in reference to his patients’ “hysterical attacks,” and not his own.

Eleanor’s “mad” (I, 132) and “unwomanly” (I, 162) revenge not only drives her into these scenes of hysterical action, but also steers her into marriage with the wealthy lawyer Gilbert Monckton. Like Wilkie Collins’s Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* (1862), who marries her unloved cousin Noel as a means of recovering her father’s lost fortune, Eleanor Vane becomes better equipped to enact *her* revenge by marrying Gilbert. She accepts his offer of marriage, yet “she only regarded him as an instrument which might happen to be of use to her” (I, 295). While Gilbert is declaring his undying love for Eleanor:

She tried to listen, she tried to understand; but she could not. The one idea which held possession of her mind, kept that mind locked against every other impression. [...] No trace of womanly confusion, or natural coquetry, betrayed itself in her manner. Pale and absorbed she held out her hand, and offered up her Future as a small and unconsidered matter, when set against the one idea of her life – the promise to her dead father.

(Braddon *Eleanor’s Victory*, I, 306)

The same excessive, Hamlet-like desire for revenge that drives *No Name* and the early scenes of *Eleanor’s Victory* becomes the catalyst for the main plot in the second volume of the latter novel, which hinges on the loveless marriage between Eleanor and Gilbert.

After her wedding, the small, emotional indications of hysteria that Eleanor is unable to conceal are not lost upon her husband who has “a lawyer’s powers of penetration and habit of observation” (I, 302). On one occasion, for example, Eleanor is about to ask Gilbert if he has seen Launcelot:

“And you have seen —— ?”

She stopped suddenly. Launcelot Darrell’s name had risen to her lips, but she checked herself before uttering it, lest she should betray her eager interest in him. [...] Gilbert Monckton, watching his wife’s face [...] had perceived the hesitation with which she had asked this question. [...] Eleanor was incapable of dissimulation, and her disappointment betrayed itself in her face. [...] Sudden blushes lit up Eleanor Monckton’s cheeks like a flaming fire.

(Braddon *Eleanor’s Victory*, I, 338-9)

Braddon’s readers know that Eleanor’s “eager interest,” and the reason she betrays so much emotion when Launcelot is referred to, is due to her “vengeful hatred of the young man” (I, 338), but Gilbert, looking on, becomes obsessed with interpreting these outward signs of his wife’s emotions:

He had loved and trusted this girl. He had seen innocence and candour beaming in her face, and he had dared to believe in her; and from the very hour of her marriage a horrible transformation had taken place in this frank and fearless creature. A hundred changes of expression, all equally mysterious to him, had converted the face he loved into a wearisome and incomprehensible enigma, which it was the torment of his life to endeavour vainly and hopelessly to guess.

(Braddon *Eleanor’s Victory*, II, 82-3)

Gilbert’s ardent gaze on his wife’s face is clearly drawn from the larger, contemporary medical idea that hysteria was an energy that needed to be anticipated and controlled by “the greatest of vigilance.” The interpretation that Gilbert gives to Eleanor’s hysterical symptoms also echoes the tenor of the medical books by misconstruing them as sexual. He thinks: “her agitation, her tears, her confusion, all betray the truth. Her heart has never been mine. [...] Her love is Launcelot Darrell’s” (II, 111). Like his medical counterparts, the lawyer assumes that the root of all hysterical agitation in women is of a concealed, sexually excessive character.

Braddon’s novel not only discounts this association by revealing it to be incorrect in the case of Eleanor Vane (whose agitation is caused by hatred, not desire), but *Eleanor’s Victory* also demonstrates how the supposedly objective observation of hysteria is itself subjective, obsessive and pathological. In the second volume of the text, the main hysteromaniac is not Eleanor but Gilbert. Having been jilted as a young man and no doubt influenced by the Victorian idea that all women are potential Eves, Gilbert becomes excessively watchful and suspicious of his wife. His jealousy is repeatedly characterised as an insidious demon that warps his ability to interpret clearly:

The insidious imp which the lawyer had made his bosom companion of late, at this moment transformed itself into a raging demon, and gnawed ravenously at the vitals of its master. [...] The ravenous demon’s tooth grew

sharper than usual when Eleanor said this. [...] Every circumstance [...] was very clear to him now, by the aid of a pair of spectacles lent him by the jealous demon his familiar. [...] There is something remarkable in the persistency with which the sufferer from that terrible disease called jealousy strives to aggravate the causes of his torture.

(Braddon *Eleanor's Victory*, I, 340-2)

In this passage, and many others like it, the novel reveals the subjective and masochistic nature of male interpretations of female mental pathology. The metaphorical spectacles lent to Gilbert by his demon do not make things clearer but mislead him, being tinted with mistaken, preconceived ideas of women as excessively sexually charged. The hysterical, obsessive nature of Gilbert's interpretation of his wife's hysterical symptoms is aptly underscored by the final sentence of the above quotation, which characterises Gilbert's fears as self-propelled, "aggravate[d]" and "disease[d]." As in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), where Robert Audley's attempt to prove Lady Audley insane becomes itself obsessive and monomaniacal, *Eleanor's Victory* similarly suggests, through the characterisation of Gilbert's demons, that the supposedly objective observers of hysteria are themselves the most hysterical. The medical obsessions with a concealed female sexuality as the cause and aggravation of the disorder are, it seems, the result of a "demon familiar," a hysteronomania in the male psyche.

These connections between hysteria and a real or perceived hidden sexual desire are explored even more ardently in Braddon's next work, *John Marchmont's Legacy*. Braddon had already started writing this novel before she had fully completed *Eleanor's Victory* and disclosed, at the time, that "I have tried to draw [...] at least one character more original than any of my usual run of heroes & heroines."⁶ This character, Olivia Marchmont, is one of the era's most extraordinary fictional renderings of its medicalised images of womanhood. Like her forerunner, Eleanor Vane, Olivia exhibits symptoms of hysteria throughout the novel. Unlike the earlier text, however, *John Marchmont's Legacy* appears, on the surface at least, to accept the alleged sexual foundations of the malady, as Olivia's "madness" stems from her frustrated desires for her cousin Edward:

She had loved Edward Arundel with all the strength of her soul; she had wasted a world of intellect and passion upon this bright-haired boy. This foolish, grovelling madness had been the blight of her life. [...] If her life had been a wider one, this wasted love would, perhaps have shrunk into its proper insignificance: she would have loved, and suffered and recovered; as so many of us recover from this common epidemic. But all the volcanic forces of an impetuous nature, concentrated into one narrow focus, wasted themselves upon this one feeling, until that which should have been a sentiment became a madness.

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 86)

⁶ Cited in Toru Sasaki and Norman Page's Introduction to Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, xv.

This depiction of Olivia's mind clearly draws on the supposed "epidemic," "volcanic" and excessive nature of hysteria, as well as on the relationship it was believed to have had with the narrow lifestyle of middle-class women. As with her earlier text, Braddon uses these non-fictional ideas to create and animate a sensational narrative. Olivia's passionate desire for her cousin leads to a hatred for her stepdaughter Mary who is Edward's chosen bride. Olivia consequently allows Paul Marchmont to imprison Mary in a boathouse and usurp her estate. In this novel, however, Braddon also uses sensational techniques to highlight the links that existed between male bourgeois advancement and the pathology of hysteria. Exploiting the medical opinion that hysterical women were supposedly of an impressionable and vulnerable nature, Olivia is characterised as a "fitting tool" for those who desire to exploit her:

Blind and forgetful of everything in the hideous egotism of her despair, what was Olivia Marchmont but a fitting tool, a plastic and easily-moulded instrument, in the hands of unscrupulous people, whose hard intellects had never been beaten into confused shapelessness in the fiery furnace of passion?

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 198)

As Olivia is Mary Marchmont's guardian, and Mary stands between Paul and a considerable fortune, it is in his best interests to exploit this vulnerability. An artist like Launcelot Darrell, Paul therefore attempts to penetrate Olivia's mind and acquaint himself with the cause of her hysteromania:

He took his dissecting-knife and went to work at an intellectual autopsy. He anatomised the wretched woman's soul. He made her tell her secret, and bare her tortured breast before him; now wringing some hasty word from her impatience, now entrapping her into some admission, – if only so much as a defiant look, a sudden lowering of the dark brows, an involuntary compression of the lips. He *made* her reveal herself to him.

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 219; italics in original)

As with the uterine theories of hysteria, this episode makes no distinction between body and mind, as is apparent from its suggestive use of medical, post-mortem imagery. The passage is also weirdly sexual, as Paul "*made* [Olivia] reveal herself" and "bare her tortured breast." The use of the term "entrapping her" also underscores how sexual, psychological revelation becomes a way in which women are controlled and contained by their male, medical observers. Discovering Olivia's secret, Paul is subsequently able to exacerbate her hatred for Mary until she relinquishes her role as guardian and allows him to rise from his Bohemian obscurity and attain the station of the Lord of Marchmont Towers.

Towards the end of the novel, however, the tables are turned and Olivia becomes instrumental in Paul's fall from this elevated position. Believing his wife Mary to be dead, Edward plans to marry Belinda Lawford. Olivia, on hearing of his intended betrothal, resolves to inform her cousin that his wife (who has given birth to his son) is still alive. In a chapter aptly titled "The Turning of the Tide," the omniscient narrator relinquishes all use of

medical terminology to Paul who attempts to silence Olivia by using it to warn other characters against her accusations. He claims:

There is no knowing what may be attempted by a madwoman, driven mad by a jealousy in itself almost as terrible as madness. [...] What has not been done by unhappy creatures in this woman's state of mind? Every day we read of such things in newspapers – deeds of horror at which the blood grows cold in our veins. [...] I come to tell you that a desperate woman has sworn to hinder to-morrow's marriage. Heaven knows what she may do in her jealous frenzy!

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 414)

The success of Paul's attempt is only short-lived, however, as Olivia, considering herself now sane ("mad until today [...] but not mad today", 423) storms in on the marriage ceremony armed with the irrefutable testimony of Mary and her child who are waiting nearby. The plot of *John Marchmont's Legacy* thus melodramatically fictionalises the early Victorian connections between the fiscal development of the emerging bourgeoisie and the medical constructions of hysteria. Whereas the refined, hysterically prone, domestic angel signified and safeguarded the nation's moral and economic wealth in the ideological division of spheres, Braddon's novel draws these connections much more deliberately and schematically, since Paul's monetary successes are inseparable from the pathologising of Olivia as hysterical.

Another concurrence between *John Marchmont's Legacy* and medical studies of hysteria emerges in the novel's representation of Olivia's nefarious and hysterical actions as related to her limited role as a woman in Victorian society. Olivia's sexuality, combined with her narrow, domestic existence, is directly linked to her hysterical paroxysms. With the shadow of Elizabeth Garrett, first ever female physician in Britain, looming large over the public psyche at the time Braddon wrote this novel, it is not surprising to find a reference to Garrett's American counterparts:

The narrow life to which [Olivia] doomed herself, the self-immolation which she called duty, left her a prey to this one thought. Her work was not enough for her. Her powerful mind wasted and shrivelled for want of worthy employment. [...] If Olivia Marchmont could have gone to America, and entered herself amongst the feminine professors of law or medicine, – if she could have turned field-preacher, like simple Dinah Morris, or set up a printing press in Bloomsbury, or even written a novel, – I think she might have been saved. The superabundant energy of her mind would have found a new object. As it was, she did none of these things. She had only dreamt one dream, and by force of perpetual repetition the dream had become a madness.

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 135-6)

In this passage, Olivia's sexuality is closely aligned to professional ambition; her incapacity to find an outlet for either converts them into "madness." Later, such connections are made more forcibly still when Olivia meets Lavinia Weston, Paul's sister and a doctor's wife. Lavinia, believing Olivia to be suffering from hysteria, suggests that:

... a doctor's wife may often be useful when a doctor is himself out of place. There are little nervous ailments – depression of spirits, mental uneasiness – from which women, and sensitive women, suffer acutely, and which perhaps a woman's more refined nature alone can thoroughly comprehend. [...] Weston is a good simple-hearted creature, but he knows as much about a woman's mind as he does of an Aeolian harp. [...] These medical men watch us in the agonies of hysteria; they hear our sighs, they see our tears, and in their awkwardness and ignorance they prescribe commonplace remedies out of the pharmacopoeia.

(Braddon *John Marchmont's Legacy*, 196)

The objectivity and competence of male, medical interpretation of hysteria is again brought under question. Lavinia draws on the unbalanced observational tendencies of medical men like her husband to champion women as the correct and most qualified experts in hysterical conditions. It is hardly accidental, therefore, that this call for female psychiatric expertise, and the disparagement of *male* medical ability, is followed, almost immediately, by a disparagement of the *male* concept of hysteria: Olivia claims, "I am not subject to any fine-ladylike hysteria, I can assure you, Mrs Weston" (197).

Braddon's *John Marchmont's Legacy* thus draws similar conclusions to the medical scribes who had noticed a connection between the hysterical epidemic and the social marginalization of women. Leading to hysterical outbursts like Olivia's, the social division of labour, Braddon seems to suggest, is as problematic and pathological as hysteria itself. Medical authors like Julius Althaus and Robert Brudenell Carter, however, do not suggest any *alternative* roles for women beyond the domestic space. Braddon's text emphatically does. The novel puts forward the idea that women ought to be considered as potential doctors, lawyers, preachers and earnest writers. This is a claim that differs widely from Althaus's suggestion that the occupations adopted to cure hysteria ought to be the education of children and charity work – both of which Olivia pursues in the novel, and both of which serve only to exacerbate her explosive mental condition. Robert Brudenell Carter had identified the *type* of concealed emotions in women as exclusively female in character. Women, he argued, *felt* while men *thought*. The feelings that constantly place Olivia Marchmont on the verge of hysteria, however, are not female in character but, if gendered at all, would be male – no doubt the very same ambitions that drove medical writers such as Carter. Like her clinical contemporaries, Braddon is able, through the concept of hysteria, to expose (and express discontent with) the social limitations on female experience. Unlike their medical counterparts, however, Braddon's novels demonstrate an ability to see beyond the Victorian division of labour, the "demon familiar" that had warped and constrained many of the male, non-fictional considerations of the same idea. In its suggestion that women could make successful doctors and lawyers, *John Marchmont's Legacy* takes one step further than the medical books, suggesting that the only successful method of preventing and curing hysteria is by granting women free play in the public, as well as private, sphere.

* * *

The mid-Victorian medical literature on hysteria and the sensation novels of the 1860s were thus both, in many ways, hysterical fictions. “Hysterical” in subject matter, tone and motivation, they offer a significant snapshot of the workings of the period’s medical interpretations of female identity as ideologically restricted. Ubiquitous, multidimensional, undefined and indefinable, “hysteria” is itself a significant expose of the workings of the Victorian ideological economy/economical ideology as a network of preconception and contradiction. Yet, through its integration into popular literature, hysteria could also supply a cross-section of the faults upon which it was partly constructed and act as a platform for more subversive calls for female emancipation.

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~Reviews~

Alexander Grinstein, MD. *Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press, Inc, 2003. pp. x + 272. ISBN 0-8236-6681-6.

Alexander Grinstein's book is avowedly a Freudian case-history rather than a biography. Convinced that Collins's works are full of personal revelations of psychological problems repeated as themes in his writing, he places more weight on interpretation of the writing, than on examining the facts of the life. Though this might seem to the uninitiated a back-to-front approach, the justification is that Collins's work reveals a fantasy autobiography, in particular of his childhood, and that the real-life situation is of secondary importance. The *loci classici* for such psychobiographies are Freud's papers on artists and writers: examples are *Leonardo and a Memory of his Childhood*, which diagnoses childhood enuresis from a study of Leonardo's drawings, and "Dostoevsky and Parricide."

Psychoanalytic readings of Collins's novels have yielded interesting interpretations, adding layers of significance to stories dismissed by Victorian critics as crude sensation. Freudian readings of *The Moonstone* by Charles Rycroft and others illuminate Victorian attitudes to sex, and reveal underlying structures of which Collins was almost certainly unaware. But they do not attempt to tie the issues raised to Collins's personal psychobiography. I find Grinstein's narrower approach reductive, diminishing the inventiveness of the fiction, the variety and interest of the life and the complexity of the man. To read Collins's novels and stories merely as ways of dealing with personal problems is to misunderstand the complicated web of personal, social, literary and practical issues with which any author who writes to make a living is faced.

From his readings of Collins's fiction and journalism, Grinstein creates a "Wilkie Collins" who is an "aim-inhibited" homosexual, someone who prefers the company of other men to that of women, and claims Collins had a "contempt and hatred of the female sex" which reaches its apogee in *Armadale*. Grinstein cites in evidence the transgressive women characters such as Lydia Gwilt, Magdalen Vanstone and Anne Silvester, and makes much of the humorous article by Collins, "Bold Words by a Bachelor," taking from it the message that a covert homosexuality is the reason for Collins's lifelong refusal to marry.

Grinstein's Wilkie Collins is frightened of his parents, his mother as well as his father, furiously jealous of his younger brother and haunted by his own "deformity." Grinstein much exaggerates Collins's slight physical peculiarities, such as his small hands and feet. Rather than being ashamed of these, Collins's letters suggest he was amused by being able to wear women's shoes and gloves. He certainly enjoyed wearing flamboyant and

unconventional clothes, and Grinstein perhaps misses a trick in not discussing his fascination with disguise.

Grinstein places enormous weight on Oedipal conflicts within Collins's writings, seeing him as suffering from a lifelong obsession with his parents and his relationship to them that he repeatedly attempted to exorcise in his writings. The many psychologically disturbed characters in the stories and novels are taken as expressions of Collins's own mental problems.

Grinstein's portrait of a deformed, bitter misogynist, eaten up with Oedipal conflicts and fraternal jealousy, seems unimaginably far from the Wilkie Collins known to his friends and revealed by his letters. "He ... was ...the gentlest and most kind-hearted of men" according to his sister-in-law Kate. Other women friends found him unusually appreciative, for his class and generation, of their company, and a delightful and easy companion. Caroline Graves would never have returned to him, abandoning her brief second marriage, and remained to cherish him for the rest of his life, if he had not been an affectionate and life-enhancing companion. Her daughter Carrie, for whom he was a substitute father, adored him. Collins's portrayals of transgressive women seem to me to mirror his own delight in breaking the rules, rather than expressing "fear and hatred." His sensation novels shocked by their questioning of social structures, as the attacks by reviewers make clear. Lyn Pykett's *The Improper Feminine* (1992) finds in them an expression of a new mood of feminism. Collins was certainly not an orthodox feminist, but neither was he a misogynist.

Collins undoubtedly had his inner demons, some of them caused by his painful rheumatic condition and consequent opium dependence, but he was the product not only of his family situation, important as this may have been, but of the wider culture in which he lived. By Grinstein's yardstick, virtually every Victorian man could be characterised as an "aim-inhibited homosexual." To assume that all the oppressive father-figures in Collins's novels are attacks on his own father ignores the structure of Victorian society, against which Collins and others were protesting. One might as well argue that Mr Murdstone, as well as Mr Micawber, was a portrait of Dickens's father. The social and literary history of the early nineteenth century, as well as Collins's own testimony that he had experienced a happy childhood, show that William Collins's Evangelical piety was not extreme or unusual for its time. No-one who has read the complete text of his letters to his children could think that he was a "stern and unrelenting ... harsh, forbidding" father. His overriding characteristic was, rather, an inhibiting anxiety, social and financial, and a consequent conventionality and snobbery. Wilkie Collins did react against this from an early age, reverting to the more happy-go-lucky unconventionality of both his grandfathers. His novella *A Rogue's Life*, which owes much to William Collins Senior's odd book *Memoirs of a Picture*, gives the clearest expression to his view of his father's limitations. I believe that marriage came to symbolise the ultimate bourgeois restriction, and that it was this, rather than any dislike or

fear of women, or Oedipal attachment to his mother, that prevented him from marrying.

Collins wrote of his father's work that he excluded from his genre paintings of the life of the English rural poor "the fierce miseries, or the coarse contentions which form the darker tragedy of humble life" in favour of "scenes of quiet pathos." Wilkie made it his life's work to redress the balance; describing the darker aspects of society that his father could not face because of the poverty and uncertainty of his own upbringing. Wilkie, with his more favoured and comfortable middle-class childhood, could reject his father's limitations. His conflicts with his father were not unconscious and Oedipal, but overt and expressed. Also his relationship with his younger brother was not the jealousy that Grinstein assumes. Charles Collins inherited the anxiety gene from his father in double measure. He was, for most of his relatively short life, physically and mentally frail, suffering from depression and an exaggerated sense of sin. His lack of confidence in his own abilities became so inhibiting that he had to give up painting, for which he had considerable talent, and turn to writing, at which he was mediocre, in emulation of his brother. Far from feeling jealous of him, Wilkie was protective, if sometimes slightly contemptuous.

In order to arrive at his conclusions Grinstein has read Collins's works conscientiously, wading through the novels and stories and producing plot-summaries for virtually all of them. This is never an easy task for Collins's complicated novels. However he is not familiar with the context in which much of Collins's writing was produced. For example, he assumes that all the sections of *The Wreck of the "Golden Mary"*, the *Household Words* Christmas number for 1856, were written either by Dickens or Collins. He therefore attributes to Collins four stories and a poem actually written by other members of the *Household Words* stable.

There are a number of important studies that address some of the contextual questions that Grinstein ignores; among them Sue Lonoff's 1982 study, *Wilkie Collins and His Victorian Readers*, and Lillian Nayder's *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, and Victorian Authorship* (2002). Other critics have shown the effect of social and political forces, literary preferences, friendships, painting, theatre, and journalism on Collins as a writer. He was always alert to the zeitgeist, and the popularity of "social problem" fiction and plays in the later nineteenth century, and his friendship with Charles Reade (not mentioned by Grinstein) had more to do with the subject matter of Collins's later fiction than his personal experiences. Grinstein writes in connection with *The New Magdalen* that "we do know of his own sexual exploits with prostitutes" – but in fact there is no direct evidence of any such exploits, nor is it true that "Collins was driven to involve himself in sexual relations with women who had been 'degraded' in some way." I find Grinstein's conclusion about this novel – that it was "a way of expressing his own unconscious wish to rescue a woman (his mother) from a life of sin" – absurd.

Grinstein, in spite of his depth of knowledge of psychoanalytic theory, is a naïve reader, who assumes that Collins's central male characters express his own opinions, fears and prejudices. He has nothing to say about Collins's frequent use of a female narrator, and his success at using the female voice. Here Collins seems to me to outstrip Dickens, who rarely uses a female voice which is not either submissive or crazy. Collins's identification with women, particularly women categorised by Victorian society as "bad," is surely worthy of Doctor Grinstein's attention. They were not merely objects (according to Grinstein, objects of his scorn and hatred) but very much part of his internal fantasy life. Life was for Wilkie Collins, as for Louis MacNeice, "crazier and more of it than we think, / Incurably plural." That is why his work endures.

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(1) William Baker and Kenneth Womack, eds. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. pp. xii + 445. ISBN 0313314071. (2) Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing, eds. *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002. pp. xii + 513. ISBN 063122064X. (3) Deirdre David, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. pp. xx + 267. ISBN 0521641500.

The volumes under review are but three examples of the plethora of recent collections of essays by divers hands on individual authors, genres, periods or movements which seek to guide modern readers (and particularly modern students and their beleaguered teachers) through the newly remapped terrain of literary studies. Each of these three companions to the Victorian novel consists of new essays by writers with established or growing scholarly reputations, and includes useful and up-to-date advice on further reading. Each book addresses a slightly different audience. The Greenwood presents itself as a reference tool, and its thirty-two relatively short essays are offered as "an introductory guide to the Victorian novel, particularly in terms of the genre's historical and cultural implications" (xi). To this end Baker and Womack divide their companion into five sections: "Victorian Literary Contexts" (with chapters on the emergence of the Victorian novel, periodicals and syndication, book publishing and the literary marketplace, and illustrators and illustration); "Victorian Cultural Contexts" (with chapters on the political novel, the "sociological contexts" of the novel, and – successively – faith and religion, philosophy, science and the scientist, law, and intoxication and the Victorian novel); "Victorian Genres;" "Major Authors of the Victorian Era" (who turn out to be Charlotte and Anne Brontë, Dickens, Eliot – who gets two chapters – Hardy, Thackeray, Trollope, Meredith, Elizabeth Gaskell and Collins), and "Contemporary Critical Approaches to the Victorian Novel." Brantlinger and

Thesig offer the twenty-six rather longer chapters of their Blackwell companion as a repository of “contextual and critical information about the entire range of British fiction published during the Victorian period,” which is aimed at “students, teachers, and general readers at all levels.” Their book is divided into three parts: “Historical Contexts and Cultural Issues” (with chapters on publishing, education and literacy, money, the economy and social class, psychology, empire, religion, science, technology and information, the legal world and politics, gender, visual culture and the stage); “Forms of the Victorian Novel,” and (the clumsily but informatively titled final part) “Victorian and Modern Theories of the Novel and the Reception of Novels and Novelists Then and Now.” Of the three companions Deirdre David’s (to which I have contributed an essay) is the shortest, is least like a work of reference, and is, perhaps, the least introductory. It is not divided into sections, and is less compendious in its approach, consisting as it does of eleven topic-based essays which collectively combine (according to the brief blurb which precedes the title page) the “literary study of the nineteenth-century novel as a form” with “an analysis of the material aspects of its readership and production,” and “a series of thematic and contextual perspectives that examine Victorian fiction in the light of social and cultural concerns relevant both to the period itself and to the direction of current literary and cultural studies.”

All three companions seek to offer (as the introduction to the Blackwell volume puts it) “original, accessible chapters written from current critical and theoretical perspectives,” and by and large they all succeed in doing this. Collectively they offer a useful perspective on the nature of the field of nineteenth-century fiction studies at the beginning of the twenty-first century. What do they have in common in the ways in which they define the field and the topics they address? All three offer a sophisticated analysis of the material conditions of the novel’s production and distribution, of its various readerships (and of nineteenth-century debates about novel readers and the evils or benefits of novel-reading). In all three the novel’s inter-relationships with issues of gender, race, empire, sexuality, various forms of policing, and the professionalization and specialization of Victorian culture are very much to the fore, but new light is also thrown on more familiar topics such as the novel’s links with science, technology, psychology and religion. All three are prominently concerned with those fictional sub-genres which grabbed the attention of students of the Victorian novel in the latter third of the twentieth century – detective fiction, the gothic, sensation fiction, ghost stories, science fiction and the fantastic, and children’s fiction. However, they do not neglect the sub-genres which preoccupied critics in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century: the condition-of-England and social problem novel, the regional or provincial novel, the bildungsroman, and the historical novel all receive fresh treatment.

Both the Greenwood and the Blackwell companions contain sections on specific late twentieth-century approaches to the Victorian novel: Greenwood has chapters on Postcolonial and Feminist readings, and Blackwell has a chapter on “Modern and Postmodern Theories of Prose Fiction” and

another on the reception of Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, Eliot and Hardy which includes their reception by twentieth-century critics. In the Cambridge companion, on the other hand, late-twentieth century preoccupations and reading practices are implicit in the topics chosen and the approaches taken in the essays. As well as foregrounding late twentieth-century theoretically informed critical approaches, all three volumes engage with Victorian theories of fiction: Joseph Childers contributes a piece on “Victorian Theories of the Novel” to Blackwell; the Cambridge volume includes quite a densely argued essay by Linda Shires on “The aesthetics of the Victorian novel: form, subjectivity, ideology,” and Greenwood has essays on “Philosophy and the Victorian Literary Aesthetic” (Martin Bidney) and “George Eliot’s Reading Revolution and the Mythical School of Criticism” (William R. McKelvy). Blackwell is the only one of these companions to concern itself with the twentieth-century afterlife of Victorian fiction – in Joss Marsh and Kamilla Elliott’s essay on “The Victorian Novel in Film and on Television” and Anne Humpherys’s short but lively piece on twentieth-century interrogations of and negotiations with the forms of Victorian fiction, “The Afterlife of the Victorian Novel: novels about novels.” In the Cambridge companion Robert Weisbuch (in “Dickens, Melville, and a Tale of Two Countries”) offers a distinctive slant on the afterlife of the Victorian novel in his exploration of the literary relations between British and American novelists of the nineteenth century, which focuses on the ways in which “American writers in the mid-nineteenth century enacted a second war of independence in their major writings.”

What particular interest do these companions to Victorian fiction hold for students of Wilkie Collins? In all three volumes Collins is something of a strolling player. He crops up in the context of discussions of genre fiction – the sensation novel, the detective novel and gothic romance. As the author of *Antonina* he also features in John Bowen’s sprightly introduction to the historical novel in Blackwell. Elsewhere he appears as a commentator on the literary scene and the changing literary marketplace, and as someone involved in new forms of literary circulation (see Graham Law’s chapter on “Periodicals and Syndication” in Greenwood). His awareness of different audiences is touched on in references to his work for the theatre (both as a playwright and as an adaptor of his own novels for stage production), and his reading tours. His interests in the law, criminality, psychology and mesmerism are variously noted, and his engagements with empire and his attitudes to race are briefly explored (by Lillian Nayder in Greenwood and Patrick Brantlinger in Cambridge). John Kucich reiterates his view of Collins’s novels as being symptomatic of the rivalry and mistrust between scientific and literary professionals (in both Blackwell and Cambridge).

Only the Greenwood volume devotes an entire chapter to Collins – the final chapter in the section on “Major Authors of the Victorian Era” – which examines his challenges to Pre-Raphaelite gender constructs. In this chapter Sophia Andres uses *The Woman in White* as a vehicle to demonstrate her case that in his earlier fiction at least Collins was engaged in a debate with the Pre-Raphaelite painters over their representations of gender. Andres argues that in

order to understand Collins's subversion of Victorian gender stereotypes it is necessary to understand how he engaged with and transformed the attempts by Pre-Raphaelite artists to revise stereotypical representations of gender. Andres's suggestion that we read Collins's presentation of Walter Hartright's initial meeting with Anne Catherick as a transformation of Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* is rather speculative ("it is entirely possible that Collins had this painting in mind..."). More persuasive is her suggestion that his representation of Marian at the time of Walter's first encounter with her is "consciously Pre-Raphaelite," and that Marian is a "composite Pre-Raphaelite figure" who closely resembles the dark Venuses of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whilst also being a more active and independent version of John Everett Millais's *Mariana*. Laura Fairlie, on the other hand, is represented in the style favoured by Sir Joshua Reynolds, as part of Collins's strategy (Andres suggests) to indicate to his readers that hers is an outdated ideal of femininity. Collins's representations of masculinity are similarly said to be refracted through painterly models. Not only does Sir Percival Glyde's Christian name hark back to a chivalric masculine ideal which his conduct belies, but Collins's representation of him in key scenes is said to invoke some of Rossetti's paintings of medieval knights in a deliberate attempt to evoke "a chivalric construct of masculinity only to deconstruct it." Andres concludes that the ways in which Collins evokes and redraws Pre-Raphaelite paintings should be seen as his version of the Pre-Raphaelite project to provoke their audience to reconsider what was decorous or "correct" in both art and life (as Susan Casteras has argued in "Pre-Raphaelite Challenges to Victorian Canons of Beauty" in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 55 [1992]).

This last essay offers a good example of one of the main differences between Greenwood and the other volumes reviewed here. Of the three companions Greenwood is the one that is most focused on individual texts, and on the authors and texts that are most likely to feature on undergraduate literature courses. As my summary of Andres's essay might indicate, the approach taken by the Greenwood essayists is not always simply that of a basic introduction to an author or text. Nevertheless, Greenwood is most likely to be useful to undergraduates and those taking survey courses. Blackwell is likely to be even more useful to undergraduates (and to those of their teachers who suddenly find themselves having to take some classes on a/the Victorian novel and need to get themselves up to speed on its social and cultural contexts, and on recent critical approaches). Blackwell is also likely to be very attractive to the general reader who wants to find out more about the Victorian novel. As a contributor to the Cambridge volume I should perhaps refrain from making a value judgement on it, but it does seem to me that whilst its coverage is more limited than Blackwell (and perhaps Greenwood too) its essays are more closely argued and are more likely to engage the advanced undergraduate or the postgraduate student.

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The Pope has just canonised three nineteenth-century missionaries, but no-one had seriously expected to see St Charles Dickens or St Wilkie Collins, who are the main focus of this book. The combination of unconventional sexual arrangements in their lives and manifest exasperation with aspects of Evangelical religion in their work has not encouraged readers to take them seriously as religious writers. But it was not always thus. In 1861 the liberal Catholic Lord Acton wrote about Dickens's religion and *Great Expectations* in a letter to a friend, observing that "Certain Germans of the last century remind me of Dickens as to religion. They saw 'no divine part of Christianity' but divinified humanity or humanised religion"

Carolyn Oulton does not mention Acton, and would in any case probably disagree with this vaguely Unitarian construction of Dickens's outlook, but she has performed a valuable service for students of Dickens and Collins by demonstrating that there is a serious and sustained engagement with religious matters in their work. Caricatures of Evangelical excess embodied in Dickens's Mrs Jellyby or Collins's Miss Clack might signal disillusionment with the Christian religion, or they might signal a deeply if unconventionally Christian concern that vital religious truth is in danger of being lost or travestied in the hands (and mouths) of silly Christians. Oulton's thoughtful and detailed work persuades us that it is the latter. She analyses selected illustrative texts carefully and is alert to personal tension and complexity. As she points out, Collins had had an Evangelical upbringing and knew almost too much about the uses and abuses of doctrines such as original sin and eternal punishment from which he dissented, but his optimistic confidence in benign providence available to all was grounded in a sense of the value of each individual soul which was itself Evangelical in origin. Even Lydia Gwilt in *Armada* is reclaimed from a career of successful criminality and allowed a good end, which invites us to suspend judgement. Oulton demonstrates how Evangelical narrative motifs such as illness leading to religious renewal are harnessed and transformed both in the case of Magdalen Vanstone in Collins's *No Name* and Pip in *Great Expectations*. Oulton also identifies and accommodates apparent contradiction: Dickens mercilessly lampooned Evangelical philanthropy yet supported it during the 1848 cholera epidemic; he condemned Evangelical attitudes to children yet supported the work of the Ragged Schools; he rejected Evangelical harshness but could be harshly judgmental, particularly in relation to adult criminals, and he was not above occasional rhetorical dependence on the latent melodrama of its theology of death and judgement, perdition and redemption. She is particularly good on complex negotiations in Dickens and Collins of the non-Evangelical, bluffly affirmative "manly Christianity" or "Christian manliness" popularised by Kingsley and Hughes in the 1850s, pointing out that it can also be applied to

women such as the redoubtable Marian in *The Woman in White*. The reading of *Tale of Two Cities* in terms of vengeance and reconciliation and the Evangelical doctrine of vicarious atonement is persuasive. So is the exploration of humane alternatives to the unattractive dogma of total depravity, and a useful distinction is drawn between Collins's tendency to rely on divine mercy and human perfectibility and Dickens's sterner belief in salvation – if at all – through individual atonement and expiation.

But Oulton is less effective in her handling of religious and ecclesiastical contexts. Dickens's withdrawal from Unitarianism after briefly attending a Unitarian chapel is mentioned, but it is not really made clear in what ways his extremely liberal and idiosyncratic version of Anglicanism differs from Unitarianism. Nor is it apparent that Dickensian religion is really adequately described by the expression "Broad Church faith," which, strictly speaking, implies inclusive neo-Coleridgean ideas on ecclesiastical polity.

Other religiously-concerned writers of the period wander through the text almost at random, mainly for purposes of comparison with Dickens and Collins. George Eliot's more radical quarrel with conventional religion and her rather different critique of Evangelicalism are her passport into the present book, but Mrs Gaskell is nowhere to be found, though her liberal treatment of social issues in a religious context brings her rather closer to Kingsley and to Dickens, who commissioned some of her shorter fiction. Newman appears briefly from time to time, but there is no recognition of the ultimately Evangelical antecedents of his religious thought or of the eccentricity within an English context of religious positions Newman would have insisted were orthodox. Evangelicalism is made to cover a multitude of excesses and absurdities, not all of which can fairly be laid exclusively at its door, but there is no indication of different phases of the movement or differences between Methodist and Calvinist evangelicalism. Evangelical attitudes are illustrated from sources which can appear randomly selected because their particular appropriateness is not explained or justified. Dean Mansel is introduced as if he was a representative of normative divinity instead of a theological extremist whose work was condemned both by John Stuart Mill and by the liberal theologian F.D. Maurice with whose Christian socialism (a term not mentioned in the book) the Dickens of *Hard Times* had considerable sympathy. That once-controversial symposium of Victorian liberal divinity *Essays and Reviews* is treated as if its only significant contributor was Benjamin Jowett, but Dickens's positive response to it seems to pick up on ideas developed in the first essay by Frederick Temple, future Archbishop of Canterbury.

The folly of those who dismiss or trivialise Dickensian religion is quite properly rebuked, but beyond that there is relatively little sense of coherent sustained debate with or within the critical tradition. Many critics are quoted, sometimes, irritatingly, without being named in the main text so their pronouncements seem curiously impersonal and oracular, but this is usually just to provide crutches for the discussion and to make local and specific points.

There are also a few trivial lapses. A teacher in *David Copperfield* (1849-50) is described as “reminiscent” of Dr Arnold in *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857). A rather meagre index (less than two pages) contrives to credit Charles Kingsley rather than his friend Thomas Hughes with authorship of *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* though the attribution is perfectly clear and correct in the main text.

But there is much to be grateful for. French criticism of English fiction in the mid-nineteenth century was sometimes shrewder and more sardonically detached than English reviewing and Paul Forgues and Emile Montégut are quoted here to good effect. Oulton delivers us from clear and present danger because we are at risk of losing any sense of the pervasive presence and power of religion in ostensibly secular Victorian fiction not only as subject matter but as a determinant of narrative form.

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Wilkie Collins. *Blind Love*, ed. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox. Peterborough, ONT: Broadview Press, 2003. Series: Broadview Literary Texts. pp. 465. ISBN 155111447X.

The story of the composition of Wilkie Collins’s final work is almost as striking as that found in the novel itself. In the spring of 1887, soon after completing the revisions to the short stories collected in *Little Novels* and with several months left before he needed to start work on *The Legacy of Cain* for Tillotsons, Collins began to plan a new fifteen-part serial. Provisionally entitled “Iris,” this was to be a romantic tale of political intrigue set in Paris during the second exile of Napoleon following his defeat at Waterloo. However, the author’s health problems which were exacerbated by the summer heat, plus the difficulties of finding a periodical willing to accept a story of such awkward length, forced Collins to lay the work aside in late July with only one third completed. In December of the same year, at lunch with Nina and Fred Lehmann, he heard the inside story of an ingenious insurance fraud from the lawyer Horace Pym and appropriated it for future fictional use. By May 1888 *The Legacy of Cain* was complete, reports of the von Scheurer insurance trial had appeared in the press, and Collins’s agent A.P. Watt had made a deal for his next serial. This was to be a story in twenty parts for John Dicks’s penny paper *Bow Bells*. With Dicks’s popular readership in mind, Collins economically determined to tack on the tale of the insurance fraud case to the existing fifteen chapters of “Iris,” at the same time shifting the setting of the prologue from the court of Louis XVIII to rural Ireland during the “Land War” of 1879-1882. The initial working title was “His Money? Or His Life” in celebration of the insurance plot but this was soon changed to “The Lord Harry,” after the tale’s devil-may-care protagonist. Despite having to hand both

the manuscript of “Iris” and Horace Pym’s detailed von Scheurer scenario, with his health failing on all fronts, Collins made slow progress on the story and the beginning of the serial run had to be pushed back. Shaken up in a cab collision in the winter, he had only written two-thirds of the narrative by the spring of 1889. A crisis was then looming in the form of Collins’s *next* serial which was scheduled to start in the *Illustrated London News* in July. The crisis was averted by Watt’s persuading Dicks to defer his demands (permanently as it turned out), and to let the *ILN* take “The Lord Harry.” Serving a rather more select middle-class audience, the owners of the *ILN* detected a hint of blasphemy in the existing title and forced the switch to *Blind Love*. More significantly, the change of periodical venue involved a shift to a serial in twenty-six parts, which necessitated a good deal of rejigging of the instalments. Collins then made the decision to dictate a detailed scenario of the unwritten chapters of the novel, primarily for his own use and that of the illustrator. However, the massive stroke that he suffered at the end of June ensured that he would not complete the story himself, so that the little black book containing the scenario was passed to Collins’s colleague Walter Besant. During his long series of collaborations with James Rice, Besant had had plenty of practice at turning plot summaries into narrative fiction, so on Collins’s death in September he was able to make a workmanlike job of completing the novel from Chapter 49. The fact that the novel exists at all is thus a tribute to the tenacious professionalism of Wilkie Collins as an author.

This new edition of *Blind Love* by Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox represents the fourth Collins novel to appear in the Broadview Literary Texts series. Three of these are lesser-known late works – the present volume, plus my own edition of *The Evil Genius* and that of *Heart and Science* by Steve Farmer, who also produced a fine edition of *The Moonstone* (reviewed in the *Journal* in 1999). The distinctive feature of the Broadview editions is the cornucopia of contemporary documents which accompany the texts of the novels, with the aim of encouraging students to read them in the material and discursive contexts in which they were first produced. Bachman and Cox’s *Blind Love* is exemplary in this respect. First and foremost, though, we have an impeccably edited text based on the Chatto and Windus three-volume edition of 1890 with Walter Besant’s preface, and accompanied by the original Forestier illustrations drawn for the *ILN*. Then we have the editors’ commentary found not only in the lengthy introduction but also in the explanatory footnotes to the novel. (Since the text in fact presents few difficulties for the modern reader, these are relatively few in number. Even so one or two struck me as rather tangential to the narrative itself – a lengthy paragraph on the importation of Cheddar cheese in Chapter 6 being a case in point.) At the end of the volume we are given eight substantial appendices, with half concerning the composition of the novel: Horace Pym’s notes on the von Scheurer case and reports of the trial in the *Times*, plus extracts from both the manuscript of “Iris” and the little black book. In addition there are not only records of the novel’s reception (in the form of obituaries as well as reviews), but also materials reflecting the novel’s engagement with the “Irish Question”

(including cartoons from *Punch*) and the “Woman Question” (in the form of Mrs Beeton’s strictures on the duties of the lady’s maid). The relevance of all these documents is clearly outlined in the editors’ introduction.

The only significant doubt concerning the present edition is whether Collins’s last novel can bear the weight of this substantial critical apparatus. Against the rich tapestry of contextual material poor Wilkie’s last desperate effort can begin to look rather threadbare. As reflected in their discussion of Collins’s position in the debates on Home Rule for Ireland and the emancipation of women, the editors themselves seem rather divided on the quality of the novel. In the area of race and empire, they conclude that Lord Harry “embodies practically every stereotypical Celtic vice” (22) and thus that the novel as a whole works crudely to justify “Britain’s continued rule over Ireland” (21). As regards gender, however, the novel’s three main female characters (Iris Henley, Fanny Mere, and Mrs Vimpany) are presented as victims of “the patriarchal power structure ... [who] refuse to submit to their destiny” (30), so that the novel is read as “Wilkie Collins’s final challenge to a Victorian domestic ideology that perpetuated gender inequalities” (23). On the face of it, such contradictory attitudes to questions of hierarchy seem unlikely to be found in the same narrative. For me the truth of the matter lies between these two extremes. The encounter between the “Saxon” Hugh Mountjoy and the “Celt” Lord Harry, rivals for the heroine’s affections, is presented in a far from one-sided way, and Iris Henley’s consistent preference for the latter must have some ideological significance. At the same time, while Iris, Mrs Vimpany, and, especially, Fanny clearly are distant relations of strong Collins heroines like Marian Halcombe, it seems something of an overstatement to read the end of the novel as a celebration of the three women’s finding “happiness and fulfillment with each other in isolation from the patriarchal power structure” (31). After all, Fanny remains the lady’s maid, Mrs Vimpany becomes the housekeeper, and the Scottish villa where they hide from the world is owned by Hugh Mountjoy, to whom Iris finally gives her hand in the Epilogue which follows Lord Harry’s assassination. “She has one secret – and only one – which she keeps from her husband. In her desk she preserves a lock of Lord Harry’s hair. Why? I know not. Blind Love doth never wholly die.” This is how Besant brought the narrative to a close, though we know that the final words in Wilkie’s little black book were slightly different. There, not for the first time in the story sounding a remarkably untransgressive note, he wrote: “Blind love to the last! How like a woman!”

But in the end these are issues on which readers can judge for themselves. The outstanding advantage of the Broadview edition of *Blind Love* is that it marshals ample evidence for us to draw our own conclusions. The publishers and editors are to be congratulated on making Wilkie Collins’s final novel available in such an attractive and engaging form.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



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Contents

~Articles~

- Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: On Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"
LAURENCE TALAIRACH-VIELMAS 3
- Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of *The Woman in White*
G. ST. JOHN SCOTT 21
- "Never be divided again": *Armada* and the Threat to Romantic Friendship
CAROLYN OULTON 31
- "Dearest Harriet": On Harriet Collins's Italian Journal, 1836-37
ANGELA RICHARDSON 41

~Reviews~

- Reality's Dark Light*, ed. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox
JENNY BOURNE TAYLOR 59
- Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing*; Bradley Deane, *The Making of the Victorian Novelist*
GRAHAM LAW 61

Editors' Note

In this issue of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* we bring you four articles spanning the length and breadth of Collins's career. Laurence Vielmas gives a detailed reading of two novels from the last decade of the author's life, unravelling their relations to the new mode of scientific Gothic and its work in the reconstruction of gender roles in the later nineteenth century. Angela Richardson, on the other hand, goes back to the author's early teens, and offers a new reading of Harriet Collins's manuscript *Italian Journal* of 1836-37, making the case for the mother to be treated as a writer in her own right. In between, Graham Stott and Carloyn Oulton return to two of the major sensation novels of the 1860s, focusing in turn on the dynamics of weekly serial publication and the conventions of romantic friendship.

In addition, in the Reviews section, we have a notice of *Reality's Dark Light*, edited by Bachman and Cox, the first collection of scholarly essays on the author to appear since *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront* (1995). This is followed by a review of specialist studies by Weedon and Deane on the Victorian fiction industry with particular reference to the rise of the mass market, both of which give a prominent place to the author of "The Unknown Public."

We hope you will enjoy the issue and agree that it testifies to the thriving state of Collins's studies. The spring of 2005 will see a special one-day conference dedicated to the life and work of Wilkie Collins, organized by the School of English at the University of Sheffield, and we hope to be able to be able to reprint papers from that event in our next issue.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: On Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas

University of Toulouse-Le Mirail

"... Knowledge is its own justification and its own reward. The roaring mob follows us with its cry of Cruelty. We pity their ignorance. Knowledge sanctifies cruelty. The old anatomist stole dead bodies for Knowledge. In that sacred cause, if I could steal a living man without being found out, I would tie him on my table, and grasp my grand discovery in days, instead of months. . . ."

(Nathan Benjulia in Collins, *Heart and Science*, 179)

The novels of Wilkie Collins are constantly haunted by Gothic motifs, though suitably adapted to the taste for sensationalism in mid-Victorian Britain. His use of Gothic trappings, however, does change significantly between the 1850s and the 1880s. Though literal ghosts never really walk in Collins's earlier novels, appearing more as figures of self-effacement or denial of identity, nevertheless there appear in his later works new spectres which wear far fewer metaphorical shrouds. In the seminal sensation novels of the early 1860s, the literary motif of the ghost often coalesced with images of live burial, echoing late eighteenth-century tales of horror or Poe's reworkings of the theme of immurement. In fact, sensationalism's quest for probability frequently replaced premature burial with wrongful incarceration, often due to dubious medical theory and practice.¹ In Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-60) or

¹ When literal cases of live burial are evoked in sensation fiction, though, they tend to remain confined to the recesses of the text – to the world of dreams and imagination, clearly differentiated from reality. For instance, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* as serialized in the *Sixpenny Magazine*, the amateur detective Robert Audley sees the grave of Lucy Talboys (*alias* the bigamous Lady Audley) open and the eponymous heroine gaily trip out of her grave (*Sixpenny Magazine* 3, 1862, 65). There the theme of the "living dead" serves to dramatize the detective's suspicions concerning his aunt's identity, in a dream in which the female criminal is reborn out of putrefying matter.

Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), for example, the lunatic asylum acts as a new locus of confinement, transforming the haunted castle into a medically-supervised institution inhabited by nameless ghostly women who are neither dead nor alive. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the guilty heroine, who has staged her own death in order to marry again into high society, is finally punished by being immured in a Belgian sanatorium, where she can no longer endanger the social fabric of Victorian England. In *The Woman in White*, in order to preserve the guilty secret of Sir Percival Glyde, the ghostly Anne Catherick dies and is interred under the name of her half-sister Laura Glyde, who herself is drugged and metaphorically buried alive in a lunatic asylum, the switch of identities being written into the lettering on a tombstone or on the label on a shirt. In both cases, the female ghost, which functions initially as a subversive image, is contained by the motif of live burial. At the same time, as is often the case in sensation fiction, forged letters and registers – as well as biased medical verdicts and warped legal evidence – construct and erase identity, fashioning individuals according to the terms of artificial codes, and turning life and death into figures of speech. Thus, live burials in Braddon and Collins engage with the problematics of perception and misinterpretation: their female ghosts raise questions about the discourses that underpin a society obsessed with taming and managing the slippery and spectral female self and which subjects women to a sometimes murderous patriarchal yoke.

The fact that such metaphorical ghosts are almost invariably female highlights sensationalism's use of Gothic thematics for feminist purposes. As Tamar Heller has argued, in his most popular novels Collins reworks the Radcliffean mode of female Gothic to express a critique of patriarchal power and authority, whether in the familial, literary, or political sphere. Fragments of buried writing and submerged feminist and reformist protests repeatedly surface in his narratives, thereby challenging Victorian gender ideology – if only for brief moments. Indeed, in the 1860s the female spectres created by Collins, Braddon or even Ellen Wood, all serve to some extent to endanger the marital institution, the touchstone of Victorian ideology. But Collins's female ghosts change faces in the 1880s. In a far more literal way than in *The Woman in White*, the later novels concern themselves with the management of the female self, entrapping real women's bodies within a medical discourse designed to institutionalize and enforce prescribed female roles.

In the novels written in the last decade of his life, Collins increasingly portrays a society where science defines and secures gender identity through the lens of "materialist supernaturalism," to borrow the phrase of Jenny Bourne Taylor (*In the Secret Theatre*, 6). Rather in the vein of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this new mode of Gothic not only rewrites mystery in the name of verisimilitude but also uses science to legitimize knowledge and

thus impress the mark of Victorian ideology on its melodramatic plots of enforced confinement and male control. In all his novels, Collins's Gothic villains, whether physicians, chemists, physiologists or simply quacks, reflect a secularized culture. In this way, Collins undoubtedly paves the way for the conflation of fantasy and science in the novels of the *fin de siècle*. With the development of mental physiology, the irrational workings of the mind come to permeate late Victorian tales of mystery, so that obscure enigmas are now not assigned to the supernatural but given Social Darwinian interpretations. *Dracula's* obsession with atavistic regression, or Stevenson's reworking of the Gothic theme of the double in chemical terms in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, are both illustrations of the incursion of science into late-Victorian horror narratives. Yet, in his own career, Collins began to drop opium-induced trances for more modern sensational devices, pushing further the limits of verisimilitude in line with advances in physiology. Somnambulism and mesmerism were thus to give way to suspended animation in the creation of the sensational plot twist. Probing in a new way the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, between life and death, Collins colours many of his late novels with death-in-life states which effectively replace his earlier ghostly figures.

Therefore, this article attempts to investigate how, in two novels of the 1880s, deathlike states push Collins's "materialist supernaturalism" to extremes, changing his discursive mode into an exhibition of medicalized and mechanized female figures. In *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880) and *Heart and Science* (1883), Collins's physicians bear no resemblance to the benevolent outcast fascinated by mental physiology or the tricky practitioner playing with laudanum, as found in *The Moonstone* (1868). The devious practices of Count Fosco, the charming villain of *The Woman in White*, pale in comparison with the perverse medical experiments encountered in the late novels. While undertones of the old anatomist visiting the graveyard at night to disinter his study materials are part and parcel of *Jezebel's Daughter*, in which a living-dead female character barely escapes from live burial, *Heart and Science* expresses Collins's virulent opposition to vivisection and features a mad scientist who tests his theories on a paralectic young girl.

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Published a few years before *Heart and Science*, *Jezebel's Daughter*, despite its modern aspects, bears more traces of old-fashioned Gothic, and illustrates Collins's journey from Radcliffean plots to more modern Gothic. In fact, the novel originated from a play, *The Red Vial*, which was written and performed in 1858 but which Collins never published. Both the play and the

novel are grounded in highly melodramatic black-and-white characterization, staging innocent characters victimized by scheming villains. Yet Collins notably reworks previous patterns of entrapment, since the plot literally depends on the literary motif of live burial. In working in this way, however, Collins did not make any breach of verisimilitude. As Jan Bondeson has explained (93), as far back as the 1790s tales teeming with dead people awakening in their coffins made claims to be telling the truth, and even in the late Victorian period fears of burial alive were still part and parcel of everyday reality.² Despite medical advances, the signs of death remained far from certain, so that tales of the living dead did not only partake of the fantastic. Far from being the epitome of rationality, medicine's shifting and potentially unreliable verdict on death could therefore be used as a plot device likely to generate mystery. As a stock Gothic motif, the figure of the living dead in *Jezebel's Daughter* thus radically revamps Collins's earlier sensational ghosts to take us into the world of the deadhouse. As a matter of fact, Collins claims in the preface to the novel that he has drawn on both contemporary documents and first-hand experience in order to "build his fiction upon a foundation of fact." As Bondeson shows, even in the nineteenth century the exhumation of coffins sometimes led to hair-raising discoveries: bodies turned face downwards, contorted faces, torn fingernails and broken foreheads, or missing fingers that the buried alive had gnawed out of despair.

Collins's narrative, indeed, calls to mind the activism against premature-burial which, Bondeson argues, was launched in the mid-eighteenth century by Jacob Winslow and Jean-Jacques Bruhier. Both underlined the uncertainty of the traditional signs of death and claimed that putrefaction was the only reliable indicator. But, while Winslow advocated an exhaustive series of tests to prove death, ranging from tickling patients with a quill to rubbing their gums with garlic or pouring vinegar and pepper in the mouth, Bruhier was in favour of building waiting mortuaries supervised by watchmen where the corpses should be kept until the onset of putrefaction. In France in 1787, the physician François Thierry made proposals similar to Bruhier's to develop morgues for the recently deceased throughout the country, while in Austria in 1788 Johann Peter Frank supported the building of communal deadhouses in every town. In the 1790s, Christopher Wilhelm Hufeland was the first to draw plans for a Weimar deadhouse (*Leichenhaus*). Waiting mortuaries were then

² As a matter of fact, in a letter addressed to B.W. Ball and dated June 26, 1865 (Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin), Collins comments on a report in *Times* (June 14, 1865), concerning a case where a twelve-year-old boy named Baty had regained consciousness half an hour before his *post mortem* examination was scheduled, totally unaware that he had narrowly escaped live burial. I am grateful to Graham Law for drawing my attention to this letter.

established in many cities throughout the German states (Bondeson, 53; 55; 60; 88-92). In *Jezebel's Daughter*, Collins works out the *dénouement* of his double plot in one of these deadhouses, turning the corpse into a failure of physiological theory and the ghost into a medical misreading.

Physiology is a vital backdrop to *Jezebel's Daughter*, which features a number of scientists who pursue the Gothic quest for Faustean knowledge. On the one hand, in Frankfurt, Dr Fontaine becomes the devoted disciple of Paracelsus, a Hungarian experimental chemist. Researching fatal drugs and their antidotes, Paracelsus and Fontaine work on two “resuscitated poisons” (118), which can be employed alike to kill or cure, depending on the dose administered.³ The two poisons thus become key motifs in the Gothic narrative as powerful symbols of disruption: as poisons, they overstep physical boundaries by penetrating the human body; as ambivalent medicine they transgress physiological boundaries by entailing life or death; and as criminal weapons they upset moral borderlines.

However, despite their experimentation on animals (119), the chemists are not constructed as plotting villains. While Paracelsus kills himself and bequeaths his research to Fontaine, the latter wants his research to fall into oblivion after his death, since only one antidote has been discovered in the course of the treatment of a patient (Hans Grimm, later known as Jack Straw) who has been accidentally poisoned. Symbolically speaking, the poison acts as a shameful material that needs to be buried and forgotten, while chemical experimentation is associated with a degenerate throwback suffering from mental alienation. The insanity of Grimm/Straw constructs him as an embodiment of regressive knowledge. His physical features – his yellow pallor and prematurely grey hair induced by the poison experiment – are so many signs of a grim past, turning his body into a ghostly living parchment, a record of base and disgraceful criminal deeds.

On the other hand, Collins's double plot also introduces Mr. Wagner who, though not a physician, is one of the governors of Bethlehem Hospital in London, an asylum for the insane. His experiments on his first subject (Jack Straw) are concealed from his wife but revealed in his private diary after his death. Once again, Fontaine's patient is metaphorically embedded and buried – this time in Wagner's diary. But as a devoted wife, Mrs. Wagner decides to continue her husband's experiments on his chosen patient, visiting the hospital and taking the lunatic away with her.

³ The ambivalent poison indifferently likely to kill or cure is a recurrent plot device in Collins's fiction. His frequent use of arsenic (most notably in *The Law and the Lady*) which was used both as a cosmetic or tonic and as a deadly poison illustrates Collins's fascination with double-edged chemical products.

It emerges that the double plot hinges upon two versions of a buried manuscript disinterred by the two scientists' wives, with the role of Jack Straw being pivotal in both cases. The narrative indeed displaces potential scientific villainy onto two women, who are widowed on the same day at the opening of the novel, each continuing to pursue her husband's experiments. Mrs. Wagner, a strong-willed and attractive woman, devotes her life to helping unfortunate women and the insane; Mrs. Fontaine, in contrast, is no philanthropist – she lacks any sense of Christian charity towards the weak. She is a black-haired, vain and mesmerizing beauty, a mercenary villainess eager for power and thirsty for wealth – the Jezebel of the title. Obviously, comparing herself to Anna Maria Zwanziger, a poisoner sentenced to death in 1811, Mrs. Fontaine belongs to a line of demon female poisoners, from the clichéd criminal types of Gothic fiction to 'real' Victorian criminals like Madeleine Smith who inspired Collins's earlier sensational plots from *Armada* (1864) to *The Law and the Lady* (1875). Having stolen her husband's poisons and antidotes, Mrs. Fontaine first poisons Mr. Keller then cures him to secure his indebtedness and make him bend to the idea of a marriage between her daughter and his son. While Fritz (Keller's son), Mrs. Wagner and Jack Straw join Keller in Frankfurt, Mrs. Fontaine, driven by her debts, then steals money from the company safe and forges the registers. Mrs. Wagner, who conscientiously writes her accounts in duplicate, confronts Mrs. Fontaine, promising to conceal the theft on condition that Fontaine restores the money, but Fontaine eventually attempts to poison her as well.

Interestingly, as both a spectral threat and a reformed example, Jack Straw, the insane character, becomes a carrier of the novel's moralistic charge, symbolizing the guilty past returning into the present both in orthodox and political ways. Moreover, Straw's constant struggle between good (controlled) behaviour and bad (unrestrained) behaviour echoes the competition between the female doubles. Mrs. Fontaine's uninhibited and unsatiable vanity is constantly framed by puritan terminology, and the novel's quest for "retribution" (222) aims at eliminating the female "demon in human form" (129), so as to leave but a single, good female character. In this way, the interplay between the reformed lunatic and the female doubles transforms Fontaine into an embodiment of Straw's raving mania and his buried fears, while Wagner comes to represent his moral management and his sense of responsibility.

Hence, the motif of the asylum plays a significant part in the narrative – though not so much as an image of confinement. Unlike in *The Woman in White*, for instance, where working-class and female characters are subject to forced entrapment and medical control, here the representation of the world of Bedlam – despite the whips and chains denounced by Wagner – does

not appear to encode much in the way of social protest. Rather, the lunatic imparts an allegorical dimension to the text right from the start. Jack Straw's nickname points to his capacity to weave straw to make "hats, baskets and table-mats" (12), an activity he practices to control the frenzy of his hands. His name thus evinces his reformed character: his mechanical weaving illustrates the process of self-control and self-discipline he constantly undergoes, as when he wrings the chains to restrain himself from drifting into madness.⁴ When Wagner takes him with her, she again furthers his education by teaching him to control himself. Significantly, Wagner's training methods recall the nineteenth-century lunacy reform movement, which favoured the teaching of self-regulation and denounced restraint and confinement (Leavy, 93).

At the same time, lacking a name or a past, without even a mother tongue, Jack Straw is fashioned after the Wandering Jew or Maturin's Melmoth. He is found first in Frankfurt under the name of Hans Grimm and reappears in London in the Bethlehem Insane Hospital as Jack Straw. Through this movement between two capital cities of Europe, Jack Straw weaves together the two parts of the novel, the two widows, and the two plots. Twice embedded in scientific diaries, a living parchment testifying to a criminal past, Straw is thus a textual weaver, to play upon the etymology of the word "text" (*texere*: to weave). The reformed lunatic then encapsulates the process of duplication at issue in the novel and becomes the epitome of duality. Straw not only weaves together two countries, two cities, two names, two widows; further, he weaves together the past (as Dr Fontaine's poisoned employee) and the present (as Wagner's experimental patient), reality and fantasy, and eventually even life and death. This slippery figure, whose identity shifts, whose age is uncertain, whose mind is unstable, whose consciousness is double, and who hovers between life and death just as mysteriously as he travels from one country to another, thus becomes central to the Gothic framework.

Sensational detectives of the 1860s like Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White* or Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* may have tended towards monomania, while half-witted characters like Anne Catherick may have caught glimpses of the hidden truth. But in *Jezebel's Daughter* a raving maniac (a forerunner of Seward's zoophagus insane patient in *Dracula*)

⁴ The superintendent at Bedlam interprets Straw's intricate plaiting as "purely mechanical" (17), hence as a reflex action that does not indicate any sign of intelligence. In William Carpenter's terminology (515), Jack Straw's self-management resembles "unconscious cerebration," that is, the automatic and unconscious actions people perform daily, either during sleep or when attention is "wholly engrossed by some entirely different train of thought" (Carpenter, 516). Straw's plaiting thus exemplifies the extent to which the patient has internalized the codes of propriety to which Victorian individuals were expected to conform.

suddenly leads the investigation and controls the shifting boundary between life and death. A figure of ambivalence, neither sane nor insane, who naively exposes the motives of those around him, Jack Straw becomes the “keeper of the keys” and has the power to gain and grant access to all hidden places. Most significantly, he has access both to Wagner’s desk where she keeps her accounts and to Fontaine’s Pink Cupboard where she conceals her poisons. Positioned in between his current benevolent mistress and the criminal wife of his former employer, Jack Straw acts as a haunting presence reminiscent of the puritan conscience: Mrs. Fontaine’s guilty knowledge is in the hands of a slow-witted character who can unlock the secrets of the past.

When Jezebel eventually poisons Mrs. Wagner, the latter’s cold body, the heartbeat weak to vanishing point (179), is brought to the deadhouse to remain there for three nights, since the doctor refuses to give “his written authority for the burial” (190).⁵ In fact, Straw has secretly administered to Wagner the antidote to “Alexander’s Wine,” which, paradoxically, first gives the appearance of death before bringing on revival. The physiological trick which provides the climactic twist of plot involves a female body bound to a set of strings in the deadhouse. Wagner is put in one of the cells designed to store corpses temporarily, with brass thimbles placed on her fingers, each connected to a bell:

Doctor Dormann pointed through the parted curtains to the lofty cell, ventilated from the top, and warmed (like the Watchman’s Chamber) by an apparatus under the flooring. In the middle of the cell was a stand, placed there to support the coffin. Above the stand a horizontal bar projected, which was fixed over the doorway. It was finished with a pulley, through which passed a long thin string hanging loosely downward at one end, and attached at the other to a small alarm-bell, placed over the door on the outer side – that is to say, on the side of the Watchman’s Chamber.

(Collins, *Jezebel’s Daughter*, 197)

As Collins hints in his dedicatory preface, the waiting mortuary found at the end of *Jezebel’s Daughter* is in fact based upon the one opened in Frankfurt in 1828, designed by the architect Johann Michael Voit, rebuilt and enlarged in 1848, and still in use in the 1880s. It was originally composed of separate wards for male and female bodies, each of twenty-three beds, and was then reformed to provide individual funeral cells. The corpses had their hands and feet connected to a system of strings leading to an alarm bell. Ventilation and

⁵ Here Collins is perhaps conscious that, in Britain, certificates stating the cause of death became compulsory only after 1874, in response to the growing number of accidental and suicidal poisonings. As Parssinen suggests, though the 1868 Poisons and Pharmacy Act sought to regulate the sale of certain poisons, the law was frequently ignored by drug-sellers and poisonous patent medicines largely evaded the legislation.

heating were provided, as well as the medical equipment needed in case of resuscitation (Bondeson, 100; 105).

The deadhouse is a further example – remember the sanatorium at the end of *Armada* – of Collins’s use of institutions as plot devices to signal society’s ultimate control over the individual. The place Collins chooses for shattering physiological certainties, and collapsing the boundaries of life and death, is a place orchestrated by discipline. According to Bondeson, smoking, cursing or drinking alcohol were forbidden in such institutions and no visitors were permitted (Bondeson, 101). With their strict regulation of class and gender, and their obsession with physical and moral hygiene, the deadhouses epitomized Victorian normative institutions. As such, the deadhouse comes to symbolize a desperate attempt at framing and supervising, observing and regulating, in the face of the uncertainties of medical knowledge. It is thus no coincidence that Collins sets his *dénouement* there, even if he anarchically tenants it with an irresponsible temporary warden who forces Jack Straw to get drunk with him. In this place Mrs. Wagner’s resurrection is not merely physiological but resonates also with moral significance, since her wicked double is entrapped in the deadhouse and forced to await her revival. Mrs. Fontaine (who has secretly followed the funeral procession) finds herself locked up among the putrifying bodies and is mistaken by the guard for a ghost (206), so that the deadhouse thus forms a modern version of the ruined Gothic castle which mirrors her own rotten, regressive criminal nature.⁶ As when she had used her miraculous cleanser, the “macula extincor,” to forge the account book or to erase her husband’s formula on the poison bottle, Fontaine has only managed to blot out the signifiers of Wagner’s life. Being morally stained, the ghostlike woman cannot truly efface her double and is in her turn blotted out by the trope of death. Collins’s scientific narrative therefore plays upon the signs of putrefaction, fusing together the eradication of the supernatural with a staging of feminine immorality. In the end, Wagner revives only after Fontaine – ironically but necessarily – has drunk the deadly poison with which she intended to kill Jack Straw.

In *Jezebel’s Daughter*, the deadhouse therefore serves to render the motif of the living dead literal, modern, and secular, more powerfully to moralize and normalize the tale of female villainy. Fontaine’s private diary recording her murder attempts is finally read as a reflection of her morbid mind, and the medicalized reading of the female character eventually robs the wicked double of her Gothic dimension, reducing the demonic to the deranged. With Wagner safely restored to health, and the Faustian quest for mastery of the

⁶ As Victor Sage has suggested in his *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (46), salvation thus can only be achieved through the corruption of the body.

mechanisms of life and death successfully unravelled, *Jezebel's Daughter* ostensibly closes on a note of harmony and reconciliation – the better to enforce prevailing Victorian ideology and obliterate the female Other. Yet, like a feminized version of the Gothic buried manuscript, Fontaine's diary remains a disturbing presence in the closing pages. This is all the more so because of its confessional tone, which leads the narrator to conclude incongruously with a final prayer for the redemption of the her soul: "Lord, have mercy on her – miserable sinner!" (225). In thus recasting her villainy in medical and theological terms, the narrative eventually betrays its own fears of failure to keep the ghastly figure of female evil under control.

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In contrast to *Jezebel's Daughter*, *Heart and Science* is strikingly modern in its medical experimentation and its attacks on vivisection. Frequently deemed as a novel "with a purpose," *Heart and Science* seems to have been written, as Collins argues in his Preface, to help "the cause of the harmless and affectionate beings of God's creation" (2). The propagandist purposes of the novel were indeed evident at the time of its publication and sharply underlined by the reviewers. Thus the *Academy* saw the novel as an "anti-vivisection manifesto," while the *Spectator* pointed to the novel as "a contribution to the literature of the Anti-vivisection movement" (cited in Page, 213, 217). Moreover, the Cruelty to Animal Act was passed only in 1881, and Collins actively communicated with Frances Power Cobbe, one of the leaders of the movement, who not only opposed vivisection but was also in favour of female suffrage and fought for the rights of women.

Notwithstanding its modern aspects, *Heart and Science* nonetheless weaves together two plot strands both clearly of Gothic origin and each with its own heavy villain. First and foremost, the novel recounts the story of the orphan Carmina, a wealthy heiress who becomes subject to the legal authority of her aunt, Mrs. Gallilee, on her father's death. Secretly engaged to her guardian's son, the surgeon Ovid Vere, Carmina is forced into seclusion by her mercenary and debt-ridden aunt who seeks to prevent her niece's marriage in order to inherit her fortune. Here Collins's narrative obviously echoes the old Radcliffean Gothic romance of female victimization, as the pure and innocent Carmina becomes increasingly nervous and hysterical. Before long the sensitive feminized hero Ovid is sent to Canada in order to strengthen his nervous system (and his manhood), while Carmina's fiercely loyal chaperon must go back to Italy to nurse her dying husband. Thus the helpless and friendless heroine is left the prisoner of her aunt, whose increasingly overt cruelty she must silently and patiently endure.

Like Collins's first and greatest narrative success, *Heart and Science* is

thus also “the story of what a woman’s patience can endure” (*Woman in White*, xvii). Carmina is another Laura Fairlie, with hair “so light a brown that it just escaped being flaxen” and a general “want of complexion in the face and of flesh in the figure” (*Heart and Science*, 13). Both defined in terms of lack, her face and figure signal her weakness and propensity for consumption or neurasthenia. But if the characterization of Carmina hints at Victorian representations of idealized wasting women, she does not quite fit the Griselda stereotype. Signs of rebellion do appear in the submissive girl, although they are largely restricted to her written confessions to her old chaperon now back in Italy. Carmina, indeed, resents her powerless position, both as a ward subjected to her aunt’s authority and as a woman denied a voice of her own. Though decorum demands that she should never bang doors, she chokes and suffocates as she is denied any form of personal privacy, and her anger towards her aunt once drives her to the verge of hysteria (155). Right at the start, her arrival in London (which she wished to keep secret) is revealed to her aunt through a series of unfortunate coincidences. Spies constantly intrude upon her private interviews with Ovid, who himself betrays their secret engagement to his mother, thus triggering Carmina’s torments. Gradually, Carmina sinks into a form of morbid sensitivity which the local doctor’s tonic cannot touch. Little by little her nervous system begins to exhibit hysterical symptoms, while her body comes to shake and shiver at the slightest sound.

Carmina’s weak will and her constant subjection to the authority of others hence create the first strand of Collins’s modernized Gothic plot, as the image of the fragile and passive heroine becomes enmeshed within the language of physiology. As Jane Wood points out (45), beneath the cultural given of woman’s patience and endurance lay widespread confusion as to the actual meaning of the female will. Simultaneously signifying both wilfulness and volition, will was a key term to naturalize and enforce woman’s powerless position. Caught within this physiological discourse, the supposed weakness of the female will inevitably placed women alongside animals and half-wits on the evolutionary scale. In *Heart and Science*, Carmina’s weakness and powerlessness thus acquire new tones when seen through the filtering lens of medical science. The nature of woman’s will indeed forms a major theme of the narrative, which places the heroine in the company of a series of strong-willed women who nevertheless exhibit similar signs of hysteria. These are: Carmina’s tigerish Italian duenna Teresa who is tempted to use her husband’s canister to poison Carmina’s guardian and even attempts to strangle her; the aunt herself who rules over the whole household with a rod of iron, but suddenly loses self-control and has to be removed to a lunatic asylum; the secretive and ill-tempered governess Miss Minerva whose “firmness of will” can only be dissected by “Inquisitive Science,” and who has an “irritable temper, serving perhaps as a safety-valve to an underlying explosive force”

(22); and even the disobedient slow-witted child Zoe who knows neither discipline nor order, and who later secretly communicates to Ovid the alarming news of Carmina's decline. Confined in a house inhabited in the main by self-assertive and unrestrained females – only the naive Mr. Gallilee and the well-disciplined Maria stand out – Carmina's passivity highlights a double bind familiar throughout the Victorian period: weak-willed women justify male control, but strong-willed women render it even more necessary. Thus, as so many reflections of what Carmina might become if unchecked, the savage Italian duenna, the furious Mrs. Gallilee, the irritable Minerva, and the disruptive Zoe all point out the necessity of Carmina's experience of discipline, which the victim compares to that of a penitent confined to a "reformatory institution," with her aunt playing the role of matron (189).

Carmina's quest for love and marriage is throughout framed by medical discourse. She is introduced to the reader in pathological terms, as we are informed from the very beginning that she is destined to become the "patient" of her surgeon lover (6). Yet the notion of woman's mind as an open field for scientific investigation is most literally fulfilled in the second Gothic strand of Collins's plot. The role of Mrs. Gallilee is echoed in that of a second villain, who pursues his own male Gothic Faustean quest. Dr Benjulia is a physiologist who researches the mysteries of the brain and experiments on animals to perfect his knowledge of cerebral diseases, though popular opinion believes him to be in search of the secret of the Philosopher's Stone (67). Not unlike Paracelsus in *Jezebel's Daughter*, the physician is a six-foot-six giant with gaunt features and "protuberant cheekbones," which earn him the nickname of "the living skeleton" (63). His thin, dark gray eyes, gipsy-brown complexion, and straight black hair hanging over his face make him resemble an American Indian (63). These suggestions of atavistic physiology and miscegenation link him to typical nineteenth-century portraits of the criminal. Naturally, his degenerative features construct him as a transgressive figure and herald his activities as a vivisectionist. His physical traits betray the scientist who oversteps boundaries and enters forbidden territory. Liminal images permeate his character, whether in his appearance as one of the living dead or in the presentation of his secret laboratory. The latter is a modern version of the castle in the Apennines. Hidden away "in a desolate field – in some lost suburban neighbourhood that nobody can discover" (66), the laboratory is hidden from view, its single skylight protected by a blind, and always locked, the key kept on Benjulia's person day and night. This mysterious place hosts most monstrous secrets: associated with dissection, Benjulia's laboratory explores bodies turned inside out, changing the seamless image of medical science into a monstrous fragmented sight where the private secrets of the body give way to the professional's knife.

Most significantly, Benjulia's devilish quest for a knowledge which "sanctifies cruelty" (179) is repeatedly associated with perverse sexual desire. The physician's patients are all sensitive subjects, female hysterics whose disorders he seeks to regulate. His medical experimentation on the half-witted Zoe's Cervical Plexus, tickling and paralyzing her to force her submit to his will (65), ranges this female patient with his other animals. But his fascination with "brains and nerves" (67) barely cloaks a desire to pry into woman's mysteries, to cut open women's brains in order to see the inside of the female psyche. Woman's minds and woman's wombs are all one to the neurophysiologist eager to excite his female subjects and penetrate the workings of the female imagination. In one particularly revealing scene, Benjulia cruelly abuses his cook "just as he pursued his own ends with a vivisected animal." In order to observe the "inferior" creature's reaction to a macabre jest after she has spoiled his dinner due to her reading of Richardson's *Pamela*, the master first encourages the servant to believe that he is making love to her and will propose marriage, only to abruptly dismiss her (208-10). His hope is that the "violent moral shock" (212) will turn her brain and provide him with an opportunity for medical experiment, thus testifying to the perversity of his lust for knowledge.

In such a context of scientific supervision, the heroine can only submit her over-wrought nervous system to the professional. Through the Faustean figure of Benjulia, Collins's narrative fuses romance and reality. When Carmina's aunt violates her privacy by reading her letter to Ovid, the narrative reaches a climax in the sensational somaticization of Carmina's anxieties: the two plots come together when Carmina's romantic sensitivity is transformed into brain disease, making the two villains merge. As we have seen, throughout the novel science is the locus of villainy. Carmina's heartless mental torturer Mrs. Gallilee dabbles in science too. Physics and biology are the favourite subjects of a character who studies the theory of creation and the mechanisms of life. Gallilee knows everything about "Geographical Botany" and "cropolites . . . the fossilized ingestions of extinct reptiles," and is aware that "the albuminoid substance of frog's eggs is insufficient (viewed as nourishment) to transform a tadpole into a frog" (83-5). She listens to lectures on "Diathermancy of Ebonite" (54) or the "Interspatial Regions" (102) and discusses her views on Matter with eminent professors. Collins here painstakingly intersperses fragments of scientific discourse, the better to justify the character's claims to scientific culture.⁷ Gallilee's thirst for knowledge is

⁷ In his preface, Collins claims that the passage on "Diathermancy of Ebonite" stems from "proceedings at a conversazione in honour of Professor Helmholtz (reported in the *Times* (April 12, 1881), at which 'radiant energy' was indeed converted into 'sonorous vibrations,'" adding that the discussion on matter derives from *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*.

not only a sign of her transgression of Victorian gender spheres but also a symptom of her depraved character. Her success in “dissecting the nervous system of a bee” (35) and her passion for dissecting flowers (84), turn her into a female counterpart of Benjulia, the “dissector of living creatures” (176).

Yet Gallilee and Benjulia function as complementary rather than identical images of the scientist. Their respective scientific passions draw upon nineteenth-century debates on neurology. As Alison Winter notes, physiology and physics were the most significant disciplines involved in brain research, at a time when neurology sought to explain mental states as physical mechanisms and physiological processes (Winter, 7). As exemplified by William Carpenter’s *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1853) or Henry Maudsley’s *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1868), it was believed that the brain was made up of two main portions, mind and matter, the first harbouring consciousness and morality or “volition” whilst the latter corresponded to the site of instincts, impulses and organic processes. As a result, mental physiology’s interest in volition and consciousness – and thus in moral responsibility – had immense political, social and cultural implications which Collins’s novel explores. By conflating the professional male scientist and the amateur scientific lady, to whom the powerless heroine is simultaneously subjected, the narrative can foreground the ideological aspects of scientific knowledge and practice. Thus, whether matter is physically or physiologically orientated, Gallilee and Benjulia merge symbolically *and* literally when Carmina falls ill and the two scientists’ quests intersect.

Benjulia is in fact at the last stages of his research when the plot of female victimization reaches its climax. As already suggested, the heroine seeks to escape her aunt’s cruelty and join Ovid in Quebec. But her letter is intercepted and Mrs. Gallilee glides into Carmina’s room “like a ghost” (248) to confront the nervously weakened heroine. At the same time, the lady scientist falsely accuses her ward of being the illegitimate child of an adulteress. The combined shock of the discovery and the accusation turn Carmina’s nervous anxiety to “partial catalepsy” (255): “A ghastly stare, through half-closed eyes, showed death in life, blankly returning her look” (250). Rigid and dumb, insensible to touch (251), and sometimes drifting into “partial unconsciousness” (280), Carmina hovers between the animate and the inanimate. As a modernized ghost-like figure, she resembles her Radcliffean foresters’ climactic passionate convulsions, in a medical representation of the *Scheintod* or death trance. Framed by medical discourse, her “death-struck look” (269) and “simulated paralysis” (313) reflect the deathlike spells then seen as characteristic of certain hysterical disorders – for example, the “lucid hysterical lethargy” distinguished by the French neurologist G. Gilles de la Tourette. In such cases the patient’s pulse rate fell, the heartbeat became

inaudible, and the patient grew pale, still and cold, often remaining in that state for several days and facing the risk of live burial (Bondeson, 251).

Here, Carmina's hysterical paraplexy cloaks her rebellion, in a manner radically different from that encountered in the other female characters of the narrative. She becomes frozen into silence and apparent death precisely as she is on the point of asserting her social independence and sexual autonomy. Her disease, therefore, figures simultaneously as an expression of her rebellion and as a denial of feminine power, since it deprives the woman of a voice just as she attempts to articulate her anger. With her endurance tried to its limits and her most private desires exposed to public gaze, Carmina somatically encodes her powerless position by morphing her mind into a tomb and staging her own suspension of will. As a result, Carmina's hypersensitivity, her visionary excitability – as for example when irrationally and superstitiously fearful of her aunt or Benjulia – reconstruct her as a case of double consciousness that demands a medicalized reading. Carmina then becomes the ideal case study for Benjulia, who allows the incompetent practitioner Mr. Null to deal with the patient so that he will be able to witness the evolution of the disease from bad to worse:

The shock that had struck Carmina had produced complicated hysterical disturbance, which was now beginning to simulate paralysis. Benjulia's profound and practised observation detected a trifling inequality in the size of the pupils of the eyes, and a slightly unequal action on either side of the face – delicately presented in the eyelids, the nostrils, and the lips. Here was no common affection of the brain, which even Mr Null could understand! Here, at last, was Benjulia's reward for sacrificing the precious hours which might otherwise have been employed in the laboratory! From that day, Carmina was destined to receive unknown honour: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in his note-book of experiments.

(Collins, *Heart and Science*, 290)

As we might expect, Carmina is saved by her lover whose devotion to his own medical practice has allowed him to inherit a revolutionary manuscript that contains the prescription for curing diseases of the brain. Rejecting vivisection, this work concerns the cases of two women “hysterically affected by a serious moral shock” (326), one resulting in fatality where the *post-mortem* examination results in a breakthrough in the treatment of brain disease. The man Ovid attempted to cure activates the buried Gothic mysteries of the narrative. But this time Collins's revision of his former outcast character Ezra Jennings in *The Moonstone* does not unveil a Gothic plot of silence and social marginalization. Nor does it signal self-effacement. The alienated scientist, who asks to be buried with only his initials and date of death on his grave, provides Ovid with the prescription for curing unruly and potentially dangerous women and thus allows him to tame Carmina's hysterical rebellion. The story

of this stranger, embedded in one of Ovid's letters to Carmina, tells of his unfortunate marriage to a disreputable woman who eventually killed herself "in a fit of drunken frenzy" (140). Desperately in love with this figure of feminine transgression, the man became mad and was confined to an asylum. Yet the manuscript does not contain his passionate love story. The supposedly irrational ravings of the asylum patient turn out to contain the clue to healing female hysteria, and thus become the key to institutionalizing male authority and securing female obedience. This manuscript – one of a series of written medical texts that orchestrate Carmina's fate as a wife – thus echoes Ovid's own manuscript described in the opening chapter of the novel, which directed his steps to Lincoln's Inn Fields and thus activated Carmina's romance.

In contrast to Benjulia's perverse dissection, Ovid then prescribes chemically to Carmina to help re-collect the fragmented pieces of her brain, and to check if she remembers "trifles" from her life before the shock. But when asked what the "ill-written" and messy manuscript is, Ovid answers that it is "something easy to feel and hard to express" (335). The elusiveness of his answer serves to shape the Gothic text into a patriarchal construct. As a symbol of male power over feminine rebellion, the theory on brain diseases silently enforces Victorian gender politics. The novel's buried secret dissimulates the mystery of male domination, not so much by entrapping the female body and subjecting it to the patriarchal blade, but by letting subjection circulate on its own *within* the female body. Ovid's prescription hence testifies to the naturalized management of feminine unruliness in a wider way than mere dissection. This might perhaps explain the chemists' refusal to make up the miraculous medicine Ovid prescribes. The allusions to adulteration (the nineteenth-century practice by apothecary chemists of altering drugs with additives and thereby changing the prescriptions written by physicians – see Altick, 561-8) are not merely casual references to current Victorian practice. The debate over the role of chemistry and drug-dosing ultimately transforms Ovid into a scientist as dangerous as Benjulia, making "the necessary additions or changes from his own private store" (328). Indeed, Ovid's use of drugs disturbingly recalls earlier references linking chemistry to "the atrocities of the Savage science" (114) and Benjulia's "horrid cutting and carving" (178). Chemistry's link with vivisection (in experiments designed to test the efficiency of "the curative action of poisons" (177), as Benjulia's brother Lemuel explains) underlines how mental physiology, grounded on the premise that man is an animal (176), systematically fashions patients into so many victims of experimentation. Carmina, as one of them, is thus exhibited alongside animals and half-witted creatures as Ovid's wife, in a subversive blurring of villains and heroes. If Benjulia poisons himself and burns in his laboratory with all his medical writings, the "happy ending" which unites Ovid and Carmina also resonates with jarring notes.

Thus, in both *Heart and Science* and *Jezebel's Daughter*, Collins's feminization of the Faustian quest for knowledge ironically results in the portrayal of a villainous woman vainly attempting to underpin a system of scientific knowledge which itself reinforces the subjection of women. From a Foucauldian standpoint, therefore, Collins's female Fausts turn science into a filtering lens through which to view Victorian ideology. As Collins gradually shifts onto more modern Gothic plots, his spectral women, who fall victim to nineteenth-century science, mechanically stage their own powerlessness and hardly voice their own discontent. Collins's "materialist supernaturalism" eventually exhibits increasing examples of the management of the female self, and his figures of suspended animation seem, indeed, to have become puppets of a murderous ideology which is eventually and inevitably victorious. If the spirit of subversion still hovers underneath his plots in the shape of his transgressive anti-heroines, it is always, and quickly, likely to be exorcised by male professionalism.

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Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of *The Woman in White*

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Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* was first published in 1859-60 in serial form, appearing in forty weekly numbers of *All the Year Round* (AYR). It was republished in three volumes in 1860 and as a single volume in 1861, with the author using these editions both to correct errors in the chronology of the story and to modify the novel's structure. For the most part the structural changes were minor (Baker, 199), providing smoother transitions between what had been distinct instalments, or introducing sub-divisions into a "narrative" where there had been none. Two, however, were more significant. The three Parts of the AYR text were replaced by three Epochs (corresponding to the volumes of the triple-decker), and the letter of Mrs. Catherick explaining Sir Percival's secret was given the status of an independent narrative. It is not too difficult to find justification for these changes. Mrs. Catherick's letter, it can be argued, should have independent status because her story adds to our understanding of Sir Percival's motives and actions, and she contributes it herself in writing. As for the three Epochs, they correspond to the three divisions of a traditional plot: exposition (up to Laura's marriage), complication (the success of the conspiracy), and resolution (Laura being accepted for herself by the Limmeridge household). At the same time, they validate the novel's publication in more or less equal volumes.¹ Nevertheless, I believe that these changes distort Collins's original intentions for his "gloriously intricate" work (Robinson, 138), at least to the extent that they are

¹ Using word counts based on the Project Gutenberg text, these represent respectively 29%, 35% and 36% of the total. (Citations from the novel are from the Sucksmith edition, and I follow Sucksmith's numbering of the instalments, rather than using the number of the AYR issue.) Collins had in fact anticipated a shorter third volume: in a letter of 13 April 1860 to Sampson Low (in private hands), he predicted that Volume III would be not more than 70-75 AYR pages, as against 71 for Volume I and 83 for Volume II. (The hitherto unpublished correspondence of Wilkie Collins will appear in four volumes from Pickering & Chatto in 2005 as *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, eds. William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law and Paul Lewis. I am grateful to the editors for their help in tracking down relevant letters.)

revealed in the *AYR* text, and in what follows I consider Collins's use of numbers, narratives and parts in the serialisation.

I. Numbers

It must be granted that Collins disliked writing for serial publication, but this is hardly surprising, as it is difficult to think of a novelist who did not. As Bulwer Lytton suggested, there were perhaps two classes of reader in Victorian England – “the one who like the serial form the other who prefer waiting till the whole is completed” (qtd. in Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, 109) – but one would be hard-pressed to find equivalent camps amongst novelists. Serialisation could be profitable and could create a reputation amongst a public numbered in millions (Collins, “The Unknown Public,” 222), and it therefore had to be engaged in. But even for masters of the art it was often a painful experience, sometimes literally so: one might remember Dickens's complaint of “Neuralgic pains” when working on *Great Expectations* (Storey 9:424). The work required unremitting effort under what Sutherland has called “furnace-like conditions” (*Victorian Novelists*, 172), with the author having to write “with the press clattering close beside [him], all the time” (Collins, letter to Gregory, 24 May 1860, Parrish Collection, Princeton University Library).

Despite this, as we have noted, Collins's changes for the three- or single-volume version of *The Woman in White* were in the main only minor ones. Days spent working on the book proofs were merely “varnishing days,” he would explain (letter to E.M. Ward, 3 August 1860, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin). We might perhaps be surprised if it were otherwise. Collins was an author concerned to revise his works (“The pages of his autograph manuscripts are black with additions, corrections, and deletions,” Sue Lonoff notes, 20), but, according to the author's own account, preparation for book publication would already be the sixth round of revision (Baker & Clarke, 2:547). By the time a work had reached this point one might reasonably expect stability in the text, especially since the scheduled dates of book publication was normally known before serialisation began. Besides, there were general reasons why Collins would have had little time at this stage for major revisions. The book form of a serial was conventionally published shortly *before* the final instalment appeared, and this was a practice that allowed little opportunity for a drastic rewrite. In the case of *The Woman in White*, however, Sutherland's comparison of the dates of composition recorded in the manuscript, and the dates of publication (*Victorian Fiction*, 44), suggests that “after the first third of the novel Collins was obliged to work against the calendar and even the clock,” and this would have made substantial revision for the volume edition particularly difficult. Nevertheless, publication in book form – if not in 1860 with the triple-decker, at least in 1861 with the single-

volume edition – would have allowed scope for more substantial revision of the structure of the serial version if that had been felt necessary. Apparently it was not.

Although Collins would try to smooth the transitions between what had been weekly instalments, the nature of the changes that were made suggests a general satisfaction with the structure imposed by serialisation. When he added subdivisions to narratives he followed the breaks already provided by the *AYR* instalments. Walter Hartright's resumed narrative in Part Two (up to the letter from Mrs. Catherick) has ten chapters; though it gains an eleventh in 1860, the new chapter (7) corresponds to *AYR* instalment 31 – which had formed part of Chapter 6 in the serial text. The new chapter thus strengthens the integrity of the *AYR* number rather than destroying it. Again, when Collins adds chapters to Marian Halcombe's narrative in Epoch Two (her journal for the period at Blackwater Park), they correspond to the *AYR* numbers, with just one exception: Marian's entry for 18 June forms a single chapter in 1860, where it had occupied two issues of the weekly. However, as Collins's original plan had been for this to form a single number (Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, 45), the revision again supports rather than undermines the intended instalment plan.

This is not the only evidence that Collins was comfortable with the serial structure. In *AYR*, when Hartright and Gilmore formally divide their narratives into chapters, and Marian Halcombe dates her journal, Collins had usually ended such sub-divisions and an instalment together. Though there were exceptions to this practice – Chapters 2 and 6 of Hartright's second narrative do not fit this pattern, and (as we have seen) neither do all of Marian's journal entries – it is clear that Collins was usually able to subordinate the demands of serialisation to his sense of how the story should unfold. It was not, of course, always the case that narrative and instalment ended together. Mr. Fairlie's narrative ends mid-way through Number 23, to be followed immediately by the Narrative of the Housekeeper (Mrs. Michelson). Her narrative ends in Number 26, to be followed by that of Hester Pinhome. Mrs. Catherick's letter – a structural unit, though not formally a narrative in *AYR* – begins in the middle of Number 35 and ends halfway through Number 36.² But generally narratives and their subdivisions do fit comfortably within the

² Count Fosco's narrative (which begins in Number 40) is long enough to have formed an instalment in its own right, but it is followed immediately with the resumption of Hartright's narrative. Presumably this was the "one double number" that Collins had to write to avoid going into a new volume (letter to Charles Ward, 5 July 1860, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York).

instalment structure. Collins, we can conclude, won his “battle against the infernal periodical system” (Baker & Clarke, 1:184) by adapting it to his purposes.³ As Baker puts it (208), Collins conquered the system’s limitations and mastered its restraining influences.

II. Narratives

The decision to have the novel narrated in different voices was by no means a casual one. A year before beginning work on the novel, Collins had explained to Francis Underwood at *The Atlantic Monthly* that he had “hit on . . . an entirely new form of narrative” (12 August 1858, Houghton Library, Harvard).⁴ The idea was, as Hartright explains in the “Preamble” to the novel, “to trace the course of one complete series of events,” by having each stage of the story narrated by those “more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded.” This was supposed to follow the example of judicial proceedings in which “the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object . . . to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect” (1).

This explanation is, however, misleading, as many have observed. Fosco’s confession apart, the witnesses brought forward do not present the facts of the case in their “most direct and most intelligible aspect”: they are, in effect, witnesses for the defence, not the prosecution. What is presented as narrative progression is really, as Jenny Taylor notes, a process of “reappropriation and redefinition” (100), and *The Woman in White* is thus an artefact rather than a record of experience or discovery (Thoms, 99, 120). Indeed, one can go further. As Kendrick points out, “The technique of first-person testimony, which the ‘Preamble’ claims will make the events clear and positive, is the principal means by which they become blurred and ambiguous”

³ We can see how he did this if we once more consider Marian’s Blackwater Park journal. Though the average length of the numbers in question (12-21) was 5658 words, the length of an individual instalment could vary from the mean by $\pm 40\%$: -2183 for Number 17, +2312 for Number 21. (Number 17 was exceptionally short because, as Sutherland notes (45), it and Number 18 were originally written as a single instalment.) For comparison: in *A Tale of Two Cities*, which had preceded *The Woman in White* in AYR, Dickens varies the length on his numbers by half as much: +20% and, excluding the very short final chapter from consideration, -14%.

⁴ The idea itself perhaps dated from two years earlier. Three years before beginning to write Collins had been struck by the drama inherent in the succession of witnesses in a court trial; Sutherland (42) argues for the trial being that of William Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner. One literary source was undoubtedly Maurice Méjan, *Réceuil des causes célèbres* (1808), which Collins bought when on a trip to Paris in 1856 (Robinson, 98). More generally on legal narrative and sensation fiction, see Grossman, 161.

(33). This is particularly evident in the *AYR* text. There the narratives – with two exceptions – simply serve to demonstrate the success of the conspiracy. They present the evidence supporting the idea that Lady Glyde is dead, but do not help us understand how it can be that she is in fact alive. The exceptions are Hartright's account of how he proved that there was a conspiracy, and (as part of his proof) Fosco's bravura recapitulation of the crime. What should be noted here is that, with the exception of the Count's confession, the evidence Hartright secures is not presented in independent narrative form. Though Fosco supplies him with a letter from Sir Percival announcing Laura's departure for London after the date of her supposed death, and points to further evidence by describing the livery stable he used, the letter, the livery-stable record and the testimony of John Owen (the driver supplied by the stable), are not themselves recorded as independent narratives. Rather, like the information obtained in the lodging house near Gray's Inn Road from Mrs. Clements that links Fosco and Anne, and puts the latter in London before Laura's arrival, they are reported indirectly by Walter Hartright.

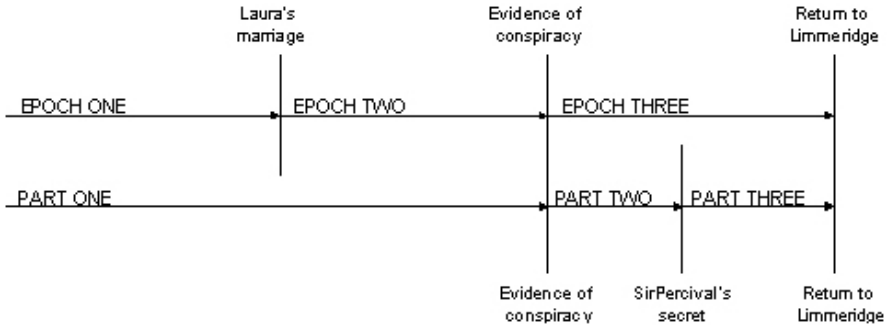
These omissions from the tally are surprising, given the quasi-judicial nature of the narrative structure, for such evidence would certainly have featured in a trial, whereas in all probability Fosco's testimony would not. Prior to 1898, Emsley notes (195-6), those accused did not testify under oath in criminal trials: their testimony was considered too unreliable, too open to temptations of perjury. Proof of guilt had to be arrived at by other means. Presumably Collins knew this – he had been called to the Bar, though he had never practised – and Hartright's omissions were deliberate. By denying independent narrative status to the stories told by Mrs. Clements and John Owen, and by not reproducing the livery stable record or Sir Percival's letter, Hartright can disingenuously appear to present in the first part of the novel all the narratives that are pertinent to what has happened. They serve to define the challenge he faces. In contrast, Fosco's narrative establishes his success, and allows us to congratulate ourselves for having understood what the conspiracy entailed.

We can thus conclude that in *AYR* Collins used the narratives to suit his own purposes. Although often a formulaic writer, he did not feel bound to use narratives in *The Woman in White* formulaically, and assign one to every character with something important to say. That is, he avoids introducing evidence in its chronological place if this would betray the conspiracy – or the motivation of the conspirators – too soon. By the same token, we can argue that Collins's decision of 1860 to create an additional narrative by separating the unsolicited letter of Mrs. Catherick from Hartright's second narrative goes against this principle and threatens the due process of suspense.

III. Parts

The third structural level in *AYR* is the Part. As noted above, in 1860 the novel was divided into three Epochs, which give the work a predictable structure of exposition, complication and resolution. The *AYR* parts have a different function. As Figure 1 shows, the first takes us to the discovery that Lady Glyde is not dead; the second to the revelation of Sir Percival's secret (and the identity of Anne); the third, to the reclaiming of Laura's rights.

Figure 1: Parts (*AYR*) and Epochs (1860)

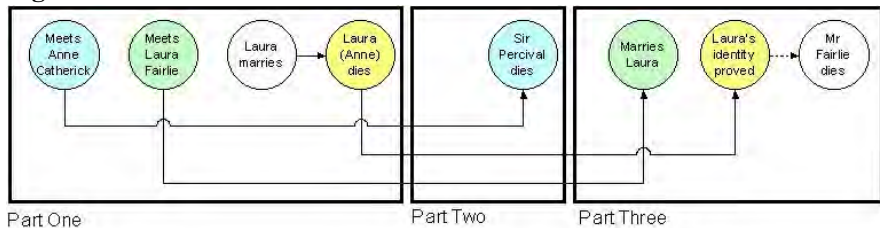


The differences between Epoch and Part structures are thus significant. The divisions of 1860 map the three stages of Laura's life: she is Laura Fairlie in the first Epoch, Laura, Lady Glyde in the second, and Mrs. Laura Hartright in the third. However, the simplicity of this structure should serve as a warning, for contrary to what Hartright implies in the Preamble, there is not one complete story in the novel, but three. There is the story of Anne Catherick, which bursts upon us in the second number, and is only fully understood with the disclosures that follow Sir Percival's death. There is the story of Walter Hartright, which begins in its own right with his falling in love with Laura Fairlie, and ends – against all probability, outside of the world of sentimental fiction – with his marriage to her. And, of course, there is the story of the conspiracy, the seeds of which are sown in Fosco's conversation with Percival on the night of June 20th, and which ends with Laura's recognition by the Limmeridge household a year later. It is this tripartite structure that is captured in the *AYR* parts.

The organising device for these interconnecting stories is death. Though Part One ends in the Limmeridge burial-ground with the certainty that there has been a conspiracy (certainty is only possible when Laura is known to be alive), it reaches the first of its two climaxes with Anne's death – at first, of course, presumed to be that of Laura. This is the event which is both the means to the conspiracy's success and, because it was premature, its fatal flaw. But if

Anne's death is the crucial event of Part One, as Figure 2 demonstrates, the deaths of Sir Percival in Part Two, and Mr. Fairlie in Part Three are no less significant.

Figure 2: The *AYR* Part structure



Sir Percival's death links all three stories. First, it frees Laura to marry again, and it means that Hartright does not end up (like Sir Percival's father) living with a married woman whose "husband had ill-used her, and had afterwards gone off with some other person" (491). Second, the death leads to the discovery of the reason for Anne Catherick's haunting resemblance to Laura. Although Mrs. Fairlie and Sir Percival seem unconcerned to find any other explanation for the similarity than a freak of nature, the readers' curiosity on this point needs to be satisfied, and the answer brings a sense of closure to Anne's story.⁵ And finally, Sir Percival's death shifts Hartright's attention to the Count. Within the conspiracy plot, Sir Percival's secret had promised to be a lever whereby Hartright could force a confession from the Baronet. Though this becomes impossible when Sir Percival dies in the burning vestry, the time invested was not wasted (despite Hartright's feeling that this was the case): the elimination of Sir Percival means that in Part Three Fosco has little alternative but to yield to Hartright's pressure.

As for Mr. Fairlie's death, it brings the love story of Walter and Laura to a satisfying fairy-tale conclusion, with them living at Limmeridge on "three thousand a year" (298). Hobsbawm, commenting on the tax assessments of 1865-66, considers an income of £6,000 "very substantial": Fosco for once was serious when he described the income coming to Laura after her uncle's death

⁵ Although a similarly haunting likeness is left unexplained in "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices" (*Household Words*, 3-31 October 1857), the complementary nature of the characters of Laura and Anne requires that their relationship as half-sisters be established (Michie, 58-59). Leavy, 128, sees all three half-sisters – Laura, Anne, Marian – forming a psychic whole.

as a “fine fortune” (298), given that, as a drawing master at Limmeridge, Hartright only received the equivalent of £221 a year. Hartright’s devotion is rewarded when – as Pesca had foreseen (13) – he marries well. Part Three also sees Fosco’s death, but thought this moralistically disposes of the Count (and means that Hartright does not have to fight a duel at some future date), it does not significantly contribute to the story in the way that Mr. Fairlie’s does.

* * * * *

A final point needs to be made. Although we do not have evidence for the way that Collins planned *The Woman in White*, it is clear that he had a sense of the novel’s stages and their proportions. Collins planned ahead when writing his fiction, working backwards from the central idea to characterisation, creating incidents from character, and finally constructing a chronology (Yates, 150; Trollope, 257; cf. Baker & Clarke, 1:259). Such planning inevitably involved a sense of a novel’s length and the proportion of its parts. Thus he would write to Edward Pigott on 11 December 1859: “I have done one third of the story – more than four hundred pages of the novel-size!” (Pigott Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California). This was when only the third instalment had been published.

It should be noted, therefore, that, based on word-counts, the conspiracy – from the conversation at Blackwater Park that first suggests the idea to the conclusion of Fosco’s narrative – occupies half of the novel (48%), and the story of Anne Catherick and the love story of Walter and Laura are of similar lengths (86% and 94% of the whole, respectively). More significantly, given my purposes here, Part One occupies two thirds of the novel (65%), Part Two, two thirds (67%) of the remaining third. Such proportions are unlikely to be coincidental, and certainly give the lie to Collins’s claim to have written “without paying the smallest attention to the serial division in parts or the book publication in volumes” (Baker & Clarke, 2:546). There might, it must be granted, have been little thought given to *volume* publication. Epoch One (the first volume) concludes without the reader having any compelling reason to turn to the next. The conspiracy has not yet begun; Anne and Walter are almost forgotten; and though one might be curious as to Laura’s future happiness as the wife of Sir Percival Glyde, I suspect that most readers could contain their curiosity. But we cannot claim a similar indifference to what is happening when each *part* comes to an end. Part One (and, as it happens, Epoch Two) ends with Hartright’s discovery in Number 26 that Laura is standing before him in the Limmeridge burial-ground – and though her appearance might be predictable, it is still a great *coup de théâtre* raising questions in the reader’s mind. Part Two also ends (in Number 37) with Collins deliberately stimulating

reader's curiosity – "Forward now! Forward on the way that winds through other scenes, and leads to brighter times" (515) – and that at a point where interest had been building for weeks. Number 36 had closed with Hartright speeding back to London, anxious to know why, in his absence, Marian and Laura had had to move; Number 35, with Mrs. Catherick's promise of an explanation as to whether Anne had really known Sir Percival's secret. Though Collins might well have been indifferent to "the book publication in volumes," he clearly paid attention "to the serial division in parts."

This is not to suggest prescriptively that *The Woman in White* should be defined by the AYR text. Although, as has been noted, the corrections Collins made in the chronology of the tale to rectify "technical errors" ("Preface to the Present Edition" [1861], xxxi), together with the other changes made "with a view to smoothing and consolidating the story" ("Preface" [1860], xxx) created problems of their own, they should be granted their place. Given the importance of chronology to the overall effect of the work, Collins must be allowed to revise his text to maintain the illusion of a coherent sequence of events. In Michael Hancher's terms, the *science* of interpretation must respect the revisions, for all that the *art* of interpretation would lead to other conclusions. Nevertheless, the complexity of the novel's structure is best captured in its first, serial publication, through its interrelated pattern of parts, narratives and numbers.

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“Never be divided again”: *Armada* and the Threat to Romantic Friendship

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As Lillian Faderman has shown in *Surpassing the Love of Men*, romantic friendship enjoyed a high cultural status for much of the Victorian period. The approbation accorded to youthful displays of feeling depended, however, on the imposition of certain unspoken rules. For both men and women marriage was expected to supersede early friendship, and ingenuous vows of “eternal” affection were not supposed to be taken too literally. Intense friendships were encouraged in all-male educational institutions, the major public schools and Oxford and Cambridge Universities famously inculcating such values. But this did not prevent male writers from gleefully satirising the excesses of female romantic friendship. In Thackeray’s *Pendennis*, most memorably, Blanche Amory insists to Laura Bell on first meeting her:

“I already love you as a sister.”

“You are very kind,” said Miss Bell, smiling, “and it must be owned that it is a very sudden attachment.”

“All attachments are so. It is electricity – spontaneity. It is instantaneous. I knew I should love you from the moment I saw you. Do you not feel it yourself?”

“Not yet,” said Laura, “but I dare say I shall if I try.”

(Thackeray, *Pendennis*, 247)

In keeping with this tradition, *Armada* contains a scathing satire of the hypocrisies of female romantic friendship. In contrast to Thackeray’s use of the urbane third-person narrator, however, the parodic commentary in *Armada* proceeds from a criminally complicit female character. Unlike Blanche or her forerunner Becky Sharp, both of whom are seen as consummate actresses in their enactment of feminine sentiment, Lydia overtly mocks the conventions of female friendship, refusing to comply with Mrs. Oldershaw’s euphemistic treatment of what is essentially a criminal business alliance.

Another Becky Sharp, Lydia Gwilt makes use of her dramatic personal appearance and the limits imposed on enquiry by polite breeding to inveigle her way into respectable society. In their plots to marry wealthy men, both protagonists expose the tendentious imperatives concealed by the rhetoric of romantic friendship, Becky through her manipulation of Amelia, and Lydia more ostentatiously in her mockery of the insincere effusions of the inaptly named "Mother" Oldershaw. While Oldershaw addresses letters to "My darling Lydia," Gwilt taunts her in return with such forms of address as "Mother Jezebel," deliberately drawing attention to the status of their correspondence as ruthlessly practical rather than tenderly feminine. This parody of the traditions of friendship provides a counterpoint to the representation of the intense bond that develops between men in the second generation of *Armadales*, figures here referred to for the sake of clarity as Allan and Midwinter. Whereas Lydia Gwilt satirizes and undermines the status of female relations, suggesting an inherent distrust as she and Mother Oldershaw attempt to outwit each other, Collins offers a far more positive treatment of romantic friendship between the central male characters, celebrating their feelings.

This positive take on romantic friendship is enabled by the idealising conventions of the time in which *Armadales* was written. Eve Sedgwick notes the importance of intense male friendships in Victorian fiction, which are often made possible by "the shadowy presence of a mysterious imperative (physical debility, hereditary curse, secret unhappy prior marriage, or simply extreme disinclination) that bars at least one of the partners in each union forever from marriage" (Sedgwick, 174). Sedgwick interprets these homosocial pairings as indicating, although not necessarily acknowledging, an erotic element; such friendships are not fully differentiated from the accepted sexual experiments of educated men of the middle class, who "operated sexually in what seems to have been startlingly close to a cognitive vacuum" (173). In an incisive account of the intense bond between the two *Armadales*, Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox interpret the hysteria Midwinter is at such pains to control as signalling an unease about his own response to his friend. They point out that members of Allan's family see the relationship as "perverse," and suggest that, while the source of the anxiety is never named, Midwinter's outbursts correspond to the assumed symptoms of "homosexual panic": "throughout the novel, Midwinter hovers on the brink of hysteria as he struggles not only to conceal his mysterious heredity, but also to separate himself from the man he most desires" (Bachman & Cox, 328).

However, though Midwinter does indeed question the legitimacy of his friendship with Allan, his feelings of guilt can be directly traced to the early experiences which he himself submits to the Rev. Brock for judgement. First appearing as a confident toddler, Midwinter recounts his later sufferings at the

hands of a Calvinistic stepfather and his abrupt social descent when he runs away. It is this social taint, exacerbated in his mind by the psychological torment he has already endured, that Midwinter sees as rendering him an unfit companion for a gentleman. Social parity was deemed particularly crucial to the suitability of an intense friendship, in which each partner's influence on the other was potentially immense.

But further distinctions need to be drawn. The confused rhetoric of the middle-class gentleman who attempts, however unsuccessfully, to rationalise or reject his youthful sexual aberrations must be differentiated from the fully conscious but potentially guilty dynamic of mutual homoerotic desire; neither of these reflects the carefully structured outlines of intense male friendship. This is because, paradoxically, the extreme levels of feeling contained within romantic friendship could be expressed only through a tacit adherence to certain conventions. That such relationships were susceptible to erotic identification did not escape the notice of writers, some of whom went to great lengths to refute any such response in their heroes and heroines. In *David Copperfield*, for example, Dickens allows Agnes of all people to question Steerforth's influence, a warning which she stresses has no reference to the drunken night at the Covent Garden Theatre (ch. 19); meanwhile David seemingly fails to notice the sexual subtext in the comments that he himself reports to the reader. Such narratives tend to emphasize the viewpoint of the more intensely loving figure, often in the first person. David's love for Steerforth and Esther Summerson's devotion to Ada in *Bleak House* are both related by the characters themselves. But where a sexual or obsessive element in such loving becomes evident, the viewpoint tends to revert to the less invested or involved figure. In Le Fanu's "Carmilla", for instance, the longings of the loving vampire are mediated through the measured tones of her intended victim.

In treatments of the theme throughout the century, certain constraints and limitations are kept carefully in sight of the reader. Most obviously, the proponents are characterised by their youth and almost always by their single status – typically, a novel of romantic friendship will end with the marriage of at least one party. Moreover, a friendship formed outside the spectrum of family acquaintance is often viewed with suspicion. Romantic friendship is justified by its emphasis on self-sacrifice, and this may take the ultimate form of one friend dying for the other (a particularly useful expedient where a marriage plot collides with an exploration of exclusive male friendship). What few writers dared to convey was the timely death of a spouse for the sake of maintaining or resurrecting a same-sex friendship.

On the face of it, the relationship between the two young men in *Armada* conforms to a familiar pattern of male romantic friendship. There is

an immediately acknowledged attraction of one to the other, although the very frankness of this avowal militates against a sexualised interpretation. The early stages of the friendship are presided over by the clergyman Mr. Brock. Midwinter's rapture in his newfound friend is carefully explained (Allan is almost the first person to be kind to him), while Midwinter himself is set against a character who is suitably impulsive but lacks his passionate responsiveness. Allan is clearly responsive to women, while Lydia stresses Midwinter's appeal for her own sex. Nonetheless the course of the narrative points to the perceived dangers of this romantic friendship in the disruption of the social structures it entails, as the two Armadales are left to travel alone together and so develop their relationship far from the constraints of watchful family members.

The pairing of these characters suggests a familiar trope in Victorian fiction: Helena Michie's detailed discussion of this theme in *Sororophobia* shows that difference in such bondings is often constructed in sexual or moral terms, allowing a virtuous (often female) character to redeem a fallen counterpart or even rival. But while the redemptive and forgiving hero/heroine is a powerful focus of narrative idealism, texts likewise suggest a level of anxiety associated with the figure of the transgressor or stranger. Although Midwinter sees himself as having been redeemed by his love for Allan, a threatening precedent is set in the first generation of Armadales, in the mysterious appearance of Allan's father in the West Indies. In his deathbed letter, Midwinter's father recalls his own readiness to trust a stranger as showing a culpable lack of restraint: "My impulses governed me in everything; I knew no law but the law of my own caprice, and I took a fancy to the stranger the moment I set eyes on him" (Collins, *Armadale*, 32). The folly of giving in to such an impulse without further enquiry is revealed when the identity of the stranger becomes apparent and his machinations are uncovered, too late to prevent his vengeful marriage to Miss Blanchard under false pretences. This suspicious appearance of a stranger is ironically re-enacted in reverse in the second generation, as Allan first encounters Midwinter in a state of dangerous illness, and with no clues as to his identity. In this context Midwinter is perceived as potentially threatening by Allan's mother and by the Rev. Brock, who both depend on family relations or personal acquaintance in order to judge the suitability of a new acquaintance. Such precautions will later be undermined by Lydia, who gains access to Major Milroy's family, and so to Allan himself, by means of a false reference, before screening her anonymity behind a conventional appeal to "family troubles."

At the same time it is Midwinter's illness and his very friendlessness that appeal to Allan, whose constancy of purpose in ministering to his new friend is implicitly compared to his romantic vacillations between Lydia and

Neelie later in the novel. Significantly, Allan is described as showing resolution for the first time in his life in his championing of Midwinter, and it is his readiness to nurse him through a potentially infectious illness that gives a moral impetus to this impulsive adoption of a stranger despite cautions from his mother and his mother's adviser.

Throughout the novel, the straightforward attachment of the two is favourably compared both to the hypocrisy of female alliances and the inconsistency of Allan's own feelings for women. Barickman, MacDonald and Stark note that "[m]ale rivalry in *Armada* is brutal almost to absurdity. The entire novel is engendered by one initial male rivalry over a woman and money" (131). But this analysis, valid as it is in its emphasis on rivalry in the first generation of Armadales, does not account for the novel's theme of atonement in the men of the second generation, as one character repeatedly attempts to sacrifice his own interests to those of his friend. Ironically such self-abnegation is associated primarily with feminine behaviour among the Victorians, but it is also a means by which the depth and sincerity of male romantic friendship can be tested. Where Lydia despises Mrs. Oldershaw, who alternately threatens and pacifies her in the interests of a potentially lucrative association, Midwinter genuinely loves Allan and sacrifices his own feelings on a number of occasions. He is willing to leave Allan for what he sees as Allan's own good rather than be the cause of further suffering as the heir of his father's original crime in murdering Allan's father.

Midwinter himself is unashamedly passionate in his grateful response to Allan as the one person who has been kind to him, and is at times unable to contain his feelings within socially sanctioned limits. In talking to the Rev. Brock, he attempts to restrain his expressions of emotion, only to break out:

"... I do love him! It *will* come out of me – I can't keep it back. I love the very ground he treads on! I would give my life – yes, the life that is precious to me now, because his kindness has made it a happy one – I tell you I would give my life –"

(122)

This hysterical response suggests a lack of appropriate control, but Midwinter recovers himself almost immediately and the narrator repeatedly draws attention to his powers of self-restraint, as he suppresses the expression of his own feelings in deference to the expectations and convenience of those around him. As the friendship develops, the two assume convergent roles: Midwinter is first described in terms of feminine nervous sensibility, despite the constant references to his physical hardiness; Allan himself is described in terms of robust animal health, but he too will later be feminised through his vulnerability to nervous sensation on the wreck of *La Grâce de Dieu*. Such assumption of feminine roles is not uncommon in representations of romantic

friendship between men. Perhaps most famously, Tennyson imagines himself as a widow at various points in the course of *In Memoriam* while also according feminine attributes to Hallam. (Such role allocation may also relate to social status. Tennyson's admiration for his friend as a superior is reflected in his play on gender, but this does not preclude an invocation of the best qualities he perceives as belonging normally to women. Again, in *David Copperfield*, David's changing status is revealed through his rejection of a feminine role and the violent death of the friend who renamed him Daisy.) In *Armadale* the use of gender stereotypes contributes to the sense of reciprocal love between the two friends, as each is able to nurse or minister to the distress of the other. Furthermore, the attribution of feminine status to each in the face of ill health or nervous shock subtly appropriates for men the idea of tender female nursing, as women are excluded from these initial scenes, despite the popular associations of therapy with feminine care.

The scene aboard *La Grâce de Dieu* typifies this interchange of gender roles within same-sex friendship. It is Midwinter's persistent superstition and knowledge of past events that govern the reader's response to the discovery of the wreck. In keeping with his perceived nervous sensibility, Midwinter first shows signs of distress when he realises where he is. Fainting on the deck of the boat, he has to be revived by his friend (as he will later be revived twice in succession by his wife). But in an unlikely turn of events, the prophetic dream is accorded to Allan, who then suffers a nervous reaction from which Midwinter relieves him. The magnetic response of one to the other is suggested in this interchange of care:

Midwinter laid his hand gently on Allan's forehead. Light as the touch was, there were mysterious sympathies in the dreaming man that answered it. His groaning ceased, and his hands dropped slowly.

(164)

Midwinter's later refusal to accept a rational explanation of the dream, and his altercation with the doctor, align him once again with feminine intuition rather than masculine reason, but his defence of the seemingly irrational also suggests that friendship may be capable of insight where medical science is necessarily inadequate. Ultimately, the conventions of male romantic friendship are upheld through this mutually supportive relationship, despite its recurring associations with feminine weakness and the irrational. What is satirised in the novel is not the responsiveness between these two men, but rather the expected transfer of female loyalty from friend to future spouse, as the marriage plot is based on a mercenary conspiracy between criminal associates rather than friends.

In more traditional renderings of the theme, perhaps most notably in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, female characters gradually withdraw their strongest feelings from each other and attach themselves to future husbands. As

Tess Cosslett observes, “very rarely is a female friendship set up as a substitute for or in competition with a male-female relationship” (Cosslett, 3). But no initial phase of solidarity is even contemplated by the female characters in *Armada*. Mrs. Oldershaw’s insistence on addressing Lydia as her “bosom friend,” together with her previous position as a false mother to her, draw attention to Collins’s parody of female friendship, by emphasising the expectation that when marriage supersedes the ties of family and friendship, such ties have at least been valued by young women up to this point. But Mrs. Oldershaw actually draws attention to the uses of romantic expression as a cover for mercenary exploitation. Having failed to intimidate Lydia with her threats of arrest for debt, she retracts them and appeals instead to traditions of female friendship as both deeply felt and fallible. With heavy irony, she emphasises their distance from each other even as she humorously appeals to their shared status as the objects of (implicitly male) satire:

“How cruel of you, if your debt had been ten times what it is, to suppose me capable (whatever I might say) of the odious inhumanity of arresting my bosom friend! Heavens! have I deserved to be taken at my word in this unmercifully exact way, after the years of tender intimacy that have united us? But I don’t complain; . . . Let us expect as little of each other as possible, my dear; we are both women, and we can’t help it. . . .”

(494-5)

Lydia refuses to respond to this letter in similar vein, but she herself will later exploit the tradition of perceived feminine inadequacy in order to manipulate Midwinter, protesting, “How I like your anxiety for your friend! Oh, if women could only form such friendships! Oh you happy, happy men!” (464).

Both in her correspondence with Mother Oldershaw and in her diary, Lydia unhesitatingly exposes the basis of female collaboration as self-serving, in direct opposition to the self-sacrificial nature of Midwinter’s deeply felt love for Allan. Again, this exposure deliberately undermines the tradition of romantic correspondence and diary writing, wherein women were traditionally held to express their feminine sensibility. Perfectly capable of exploiting social norms when they suit her purpose, Lydia also serves as an ironic commentator on, and judge of, the very conventions she uses to protect her position at Thorpe Ambrose.

If the male friendship explored is more sincere, Lydia’s machinations apparently expose it as equally vulnerable to intervention. The conventions of romantic friendship assume that it will at some point be susceptible to the greater demands of a love plot, and it is his love for Lydia that causes Midwinter’s temporary estrangement from Allan. Initially disposed to sacrifice his own feelings for her when he believes that his friend will marry her, Midwinter champions the woman against his friend when he learns that

enquiries have been set on foot in violation of her privacy. This conflict between romantic love and friendship creates the tension on which the plot revolves in the second half of the novel. It is notable that the parallel rivalry between Neelie and Lydia shows none of the heroism involved in Midwinter's renunciation. Lydia seeks revenge on Neelie for having destroyed her own material prospects, while Neelie is jealous of the woman whom she believes to have stolen her lover, just as she was earlier jealous of Midwinter as her lover's friend. And after her marriage to Midwinter, Lydia comes to feel resentful of her husband's continuing love for Allan. Indeed, his marriage itself has been interpreted as an act of sacrifice, albeit unconscious, on his friend's behalf. William Marshall suggests that Midwinter "thereby takes upon himself . . . the suffering and perhaps the destruction intended for his friend" (Marshall, 74).

There is, then, no simple progression from romantic friendship to marriage in *Armada*. Lydia marries Midwinter for love, only to convince herself within a matter of two months that he no longer loves her, and it is at this point that Allan reappears and asserts his claim to the attention of his friend. The resulting resentment on Lydia's part jeopardises the assumed resolution whereby she will be redeemed by her love for her husband, as she once again plots to take Allan's life. The continuation of a close male friendship within the marital domain is shown to be deeply problematic. Lydia complains, apparently with some justification, that her husband gives time to his friend that he cannot spare for her, although Allan appears oblivious to the deepening rift for which he is at least partly responsible. That Lydia is too hasty in her suspicions is confirmed by the narrator, who implies that Allan has in fact become secondary in Midwinter's affections since his marriage. Meeting Bashwood at the railway terminus in London, he is reminded of "the old grateful interest in his friend which *had once been* the foremost interest of his life." (Collins, *Armada*, 783 [my italics]). But with Lydia's subsequent abandonment of Midwinter and her entrapment of Allan in Dr Downward's sanatorium, the claims of male friendship are fully restored. Midwinter almost dies for Allan by changing rooms with him, so fulfilling the claim made to Mr. Brock that he would give his life for his friend. Midwinter is only saved by the intervention of Lydia, who writes to him in similar terms, that it is easy for her to die knowing that he will live. Re-enacting the scene on board *La Grâce de Dieu* in which Allan revived Midwinter from his faint, she now restores him to consciousness before herself entering the room containing fatally poisoned air. In this act of atonement and self-sacrifice she both validates her own superior love for Midwinter and at the same time relinquishes her claim to him, allowing his loyalty to remain with his friend rather than with his unsuitable wife. As Allan accompanies his friend to Lydia's funeral, the restoration of male ties is shown to be complete.

Reversing the pattern in which an unsuitable or inconvenient friend dies to facilitate the marriage plot, *Armada* depicts the initial remorse of a woman who abandons her criminal purposes for love, only to resume her plotting when she comes to feel that her husband's attention is reserved for his friend. At this point, it is not the friend but the wife herself who is sacrificed to the exigencies of plot. In this uneasy resolution to the novel, male friendship is shown to be ultimately more durable than heterosexual involvement, as Lydia is redeemed by dying in place of her husband and Midwinter's heroism is brought out by an almost equally intense love for his friend. In case the reader has missed the point, the novel concludes with a conversation between the two friends on the morning of Allan's wedding day, in which Midwinter justifies his belief in the significance of the dream:

“ . . . I once believed that it was sent to rouse your distrust of the friendless man whom you had taken as a brother to your heart. I now *know* that it came to you as a timely warning to take him closer still. Does this help to satisfy you that I, too, am standing hopefully on the brink of a new life, and that while we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again?”

(Collins, *Armada*, 815)

The conclusion of the novel is traditional insofar as it ends with a marriage between the eponymous hero and his innocent female counterpart. However, this union is made subordinate to romantic friendship, the focus of the final lines of the novel, in defiance of assumed cultural norms.

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“Dearest Harriet”:¹

On Harriet Collins’s Italian Journal

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Views of Harriet Collins

Most biographers of Wilkie Collins have introduced us to his mother, making varied claims about her personality and relationships. In this essay, based on a close reading of her Italian Journal of 1836-37, I reconsider and revise these views, bringing forward a more sympathetic reading of Harriet Collins than biographers have generally offered.

Among his biographical remarks on Wilkie Collins in 1931, S.M. Ellis introduces Harriet as both “a woman of humour” and “strong minded” (Ellis, 22, 5), observing that both Charles and Wilkie Collins lived with their mother until they were middle-aged, and inferring that both were very much under her influence. Later, in her notes for her unfinished biography of Wilkie Collins, Dorothy L. Sayers writes:

One would like to know more about Mrs. Collins, who was able to inspire such devoted affection in her husband, her sons and her friends. She seems to have been a woman of great humour and character, as well as of remarkable beauty.

(Sayers, 39)

These favourable views of Harriet Collins, however, were not echoed by those biographers who most immediately followed Sayers, publishing their studies in the 1950s. Kenneth Robinson (1951) agreed with Sayers that Harriet Collins “was in many ways a remarkable woman,” but the only details he gives about her are negative. Believing she had “decided views” and “eccentricities,” Robinson cites approvingly the view of Harriet’s daughter-in-law Kate Dickens, who thought she was “a Devil”; moreover, Robinson notes, Harriet

¹ In the eighty manuscript letters to Harriet Collins found in the Pierpont Morgan Library, this is how William Collins most characteristically addresses his wife, varying the salutation with “My dear love” and “My dear wife.”

. . . considered that Mrs E.M. Ward should have abandoned Art when she married, telling her that if she devoted her energies to the home, to tending and cooking for her husband and to making the children's clothes, there would be no time left for painting.

(Robinson, 62)

Nuel Pharr Davis (1956), on the other hand, introduces us to a subservient Harriet, a view based entirely on his detection of autobiographical elements in Wilkie Collins' novel *Hide and Seek* (Davis, 14, 21).

In *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* (1988), the first major biography for over thirty years, despite the revelations about the son's "morganatic" family by Martha Rudd, William M. Clarke cannot add much to our understanding of the mother. However, Clarke is rather more sympathetic to Harriet, alleging that she was neglected by William both at home due to his long visits to wealthy patrons, and on the Italian journey where she was exposed to danger. But it was not until 1991, when Catherine Peters's *The King of Inventors* was published, that a detailed account of Harriet Collins was produced. Peters's biography of Wilkie Collins is thorough and definitive. She was the first biographer to write the story of Harriet's life and she quotes extensively from Harriet's manuscript writings, including the hitherto unused Autobiography. However, many of the negative views of Harriet remain in Peters's account. Commenting that her sons' male friends enjoyed Harriet's company, Peters makes use of the anecdotes involving Henrietta Ward and Kate Dickens to show that Harriet treated women differently to men. Peters refers to Harriet as an "unintellectual woman" whose virtue consists of "common sense" (Peters, 24) and, like Davis, she feels that Harriet was a subservient wife:

William and Harriet Collins had both been brought up in households in which an easygoing, unassertive man had been dominated by his more forceful wife. They tried not to repeat the pattern. Though Harriet had more natural energy and enthusiasm than William, there was no question that he was the man of the house.

(Peters, 19)

In keeping with this view, Peters interprets Harriet's Italian journal as a record kept entirely for the benefit of her husband. Harriet, however, is more seriously considered as an independent woman and a writer by Lillian Nayder (1997), in the "Biographical Sketch" which opens her critical study of Collins, inviting us to consider her accomplishments afresh (Nayder, 6-9). Here, Harriet steps free of the anecdotes often repeated to her disadvantage and is considered for what she accomplished.



Harriet Collins in 1831, from a portrait by John Linnell.

Courtesy of Faith Clarke.

The most frustrating aspect of studying Harriet Collins, of course, remains the paucity of information that has come down to us. Although we are fortunate that her circle included artists and writers whose letters were kept and about whom memoirs were written, these figures are overwhelmingly male. We have no journals or memoirs from her friend and neighbour Mary Linnell, nor from the women she met on her travels: Mrs. Severn in Rome, Miss Mackenzie in Florence and Lady Russell in Naples. If only young Mary Rice, who accompanied the Collins family at the start of their travels, could have added her voice to those of Henrietta Ward and Kate Dickens, we might have added a different dimension to the anecdotes so often repeated. Sadly, we must view Harriet Collins without the testimony of her women friends and travel companions. Though many of her contemporaries recognized Harriet's sense of humour, we are told about it rather than shown it. There are many charming, teasing letters from Wilkie to his mother, but none of her replies. We learn that she gave as good as she got in banter with Millais but only his words have been recorded.

Harriet Collins's manuscripts

In 1835 Harriet Collins kept a tiny diary, now held at the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, which gave her room for just three lines a day on her life in Bayswater as the wife of an artist and the mother of two sons. It is here that we learn something of her friendship with Mary Linnell. The recorded visits are not just social calls to a nearby neighbour. Mary is heavily pregnant with twins in 1835 and gives birth on 12 March. Harriet visits her almost every evening during the spring and summer, presumably to support and nurse her friend and help with the nurture of the babies. A woman would need a most trusted friend at such a time and there are constant references to seeing "Mrs Linnell," as Harriet refers to her. We also learn of Harriet's interest in the artistic life of her husband, the difficulties of employing a servant, and the struggles of a housewife concerned with such things as mattresses. She also takes long daily walks into Kensington Gardens. When there are just three lines to write per day, only the most dramatic, irritating or important events are recorded. It is interesting to see that Harriet's friendship and walks are included as well as her difficulties with domestic life.

The 1836 diary, now also held at the National Art Library, is larger, but was not bought to mark the occasion of the journey to Italy. In fact, Harriet used an old (1834) edition of Kirton's Royal Remembrancer and Pocket Diary. In order to cope with an out-of-date diary, which she was commencing in September instead of January, Harriet corrected all the dates as she went along. She made use of all the space available, writing on the blank page prior to the

start of the diary and on the space at the top of each page. She created two extra entries, one recording the Easter ceremonies in Rome, and one for the last three months of 1837. These she carefully folded and stitched into the diary at their appropriate places. The Italian Journal contains a rapid flow of unpunctuated comments and descriptions often written in an abbreviated note form.

The autobiography, now held at the University of Texas,² was written in 1853 and then Harriet had time to shape her sentences well. It is delightful to read and rather like an alternative view of Jane Austen's Bennett family. In it we learn that Harriet and her band of pretty and lively sisters decorated their ball gowns with leaves when they could not afford ribbons and that they flirted with army officers. It also relates Harriet's conversion to an evangelical form of Protestantism which led her to renounce her desire to be an actress and to become a governess and teacher instead. The autobiography is a slightly fictionalised version of her early life and ends with her marriage.

Evidence from Harriet's Writings

As observed above, many of Wilkie Collins's biographers drew upon Henrietta Ward's *Memories of Ninety Years*, published only in 1924. Harriet gave a "lecture" to Henrietta Ward in 1851, when she was nineteen years old. Here is the memory, quoted in full:

I received a lecture from old Mrs Collins on my maternal duties, which I was foolish enough to take to heart for a time. She told me I was very wrong not to make my child's clothes and give all my time to domestic matters, and that if I did my duty to my husband and home there would be no time to paint.

(Ward, 52)

The young Henrietta piously replied to this prescription: "If you think so I will do it for a year" (Ward, 38). Catherine Peters embellishes this story in the retelling:

She terrified Henrietta Ward into becoming, briefly, a full-time wife and mother, until the young painter found that not only she, but her husband and children too were far happier when she went back to her career.

(Peters, 82)

What are we to make of Harriet's apparently stern treatment of this young woman? Henrietta, then a mother who had been married for two years, must still have been the baby of the group of friends visiting the widowed Harriet and her sons in 1851. Could she have taken to heart a remark that was not

² I am indebted to Catherine Peters who allowed access to her transcript of the manuscript.

meant to be serious? We must remember she was recollecting it more than seventy years later. Harriet could have been a formidable presence to such a young woman, as she was at that time an active amateur actress, a successful hostess, and the manager of her sons' finances. Or could it have been a bitter and jealous remark revealing something of Harriet's feelings about the things she gave up when she was newly married?

A close look at the Italian Journal provides more evidence for the former reading than the latter. First of all, Harriet did not herself expect to be cooking for her husband and children. On the last page of her Journal, she jotted down six phrases in English and Italian:

To lend – prestare
a coffee pot – una caffettiera
a looking glass – lo specchio
to fry – friggere
to broil – arrostito sopra le brace
blood – il sangue

Several of these phrases would have helped her when instructing a cook in the preparation of meat to English tastes. No servant travelled with the Collins family, but there are occasional references to women servants or housekeepers. For example, on 7 December in Nice, she wrote: "Settled with Mrs Analle to have our dinner sent up at five very indifferent." Although we have no evidence about the servants Harriet employed back home in Porchester Terrace,³ later in her widowed life she kept a cook and a housemaid, as we learn from a letter to her from Wilkie Collins.⁴

As to sewing, Harriet says of herself in her Autobiography that her mother complained

that I was the most troublesome of all her children that I would not learn needlework, but when not wandering about the fields & Hedgerows I was devouring any idle books I could get, that never could do me the least good.

There are direct references to sewing in the Italian Journal – to "making a tippet," "trimm[ing] my bonnet" and so on – so clearly Harriet had learned to sew by the time she was a mother herself. On the fly leaf of the Journal she

³ William Collins never bought any of the homes in which he lived, always preferring to lease. Their house in Porchester Terrace was sublet in their absence on the Italian trip and managed by Harriet's brother-in-law William H. Carpenter, who, as an art dealer, also managed sales of William's work while he was away.

⁴ This is a delightful letter from the youthful Wilkie to his mother, dated 8 August 1844, in which he rails against Susan the housemaid for her ill-treatment of the family cat "Snooks" and her inability to pack a carpet bag (Baker & Clarke, 1:20-2).

noted addresses in Rome, with “tailor, Rome, black velvet coat” added. One sewing disaster is recorded in the Journal, when in October 1837 she tried to make a dressing gown for William which turned out far too large. There are also many references in the Italian Journal to Harriet having unspecified “work” to do, a common entry being “worked and read”. Present day readers of Victorian writings usually understand references to “work” in a woman’s hands to mean embroidery or mending. But Harriet had other work to do when she was travelling. She managed the domestic accounts and was responsible for the marketing, for paying the servants and for managing the chambermaids. She found time in the day to write in her journal and also kept up correspondence with her sister and Sir David Wilkie’s sisters. These facts, taken from the Italian Journal, indicate that the “work” she engaged in every day involved considerably more than simply sewing.

Of course, this evidence about Harriet’s own life could make her remark to Mrs. Ward seem hypocritical. But when Harriet’s reputation for wit and humour is kept in mind, her remark appears to have been self mocking. Her sons at least would know that she was a poor cook and mender, and all of her friends would know that her own sister Margaret was both a successful artist and a wife and mother. The more negative comment made about Harriet by Kate Dickens comes from *Dickens and Daughter*, recollections from Kate Dickens Perugini recorded by Gladys Storey when Kate was in her seventies, and occurs merely as an aside in the middle of a description of Wilkie Collins:

His father (William Collins, R.A.) was a very religious man, while his mother, who had a great influence over his life, was ‘a woman of great wit and humour – but a devil!’ said Mrs. Perugini. He felt her death keenly, for she had been an unselfish mother to her two sons, of whom she was very proud

(Storey, 214)

What does it mean to say someone is “a devil”? In this context, might the label have to do with her wit and humour? It seems clear Harriet did not object to being teased, so perhaps her own form of humour took the form of teasing others – a practice that would make Harriet appear unsympathetic to those who were troubled. Although we know relatively little of Kate and Charles’ union, Charles suffered from ill-health, dying of cancer in 1873, after only twelve years of married life, and there were no children. Kate’s father, Charles Dickens, implied that his son-in-law was sexually impotent and was wrong to have married his daughter, and so it is also possible that Harriet appeared “devilish” to the Dickenses in her staunch defense or support of her younger son. Unfortunately, this is the only reference to Harriet in *Dickens and Daughter* and it is not glossed in any way.

Finally, on the question of whether or not Harriet was a subservient wife, there is evidence in the Italian Journal of an equal partnership. William and Harriet shared the organization of travel as well as the care and education of their sons. Almost every entry in the Italian Journal refers to William and the young Wilkie (there referred to as “Willy”) being out together. William is working throughout the trip, meeting artists, making sketches, seeing at first hand the works of the great masters, while Willy is learning from him how to be an artist. Charlie, who is only eight, remains with his mother, shopping, going on her daily walks in public parks as well as on special trips to the zoo in Paris or to birthday parties. Visits to the museums and galleries were events for the whole family and Harriet used her journal to record her impressions.

On the Medici Venus in the Uffizi, Harriet writes: “first grand point the celebrated Venus which entirely answered my much raised expectations next the Niobe very wonderful but more grand & sublime than beautiful.” She went again to see the Venus and criticized the restoration: “looked again at the Venus saw the arms & hands were modern & too long” (Manuscript Journal, 28, 30 December 1836). Such examples cast doubt on Catherine Peters’s claim that Harriet kept her journal for William’s benefit. These are Harriet’s own observations and show her interest in art. Indeed, judging from William’s letters to Harriet, she seems the dominant figure in the relationship, as a playfully complaining letter from William (at home) to an absent Harriet reveals:

. . . I have promised to take Willie to the Royal Zoological Gardens . . . – he complains too of being dull without Ma – . . . you don’t say half enough about your self and your health in your scraps of letters, I believe you have forgotten us altogether . . . I forgot whether I told you I had promised to go on the 1st Sept to Seaford with Mr Antrobus, it would serve you right to go the day before you return (if I could – you little hard hearted minx, it would —)

(13 August 1842, Pierpont Morgan Library).

It is, however, perfectly true that Harriet gave up her waged work upon marriage. We do not know how she felt about this. Her Autobiography does not reveal any particular sufferings as a governess, but it must have been a relief to have more control over her daily life than she did while occupying that position. There is a feeling of frustrated energy coming from her diaries which is not present in the Autobiography and which may suggest the constraints of married life. This later manuscript was written in her widowhood, when, as Peters, Nayder and Clarke point out, she was much more in her own lively element.

The Quality of Harriet's Writing

The Italian Journal cannot be said to be a literary masterpiece; it was jotted down rapidly and lacks the form and structure of the Autobiography. However, the combination of forthright views, practical detail and little asides is quite charming. William found his wife's writing style exasperating but endearing:

I received your note Mrs Pert and although it was sufficiently absurd yet as I gathered from its random contents that you are all well (devouring every day all the good things you can lay your hands upon at my expense) I could not but feel pleased and grateful

(to Harriet Collins, 13 August 1842, Pierpont Morgan Library)

The writing in the Italian Journal shows that Harriet was educated in the eighteenth century. She regularly uses the long "s" in words with double "s" and the abbreviations "Mornng, Eveng, Wm," employing the ampersand freely. Her Autobiography sets out her education: "as to education we took that very easy, by degrees we learnt to read, at least I know that I soon picked up that power for I was a perfect devourer of all the story books (& few they were) I could get hold of." As a girl, she read: "Gullivers travels, Gil blas, Don Quixotte, Lady Mary Wortley Montagus letters, Sternes sentimental journey and Humes history of England, this last was read at the express desire of my father & chiefly aloud to him." "One day," Harriet recounted, "finding some books poked behind others out of the way I dragged them forth, and oh the joy! What did they prove to be, no less than the mysteries of Udolpho, and the Italian." Her enthusiasm for Ann Radcliffe could be predicted from the way she thrilled to nature – and from the way she overused the word "sublime." Here is her account of the journey in the south of France:

the road improving in beauty every league the mountains clothed with vine & olive but the most wonderful and sublime scene we ever beheld was about a post from Toulon called Les Gorges a narrow pass between perpendicular grey rocks about 2 miles in extent

(Manuscript Journal, 21 October 1836)

Or again on October 25, 1836: "the night splendid and the scenery sublime crossing mountains all the way bordering on precipices."

The Italian Journal seems important not because of the quality of the writing but rather because it is a woman's account of the grand tour, packed with detail about Harriet's children and the people she met. Reading it is to look over her shoulder into a private world where, unfortunately for the researcher, she does not introduce the teeming characters and seldom provides first names or initials. Published and manuscript journals help identify those in her circle, however, as do the letters of some of those she met, which often

provide a sharp contrast to Harriet's writing. This is the case with the sculptor John Gibson, whom the Collinses met in Rome. William is invited to share his studio and he is often to be found in their apartments in the evenings, drinking tea. Reading Gibson's own writings of the period, one inhabits a Rome that seems virtually empty, with almost no people mentioned. There are lots of moments which interest a sculptor – when Gibson sees an Italian peasant drinking from a fountain and wonders whether to incorporate the peasant's weight distribution into his latest sculpture, for example – but nowhere does Gibson refer to a visiting RA and his charming family. Similarly, you would never know from reading Sir Henry Russell's account of his Italian journey that he had his wife and family with him. To his brother Charles he writes respectfully of William Collins:

I have seen a good deal of Collins and like him very much . . . He has made some beautiful oil sketches of beggars and peasants, men, women and children. He says that . . . the mistake of English artists at Rome has been that they have studied art when they ought to have studied nature

(letter to Charles Russell, 30 April 1837, Bodleian)

But from Sir Henry's account of his time in Rome and Naples, one would not know that William Collins was living with his wife and family. Yet Harriet's *Italian Journal* contains a number of references to excursions with the Russell family, and "the young Russells" were invited to Charlie's ninth birthday party. Even Thomas Unwins, a constant companion of the Collins family during their three months in Sorrento, makes no mention of them at all in his letters and writings from the time.

While the professional interests and connections of these male travellers and artists dominated their writings, an often diverging set of concerns is expressed in the many volumes of women's travel writings from the period which are now available – an interesting area of study for Victorianists. With her *Italian Journal* Harriet does not quite fall within the "intrepid woman traveller" category, even though her journey was arduous and there was danger of cholera. Unlike most intrepid women writers, however, Harriet was travelling in a family with young children.

Harriet Collins the Traveller

Despite their comparative affluence,⁵ the Collins family did not travel in the style of Charles Dickens when he took his family to Italy.⁶ Dickens had

⁵ William's sales lists for the period 1808 to 1827 can be found at the National Art Library. These show a steady progression of income from £85.18.00 in 1808, to £813.15.00 in the

his own carriage, employed an agent who travelled with him to take care of the arrangements, and stayed in rented villas. By contrast, the Collins family endured public coach travel and stayed in hotels. It seems clear that they had consulted contemporary guide books and the Journal reveals that they took with them Fanny Trollope's brand new travel book, *Paris and the Parisians*. They almost certainly had with them a copy of Mariana Starke's *Travels to Europe* as well. This travel bible explained the prices they would be expected to pay for certain items in different countries, the routes to take to see the best art and antiquities, and the belongings they should pack. Following Starke's advice they set out in what she considered the healthiest time for a journey – the winter. If they travelled in summer, Starke warned, they would encounter mosquitoes in the marshy areas in the south of France – the Camargue – and outside Rome – the Pontine marshes. However, in travelling through the winter they were subject to extreme cold and Harriet recorded her concern for her younger son who was often ill on the journey. During their overnight stops she moved into his bed to ensure that he was warm. The family travelled in the large public coaches called diligences, which were slow and generally crowded. Harriet was “much amused by the strange and awkward appearance of horses harness and the whole vehicle”. It was William's task to book the seats and he always arranged for Harriet and Charlie to be in the *coupé* of the diligence, which was a box attached to the back of the coach and was the only place where it was possible to stretch your legs or sleep. He and Willy sat on the outside of the coach, where the swaying of the vehicle forced the passengers to constantly adjust their muscles as if standing on the deck of a ship in a rough sea.

Fanny Trollope's travel guides aptly describe the arduousness of the journey the Collinses were undertaking. As Mrs. Trollope recalled, it was:

. . . an enterprise requiring a good deal of moral courage to undertake, and an equal portion of physical strength to perform . . . we set off by the diligence to travel day and night over the three hundred and thirty miles which divide Paris from Lyons . . . Tedious and tiresome enough must ever be the journey from Paris to Lyons under every possible contingency . . . not even the first

year he married (1822), culminating in £1,075.5.00 in 1827. These are simply his earnings from sales and do not include earnings from engravings. In an appendix to the *Memoirs*, Wilkie Collins lists his father's sales and shows that his fees in 1836 amounted to £1,113.

⁶ Dickens wrote *Pictures from Italy* after his 1844 trip, commissioning Samuel Palmer to illustrate it, no doubt influenced by Palmer's Italian paintings which were inspired by his own trip in 1838. This choice brought Dickens into contact with the world of the young Wilkie Collins, long before they actually met, as Palmer was the protégée and son-in-law of John Linnell, an old friend and neighbour of William and Harriet Collins.

quarter of the honey-moon could render it otherwise, for it is long, toilsome and exceedingly devoid of interest

(Trollope, 1:3-4)

Harriet herself describes one of the worst moments of that same section of the journey, following her last day in Paris:

Packing up went to see the new church of St madeleine magnificent structure though still unfinished the carving most elaborate style of architecture Grecian shopped returned to finish packing very tired got into a Hackney coach and drove to Rue St Paul found the Diligence ready & coupe very comfortable started a little after six dark & dreary began about one to feel very much done for. At four on Tuesday mornng we were told the Diligence would stop one hour and we were to get out thought it an odd time to choose but alighted wet and dark found a cold comfortless kitchen nothing to be had a grumbling old man in a night cap made his appearance who could hardly growl out an answer women with screaming babies soldiers etc made up the medley group out of different parts of the diligence our next misery was to discover that we were to be sent on in covered caravans about four for the party ours contained driver two soldiers us four a Lady her husband & child from America very kind people I was taken very ill on the road breakfasted at the most horrid place in kitchen with all sorts of wretches reached Auxerre nearly dead at eight oclock – comfortable hotel very thankful to get a good bed

(Manuscript Journal, 3, 4 October 1836)

Part of the way was taken by steamboat on the Rhone but this had its own discomforts:

Got on board the boat wet all day obliged to stay down stairs all sorts of people priests gamblers drinkers gents ladies children dogs dinners & breakfasts all sorts of eating reached Lyons about 6 oclock had tea & eggs poorly in eveng

(Manuscript Journal, 8 October 1836)

On 1 December she wrote: “feel very weak & poorly getting neither health nor strength at Nice”. The last part of their journey to Florence, during which they paused for a day in Pisa, took them another nine days by coach and boat. They remained in Florence for Christmas and the New Year but suffered from the cold, which she considered too severe for Charlie to remain in church on Christmas Day. On New Year’s Day, the waiters at the Hotel gave her flowers.

As soon as they arrived in Rome they were greeted by Joseph Severn, who was the most well-established of the British artists living there. He was the artist who had accompanied Keats to Rome and was at this time at the heart of the British artists’ colony. During their stay in Rome, William Wordsworth

also visited. Harriet faithfully recorded their breakfast and other meetings with Wordsworth, noting them down in the same matter-of-fact way she used to record all such encounters. After all, Harriet already knew Coleridge, who had been one of their neighbours when they lived in Hampstead. Almost every day Harriet recorded different visitors to their lodgings. The entry which covers Charlie's birthday on Wednesday, 25 January 1837, is a good example:

Dear Charlie's birthday out shopping after breakfast then I took a ride with Mrs Severn to Borghese gardens back by 2 young Russels came to spend the day went on Pincio home at four to dinner all sorts of company in eveng Mr Severn & Mr Williams came in to tea had a fine feast.

Harriet recorded all the sights of Rome – the Colosseum by moonlight (“never beheld any thing so grand”) – the Vatican (“quite lost in astonishment at the vastness of the place”).

They also visited the Sistine Chapel daily during Holy Week to see the ceremonies, and Harriet described herself as running for a good place and jostling for a view:

we ran with all speed to St Peters . . . but the best places were all taken . . . then I darted off to a hall in the Vatican . . . by dint of great pushing and squeezing I got a tolerable place and saw the Pilgrims . . .

The Holy Week section of the Journal was written on extra sheets of paper and carefully stitched into place. It was written in a more leisurely style but still unpunctuated:

we were in the Sistine chapel soon after 1/2 past eight staid through a long dull service and then went into the sala Reggia where we stood to see the procession of the Pope carrying the host through to the Pauline this was most splendid and imposing the cardinals glittering in white and gold robes. The Pope in superb white and gold a white and gold veil thrown over his head and a white and gold canopy carried over him as this glittering cavalcade left the Sistine Chapel a strong gleam of sunshine fell on it and produced the most marvelous effect while at the other end through the ample folding doors leading to the Pauline Chapel the holy sepulchre was even dazzling with innumerable lights

(Manuscript Journal, 22 March 1837).

With such evocative passages as this, it seems surprising that Harriet did not think of her Journal when she took to writing again in 1853. However, after the stay in Rome there are not many more lyrical moments in the Italian Journal. Harriet had to take on a new and demanding role and became the head of the family, holding the family prayers, managing the doctor's regime and fearing that her husband might not have long to live.

Harriet in Crisis

The Starke guidebook which informed their travels also contained a list of medicines which they should take on their journey: James powder (a purgative), sal volatile (a reviver), pure opium and liquid laudanum (pain killers), ipecacuanha (for rheumatism), emetic tartar (another purgative), prepared calomel (a headache treatment with terrible side effects), essential oil of lavender and spirit of lavender (to soothe), sweet spirit of nitre (for fainting spells), antimonial wine (yet another purgative), court plaster and lint (for bandaging wounds). As Harriet is careful to note everyone's health in her Kirton's Royal Remembrancer, it is highly likely that she took such a medicine chest with her. The Journal shows that she was often called upon to be the nurse of the family.

Some of her most spirited phrases in the Journal are those she used to record her own health. She is often "half dead with fatigue" from coach travel,⁷ and on one occasion notes "stomach in utter rebellion" after eating dinner at a French coaching inn. But it was sensible to be concerned with health, since they were travelling in a region where cholera was rife. They were delayed at Nice because of cholera quarantines in Italy, which prevented onward travel. In Naples, they came face to face with cholera victims. All Harriet writes in her journal to describe their abrupt departure from Naples, after a month there, is: "began to pack for Sorrento Dr Murray engaged to go with us heartily glad too at the prospect of leaving Naples" (Manuscript Journal, 21 May 1837). She does not explain why they left, but Wilkie, in his *Memoirs* of his father, solves the mystery:

Strange-looking yellow sedan chairs, with closed windows, had for some days been observed passing through the street before the painter's house. On inquiry, it was ascertained that their occupants were sick people, being conveyed to the hospital; and, on further investigation, these sick people were discovered to be cholera patients

(Collins, *Memoirs*, 2:106-7)

They had to leave before quarantine bans on travel were imposed. And so, unexpectedly in an Italian tour of grand art, they came to live in Sorrento for three months during the hottest time of the year.

Initially it well suited William to be in such a landscape and light. He was constantly out sketching seascapes, especially the sweep of the Bay of

⁷ Wilkie Collins uses the same expression in a letter to Nina Lehmann, dated 25 February 1883, on completing *Heart and Science*: "I finished my story – discovered one day that I was half dead with fatigue – and the next day that the gout was in my right eye" (Baker & Clarke, 2:455).

Naples with Vesuvius in the background. Harriet felt at home at once. On their second day there she wrote:

Wm, the boys & Dr Murray took a long ride after breakfast till nearly 4 I staid at home worked etc walked down the garden to the sea in the eveng walked out in lanes & like Sorrento better every hour

(Manuscript Journal, 3 June 1837)

During June and July she often recorded moonlit walks, sea bathing and rides on donkeys to admire views. They were lucky to find their idyll as the quarantine had extended down the coast to Amalfi. When William with Wilkie took a boat trip to sketch Amalfi cathedral they were prevented from landing. Nothing daunted, William sketched from the sea:

As soon as his boat approached the shore, two armed soldiers ran down to the water's edge, and forbade all projects of landing . . . a demand for dinner was next proffered, and complied with by the landlord of the inn, who sent his cooks down to the beach in procession with the dishes, which were placed close to the sea, and taken into the boat by the sailors . . . even the money to pay for the repast was ordered to be thrown, with the empty dishes, into shallow water . . . during these proceedings, the idle population, who flocked to the beach, saw themselves, to their utter astonishment, quietly adorning from a distance the sketch-book of the painter; who on this, as on all other occasions, coolly made the most of his time and pencil which existing circumstances would allow.

(Collins, *Memoirs*, 2:110-11)

It was this kind of exposure to the sun which is believed to have caused William's serious illness.⁸

Harriet first described her husband as "rather poorly" in late July. Their doctor, Dr Strange, made daily visits and the August journal entries contain a catalogue of Victorian medical treatments, none of which helped the stricken William. He was given leeches to his temples, blisters behind his ears, subjected to harsh purgatives every day and hot baths. Not surprisingly Harriet observed that he was "quite worn out". She wrote that he suffered inflammation in his eyes, rheumatic gout in his back and severe pain in his shoulder. By mid August, Harriet was struggling in her role of nurse with administering the medicines and heating the bath water to the correct temperature: "Wm very ill in bed all day . . . took a warm bath in eveng great

⁸ Constable died in 1837 and no doubt the news of his death would have caused Harriet extra anxiety over William, for he, like Constable, painted in the open air.

trouble & perplexity broken Mrs Hills thermometer quite ill with fatigue & vexation" (Manuscript Journal, 19 August 1837). The next day she recorded: "Wm very ill miserable day great heat determined to move."

Taking charge of the situation, Harriet found them new lodgings in a cooler area. William had to be carried by two men in an armchair but Harriet felt the new situation lessened his misery. She sat in the "airy and cheerful" new surroundings, reading to her husband, quietly noting that it was "a great blessing to have such comfortable rooms". However, these material changes failed to help the patient and towards the end of the month things were no better: "Wm the same dreadfully weak." That evening, a visitor, Miss Wheldon, had a fainting fit at dinner and Dr Strange was called for her. "Great deal to do," stoically recorded Harriet; "went to bed quite worn out". Suffering from his complaint as well as his medical treatments, William was ill for two months. Harriet noted sadly the passing of their wedding anniversary.⁹ Their doctor prescribed more hot baths and Harriet acquired a new machine to heat water over a fire, which often went out. Finally their doctor suggested taking the mineral baths on the volcanic island of Ischia and they set sail on 3 October, leaving Dr Strange behind. William began to recover at Ischia after prolonged suffering, but his health was seriously undermined as his illness weakened his heart and led to his death ten years later, at the age of fifty-nine. The family returned to Naples where Harriet's journal entries became shorter and shorter, reflecting the effect of her husband's slow recovery on her spirits.

The conclusion of Harriet's journal is highly dramatic and full of emotion: guilt, religious prejudice, concern for her husband and young son, feelings triggered by the accident-prone Charlie. On an art outing to a local palace in Naples without her children, Harriet returned to find

my poor Charlie with his coat half off his arm hanging and in a broken voice he exclaimed I have broken my arm the arm was set and bound up my poor child behaving like a hero his bed was moved into our room and he was put into it his pain increased all the eveng we got to bed soon after eleven but no sleep barely all night poor Charlie screaming with pain Alas what an end of the old year but I take shame to myself for not taking my boys with me.

She then lamented:

Many months of this past year have been passed in much anxiety and fatigue caused by the severe affliction of rheumatism suffered by my husband many times my heart has been oppressed with heaviness the climate of Italy is not favourable to the bodily or mental temperament of my husband this is a fact of which I am well assured.

⁹ They had married on 16 September 1822.

Her mood deepened when she looked back to family and friends at home, since “death has been busy with many we left there hoping they would be in health to greet our return”. On this sad note, her journal ends, eight months before their return to London.

Conclusion

Though her Italian Journal opens with regret (“set off ... from our dear peaceful home”) and closes with remorse, in its centre we read of Harriet’s delight at thrilling landscapes, her awe at the monuments in Rome and her sense of wonder at viewing Renaissance art with her own eyes. We know she ran from St Paul’s to the Vatican to catch a glimpse of the mysterious ceremonies for Holy Week, held impromptu tea parties, rode on horseback and on a moonlit night observed a firefly for the first time. Along with her evident care for her family, such details provide a counterweight to the negative sketches so often drawn of Harriet and show why she charmed many of her contemporaries.

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~~Reviews~~

Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, eds. *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins*, Tennessee Studies in Literature vol. 41, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003. pp. xxviii + 386. ISBN 1572332743.

Collins's work, as he famously noted in the Preface to *Armada*, "oversteps, in more than one direction, the narrow limits within which [critics] are disposed to restrict the development of modern fiction," and this new collection of essays aims to move beyond the narrow limits of the "sensation novel" and the time frame of the 1860s, to explore the full range of Collins's aesthetic project. *Reality's Dark Light* ranges from the relationship between Collins's first "modern" novel *Basil* and the Pre-Raphaelite movement, to his uneasy relation to emergent forms of publication at the end of his writing career. However, while the editors stress that the volume incorporates a range of critical perspectives (xix), its principle focus is on Collins the subversive challenger of boundaries – both ideological and aesthetic – and on those aspects of his fiction which anticipate, at times uncannily, our own preoccupations with how power relations are undermined from within. Drawing variously on Freud's own essay on the "The Uncanny" and on postcolonial discussions of hybridity, many of these essays investigate how Collins's fiction embodies what Jonathan Dollimore (in *Sexual Dissidence*) has termed the "perverse dynamic," in which the "other" is absolutely integral to the self, even as it remains trapped within a dominant/subordinate hierarchy. "Transgression" is by no means a new trope in Collins studies, but the forms it takes are explored here in some intriguing ways, particularly in relation to sexuality, disability and race.

In particular, Martha Stoddard Holmes analyzes how Collins breaks with dominant portrayals of various forms of disability, with their taint of degeneration, by refusing to consign his disabled heroines to passive, non-reproductive victimhood. In *Hide and Seek*, *The Moonstone* and *Poor Miss Finch*, she argues, Collins does far more than attempt a naturalistic portrayal of deafness, "crookedness" or blindness; he actively links the heroines' ostensible handicaps to their position as desiring subjects, "exploring and disrupting cultural conventions of seeing, nonseeing and desire" (75). Rosanna Spearman writes and literally smothers the desire that Rachel may not speak; in *Poor Miss Finch* it is Lucilla's blindness that enables her to develop as a sexual subject. Placing Lucilla in the context of contemporary discussions of hereditary transmission, Holmes argues persuasively that it is her *normality*, as a blind woman given full access to "courtship, marriage and motherhood" (62), that makes her such a radical figure.

While Holmes explores how the boundaries between the normal and the pathological are disrupted by the sexualized *and* domesticated disabled

woman, Piya Pal-Lapinski investigates the intricate interconnections between exoticism and toxicity in the figure of the female poisoner. Reading *Armadale* and *The Legacy of Cain* in the context of mid-century medical debates and legal dramas, she offers a seductive interpretation of Lydia Gwilt's hybridity – of her wandering, nomadic identity and complex textual and ideological position that is manifested in her use of poison as an act of resistance, finally turned, in a gesture of containment, back on herself. In Richard Collins's discussion of 'Bearded Ladies, Hermaphrodites and Intersexual Collage' the perverse dynamic is again much in evidence. Placing Marian's disturbing moustache against a background of contemporary freak shows and medical studies of hermaphrodites and unclassifiable nondescripts, he argues that it becomes "the focus of all the anomalies and contradictions of the novel" (136). While Marian's "Medusa-like" visage reflects Walter's own sexual ambivalence and anxiety, Richard Collins suggests, she also enables him to discover his masculinity and detective prowess. Thus Laura becomes the figure of homosocial exchange between Marian and Walter, even though Marian must be transformed from disturbing hermaphrodite to asexual androgyne to complete this exchange. A comparable process of transformation occurs in Karin Jacobson's fascinating comparison of the Madeleine Smith trial and *The Law and the Lady*. Drawing on contemporary legal theory, she argues that both are "weird cases" hinging on the revelation and concealment of letters, that neither can easily be assimilated into legal discourse; and that Valeria, the detective heroine of Collins's novel, becomes the "mother" of the law who attempts, albeit unsuccessfully, to mediate and control this weirdness. Here Miserrimus Dexter is the liminal figure who conceals and reveals Sara Macallan's unhappy past and suicide, allowing Sara herself to become the buried object figure that enables Valeria's marriage to finally be legitimised.

The essays by Timothy Carens, Lillian Nayder and Audrey Fisch that focus on Collins's treatment of empire tease out the slipperiness of "race" as a category and the intimate relationship between colony and home, "black" and "white," domestic self and imperial other. While Carens draws on Freud's uncanny and Homi Bhabha to focus (somewhat predictably) on *The Moonstone*, and Audrey Fisch extends this deconstruction of racial binaries to *Miss or Mrs?*, *Black and White*, *The Guilty River* and *Armadale*, Lillian Nayder argues that Collins moves through the more obvious representations of slavery and empire to explore how 'race' is constructed as an arbitrary category in *Poor Miss Finch*. Comparing Oscar Dubourg's sudden transformation into a "blue man" (a term, she shows, then imbued with connotations of "miscegenation") with John Howard Griffith's sensational expose of Southern racism in the 1960s *Black Like Me*, she offers an extremely thought-provoking analysis of how Collins denaturalises racial prejudice and "effectively pathologises the racist norm" (274).

I found many of these essays fascinating. But while they demonstrate that the very hybridity that caused Collins to be marginalized in the past is what speaks most clearly to us now, there is a danger that this too, can become a new kind of narrow limit, where Collins speaks against a monolithic "Victorian

ideology” rather than enaging with its contradictions and complexities. Such overdetermined reading is paradoxically both challenged and taken to its logical conclusion in Albert D. Hutter’s wonderfully quirky reading of Fosco’s real fate in *The Woman in White*. Opening by exploring Fosco’s roots in Italian nationalist politics, he turns to the text and to the possibilities it opens for the reader to construct alternative endings. Fosco himself must have written his biography, therefore it could not have been his own body in the Paris morgue, he suggests: might the shape-shifting master of disguise, capable of the doubling and substitution of Laura Fairlie, have created his own body-double to evade the Brotherhood’s revenge? Surveying the theme of resurrection across Dickens and Collins, Hutter concludes with a suggestive discussion of the therapeutic possibilities inherent in the act of reading itself.

As Bachman and Cox emphasise in their introduction, Collins always in some sense saw himself as a realist in the complex sense of that term as being both rooted in and “beyond” sense experience. But his practice was also shaped by his aesthetic and economic contexts, and the first and last of these essays illuminate how he moved across and between different cultural circles as a bohemian artist and a commercial writer at the different stages of his career. Tim Dolin and Lucy Dougan unpick how closely *Basil* corresponds to and extends the Pre-Raphaelites’ ambivalence towards modernity; while Graham Law offers a nuanced discussion of the connections between the form of Collins’s late narratives and the expanding national and international literary market place that he both depended on and at some level despised. Law’s analysis of Collins’s uneasy position in late nineteenth century publishing practices offers a useful corrective to those who want to read him, always, as a dangerous radical, and *Reality’s Dark Light* still leaves much to explore in Collins’s *oeuvre*. But it is great to have this new collection, which will help place Collins, perverse or not, at the centre of the dynamics of Victorian culture.

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(1) Alexis Weedon. *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. pp. xvi + 212. ISBN 0754635279. (2) Bradley Deane. *The Making of the Victorian Novelist: Anxieties of Authorship in the Mass Market*. London: Routledge, 2003. pp. xvi + 170. ISBN 0415940206.

Following John Sutherland in his ground-breaking study of *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* (1976), in recent decades a number of critics have produced detailed studies of major Victorian writers in the light of developments in the history of publishing. These investigations include Robert Patten’s *Charles Dickens and His Publishers* (1978), Peter Shillingsburg’s

Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W.M. Thackeray (1992) and *Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work* (1999) from Linda Hughes and Michael Lund. Though it plays a crucial role in developments in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the career of Wilkie Collins still awaits such comprehensive treatment. However, there have recently been a number of more specialist studies on aspects of the Victorian fiction industry – Deborah Wynne on the family magazine and Lillian Nayder on literary collaboration, for example – in which Collins is a key witness. The volumes under review here, both of which concern the emergence of a mass market for the printed word, fall into a similar category. On its own, Collins's impressively prescient essay on "The Unknown Public," appearing in *Household Words* in the summer of 1858 and proclaiming that "the readers who rank by millions will be the readers who give the widest reputations, who return the richest rewards, and who will, therefore, command the service of the best writers of their time," might assure him a place in any study of this topic. It must be said at the outset, though, that the books by Weedon and Deane approach their common subject from positions almost diametrically opposed, and assign to Collins a very different place in their accounts.

Alexis Weedon's perspective is that "of the student of publishing economics, rather than that of the literary, social or book historian" (4), so that the centre of the stage is occupied less by authors or readers than by printing and publishing firms. Though there is the occasional nod in the direction of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, this remains a steadfastly empirical study of the growth of the mass market for books, the bibliometric emphasis signalled by the scores of figures and tables which lend ballast to the argument. This study is one of a number deriving from the History of the Book in Britain project, and makes extensive use of its Book Production Cost Database, an index of the costs of raw materials, labour and printing, derived from the surviving business records of around a dozen major publishing and printing concerns between 1830 and 1939. (These include the two most important houses carrying Collins's work, Richard Bentley and Chatto & Windus.) The trends emerging from this microeconomic data are compared with other sources, at once more comprehensive and more problematic, such as the Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue and the monthly listings of the *Publishers' Circular*, which served for earlier enterprises of this type, most notably Simon Eliot's *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919* (1994). Compared to Eliot, Weedon tells us little about trends in periodical publication, but gives us a good deal more on the surprisingly large output of the provincial presses, and, especially, the expansion of exports of British books to colonial and other overseas markets. After a chapter dedicated to explaining the archival sources accessed and the methodology employed to tap them, Weedon goes on to analyse how general economic fluctuations affected the publishing industry, and to demonstrate the effects of steep reductions in productions costs on the material and aesthetic form of the book. There follow two chapters on trend variations according to field, with literary and educational books the chosen genres. The final chapter, which appeared in

an earlier version in *Book History* (1999), offers a case study of changing publishing strategies in the final decades of Weedon's range, when the triple-decker sinks and the film industry rises, and it is here that two Chatto & Windus authors take the stage – "Ouida" and Wilkie Collins.

Unfortunately the authors are here still limited to walk-on parts. The statistics Weedon offers concerning patterns of production of cheap editions and sale of film rights date only from the period after the death of the two writers, so that it is only the strategies of the publisher that are at issue. The question why Collins and Ouida resisted the production of sixpenny paperback editions of their novels so strongly during their lifetime is raised, but the answers given are narrowly economic. Collins's complex engagement with a mass audience through the serial market is treated only cursorily – Weedon seems unaware that the author's serial rights were marketed by the agent A.P. Watt from as early as 1881 – while Ouida's fascinating diatribe against 'New Literary Factors' (in the *Times* of London of 22 May 1891) is overlooked completely. Similarly, perhaps because the interests of the publishers were not directly involved, there is no mention of the active engagement of both writers in the fight to protect the rights to the theatrical performance of their own fiction (Collins through the dramatization of his own works, and Ouida again through correspondence in the *Times*), which might have made a neat bookend with the section on film rights. Altogether then, this chapter is the thinnest in the volume, in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense, confirming by default that publishing, authorship and readership do need to be studied as a single complex if we are to develop a truly rounded book history.

In contrast to that of Weedon, Bradley Deane's study of the mass market, originating as a doctoral thesis at Northwestern University, is more interested in what Foucault has called the "author-function." It seeks to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the concept of authorship in nineteenth-century Britain, by isolating "the social, economic and aesthetic transformations that allowed it to achieve its almost unassailable hegemony in popular culture and professional criticism alike" (ix). The more immediate theoretical debt, though, is to Althusser's notion of ideology, with Norman Feltes's *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (1986) providing an apt model for its application to nineteenth-century publishing history. Like Feltes, Deane proceeds by isolating a series of critical "moments" represented by the production and reception of specific canonical works. In Deane's case, the four crises are: Scott's rejection of the Wordsworthian idea of Romantic genius in favour of a more impersonal notion of the social utility of the author's work (*Waverley*); Dickens's embracing of the role of the friendly, sympathetic author in a period of growing social antagonism and alienation (*The Pickwick Papers*); Collins's adoption of a professional model of authorship in the face of the rise of the "unknown public" (*The Woman in White*), to which I shall return; and James's cultivation of a pseudo-religious concept of modernist literary authority in the face of the "balkanization" of the late Victorian market-place

(*The Princess Casamassima*). These chapters are followed by a more wide-ranging discussion of the anomalies of the “veiled” female authorial personality in the Victorian period, with Gaskell and Eliot serving as examples.

The Making of the Victorian Novelist, however, is a fairly slim volume, and these “grand” arguments are often supported only by a highly selective use of secondary sources. Here, “qtd. in . . .” proves a constant refrain, with the date and provenance of the original left to the imagination too frequently. This is a particular problem in the chapter on the “sensation school,” which Deane sees as a phantom menace conjured by the reactionary critics of the elite quarterly and monthly reviews in order to deride the indiscriminate taste of the emerging mass reading public served by the popular illustrated weekly papers. This leads to a discussion of the fascination with legal discourse in the narrative content and form of *The Woman in White*, which is thus read interestingly as a novel dramatizing “the moment of sensationalism . . . a juncture during which the fantasy of a utopian, universal community of readers was ripped asunder” (59). But the argument is premised on the claim that Collins’s “reputation among critics tumbled rapidly in the early 1860s” though he had “previously enjoyed nearly unanimous critical approval” (60); at the same time, it is stated that *The Woman in White* “received one of its best notices in the *Times*” (75), one of the most powerful opponents of the quarterly press. To maintain such claims it really is best to keep a safe distance from the documentary evidence, which suggests rather: that, in 1852, *Basil* was received with animosity by many reviewers on account of its sexual content; that Collins was treated more kindly by anti-sensationalists like Margaret Oliphant and Henry Mansel than were women writers such as Braddon or Wood; and that *The Woman in White* was given a rather rough ride in the *Times* (both in the dedicated notice on 30 October 1860, and in a reprise in the course of the review of *Great Expectations* on 17 October 1861, both probably by E.S. Dallas), especially in comparison with the treatment of *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *East Lynne*. Recognition of tensions like these might have produced a rather more nuanced account of the complexities of Collins’s position.

Despite the lapses mentioned, though, these two volumes – both in the main engagingly written, tightly argued and attractively presented – are very welcome additions to the growing list of works on nineteenth-century book history which engage with the career of Wilkie Collins. All the same, they still leave me with an appetite for a work dedicated to that theme; one that might grapple with the full range of publishing issues raised by Collins’s writings, including not only volume publication, but also serialization in periodicals, the dramatization of narrative for theatrical performance, the globalization of the fiction market, and the formalization of literary agency; and, finally, one that might attempt to combine the rigorous empirical methodology of a Weedon with the theoretical elegance and sophistication of a Deane.

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Contents

~Articles~

- Gendered Visions: The Figure of the Prostitute
in *The New Magdalen* and *The Fallen Leaves*
JESSICA COX 3
- Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in *Hide and Seek*
AOIFE LEAHY 19
- Collins and the Custody Novel: Parental Abduction and Family Business
TAMARA S. WAGNER 31

~Note~

- The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (1)
WILLIAM BAKER, ANDREW GASSON, GRAHAM LAW, & PAUL LEWIS 48

~Reviews~

- Lyn Pykett, *Wilkie Collins* (Authors in Context)
MARK KNIGHT 56
- The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, ed. William Baker et al.
LILLIAN NAYDER 58
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *The White Phantom*, ed. Jennifer Carnell
GRAHAM LAW 62

Editors' Note

There can be no doubt that 2005 has been a notable year in Wilkie Collins Studies, with a number of major events and publications reflected in the current issue of the *Journal*. March saw the one-day conference organized by Andrew Mangham at the University of Sheffield, which attracted many distinguished speakers and a lively international audience. June saw the publication of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* from Pickering & Chatto, four weighty volumes of collected correspondence under the editorship of William Baker and his colleagues, which has been more than five years in the making. And September saw the appearance of Lyn Pykett's volume in the "Authors in Context" series from Oxford University Press, where Collins joins the likes of the Brontës Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, Wilde and Woolf. Reviews of both Lyn Pykett's monograph and the Pickering & Chatto edition of the letters are included in this issue, while we are also happy to be able to include the first of a planned series of lists of "Addenda and Corrigenda" to the letters from the hands of the editors. Two of our featured articles also derive from presentations at the Sheffield conference: Jessica Cox on the image of the prostitute, and Aoife Leahy on the "evil of the Raphaelesque". The issue is rounded out with an original piece on "Collins and the Custody Novel" by Tamara S. Wagner, and a review of the recent reprints of Mary Braddon's penny bloods from the Sensation Press. Since next year sees the publication of the *Cambridge Companion to Wilkie Collins*, edited by Jenny Taylor, there seems every reason to expect another *annus mirabilis* for students of Wilkie Collins.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

Gendered Visions: The Figure of the Prostitute in *The New Magdalen* and *The Fallen Leaves*

Jessica Cox

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The character of the fallen woman is a staple figure in the novels of Wilkie Collins: from Margaret Sherwin in *Basil* (1852) and Sarah Leeson in *The Dead Secret* (1857) to Lydia Gwilt in *Armadale* (1866) and Anne Silvester in *Man and Wife* (1870), sexually transgressive women repeatedly feature, and are almost always depicted in a favourable light. Collins was by no means unique in offering sympathetic portrayals of women who had crossed the boundaries of Victorian respectability. Throughout the period – from Dickens’s Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, serialized from 1837, to Hardy’s Tess, who outraged critics in 1891 – the fallen woman was a recognizable and controversial figure in the novel. Her presence reflected contemporary anxieties about female purity: Victorian attitudes to fallen women in general, and prostitutes in particular, were often rooted in a fear of female sexuality and the notion that female desire was somehow contagious, an attitude most notoriously reflected in the Contagious Diseases Acts. The sexual double standard prevailing in the nineteenth century, which condemned the sexually transgressive female whilst tacitly accepting male promiscuity, is often reflected in the literature of the time. The conventional fate of the fallen woman in the Victorian novel is to sin, suffer and die: as Tom Winnifrith observes, “the condemnation of fallen women ... appears at first sight to be shared by almost every nineteenth-century writer of any stature” (Winnifrith, 5). In Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, for example, the prostitute Nancy is brutally murdered, while in Gaskell’s *Ruth* (1853), the eponymous heroine, mother to an illegitimate child, dies of typhus. However, Victorian novelists did not universally condemn the fallen woman. *Ruth* is significant in that it offers a compassionate depiction of her, although Gaskell ultimately adheres to Victorian literary convention and kills her errant heroine. In its overt sympathy for the fallen Ruth, Gaskell’s text anticipates the

sensation novels that first emerged in the 1860s, which often shocked Victorian sensibilities with their depictions of sexually transgressive women. These in turn anticipated the fiction of the fin-de-siècle, which reflected “a change in sexual attitudes and the depiction of sexual matters” (Winnifrith, 9), although the death of Hardy’s Tess is indicative of the fact that the fallen woman remained a controversial figure throughout the Victorian era.

The fallen woman of the sensation novel often succeeded in infiltrating the middle or upper class domestic sphere, coinciding with the beginning of Josephine Butler’s campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts – a campaign that brought taboo subjects to public attention, and more particularly to the attention of middle and upper-class women at a time when “decent women did not talk about sex in public – still less about sexual diseases, or the double standards employed by men when legislating about them” (Wilson, 473). Butler, as the main public figure of the campaign, came to be viewed by many Victorian moralists as little more than a prostitute herself – the consequence of speaking openly on such outrageous topics. This, of course, is indicative of why Victorian novelists refrained from explicit depictions of sexual transgression. The first of the Contagious Diseases Acts was passed in 1864, and they were only repealed in 1886. They allowed the internal examination of women suspected of being prostitutes, and women who refused to be examined, or who were found to be suffering from sexually transmitted diseases, could be imprisoned for up to nine months (see Walkowitz *Prostitution*). Aside from the fact that the acts sanctioned the violation of women’s bodies, their effectiveness was extremely limited, as men who visited prostitutes were not subject to examination, and therefore the spread of disease could not be contained. Through the work of Josephine Butler’s Ladies National Association, the acts received a great deal of publicity, but they were, in fact, just one of many laws which, while attempting to regulate sexuality, failed to adequately protect women from sexual abuse: until 1885, the age of consent was just thirteen (Walkowitz *Prostitution*); there was no legislation to protect women from incest or marital rape in the nineteenth century; and men abusing adolescents between the ages of thirteen and sixteen could not be prosecuted if more than three months had elapsed since the abuse had taken place (see Bartley, 182). Furthermore, rape was extremely difficult to prove, and consequently very few incidents were reported, even fewer resulted in prosecution, and less still in conviction. Women who became pregnant as a result of sexual abuse were rarely regarded as victims, and were often forced into refuges, workhouses or prostitution.

The passing of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and the public campaigns calling for their repeal, undoubtedly meant that the fallen woman theme carried a new resonance for the sensation novelists. The sexual double standard in particular became a focus in sensation literature, and is attacked – either overtly

or subvertly – in a great many novels of the 1860s, not least those of Collins - although more conservative writers, such as Mrs Henry Wood, also participated in the genre, and frequently upheld Victorian moral standards. Although the sensation novels and the campaign for the rights of prostitutes at this time may have appeared to reflect a more tolerant attitude towards female sexuality, they also had the effect of outraging large sections of society, amongst whom was deeply embedded the idea that, in the words of Josephine Butler, “a woman who has once lost chastity has lost every good quality” (cited in Jordan, 158). It is in this respect that the sensation genre, and the novels of Collins in particular, often differ from earlier fallen woman narratives: not only does Collins rarely punish his fallen women for their sexual transgressions, he often depicts them marrying into the middle or upper classes, suggesting his own feminist sympathies and disapproval of hypocritical Victorian attitudes. Yet, while the character of the sexually transgressive female is often present in Collins’s fiction, the figure of the prostitute appears only twice. This essay will thus focus on the depictions of Mercy Merrick in *The New Magdalen* (1873), a former prostitute whom the narrative idealizes, and Simple Sally in *The Fallen Leaves* (1879), who is paradoxically represented as a virginal prostitute, and whose portrayal is at the same time highly sympathetic and highly sexualized. “In both cases the prostitute ends up respectably married,” as Tom Winnifrith observes (140), but in neither text is Collins’s treatment of the fallen woman straightforward or entirely free from gender stereotyping.

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In *The New Magdalen*, Mercy Merrick, the reformed prostitute of the title, is the illegitimate daughter of an actress and a gentleman, who falls into prostitution after she is drugged and raped whilst unconscious. Repentant of her past and determined to reform, she fails to find respectable work as a result of her earlier transgressions. Consequently she adopts the identity of another woman – Grace Roseberry, whom she believes to be dead – in order to escape the stigma of her prior misdemeanours. However, Mercy’s past catches up with her when Grace reappears alive and well. Mercy returns to the shelter where she had originally sought refuge, refusing her employer’s offer to overlook her disreputable past, as well as a marriage proposal from a respectable clergyman, Julian Gray, whom she loves. Eventually, after he becomes seriously ill, she agrees to marry him. They are subsequently rejected by polite society and leave Britain to begin a new life in the New World. The briefest examination of the plot indicates a significant move away from the traditional fallen woman narratives of earlier decades. Not only is the protagonist forgiven for her sexual transgressions, but she is also rewarded for her repentance with a happy

marriage at the conclusion of the novel. Collins thus actively subverts the conventions of the fallen woman narrative.

Whilst Collins's depiction of Mercy serves to highlight the hypocrisy of Victorian attitudes towards fallen women, the portrayal is somewhat problematic. The protagonist has all the characteristics of a gentlewoman, but her history is entirely contradictory to this. Not only has she experienced a childhood plagued by poverty and later turned to prostitution, but she also spent time in prison after being (falsely) accused of theft. Her history is reminiscent of Dickens's Nancy, yet her character has more in common with Rose Maylie in the same novel. However, it was necessary for Collins's purpose that Mercy should appeal to the reader, hence the paradoxical representation: Nancy's crudeness and hardness would not have translated into a character whom the reader could both pity *and* empathize with. The necessity of this alteration is emphasized by an examination of the writings of Josephine Butler, in which "prostitutes generally speak like ladies" (Jordan, 68). Both Butler and Collins were appealing to a middle-class readership, and to appeal to them through the language and speech of the lower classes would have been fruitless. Yet the consequence is that Collins's depiction of Mercy is not only idealistic, but unrealistic as well, and thus ultimately serves to undermine the novel's moral purpose: Mercy is simply not representative of the Victorian prostitute. Whilst a few middle-class women did become prostitutes, the large majority were working-class – forced by poverty into one of the few occupations in which they could earn an independent income. Paula Bartley emphasizes this point, observing that those women of the middle and upper classes seeking refuge at reform institutions "were more likely cast-off mistresses or single mothers than ex-prostitutes" (Bartley, 37).

As a plea for society's fallen women, the novel ultimately fails: the nineteenth-century reader may have agreed that Mercy was worthy of forgiveness, and deserving of happiness, but she is not representative of society's fallen women, who turned to prostitution not unintentionally and "guiltlessly", as Mercy does – "I was an innocent girl ... I was at least not to blame" (Collins *The New Magdalen*, 241), but because there was no other option available for them. Nevertheless, certain aspects of the narrative are indicative of nineteenth-century attitudes towards the figure of the prostitute. In the opening scene, when Mercy reveals her past to the shocked and unsympathetic Grace, her despair is telling: "what I *am* can never alter what I *was* ... the lost place is not to be regained. I can't get back! I can't get back" (12). Collins suggests the unforgiving nature of the morality of the middle and upper classes that prevented the fallen woman from regaining any respectable position within society, and it is this rigid morality that is the author's main focus of attack in the novel. It is worth noting, however, that, amongst the working classes at least, "as long as prostitution represented a temporary stage

in a woman's career, and as long as she could leave it at her discretion, she was not irrevocably scarred or limited in her future choices" (Walkowitz *Prostitution*, 196). In his seminal work on prostitution, William Acton, although not generally inclined to come down on the side of women, supports this view:

I have every reason to believe, that by far the larger number of women who have resorted to prostitution for a livelihood, return sooner or later to a more or less regular course of life ... [T]he better inclined class of prostitutes become the wedded wives of men in every grade of society, from the peerage to the stable.

(Acton, 39)

While the number of former prostitutes who married amongst the middle and upper classes was undoubtedly few, it is clear that the attitude expressed towards the prostitute in much Victorian literature may have masked a rather different reality.

Although by no means an entirely realistic portrayal of the nineteenth century prostitute, *The New Magdalen* does succeed in drawing attention to the hypocrisy of Victorian "respectable" society and their supposedly Christian values – sentiments paralleled by Josephine Butler and the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. This is achieved partially through the presentation of Mercy, but more significantly through the character of Julian Gray and the novel's conclusion. Like Captain Kirke in *No Name*, Julian Gray is the Christ-like saviour of the heroine – more explicitly in this case given his status as a Clergyman, though this is a role that he eventually forsakes before marrying Mercy. Julian's character is representative of true Christian values – those of forgiveness and unconditional love. Significantly, the sentiments he expresses parallel those of key figures campaigning for the social rights of prostitutes. Pleading Mercy's case following her confession to Horace, Julian pronounces that "her heartfelt repentance is a joy in Heaven. Shall it not plead for her on earth? Honour her, if you are a Christian. Feel for her, if you are a man!" (Collins *The New Magdalen*, 250). This echoes the sentiments of Josephine Butler:

when you say that fallen women in the mass are irreclaimable, have lost all truthfulness, all nobleness ... and all tenderness of heart because they are unchaste, you are guilty of a blasphemy against human nature and against God.

(cited in Jordan, 116)

Indeed, the similarities between Josephine Butler and Collins's Julian Gray are numerous, and worthy of consideration. Like Butler, the novel's hero is a renowned orator, who actively involves himself in the rescue of fallen women, and whose effect upon them is profound, as Mercy's account of his sermon at the refuge demonstrates:

His text was from the words “Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.” What happier women might have thought of his sermon I cannot say; there was not a dry eye among us at the Refuge.

(Collins *The New Magdalen*, 14)

A strikingly similar account is to be found of Josephine Butler’s first visit to the oakum sheds in the mid-1860s, where “women for whom there was no hope of redemption” worked in pitiful conditions: “Josephine ... bid them pray, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner!’ and, as if in response to a charm, all fell to their knees upon the damp bricks. She knelt too, and heard a great moaning and weeping rise up from the cellar floor.” (Jordan, 67-8). In both extracts, the speaker quotes from the Gospel of St. Luke in attempting to reclaim society’s fallen women. The repeated use of the New Testament by both Butler and Julian Gray is significant, indicating the positioning of both as mirrors of Christ in their relation to the fallen woman. The image of the hero as saviour is not uncommon in Collins’s novels, and is demonstrated in *The New Magdalen* in the words of reassurance Julian offers to Mercy: “Rise, poor wounded heart! Beautiful, purified soul, God’s angels rejoice over you! Take your place among the noblest of God’s creatures!” (142). The words are again reminiscent of the religious sentiments of Butler who, “one day ... felt moved to say to a woman who was just dying, ‘Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee’” (Jordan, 82), and who acted as “the saviour of oppressed women, ... a female Christ” (174).

The religious beliefs of Collins’s character clearly echo those of Butler. Both repeatedly refer to the scriptures, but both are also disillusioned by the hypocritical religion practised by large sections of society. This disillusionment with the Church results in Julian resigning his post of clergyman in *The New Magdalen*, and similar hypocrisies in the attitudes of Christian leaders were observed by Butler at a meeting of the Church Congress in 1871: “The majority of the clergy present had been carefully trained by evil advisers to consider this legislation [the Contagious Diseases Acts] an excellent thing” (Butler, 56). Butler viewed her rescue work and campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts as a mission from God, and her work was clearly based upon a deep personal commitment to Christianity, not dissimilar to that expressed by Collins’s Julian Gray. Parallels can also be drawn between Julian’s rescue of Mercy, and Butler’s personal involvement in the lives of individual prostitutes such as Mary Lomax, one of many fallen women whom Butler took into her own home. The gratitude Mercy expresses towards Julian – “No words of mine can describe what I owe to him. He has never despaired of me – he has saved me from myself.” (Collins *The New Magdalen*, 180) – is analogous to that articulated by Mary Lomax in a poem to Butler:

When I think of how she found me so wretched and so low,
So torn with pain and sickness, so plagued in guilt and woe;
How sweet she said she loved me, even me the wicked one
And answered my despairing words with joyous hopeful tone.

(cited in Jordan, 72)

The parallels between Josephine Butler and Collins's Julian Gray should not be dismissed as merely coincidental. Butler's controversial campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts had already captured public attention when Collins began writing *The New Magdalen*, and the author would undoubtedly have been aware of it. Indeed, Collins's decision to name the character J. Gray may be a nod towards Butler, whose maiden name was Grey. The figure of the reformed prostitute in the novel can be read as a deliberate attempt to engage with public opinion at the time – possibly as a marketing technique, but more likely because his own beliefs regarding the social status of sexually transgressive women corresponded with those of Butler. Collins's purpose in *The New Magdalen* – to draw attention to society's hypocrisy through the plight of the repentant fallen woman – clearly parallels the arguments used by Butler in both her rescue work and her campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Butler's belief that prostitutes were entitled to the social rights and the opportunity to reform were founded on the same Christian principles which Collins espouses in the novel, and like Collins, she held in contempt the hypocritical Christianity practised by so many in Victorian society.

* * * * *

Collins's attack on the hypocrisy that lay at the heart of Victorian "respectability" is even more central to *The Fallen Leaves*. The metaphor of the title suggests the impossibility of the fallen woman ever regaining a respectable position in society, echoing Mercy's sentiments in *The New Magdalen*. The book follows the progress of the hero, Amelius Goldenheart, who leaves a Christian Socialist community in America to travel to England, where he becomes involved in the lives of various women, including that of the young prostitute, Sally.

Unlike Collins's earlier portrayal of Mercy, that of Sally is completely unidealized. Indeed, she is so much a victim of her life on the streets as to make her depiction shocking and even harrowing. Collins's image of a young prostitute is rendered more disturbing by her child-like simplicity: "she's a little soft, poor soul – hasn't grown up, you know, in her mind, since she was a child" (Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 275). She is nicknamed "Simple Sally" and as a consequence of her simplicity, Amelius treats her like a child: "'Think of

the new dress, and the pretty bonnet' suggested Amelius, speaking unconsciously in the tone in which he might have promised a toy to a child" (289). However, in contrast to her childishness, Sally's character is also highly sexualized, and from their first meeting Amelius's pity for her is clearly mingled with sexual attraction, which permeates the narrative's description of her and immediately casts her in the role of fantasy figure:

The lost creature had, to all appearance, barely passed the boundary between childhood and girlhood – she could hardly be more than fifteen or sixteen years old. Her eyes, of the purest and loveliest blue, rested on Amelius with a vacantly patient look, like the eyes of a suffering child. The soft oval outline of her face would have been perfect if the cheeks had been filled out; they were wasted and hollow, and sadly disfigured by a piece of plaster covering some injury. She was little and thin; her worn and scanty clothing showed her frail youthful figure still waiting for its perfection of growth. Her pretty little bare hands were reddened by the raw night air. ... But for the words in which she had accosted him, it would have been impossible to associate her with the lamentable life that she led. The appearance of the girl was artlessly virginal and innocent; she looked as if she had passed through the contamination of the streets without being touched by it, without fearing it, or feeling it, or understanding it. Robed in pure white, with her gentle blue eyes raised to heaven, a painter might have shown her on his canvas as a saint or an angel; and the critical world would have said, Here is the true ideal – Raphael himself might have painted this!

(Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 272-3)

Sally is presented, paradoxically, as a virginal prostitute. The dichotomy in the way that Amelius views Sally continues throughout the narrative. As Sally Mitchell observes, "the prostitute was the one woman about whom it was permissible to have sexual thoughts; if victimisation made her pure she could be an object of both pity and desire" (Mitchell, 133). These sentiments are echoed by Collins within the novel, in the words of warning spoken to Amelius by one of the Elder Brothers of the Christian Socialist community: "Be especially on your guard, my son, if you meet with a woman who makes you feel truly sorry for her. She is on a high-road to your passions, through the open door of your sympathies" (Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 460). Although he refers to their relationship as one between "brother and sister," or "master and pupil" (387), Amelius is constantly struggling to resist his desire for Sally, to his own apparent shame: "That innate depravity which Amelius had lately discovered in his own nature, let the forbidden thoughts loose in him again" (354). The relationship ultimately culminates in their marriage, so that Amelius finally gains sexual access to Sally, albeit with legal sanction.

The division in Sally's character between child-like innocent and sexual fantasy figure is an uncomfortable one, and taints Collins's portrayal of the fallen woman in the novel. Sally never fully escapes the world that objectifies

her and casts her as a figure for male fantasy, for even Amelius, her saviour, continues to view her in this light. Although in *The New Magdalen* Julian too marries the fallen woman, thus also entering into a sexual relationship with her, Mercy is presented as intelligent, independent and entirely capable of making her own decisions. In spite of this, there is inevitably an imbalance of power in their relationship: Victorian morality, social convention and assumptions about gender roles effectively prevent the respectable clergyman and the fallen woman from being presented on equal terms. However, in contrast to Mercy, Sally is childish to the point of being mentally disabled. Thus the impression given is that Amelius, motivated by his sexual attraction, is taking advantage of her. Given Collins's penchant for depicting the rescue of the fallen woman in his fiction, as well as his own relationship with Caroline Graves, rumoured to have begun after he rescued her from "a bully or a pimp" (Peters, 192), it seems likely that the author's own fantasies are embodied in the character of Sally.

Collins's depiction of Sally in *The Fallen Leaves* prefigures Hardy's portrayal of Tess twelve years later in which, as Penny Boumelha observes, "the narrator's erotic fantasies of penetration and engulfment enact a pursuit, violation and persecution of Tess in parallel with those she suffers at the hands of her two lovers" (Boumelha, 46). Lynne Pearce also notes that "often ... Tess is seen specifically through the eyes of one of the male characters" (Pearce, 35), but more significantly, the reader sees Tess through the eyes of her male creator, who, like Collins in *The Fallen Leaves*, not only sympathizes with his protagonist, but also desires her. Comparisons can also be drawn between Collins's novel and W. T. Stead's investigation into child prostitution in London, which resulted in the publication of "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885. In attempting to highlight the problem of child abuse and trafficking, Stead purchased a young girl for the sum of five pounds – an act for which he was later prosecuted and imprisoned for three months (see Walkowitz *City*, 81-120). Walkowitz notes, in a statement which could easily be applied to Collins's *The Fallen Leaves*, that Stead "combined the seemingly incompatible sensibilities of male feminist and voyeur" (95). The examples of Collins, Hardy and Stead (whose investigation helped to bring about the increase of the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen) demonstrate that while the conjunction of male fantasy with genuine sympathy for the plight of women may be uncomfortable, it was nevertheless not uncommon.

Philip O'Neill proposes that *The Fallen Leaves* "is a text that has a great deal to say about the representation of women, and comes closest to justifying the 'feminist' label of Sayers" (O'Neill, 6). He argues that the sexual desire between Amelius and Sally is mutual, and that their marriage serves to "legitim[ize] their sexual desire" (72, emphasis added). However, the internal

evidence of the text directly contradicts the idea that Sally feels sexually attracted towards her rescuer. The sexualization of Sally's character by both Amelius and Collins undoubtedly detracts from a feminist reading of *The Fallen Leaves*. Although Sally escapes from her role as prostitute, she remains restricted by Amelius's perception of her, and, in contrast to a number of Collins's other novels, there is no real attempt to address the issue of the social and legal rights of the fallen woman. She is consistently portrayed as child-like – described as a “child-victim ... still only feeling her way to womanhood” (Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 365), as possessing a “quaint childish charm” (369) and repeatedly referred to by Amelius as “My dear child” (303, 401, 455, 465). Although Sally clearly loves Amelius, it is depicted as a platonic love. When Amelius kisses Sally, both his desire for her and his power over her are clearly apparent:

He was young – he was a man – for a moment he lost his self control; he kissed her as he had never kissed her yet. Then, he remembered; he recovered himself; he put her gently away from him, and led her to the door of her room, and closed it on her in silence.

(Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 469)

But when Sally kisses Amelius, it is “with innocent familiarity ... as a sister might have kissed him” (376). Even when Sally originally propositions Amelius on the streets of London, her motive is not sexual, but financial: she must “bring money home” in order to “save her[self] a beating” (274). O'Neill recognizes the underlying sexuality that motivates Amelius, but ignores the significance of Sally's childish mentality, and suggests that “while she may be the object of sexual desire, Collins is careful not to outrage decorum and [therefore] Sally is seen in terms of a rather simple child” (O'Neill, 68). In fact, the image of Sally as both child and object of sexual desire is one of the most disturbing elements of the text. Sally's age (fifteen or sixteen) is enough to make the modern reader uncomfortable with Amelius's relationship to her, although it is significant that when Collins wrote the novel the age of consent was only thirteen. More disturbing than her actual age, however, is her child-like mentality. She is described as having a “vacantly submissive manner” (Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 276), a “feeble intelligence” (313), and repeatedly refers to herself in deprecating terms, as a “poor stupid girl” (283) and “an ignorant creature” (375). She is both mentally and morally disabled – never seemingly fully aware of the implications of her actions, and it is this fact that renders Amelius's desire for her so disquieting. Further emphasizing the uncomfortable and contradictory nature of their relationship is the fact that both of them view Amelius as a substitute parent to Sally. He refers to her as “my child”, exclaiming, “I must be all that the kindest father and mother could have been to you, now. Oh, my poor little girl!” (440). Similarly for Sally, Amelius is “father and mother both to her simple mind” (401). Their relationship is

further complicated by the narrative repeatedly comparing Sally to a dog. When he first encounters the child-like prostitute, she “looked at him with the dumb fidelity of a dog” (303), and later she is described as having a “dog-like devotion to Amelius” (308-9). The comparison culminates in the scene in which Sally appears before Amelius after escaping from the Refuge:

In his unendurable loneliness, he had longed for his dog ... There was the martyred creature from the streets, whom he had rescued from nameless horror, waiting to be his companion, servant, friend ... innocent of all other aspirations, so long as she might fill the place which had once been occupied by the dog

(Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 365)

Like Amelius’s desire for the fallen woman, which necessarily objectifies her, the analogy between Sally and a dog similarly dehumanizes her character. Although it can be surmised that Collins’s intention was to emphasize the extent of her retardation, the dehumanization of the figure of the prostitute in the novel represents a pornographic cliché, and thus raises further questions about Collins’s attitude towards the fallen woman and his feminist intentions. Sally’s simplicity is contrasted by the complexity of her position in relation to Amelius. She is viewed by her rescuer at various points in the narrative as virgin, whore, child, daughter, sister, pupil, object of desire, and dog. These contradictions and paradoxes ultimately act as barriers to a feminist reading of the text. Consequently, O’Neill’s assertion that the novel represents the pinnacle of Collins’s feminist writings must be called into question. His discussion of *The Fallen Leaves* raises important questions about the position of the male critic in relation to the fictional child as sexual object: his interpretation of the narrative is skewed, arguably as a result of a gendered reading of the text.

In spite of the fact that he objectifies Sally, Amelius is still presented, like *The New Magdalen*’s Julian Gray, as her saviour, and he does indeed rescue Sally from the streets and give her a better life. In her gratitude, Sally idolizes Amelius, and refuses to be parted from him. However, her feelings towards him further increase the imbalance of power in their relationship: Amelius knows he may give in to temptation at any time, and Sally, willing to do whatever he asks of her, would not object. Although he ultimately gains legitimate access to her through marriage, Amelius nevertheless violates the trust Sally has placed in him, and contradicts his own claim that his only motivation in rescuing her was Christian compassion, his aim being “to restore that poor starved, outraged, beaten creature to the happy place on God’s earth which God intended her to fill” (292).

The control that Amelius wields over Sally, whether consciously or not, is in part derived from the fact that she lacks the independent will and strength of mind that characterize many of Collins’s other heroines, such as Magdalen

Vanstone and Mercy Merrick. These characteristics have provided key evidence in feminist readings of Collins's work, which have frequently focused on the assertiveness of Collins's central female characters. Sally's lack of will therefore presents another obstacle to a feminist interpretation of *The Fallen Leaves*. Ironically, the narrative criticizes Regina for her "weakly complacent good nature" (195) and for failing to "assert ... a will of her own" (193). Yet Sally is no more assertive than Regina. She is a transgressive protagonist because her role as a reformed prostitute is at odds with the role of heroine, but she is – unlike many of Collins's other heroines who are marked by their independence – controlled by the men in her life: first by her pimp, and later by her rescuer, Amelius. In this respect parallels can be drawn between Amelius and Sally's pimp, both of whom are interested in Sally as a sexual object. The underlying implication is that marriage is a form of prostitution, a notion repeatedly found in Collins's work. It is Amelius's decision to take Sally off the streets, to allow her to live with him and for them to eventually marry. Whilst Mercy essentially acts independently in choosing to relinquish her life as a prostitute, Sally's reformation is entirely Amelius's doing. Although the text implies that her inability to act independently is the result of the extreme brutality with which she has been treated, she is nevertheless not in the same category as many of Collins's other heroines who have inspired feminist criticism, such as Marian Halcombe and Magdalen Vanstone. Consequently, the distinction between Sally and Regina is not as palpable as it initially appears, and certainly not as clear as the division between Mercy and Grace in *The New Magdalen*. Ultimately, despite Sally's sexual transgressions, both she and Regina emerge as disappointingly conventional Victorian heroines.

Collins's narrative implies that Sally's life on the streets has prevented the development of her mind: "the natural growth of her senses – her higher and her lower senses alike – has been stunted, like the natural growth of her body, by starvation, terror, exposure to cold, and other influences inherent in the life that she has led" (302). Thus, Collins's depiction of Sally, although problematic, can nevertheless be read as a commentary on the dangers that threatened women – particularly young women – working as prostitutes in Victorian Britain. Although, as in *The New Magdalen*, Collins make no specific reference to the Contagious Diseases Acts, possibly because of the taboos surrounding the subject, his representation of Sally and the threats posed to her mind and body while she works as a prostitute is timely, coinciding with Butler's campaign. However, Sally's mental deficiencies are such that it seems possible that they are the cause, rather than the effect, of her fall into prostitution. In her 1912 article "The Cause of Purity and Women's Suffrage," Ursula Roberts suggested that "Feeble-minded girls are peculiarly liable to be seduced ... they are too feeble to make any resistance to the demands of unprincipled men. Once they are seduced, the downward path is easy" (Roberts,

288). The debate over whether feeble-mindedness precipitated women's fall into prostitution, or whether their fall *resulted* in the retardation of the mind is interesting, and while 'feeble-minded' girls may have been particularly vulnerable, they did not account for the majority of prostitutes. Collins's critique of prostitution, which suggests the detrimental effects of the trade on women's minds, can be linked to the views of campaigners such as Josephine Butler, who emphasized the dangerous consequences of prostitution on the mind, body and spirit of those involved, and highlighted the lack of protection available for young, vulnerable and poor women. Through the character of Sally, Collins aligns himself implicitly with those campaigning for the rights of prostitutes, clearly supporting the view that prostitution "is the production of ... gross physical cruelty, of moral death" (Blackwell, 100).

Collins's depiction of Sally in *The Fallen Leaves* is both more realistic and more problematic than his portrayal of Mercy in *The New Magdalen*. Sally, unlike Mercy, is clearly affected by her experience – both mentally and physically. The true brutality of her situation is poignantly depicted in the scene in which she is accosted by her pimp, a character reminiscent of Dickens's Bill Sikes:

Amelius turned, and saw Simple Sally with her arm in the grasp of a half-drunken ruffian; one of the swarming wild beasts of Low London ... "You've got a gentleman this time," he said to her; "I shall expect gold to-night, or else!" He finished the sentence by lifting his monstrous fist, and shaking it in her face.

(Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 276-7).

In contrast to *The New Magdalen*, the horror of the life of a poor London prostitute is clearly portrayed. Sally is still working as a prostitute when she is introduced to the reader: her sexual transgressions are not cloaked in the mystery of her past, as Mercy's are, nor is her status in any way ambiguous, as Nancy's is in *Oliver Twist*. The abuse of Sally's body by the man who effectively controls it in a sense mirrors the abuse of the prostitute's body by doctors as a consequence of the Contagious Diseases Acts, which effectively sanctioned the violation of the female body. Furthermore, Amelius's expectation that the law will protect Sally (277) is ironic, considering that the law effectively encouraged the abuse of the prostitute's body through the Acts. Once again, Collins appears to be alluding indirectly to the controversy surrounding this legislation, and the policeman's admission that the law cannot protect Sally mirrors the legal system's failure to prevent, indeed, its encouragement of, the abuse of the female body.

Collins is more forthright in his presentation of prostitution in *The Fallen Leaves* than in any of his previous works, and indeed than in most other Victorian novels dealing with the same subject. However, while Mercy eventually escapes the stigma of her past – albeit by escaping from England and

the conservative and hypocritical attitudes of its inhabitants – the same cannot accurately be said for Sally. Mercy is ultimately accepted – at least by Julian and Lady Janet, members of the society which previously refused to forgive her. Those members of “respectable” society who cannot forgive her are shown to be hypocritical and unchristian. However, in *The Fallen Leaves* there is no union representing the forgiveness and acceptance of the reformed prostitute as there is in *The New Magdalen*. Although Sally is apparently happily married at the conclusion of the novel, it is not to a respected member of Victorian society, like Julian Gray, but to an outsider like herself. Amelius belongs to a Christian Socialist world far removed from, and disapproved of by, English society. Therefore, while his acceptance of Sally and her past may represent, in Collins’s estimation, true Christian values, these values are not to be found within the closed circle of polite society. Amelius’s servant, Toff, is the only other character in the novel who accepts the marriage. Even Rufus, friend and ally of Amelius, disapproves of the union. Furthermore, the marriage is not primarily the culmination of Sally’s reformation, but the fulfilment of Amelius’s sexual desires. While Sally escapes a life on the streets, it is ultimately only exchanged for a life in which she continues to be objectified. Interestingly, in the proposed Second Series of *The Fallen Leaves*, Collins intended to show the breakdown of Amelius’s and Sally’s marriage (see Gasson, 59) – another indication, perhaps, that Amelius is driven not by Christian love and compassion, but by his sexual desire for Sally.

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Collins’s depictions of prostitution in *The New Magdalen* and *The Fallen Leaves* enable an assessment of the author’s attitude towards not only the figure of the socially and legally oppressed prostitute, but also women in general. Although Collins campaigned forcefully through his fiction for greater legal protection for married women (*Man and Wife*) and illegitimate daughters (*No Name*), his portrayals of Mercy and Sally emphasize his ultimately ambiguous attitude towards women. While these narratives can be read in the context of contemporary debates about prostitution, there is no overt engagement with the campaign to secure basic human rights for the prostitute. Indeed both texts appear to suggest that the fallen woman’s salvation is possible only through redemption in the form of marriage – not through the achievement of individual autonomy and respectability. The removal of the prostitute from the Victorian streets to the sphere of home and respectability, where she may fulfill the conventional roles of wife and mother is in some sense radical, signifying as it does the forgiveness of the fallen woman and the possibility of redemption. However, the transformation from disreputable

prostitute to respectable wife is a problematic one – particularly in light of the analogies repeatedly drawn by Victorian feminists between marriage and prostitution, and the concept of the prostitute as paradoxically representative of the Victorian feminine ideal points to a sexualizing of the conventional Angel of the House. This clearly emphasizes the problematic nature of Collins’s depictions of the fallen woman – particularly in terms of a feminist approach to his work: his texts arguably reflect not a desire to free the fallen woman from the trappings of Victorian attitudes towards morality, but a desire *for* the fallen woman – a desire exhibited by both the author and his characters, particularly in the case of Sally in *The Fallen Leaves*. If we accept Lyn Pykett’s assertion that the “expeditions that [Dickens] undertook with Collins in the 1850s involved entertaining and being entertained by ‘ladies of the night’” (Pykett, 51) then it is hardly surprising that this desire manifests itself in Collins’s fiction.

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Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in *Hide and Seek*

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Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek* was initially published in 1854 and is the first of many novels in which Collins mischievously undermines Raphael, the adversary of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This enmity is clearly identified in the name of the Brotherhood itself, since the objective of the P.R.B. was to return to the innocence of art before Raphael (or, more precisely, to art before the latter part of Raphael's career). In this essay, I will examine points of similarity between *Hide and Seek* and John Ruskin's 1853 lecture "Pre-Raphaelitism," in which Ruskin defends the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood by attacking both Raphael himself and the Raphaelesque art of the nineteenth century. Ruskin's lecture makes a dramatically effective argument and suggests that there is a great evil or catastrophe at the heart of Raphael's art that has been passed on to the modern day artists that emulate him. Although the points made are not particularly logical in terms of art history, they are intended to work as a powerful narrative in defence of the Brotherhood, and in this sense the lecture succeeds brilliantly. *Hide and Seek* repeats several of Ruskin's condemnations of Raphael, but in a mischievous and covert way, through in-jokes that were probably only evident to Collins's artistic friends in 1854.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood claimed influences that, in many ways, were full of contradictions. The young artists opposed themselves to the Royal Academy interpretation of the Raphaelesque, that is, the influence of Raphael on a line of British artists from Sir Joshua Reynolds to traditionally minded contemporary artists in the Royal Academy. Yet they admired artists like William Blake, who had wanted to claim a fresh line of influence from Raphael to himself in opposition to Reynolds's appropriation of Raphael for his own artistic values.¹ Their "medieval" inspiration came from Early Renaissance figures such as Giotto, from a scanty knowledge of the Quattrocento, and even

¹ See Blake's statements to this effect in *On Art and Artists*, 203-8.

from the early work of Raphael.² The Pre-Raphaelite name suggests a complete rejection of Raphael, but this is misleading. The P.R.B. really wanted to reset the progress of Raphael's influence, to take inspiration from his early work in a way that was true to the values of the Early Renaissance, referred to as Early Italian Art or the medieval period in Pre-Raphaelite writings. One of the most confusing things about reading art criticism from the nineteenth century in general is that the term "Renaissance" generally refers to the High Renaissance only, so that everything from Giotto to early Raphael can be referred to as medieval art. In support of the Pre-Raphaelite agenda, Ruskin argued that there was a sharp dividing line between Raphael's early, moral "medieval" art and his later, destructive creations.

Ruskin's lecture in defence of "Pre-Raphaelitism" can be confusing for the reader if the argument is taken too literally. Contradicting some of his own previous writings,³ Ruskin claims that a single project by Raphael marks a great split between medieval and modern art, the latter spanning from the High Renaissance to the nineteenth century. Medieval truth is lost from Raphael's work in the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican, in which Christ is ruler of Theology in the *Disputa* but Apollo usurps Christ as the ruler of the Arts in *Parnassus*. This single act of blasphemy causes ripples through art history and removes God from all modern art. The "Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," or writing on the wall for the "Arts of Christianity" (Ruskin, 162), dates from this event. Ancient Greek sculpture, which was pagan, elevates the "ideal beauty" or standardization of features that is later copied by High Renaissance artists. Present day Royal Academicians that rely on "Elgin marbles" (166) and Raphael's paintings to learn to draw the ideal form are rejecting the superior period of medieval art, when the presence of God and truth to nature in art was more important than anything else. Greek/High Renaissance/Victorian art worships "beauty rather than veracity" (163), and is thus tainted. In the present day, the foolish artist who blindly continues to paint from an idealized and artificial standard by copying Raphael is rejecting God by rejecting nature. The Pre-Raphaelite movement is to be commended, however, for bravely attempting to return to the principles of medieval art.⁴ Ultimately, Ruskin's argument presents a simple opposition between the Pre-Raphaelites and the

² See Wood, 10-12, for an account of equally important and contemporary influences such as William Dyce.

³ In his pamphlet of 1851, also entitled "Pre-Raphaelitism" (reprinted in Ruskin, 1-47) Ruskin claims that the P.R.B. artists are not medieval at all and should avoid the perils of "mediaevalism and Romanism" (20n). In the 1853 lecture (reprinted in Ruskin, 151-74) he revises his interpretation of medievalism so that it is no longer associated with Catholicism but with truthful art.

⁴ Christ is at the apex of the P.R.B.'s pyramid of immortal influences, restored to his rightful place in art history (Hilton, 34).

Royal Academy: truth versus deceit. The artists of the Royal Academy change God's work to meet an artificial, classical standard (also found in High Renaissance art), thus lying to the viewer. Metaphorically, they worship Apollo rather than Christ, by replacing truth to nature with a classical standard that only looks natural.⁵ This central metaphor explains Ruskin's otherwise peculiar claim that a single elevation of Apollo over Christ could doom all "modern" (that is, Victorian) art to a state of "deny[ing] Christ" (155).

The plot of *Hide and Seek* depends on the history of complicated family relationships, which seem to parallel events in the history of British art. Madonna, the novel's deaf heroine, is the illegitimate child of two suspiciously beautiful parents whose liaison ends because of deceit and misunderstandings. A gentleman who is known by a false name seduces Mary Grice, and leaves her pregnant. Although he does not intend to abandon her, his act of deception in giving a false name facilitates a tragic sequence of events. Mary flees from her family home to avoid bringing disgrace to the name of her father, Joshua, and dies soon after giving birth. The names are telling: Madonna is a reproduction of Mary, and the shamed father recalls Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first President of the Royal Academy and a famous supporter of Raphael. At first a circus family cares for the baby, but some years later the artist Blyth is so startled by the child's resemblance to a Raphael Madonna that he adopts her. The main action of the novel takes place when Madonna is twenty-three and has unknowingly fallen in love with her half-brother Zack Thorpe, the legitimate son of her mother's mysterious lover. A marriage between Madonna and Zach would produce more "copies" or children that would inherit a tainted legacy. The truth is finally uncovered by Mat, Madonna's uncle, who has returned from the sea and is seeking revenge for the death of his sister. Ultimately, however, the elder Mr Thorpe dies of natural causes shortly after Mat has forgiven him. The novel ends as the Blyths embrace their unusual extended family, but with no apparent prospect of marriage for Madonna, whose Raphaelesque face must not be reproduced in a new generation.

The reader's first view of Madonna seems to suggest that Collins is praising Raphael, despite the novelist's involvement with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood:

[Friends of the Blyths] unanimously asserted that the young lady's face was the nearest living approach to that immortal 'Madonna' face, which has for ever associated the idea of beauty with the name of RAPHAEL. The

⁵ The absolute symmetry of classical sculpture deceives the human eye into seeing a perfect and extremely healthy figure. As the Victorians were aware, however, thanks in part to scientific progress, real people are subject to many variations that are absent in standardized models of beauty. Raphael's figures were praised for looking natural in his own time and for centuries later, but the Victorians could identify this natural appearance as an illusion.

resemblance struck everybody alike, even those who were but slightly conversant with pictures, the moment they saw her.

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 50)⁶

There is already a suggestion of tongue-in-cheek humour, however, in the fact that those who are relatively ignorant of art and only “slightly conversant with pictures” (50) tend to appreciate a Raphael. The popular taste of the masses is parodied. Collins’s review of Pre-Raphaelite art at the 1851 Royal Academy exhibition in *Bentley’s Miscellany* takes a similar approach, apparently echoing typical criticism of the P.R.B. but only when he is satirically looking through “the eyes of the general spectator” (623).⁷ The review ultimately suggests that most viewers lack the intelligence or sensibility to appreciate Pre-Raphaelite art: only the most refined viewer will appreciate Charles Allston Collins’s *Convent Thoughts*.

Yet Collins goes on to point out that Madonna’s appearance is imperfect by the standards of ideal beauty and thus not truly Raphaellesque in the Royal Academy tradition:

Taken in detail, her features might be easily found fault with. Her eyes might be pronounced too large, her mouth too small, her nose not Grecian enough for some people’s tastes. But the general effect of these features, the shape of her head and face, and especially her habitual expression, reminded all beholders at once and irresistibly of that image of softness, purity, and feminine gentleness, which has been engraved on all civilized memories by the ‘Madonnas’ of Raphael.

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 50-51)⁸

By Pre-Raphaelite standards, Madonna is redeemed by her so-called faults. Her features are not completely Grecian or standardized, suggesting that she is an individual rather than a type. In “Pre-Raphaelitism,” it is the marriage of Raphael’s art to Apollo – to the classical – that is destructive. Madonna proves her virtue by painting from nature; she is a Raphael figure before the Stanza della Segnatura fall rather than afterwards. Blyth will foolishly place temptation in front of her, however, by trying to make her copy a classical bust of Venus.

Although the casual reader may simply believe that *Hide and Seek* praises Raphael and thus traditional Victorian artists, Collins is critical of the Royal Academy approach to art. By his subtle criticism, he avoids disapproval from supporters of Raphael such as his collaborator Charles Dickens, who

⁶ I quote from the Catherine Peters edition of *Hide and Seek*, which uses the revised 1861 text, but have checked all citations against the first edition of 1854.

⁷ Dolin and Dougan, 6-7, discuss the background to Collins’s decision to write the review, but do not consider the piece to be satirical.

⁸ In the Bentley three-volume edition of 1854, “engraven for ever on so many memories by the ‘Madonnas’ of Raphael.” (I XX).

wrote “Old Lamps for New Ones” in defence of Raphael’s reputation. More significantly, perhaps, Collins often employs the same amusing, double-edged language that is found in Victorian art reviews and essays, which are full of insider jokes and knowing ironies. Although art reviews from the period can appear pompous at first glance, the tone is often more playful than the reader might expect.⁹

Collins seems to link the positive aspects of Madonna’s beauty back to Early Renaissance artists rather than forward to the present-day Royal Academicians. The Pre-Raphaelites themselves liked much of Raphael’s art, particularly his early work, and objected only to the slavish copying of his later paintings.¹⁰ Ruskin also suggested that Raphael’s art before the Stanza della Segnatura was in the “ancient and stern mediæval manner” (162). Consequently, Collins does not undermine the anti-Raphael argument even if he is condoning the type of beauty that Raphael would have depicted in his youth. The admiration is, in any case, often expressed through the flawed judgement of characters that view Madonna. Blyth’s excitement when he beholds Madonna’s face for the first time reveals a confusion of images in his thoughts:

Mad and mysterious words, never heard before in Rubbleford, poured from his lips. “Devotional beauty,” “Early Italian art,” “Fra Angelico’s angels,” “Giotto and the cherubs,” “Enough to bring the divine Raphael himself down from heaven to paint her.”

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 60)

If Madonna’s beauty is comparable to the figures in the works of Giotto and Fra Angelico, she is a suitable inspiration for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood itself. The reference to “Early Italian art”, a phrase often used in the P.R.B.’s publication *The Germ*,¹¹ hints strongly at this. Collins may be suggesting that the young Raphael simply learnt to paint figures from the great artists before him, to the extent that the ignorant viewer sees Madonna as being Raphaellesque.

Yet Blyth embarks on a path of misleading silence and deception after he adopts Madonna, because he fears that telling the truth will lead to her being reclaimed by her unknown father. This suggests that Madonna’s influence can

⁹ In such writings, even the solemn Private View exhibitions at the Royal Academy, events reserved for dignitaries, can include broad humour. In “Old Lamps for New Ones,” Dickens includes a joke about the potential realism of ‘Pre-Raphaelite’ nudes and the Queen’s reaction: “the event of a skilful painter of the figure becoming a little more perverted in his taste, than certain skilful painters are just now, might place her Gracious Majesty in a very painful position, one of these fine Private View days” (12).

¹⁰ See William Michael Rossetti’s introduction to facsimiles of *The Germ*, 6.

¹¹ One essay by Frederic Stephens (under the pseudonym “John Seward”) was entitled “The Purpose and Tendency of Early Italian Art.”

be negative when interpreted by the wrong people. If Raphael's early art eventually degenerated into a fallen state in the past, perhaps it will do so again.¹² Similarly, the tragic seduction of Mary Grice may be repeated if Madonna is corrupted by her affection for Zach. Believing that he is protecting Madonna by hiding the truth about her origins, Blyth casts her in harm's way by allowing her to become close to Zach. If Blyth had given his circle of friends a truthful account of his adoption of Madonna, Mr Thorpe could have identified his daughter years before her infatuation with her half-brother was allowed to develop. Lies, even lies by omission, hold hidden dangers.

Blyth's attempts to teach both Madonna and Zack to draw reveal that he is a well-meaning but inadequate instructor, of the type that Ruskin describes in the "Pre-Raphaelitism" lecture. Blyth does not allow Zack to draw from nature as he begins his studies; he must copy existing artworks that elevate the ideally beautiful. Ruskin says of the laborious act of copying drawings from the antique: "The dull child will slowly do your bidding, blacken his paper and rub it white again" (Ruskin, 165), just as Zack does in response to Blyth's command to "rub out what you have done" (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 149). In Madonna's case, copying a bust of Venus is something not "much to her taste" (52). Like Ruskin's promising student, who can draw in the "middle-age spirit" by perceiving the "country outside" (Ruskin, 164) through his own eyes, Madonna has preferred since her childhood to draw from nature, showing "ungovernable delight at the prospect of a sketching expedition with Mr Blyth in the Hampstead fields" (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 120). True to Pre-Raphaelite values, Madonna learns more from the fields than from Royal Academy methods of drawing.

Zack, who decides to become an artist only for financial reasons, is more easily persuaded to submit to the standard training. Poor Blyth exposes his own limits as an artist as he promises to train Zack:

"I'll teach you myself to draw from the antique. If someone can be found who has influence enough with your father to get him to let you go into the Royal Academy, you must be prepared beforehand with a drawing that's fit to show. Now you shall come here, if you promise to be a good boy, you shall come here, and learn the ABC of art, every evening if you like. We'll have a regular little academy. . . ."

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 130-1)

The infantilism of Zack in the course of his training forces him into the role of the "good boy" (130) who obeys his drawing master, becoming the dull, obedient child that Ruskin describes. To Blyth, art is learnt like the alphabet through a set programme of copying before moving on to life models, thus

¹² A similar threat hung over the Pre-Raphaelites themselves, particularly in 1854, since the Brotherhood had disbanded and the painting style of Millais was changing dramatically.

applying artificial ideals to the subject. Such training persuades the artist to see a living model as it “should” be and alter it in the work of art.¹³ This leads to Blyth making unintentionally humorous remarks, such as his remark that a circus performer’s legs are “out of drawing” (65) although she is a human figure, not a painting. Madonna is the true artist who is deaf and dumb but who has unimpaired vision, while Blyth and Zack are blinded by poor training.

As a sheltered young woman who learns to draw in her own family circle, Madonna is initially excluded from the company of other student artists. Yet this is beneficial to her progress, since she cannot be led astray by the foolishness of less talented students. Rossetti’s young artist narrator in the framing narrative of “Hand and Soul” is humiliated when others insist in copying a Raphael instead of appreciating the medieval picture that inspires him. Independence of spirit and vision are also vital in “Pre-Raphaelitism,” since the aspiring Pre-Raphaelite must ignore both his poor masters and the “dull” (Ruskin, 165) students who obey them. A woman whose social position means that she must learn from nature has the particular advantage of avoiding unhelpful influences on her work, and can create true art instead of soulless reproductions of classical busts. At first Madonna is in the enviable position of learning directly from the natural world. Although Blyth is a flawed teacher, Madonna is strong enough to maintain her artistic integrity. As her feelings for Zack grow, however, she works harder at her set assignments, because he professes a careless admiration for her work and “def[ies] the whole Royal Academy to equal it.” (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 151). She frames her “copy from Blyth’s bust of the Venus” (153) for him, perpetuating the deceit of his offhand flattery with deceitful art. The company of another student has been detrimental to her work.

In 1840 William Wordsworth wrote in the concluding lines of the sonnet “On a Portrait of I.F., Painted by Margaret Gillies”:

Where’er, preserved in this most true reflection,
An image of her soul is kept alive,
Some lingering fragrance of the pure affection,
Whose flower with us will vanish, must survive.

(Wordsworth, III xxviii)

Gillies, an artist who preceded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood but whose work looks Pre-Raphaelite in retrospect, painted in a realistic style. She thus depicted subjects as they really were, rejecting the Royal Academy practice of improving on a subject’s features by, for instance, substituting a straight Greek nose for an upturned one. As Wordsworth points out, an affectionate viewer hopes for a good likeness in order to remember a departed loved one. A “true

¹³ Seeing and painting a subject as it should exist in a classical form, rather than as it is, is a key principle of Joshua Reynolds’s *Discourses*.

reflection” captures the soul of the subject in its humble truth to nature. Conversely, an idealized portrait may have no soul at all. This is also implied in “Hand and Soul”, in which a Raphael portrait is contrasted to Chiaro dell Erma’s portrait of his own soul. If the artist does not respect nature, and elevates an artificial standard of beauty in nature’s place, the resulting work of art will be empty and soulless. When Madonna gives in to Blyth’s training and frames the copy of the Venus, she compromises her integrity and denies the importance of truth in her artistic vision. She is a liar like Blyth, Zach and Mr Thorpe, because she has perpetuated the lie inherent in ideal beauty.

Collins certainly wanted his novel to be read by the common reader. He wrote to Edward Pigott in late June 1854, after the latter had reviewed *Hide and Seek*, and enthusiastically told him that “the public demand from what I can hear of the Libraries seems to be as brisk as possible on all hands” (Baker et al., eds, I 103). Yet for most readers, the references to Raphael in the novel will not seem connected to Blyth’s poor methods of teaching. But Royal Academy students learnt ideal beauty from copying antique statues (or from drawings or plaster busts of these statues, meaning that they were making copies of copies) and from studying the Raphael cartoons in Queen Victoria’s collection.¹⁴ Ruskin’s lecture jumps from the description of Raphael’s betrayal of Christ in the Vatican to an attack on Royal Academy teaching practices. Only those trained in the production of nineteenth century art would recognize the link between Blyth’s idolization of Raphael and his instruction to a student to copy a bust of Venus. The standard of ideal beauty, rather than drawing from the life without making alterations, is essentially the same in the eyes of Victorian artists. Those in Wilkie Collins’s circle, including his brother Charles and his close friend John Everett Millais, would be capable of spotting this link, but a more general readership is likely to be left in the dark.

With the knowledge that his possession of Madonna may have increased Blyth’s worship of the Raphaelesque, the reader has a clearer understanding of Madonna’s predicament. As a woman who bears some resemblance to a Raphael virgin, she inherits a contradictory legacy. She can blind the viewer to the virtues of the natural world, by embodying the dangerous and seductive qualities of ideal beauty. Her birth parents were beautiful but their lives were shaped by lies: by Thorpe’s false name of Arthur Carr, by Mary’s concealment of her pregnancy from her father, and by the hypocritical deceptions of Mary’s aunt, Joanna. Alternatively, because there are imperfections or individual characteristics in Madonna’s looks, she might guide the viewer back to the

¹⁴ The cartoons, now on display in the Victoria and Albert Museum, were kept in Hampton Court in the nineteenth century. Such key influences as Raphael and the Elgin marbles on Victorian artists are discussed widely in Boase, e.g. 278.

pure art of Giotto and Fra Angelico and bring a Pre-Raphaelite truth to the viewer. As it happens, she is unable to do this without her uncle Mat's help, since the combined influence of Zach and Blyth has misled her.

In *Hide and Seek*, Collins shows the first hints of the theme of horror in association with the Raphaelesque that he will develop more fully in later novels. Mat's reaction to his first view of Madonna at Blyth's exhibition, where she is displayed like the other artworks, is the clearest indication of this horror:

The first amazed look that he cast on her, slowly darkened, while his eyes rested on her face, into a fixed, heavy, vacant stare of superstitious awe. He never moved, he hardly seemed to breathe, until the head of a person before him accidentally intercepted his view.

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 250)

Mat sees Madonna less as a person than as a frightening copy of his sister's image that brings a message from beyond the grave:

The awful face of the dead woman, as she was in her youth (now fixed for ever in his memory by the living copy of it that his own eyes had beheld) seemed to be driving him on swiftly into unknown darkness, to bring him out into unexpected light at the end.

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 260-1)

The emphasis is on the terror of Madonna as a "living copy" of her Raphaelesque mother. In his 1853 lecture, Ruskin represents Raphael's art as a catastrophe, bringing "doom" (163) into the world that is perpetuated every time his mistakes are copied. Mat, however, will escape from this damaging influence. In "The Exhibition of the Royal Academy" review, Collins notes that as the P.R.B. artists cast off the misleading lessons inflicted by the Royal Academy, "they are emerging from the darkness to the true light" (625). Mat is going through the same process, although he is not yet aware how the light at the end of his journey will liberate him.¹⁵

The fact that Raphaelesque confusion is loose in the world at present is emphasized by the paintings that Blyth has on display in his studio during his own Private View for family members and patrons. He paints pictures of babies and kittens to support his family, but he creates one or two paintings of so-called High Art each year for the Royal Academy exhibition. These paintings are in the esteemed genre of historical painting, which means that Blyth is influenced by Raphael's later work and by Royal Academy tradition. Collins is particularly satirical when Blyth attempts to explain a painting he has

¹⁵ "Chiaro", the name of Rossetti's medieval artist in "Hand and Soul," means light. Traditional Royal Academy artists employed 'chiaroscuro,' or the contrasting light/dark technique in their compositions, while the Pre-Raphaelites were noted for flooding their compositions with light. Mat will also find his way to light without darkness.

completed of Columbus discovering America. Anything but a realistic depiction, Blyth's painting includes winged allegorical figures¹⁶ that cannot be interpreted by anyone but the artist himself. With unintentional irony, Blyth explains that the viewer will be able to understand one part of his painting:

Here we get to Reality, and to that sort of correctly-imitative art which is simple enough to explain itself.

(Collins *Hide and Seek*, 240)

The artwork is so ridiculously large and unwieldy that it falls off the wall and is caught by Mat. Mat, an actual sailor, points out the ship in the painting is a very poor one. He sees no reason to paint a scene allegorically when the allegory is too dense to be understood, and Collins himself clearly takes Mat's point of view. Although the sense of disorientation that Mat experiences while looking at the art mirrors his troubled mental state, the broadly satirical tone that Collins uses to describe the paintings themselves seems a little incongruous. There are several possibilities for disaster at this point in the plot of *Hide and Seek*. Mat could discover Mr Thorpe and kill him, reading a violent instruction from his sister in Madonna's face. History also seems to be repeating itself as Madonna falls in love with Zack, who has inherited his father's seductive looks, since the sister and brother may marry and pass their tainted beauty onto a new generation of doomed Raphael-esque children.

Mat is the bringer of truth in the novel, however, and avoids disaster with his ultimately righteous actions. His virtue is emphasized by his striking physical disfigurements. As the lovely Mary's brother, he may once have been handsome, but he returns to England with deep and discoloured facial scars and without a normal scalp. The black cap that he wears to cover his worst injuries, however, is oddly reminiscent of the fashionable berets worn by men in Raphael's portraits. Dante Gabriel Rossetti condemns such portraits in his story "Hand and Soul," in which the generically titled *Berrettino* causes students to lose their artistic vision as they copy a Raphael rather than think for themselves (33). While Raphael's sitters wore their headgear over flowing locks of hair, Mat's head has a stark appearance, for there is "nothing but bare flesh, encircled by a rim of black velvet" (Collins *Hide and Seek*, 182). One chapter title that refers to Mat in the revised 1861 edition, "The Man with the Black Skull-Cap," suggests a descriptive title for a portrait of an unidentified sitter. Mat seems to be the wreck of an ideally beautiful subject, but, like Oscar in *Poor Miss Finch* (1872), the mutilation of his features allows a truthful soul to emerge. He confronts a withered Mr Thorpe, who has lost his former deceptive beauty, and manages to forgive him. Zack and Madonna can never marry each other, but they show no interest in marrying anyone else. Their line may be at

¹⁶ The P.R.B. linked this type of painting to Raphael's late, mannerist work *The Transfiguration* (Hilton, 29).

an end, reflecting Collins's notion that it is time for Joshua's Raphaelesque descendants or copies to die out gently. At the end of the novel, Zack takes Mat as his role model, not Blyth, and the danger of a new generation of inadequate artists has also passed. Mat himself is not an artist, but perhaps no art at all is better than Raphaelesque deception.

Hide and Seek shows Collins using two different ways of criticizing the Raphaelesque. Satire, evident in the description of Blyth's paintings, is used again in *A Rogue's Life* (1857) to scoff at the art world in general. The Rogue is a caricaturist, a portrait painter and a forger in turn, and in none of these guises is he a truthful artist. Timothy Hilton includes a long quotation from *A Rogue's Life* in his study of *The Pre-Raphaelites* (55), since the novel includes a direct and unsubtle comment on contemporary fashions in art. The tinges of horror, however, anticipate the more dramatic and more successful plots of many other Collins novels. Collins has made a beginning in finding his recurring theme of evil that is brought into the world by the Raphaelesque. In *The Moonstone* (1868), for instance, Raphael's arabesques are painted on Rachel Verinder's bedroom door immediately before the theft of the diamond, as if that act of copying must bring disaster into the world. The association of the Raphaelesque with ghostly and supernatural messages, read by Mat in Madonna's physiognomy, is realized in *The Haunted Hotel* (1878) as a tormented spirit appears in a room painted with images from the Stanza della Segnatura.

Hide and Seek is a fascinating novel, destined for a wide readership and yet apparently written for a select number of artistically aware readers. Many of its apparently opaque moments make more sense in the light of Ruskin's "Pre-Raphaelitism": the significance of Blyth's poor teaching, the horror suggested by Madonna's face, the necessity that Mat should be disfigured and thus more truthful. The central danger in the novel is that Raphaelesque deceit will hide the truth forever, in a perpetual game of hide and seek. A kindly character like Blyth endeavours to idealize or gloss over the past, threatening a terrible future for Madonna and Zack, because he is already used to lying in his art. Collins's ending, which leaves both of his young characters unmarried, may seem to deny *Hide and Seek* its necessary closure. In fact, the conclusion that Madonna and Zack will not reproduce themselves means that Collins's plot is fully resolved. Once truth prevails, the deceit inherent in ideal beauty cannot be created once again. The decline of the Raphaelesque is the happiest possible ending for all concerned.

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Collins and the Custody Novel: Parental Abduction and Family Business

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The Evil Genius, Wilkie Collins's late "mission novel" about changing divorce and custody legislation, opens appropriately enough in a court of law. One of the most detailed, and most satirical, trial scenes in Victorian fiction, it differs from most sensationalized accounts by placing emphasis on the jury's arbitrary rearrangement of the evidence, rather than on the defendant's experience of standing trial and facing the verdict. If this approach satirizes legal processes somewhat clumsily, it also serves to draw attention to the impossibility of passing judgement on the basis of incomplete or falsified evidence, or, more significantly still, on what are shown to be preconceived concepts of the proper as well as of the probable. Instead of focusing directly on adultery, divorce, or even child custody – an increasingly popular ingredient of Victorian sensation fiction – the novel proceeds to criticize both legal and social systems for seeking to police domestic arrangements. In this, it seeks to illuminate particularly, and indeed provocatively, the rights and needs of variously misjudged fathers. They are shown to be on trial precisely in order to indict the changes in the legal reconfiguration of paternity that has ironically put them into this compromising position in the first place. That the first trial scene has little to do directly with custody law, but instead investigates a case of insurance fraud, not merely substantiates the accusation of the judicial system and its fraudulent abuses, but further testifies to the wide-ranging repercussions of the law's deeply resented interference in domestic affairs. In addition, it sets in motion a chain of interlocked cases of deception that ultimately bring yet another father to court. This time the law deprives a man of his family in a more clear-cut fashion by taking away neither his liberty nor his life, but his custody rights over his daughter. Yet in each case, the legally or morally "convicted" father is effectively taken in custody by Victorian ideologies of domesticity and, with a peculiarly poignant irony, through the implementation of newly created concepts of domestic fatherhood. The custody dispute in which Collins's last and most provocative "custody novel" culminates, thus ensures that there is much more on trial than custody legislation alone.

Published in 1886, the year that saw the Guardianship of Infants Act, *The Evil Genius* significantly started out as Collins's critical commentary on what he saw as the problematic marginalization of fathers by a new privileging of maternity, although the novel's representation of paternity is fascinatingly disturbed by a much more complex ambiguity. The introduction of a father convicted by an incompetent and careless jury in the opening chapters functions as an important emblem of judgmental late-Victorian society and its judicial system, while his death of heart-failure not only foreshadows, but, through an array of coincidences, leads to another father's condemnation for domestic offences. A proliferation of false clues that mimics the trial, however, at the same time propels a new conceptualization of fatherhood that wrenches it from patrimony, while its linkage to various ways of being taken in custody puts a new spin on what can be termed Victorian "custody fiction."

Usually overlooked as a perfunctory prologue or frame-story that primarily serves as an excuse for the adulterous father of the main plot, "Before the Story," as the first section is entitled, is thus of particular importance as it targets the legal system as a whole, not just individual lawyers or jurymen. It mocks society as a collection of clueless individuals, bound together by constricting conventions. Captain Westerfield, recently returned from sea, stands accused of having deliberately helped to wreck his ship in order to claim insurance money and, further, of having made away with the cargo of valuable diamonds. Suspected of "trying to influence the verdict" (Collins *The Evil Genius*, 49), the foreman lapses into silence, leaving the jurymen to muddle through a confused, and glaringly incomplete, recollection of facts to the best of their deplorably limited abilities. Standing in for an intriguingly unreliable narrator, he then invites the members of the jury (and, by extension, the readers) to judge for themselves. Yet the very opening sentence spells out a warning against the reliability of such a management of the case: "The gentlemen of the jury *retired* to consider their verdict" (45, emphasis added). Eliding the presentation of the evidence, the prologue shows the jury in somewhat sleepy retirement, while the accused lies dying of a weak heart. It is an ominous anticipation of society's judgmental treatment later in the novel of both an adulterous father and his socially ostracized wife and child. With its investment in the process of working through conflicting evidence, *The Evil Genius* instead emphasizes extenuating circumstances that the jury typically fails to take into account. While legal arrangements (or their circumvention) structure the plot, they are ultimately dispelled in a somewhat fortuitous resolution that aptly repeats the critique of "the rules of society": "Is there something wrong in human nature? Or something wrong in human laws?" (194).

In Victorian "custody fiction," it is indeed invariably "[t]he law's mysterious authority," as it is described in Anthony Trollope's own anti-sensational custody novel *He Knew He Was Right* (441), written at the end of what came to

be known as “the sensational sixties,” that really is on trial. Collins’s late addition to this intriguing subgenre may ultimately locate the “evil genius” within the family itself, yet, in combination with the central exposure of the law’s interference in the domestic sphere, this creates a sensational spectacle of both family and society. The novel reworks earlier sensational narratives that capitalize on adultery or divorce as common plot-devices to explore instead the law’s power to affect domestic change and, conversely, the influence of ideologies of domesticity on legislation. As a result, the revision of the most easily sensationalized plots also works out a generic shift in popular fiction. Collins’s most self-conscious custody novel underscores the significance of changing family law to Victorian literature and culture and, simultaneously, maps out the reworking of both sensationalism and specific social “missions” in his later works in general.

A subgenre that was never conceived or advertized as such at the time, but which can be identified by more than just its common theme, the Victorian “custody novel,” as it developed in the latter half of the nineteenth century had its roots in nineteenth-century discourses on divorce, as well as in the mid-century novel’s dissection of the increasingly nuclear family. In both, it significantly overlapped with the sensation novel as the central cultural product of the Victorian craze for sensation. As Karen Chase and Michael Levenson have argued, as “a new age of divorce loomed,” there was a call for new narrative conventions: “Marriage had its elaborate tropology, but divorce erupted into imaginative life without coherent metaphors” (187). This partly explains the popularity of the “bigamy novel,” although it also necessarily raises the question of why divorce yielded bigamy novels and not divorce novels. Chase and Levenson suggest that the answer rests in bigamy’s function as a “‘quiet’ alternative to the divorce pandemonium” (203). The custody novel provides an alternative that more effectively negotiates the ruptures in the Victorian family precisely because its break-up is sanctioned, even ordered, by the law. If bigamy can easily be condemned as illegal as well as immoral, the split-up of families in custody novels is arranged by the legal system itself.

It is therefore particularly important to note that the plotting of divorce and custody in the Victorian novel was by no means limited to sensation fiction. It was not even necessarily concerned with women’s rights. Plot-lines structured on custody disputes specifically fostered an interest in psychological realism even while, or perhaps especially because, they employed some of the sensation novel’s preferred themes. Perhaps nothing testifies to this more forcefully than Trollope’s self-conscious revision of one of the most easily sensationalized plot-devices of the genre’s “domestic Gothic”: a parental abduction that is legal, yet evinces the father’s growing insanity. By the late-1860s, custody issues and child abduction had indeed become such recognizable sensation elements that Trollope and Margaret Oliphant, the genre’s most dedi-

cated critics, both drew on them almost as a matter of course in their own ventures into sensation. If they at once widened and differently narrowed down the interests of custody fiction, their experimentation with its confines intriguingly prepared the way for Collins's later revision of both the sensational thrust and the psychology underpinning of parental abduction plots. In order to situate *The Evil Genius* in relation to the general vogue for custody fiction as a sub-genre of the sensation novel, but which eventually cut across contested generic demarcations, I shall also explore how a range of Victorian novels variously used child abduction as a plot-device to arrest its sensationalization: Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*, Oliphant's *Salem Chapel*, Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and even Henry James's *What Maisie Knew*, as well as *The Fallen Leaves* and *Heart and Science* by Collins himself.

Taking Sensation in Custody: Re-Plotting Abduction

He Knew He Was Right may set out to invert the sensation novel's interest in carefully concealed mysteries, but its own ponderous unfolding of progressive madness ends up paying tribute to the genre's narrative potentials. In re-addressing both the "woman question" and the need to take the insane in custody (rather than letting them assume custody rights), it rearranges two of the genre's most commonly chosen themes. In a very different vein, Oliphant's *Salem Chapel* (1863), a particularly self-conscious venture into sensation fiction, depicts a melodramatic murderess and a frivolous ex-husband against a provincial backdrop. This was originally erected for her domestic series, the *Chronicles of Carlingford*, of which *Salem Chapel* was to be the final instalment. As a result, the abduction plot sits rather oddly within a novel that is primarily about a young dissenting minister's struggles to compose uplifting sermons, with sometimes unexpected results. The father, in fact, abducts his imbecile daughter merely out of spite, driving his former wife to murder. That Oliphant chose parental abduction when reluctantly turning to sensation fiction indeed says more about the plot-device's popularity, its unfailing attraction *as* a sensational *topos*, than about its rather abrupt intrusion into provincial Salem. By contrast, Trollope's novel brings together the two interrelated problems of reconciling popular sensation with domestic fiction and of successfully negotiating literary aspiration and popular demand. With its pointed exposé of self-righteousness in the title, *He Knew He Was Right* underscores the constrictions created by the law, the press, and the social conventions governing upper-class society. A novel of the late 1860s that operates at the margins of the sensation genre, but at the same time questions its devices, it forms a particularly striking counterpoint to Collins's fictionalizations of divorce and custody laws. Instead of expanding on the largely off-stage abduction, it illuminates the intricacies of the legal system. It is exactly such intricacies that often remain obscured in more sensational representations.

But if Collins's early fictional uses of divorce and custody disputes are without doubt unselfconsciously sensational, there is a significant shift in his reassessment of the process of judging. Written nearly two decades after the sensation novel's heyday, *The Evil Genius* is less concerned with new infant custody laws – although they serve as a decisive catalyst – than with social typecasting of “failing” fathers and, on another level, of the father's dwindling significance in a progressively domestic culture. In this case, however, it is a marginalization that is sanctioned by new laws. While Collins's earlier novels may often have dwelt on longstanding juridical oversights or contradictions, that a recent revision of the legal system, could generate *more* injustice added quite a new spin on Collins's critique of the Victorian legal system.

In concentrating on one of Collins's most blatant “mission novels,” his “novels-with-a-purpose,” as Lyn Pykett calls them (20), I seek to set in the foreground the ways in which *The Evil Genius* redirects both popular sensation plots and topical issues in order to articulate this twofold interest in paternity. Most strikingly perhaps, the novel rejects the sensation trope of paternal persecution sanctioned by patriarchal laws and instead deploys a *maternal* abduction that flies in the face of the law. But if the mother's initially illegal claiming of the child serves to cement the break-up of the family, new custody laws are shown to expedite the process. It is intriguing to notice to what extent the father's adultery is represented as understandable, indeed almost inevitable in the circumstances, while the maternal abduction it leads to is at once sensationalized and frowned upon. The father's emotional needs as well as rights indeed feature so prominently as to diminish sympathy for the betrayed wife. While this makes the novel's take on parental abduction peculiarly provocative as well as powerful in its rearrangement of plot-twists, it also firmly places the blame on the law itself. As the family lawyer (and a fond father at that) cogently puts it, when he “reluctantly reminded [Mrs Linley] that the father had a right” to his child: “No person – not even the mother – can take the child out of the father's custody [...] unless it happens that the law has deprived him of his privilege” (189). The mother colludes with what is presented as an unjust, even inhumane, deprivation, but without the law's interference in the Linleys' family affairs, it is suggested, reconciliation could be affected much more easily.

The governess may penetrate and disrupt the triangular unity of father, mother, and child, as does the mother-in-law (the evil genius of the title), but the governess's childlike dependency has been brought about by the break-up of her own family, which has similarly been arranged by court proceedings. It is therefore doubly symptomatic that her own father is falsely convicted of an insurance scam. In a pointed alignment with the implementation of custody laws, the father's loss of the rights to his child, little Kitty, in the main plot is associated with a swindle. Thus, as the unfortunately desirable governess, Captain Westerfield's daughter Sydney is emphatically declared to be the vic-

tim of the law's interference in two families. Sydney Westerfield is first introduced as an unwanted child who becomes the childlike governess of a girl that is turned into a contested commodity through a custody dispute. Little Kitty's father, Mr Linley, picks up a new governess at a cheap school simply because he feels an ambiguous interest – at once pseudo-paternal and romantic – in an exploited teacher. He employs her at once, without so much as asking for references, carrying her off like a chattel, or indeed like a prisoner or a child, someone taken into custody, or one over whom he has custody rights. This may seem a praiseworthy act of impulsive charity, but as Sydney herself acquires desirability as childlike lover, it leads in turn to the child's commodification as a possession.

In a poignant rewriting of various popular narrative structures, including the governess novel and the sensational divorce novel, Sydney is deprived of agency and responsibility by social structures which also take the shape of – and this becomes important to the reinvestigation of maternity and paternity – the monstrous mother who abandons her and the miserly aunt who exploits her. In the words of her new employer's shrewd, yet vicious, mother-in-law: "remember what a life she has led, [...] the good qualities of that unfortunate young person can *not* have always resisted the horrid temptations and contaminations about her" (Collins *The Evil Genius*, 100). The offspring of an aristocrat's marriage to a former barmaid, Sydney is raised as a pupil-teacher by her aunt. Like Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre before her, she advertises in the newspapers, becomes a governess, and falls in love with her pupil's father. But, as Jane certainly would not have, she succumbs to adulterous desire. To reassess Sydney's position in the plot, as in cultural fictions of adultery, the novel further filters her trials through a rewriting of the governess-novel and, more pointedly still, of the age's most memorable narrative of marital incompatibility: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).

Anne Brontë's novel is significantly the first and, until the publication of *The Evil Genius* nearly forty years later, probably the only novel to represent maternal abduction. As the heroine struggles against her husband's right to their son, however, she is not merely constrained by domestic confines, but reinforces them through a promotion of bourgeois ideals of maternal rights that ultimately take the novel's proto-feminist agenda firmly in custody. As Laura Berry has powerfully argued (37-9), through the double meaning of the term custody, *Wildfell Hall* aligns any form of domestic guardianship, whether paternal or maternal, legal or illegal, with incarceration. As the proto-Victorian woman embodies this introduction of domesticity in the novel's Regency setting, her ultimate possession of the heir (the future Victorian gentleman) arrests the Regency dandy's homosociality to appropriate him for the bourgeois Victorian home. The heroine's escape hence engenders a new structure of domestic confinement.

The Evil Genius reworks this plot-line precisely in order to question the Victorian ideologies of domesticity – and specifically of maternity – that the changing infant custody laws of the nineteenth century endorsed. *Wildfell Hall* functions as a retrospective reassessment of the seminal Infant Custody Act of 1839 (Berry, 106). Passed after Caroline Norton’s much discussed divorce and fight to gain access to her children, a fight that involved massive campaigning, the new custody bill at once built on and assisted in the promotion of a new maternal ideal. It was the first time that divorced women, provided they had not been proved guilty of adultery, were given the right to apply for the custody of children, if under seven years of age. Although different laws applied in other parts of Britain, it was not until the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 that women in England could petition for divorce. But as Lawrence Stone has pointed out, the Married Women’s Property Acts of 1870, 1874, and 1882 had a much more socially and culturally important impact than the Divorce Act, which made divorce a commodity only purchasable by the upper middle classes (390). Indeed, in contrast to a number of sensational custody novels of the 1860s and 1870s, money certainly is not the issue for the wealthy, landowning Linley family of Collins’s “mission novel.” What is much more crucial to the Linleys’ dilemma is that changes in legislation over the course of the nineteenth century paved the way for a profound shift in attitudes to divorce (Stone, 371-82), which the Guardianship of Infants Act of 1886 reflected as well as helped to promote. The Act not only appointed a mother guardian upon the father’s death, but further suggested that, as Stone pointedly puts it, by the late-Victorian age “it had become morally accepted that it was only right to grant custody of young children to their mother” (390). It is this assumption that Wilkie Collins took issue with and proceeded to explore within a reworking of popular, sensation-alized plots.

It is therefore peculiarly significant that, for the court scene that decides custody over Kitty Linley, the 1886 Guardianship of Infants Act is not particularly relevant, although its implications are central to the novel’s promotion of a “family father.” Presumably set before the act was passed, the novel never discloses a specific timeframe; even letters are undated, an omission that is rare indeed in Collins’s fiction. Instead, what makes divorce possible for the wife is a cleverly manipulated discrepancy between Scottish and English marriage laws. In Scotland, unlike in England, a wife could petition for divorce on the grounds of the husband’s adultery alone without its being compounded by cruelty, bigamy, or incest. This explains why the novel is partly set in Scotland, just as Scottish settings had facilitated similar legal twists in *Man and Wife* (1870), Collins’s first novel with a declared “mission,” or in the tellingly titled *The Law and the Lady* of 1875 (Law, 11). *The Evil Genius* is similarly interested in exposing the ways in which laws can be manipulated, and how even sympathetically presented lawyers, however ashamed they might be of living by the law

(see Collins *The Evil Genius*, 187), make much of legal loopholes. When, after her husband has deserted her to form an adulterous relationship with the governess, Mrs Linley pays for a wily lawyer to maintain possession of her daughter, this tends to leach away sympathy from the betrayed wife: "... there is a law, after all, that will protect me in the possession of my little girl. I don't care what it costs; I want that law." (189). By capitalizing on its incongruities, the future divorcee beats the law with its own weapons. After staging an illegal child abduction under the very noses of the father's professional spies, she cunningly circumvents custody rights by using a Scottish court to grant a divorce on the grounds of adultery, which duly deprives the father of his "privilege": "His lordship then decreed the Divorce in the customary form, giving the custody of the child to the mother," yet not without first condemning the wife as "an inconsiderate woman, culpably indiscreet and, I had almost added, culpably indelicate" (214-5). However unfair this judgement, it reflects the social ostracism which Mrs Linley and her daughter face. It is, moreover, underscored by the legal manoeuvring that has empowered Mrs Linley in the first place.

So if *The Evil Genius* was sparked off by imminent changes in the legal construction of infant custody, in the same way in which most of Collins's "mission novels" were concerned with a topical issue, even if their plots had a tendency to get the upper hand,¹ it was also particularly ambiguous about the ideologies of domesticity that underpinned them. So far from functioning as a shelter, as Ruskin so hopefully termed it in a much-cited passage in *Sesame and Lilies*, "from all terror, doubt, and division" (122), the family is not merely vulnerable to social constrictions, to incursions of the law into the privacy of domestic space, and to various business ventures (including fraudulent speculations), but creates business for the family lawyer. Domestic Gothic feeds on a plenitude of familial divisions, as studies of the sensation novel have amply argued (Nayder, 72; Taylor, *passim*). In a more recent study, Karen Chase and Michael Levenson speak of the "antifamily of popular sensation" (7). Its revision in a late "mission novel" that takes up an easily sensationalized *topos* as a fictional engagement with legal discourses renegotiates both familiar plot-lines and new cultural concepts of domesticity and paternity.

¹ Compare Wiesenthal on *Heart and Science*: Collins's novel about vivisection, it also develops new theories of hysteria as well as reworks inheritance-plots, a love-story, and, as we shall see, conceptualizations of fatherhood. Similarly, *Man and Wife* deals with issues other than marriage laws and "muscular Christianity;" *The Two Destinies* not only about mesmerism; *The Legacy of Cain* about more than phrenology.

Why they knew he was wrong: the child abductor as villain and victim

The Evil Genius rewrites the abduction plot of Brontë's *Wildfell Hall* by twisting its negotiation of marital conflict into what may at first sight seem a conservative slanting of controversial issues. Despite its ambiguities, it does so by developing interest in a new ideal of fatherhood that divorces paternity from issues of patrimony. As John Tosh has shown, in mid-Victorian Britain, the home became "a man's place" in a markedly new way: not as "his possession or fiefdom, but also as the place where his deepest needs were met" (1), and fatherhood was an integral part of man's domestication. However, if the new idea of the father was entirely an outgrowth of middle-class domestic ideals, the privileging of maternity had profited even more from the same idealization of the family. Wilkie Collins powerfully represented this as at best a one-sided promotion of parenthood. In that the possession of the child is shown to become reduced to a personal issue, the bone of contention in a fight over possession, *The Evil Genius* exposes the fraudulent premise of any exclusive emphasis on the mother's sentimental investment in her children.

In this, the novel may partly prefigure the use of emotional blackmail in what is perhaps the most memorable literary work on custody, Henry James's *What Maisie Knew* (1897): James's novel tests domestic arrangements that are only suggested, or threatened, in earlier fiction (*He Knew He Was Right* and *The Evil Genius* among them). The brilliant irony brought out by Maisie's central consciousness is, however, intriguingly anticipated by Kitty's naïve but probing questions about her father, about her own suddenly fatherless position, and as we shall see, also about her disconcertingly aggressive desire for father surrogates. But as a bridge between the wife's flight in *Wildfell Hall* and the ironic diffusion of responsibility in *What Maisie Knew*, Collins's novel most compellingly revises the vilification of the abducting father in earlier custody novels such as *Salem Chapel* and *He Knew He Was Right*. In both novels, parental abduction is the last resource of a dangerous man driven to desperation and even insanity.

In *The Evil Genius*, maternal abduction creatively complicates a somewhat overused plot-device. In a cleverly conducted kidnapping, the child is rowed across a lake in a thick fog, stripped "in an empty yard – no idlers about in that bad weather" – and clad in "[a] boy's ready-made suit – not at all a bad fit for Kitty!" (208). This successfully throws the pursuing spies off the scent. If this is fascinating as a major deviation from the dominant device of paternal abduction (of male heirs by male villains), it is also a detective plot in reverse. The novel thus partially rejects sensational plot-lines, but without necessarily circumventing sensationalism completely. A brief comparison with Trollope's self-consciously anti-sensational take on the Victorian custody novel therefore illuminates best Collins's reworking of parental custody as a plot-device. What is an excruciatingly painful process in the most psychologically probing pas-

sages of *He Knew He Was Right* remains unexplored in *The Evil Genius*. Yet the latter nonetheless profits significantly from the reworking of a theme that had, by the late 1860s, already come to be regarded as a straightforwardly sensational plot-line. In Collins's late, if not belated, reworking, it is freely discussed that Mrs Linley is "to be reckoned up [. . . that is,] detective English for being watched" (188). Yet there is none of the self-disgust that slowly drives the desperately jealous husband mad in Trollope's novel.

In contrast to the majority of detectives in sensation fiction, professional and amateur alike, the ex-policeman employed by increasingly unstable Mr Trevelyan to spy on his wife has "in the special spirit of his trade [...] taught himself to believe that all around him were things secret and hidden [...]. He lived by the crookedness of people." (Trollope, 243). In the first "days of his madness," Trevelyan takes "Mr Bozzle into his pay," and it is then only right that he feels "a crushing feeling of ignominy, shame, moral dirt, and utter degradation" (230). Bozzle's sensationalized reading of society and the law provides the sordid narrative Trevelyan needs to justify his jealousy, a possessiveness that evolves into a monomaniacal obsession. As he resorts to child abduction to get his son back, there is no doubt about the authorial condemnation of his action, despite its legality which is appropriately articulated by the despicable Bozzle: "'The paternal parent has a right to his hinfants [sic], no doubt.' That was Bozzle's law." (497). Yet, neither of them qualifies as a sensational villain: if Bozzle is too transparent (too comically vulgar), Trevelyan is a case-study in the indeterminacy of sanity. A domestic man "to whom his child was very dear [and] one too to whom the ordinary comforts of domestic life were attractive and necessary," he harps much upon family values: "My whole happiness was in my home. [...] My child and wife were everything to me." (161, 235-36). His wife might be reckoning up "her budget of grievance" (238), but so is he, and as far as their expressions of possessiveness go, blame and sympathy are carefully measured out. As Trollope's most sympathetic treatment of "the foolish workings of a weak man's mind [that] ruin the prospects of a woman's life" (505), his custody novel presents a marked contrast to the focus on the father's wrongs in Collins's later work – a contrast that significantly questions simplified polarizations of moral judgements both in sensation fiction and in anti-sensational novels by Trollope or Oliphant.²

Some of the most sensational abduction plots – including a newborn's almost perfunctorily evoked kidnapping in the frame-story of Wilkie Collins's 1879 sensation novel *The Fallen Leaves* – are less concerned with legal or moral alignments than with melodramatic effects. Here, the abductor's vilification,

² *He Knew He Was Right* has been described as "a powerful commentary on the Custody of Infants Act" and, like *Wildfell Hall*, can be linked to Caroline Norton's campaigns that helped to bring about the act (Markwick, 4, 12).

moreover, is often tied up more generally with the commodification of the child, whose financial value to the father, rather than emotional worth to the mother, is at stake. In Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *The Black Band* (1862), for example, the villain, a foreign colonel and the mastermind of a secret society, has his newborn snatched from the cradle to strengthen his hold on his wife's inheritance, which is his ticket to the title and estate of an Englishman. As he admits freely to his wife: "I am making arrangements for myself assuming your ancient name, as successor, in some measure, to your father's property" (Braddon, 221). (Why he chooses to abduct and hide the child rather than have him killed remains obscure, considering that he has had a hand in a number of murders.) The baby-farmer with whom the "baby heir" (290) is left is told neither to "speculate on his rank nor his future; from the hour in which I place him in your arms his rank is your rank, his fortune yours" (287). In a strikingly similar way, Collins's *The Fallen Leaves* shows a father abducting and then abandoning his daughter for financial gain. Perpetrated by an ambitious porter, the abduction is a financial venture, premised on emotional blackmail and acted out through a bargain with a cheap baby-farmer. The porter succeeds in carrying it out by ensuring the interest of his employer's daughter: "Yes! he, the low-lived vagabond who puts up the shop-shutters, he looks forward to being taken into partnership, and succeeding you [his employer] when you die! [...] His one chance is to set your temper in a flame, to provoke the scandal of a discovery" (Collins *The Fallen Leaves*, 14). This "low-lived" dependent speculates on the emotional dependencies that can be used to disrupt a family business. When his first speculation – to marry the impregnated daughter of the house and thus to become her father's partner – fails, he "calculated on [the] disgraceful circumstance" of the child's birth as well as on the young mother's desolation, and "deliberately abandoned his child, as a likely cause of hindrance and scandal in the way of his prosperous career" (215, emphasis added). He breaks into the house to take the momentarily unsupervised infant, with one stroke removing the illegitimate offspring as a future hindrance to his advancement and offering himself as the bereaved mother's consolation, without, of course, ever revealing his role in the kidnapping. Appropriately, at the end of the novel, like "his other rotten speculations" (261), this riddance fails. His wife's suicide, his daughter's reappearance as "Simple Sally," and his bankruptcy coincide. Most significantly, *The Fallen Leaves* bears witness to the consequences of the abduction. The victims of typical fictional abduction plots remain children, but Simple Sally emerges as a prostitute, albeit a childlike one.

Collins's subsequent use of the *topos* is increasingly concerned with this interest in long-term social and moral effects. *Heart and Science* (1883), Collins's next novel that touches upon financial speculations concerning children, by contrast, sets the father's emotional investment in his daughters against an heiress's victimization by her scheming aunt. There the much-abused, indeed

emasculated and childish, father walks out with his two little daughters in tow. With the help of a shy, blushing lawyer, “a human anomaly” (Collins *Heart and Science*, 70), he engineers the rescue of his own children and that of his wife’s dependent niece: “they innocently achieved between them the creation of one resolute man” (262). Here the lawyer still assures the “[a]mazed and distressed” father that he stands “on firm ground” (265) as far as custody rights are concerned. But there is no such comfort in *The Evil Genius*. In other words, as Collins continues to explore the theme of child custody, the laws become less reliable, the issues of fatherhood more pressing, and the villains more difficult to pin down.

If *The Fallen Leaves* and *Heart and Science* still evince an interest in inheritance, it is important to note that the children at stake are all girls. This is in itself a rewriting of the hitherto predominantly male abduction plot. Most children in Victorian novels are the victims of kidnappers because they are heirs to disputed fortunes. Their financial legacies guarantee that they have value. This accounts for the disappearance of a newborn in Braddon’s *The Black Band*, as we have seen, and also in her more domestic sensation novel *John Marchmont’s Legacy* (1863), as also for a baby’s quick concealment in Ellen Wood’s sensation novel *Lord Oakburn’s Daughters* (1864). Even in *Salem Chapel* it is important to the plot that the imbecile daughter is an heiress. In contrast, nothing is said about Kitty’s expectations in *The Evil Genius*,³ where the inheritance plot is consigned to the margins. Indeed, the inheritance theme is reworked in the subplot as a striking counterpoint to the main plot’s exclusive interest in the purely domestic reconfiguration of parenthood. Sydney’s mother and aunt are fixated by children’s pecuniary value: brutish Mrs Westerfield favours her son, who might have succeeded to the estate of Lord Le Basque – which is why she married the lord’s younger brother in the first place – and resents her first child’s being a girl and the father’s favourite. This monstrous mother’s “habitual neglect of her eldest child” culminates in the child’s desertion (Collins *The Evil Genius*, 59), which, as I have emphasized, sets in motion the adultery and custody narratives that propel the main plot. What is significant to note here, however, is that Sydney’s mother keeps her son, taking him with her when she emigrates to the United States, although she abandons her daughter as having no value to her. The girl is left with her aunt, who significantly makes a living out

³ By contrast, in Collins’s seminal sensation novel *The Woman in White* (1860), the value of the swapped women, both childlike and rendered mentally disturbed by their experience, is primarily pecuniary in the plotters’ plans. Testifying to the prevailing and increasingly self-reflexive interest in the *topos*, the opening chapters of the first series of Wood’s *Johnny Ludlow* (1868) revolve around child abduction, while “Tod’s Repentance” in the third series (1885) has an ironical twist: a boy goes missing, a never-do-well relative is suspected, but the child has really only been accidentally locked in a barn.

of children (67). Exploited as an unpaid pupil-teacher, Sydney is in a particularly vulnerable position, of which her future employer can easily take advantage by offering her escape from her aunt, a position in his family, and himself as an ambiguous paternal figure. In the mother's charge, however, the boy witnesses a fatal scuffle between his mother and a stepfather, simply denominated as "The Brute" (63), and is subsequently lost in the wilds of the American West. Not only does his inheritance never materialize, but he soon vanishes from the narrative.

But as the Linleys' welcoming, emphatically casual, family is offered as an escape, the governess's acceptance as part of the family quickly becomes a mockery of Mr Linley's pseudo-incestuous interest in a young woman he tries to identify with his daughter, ironically in order to channel his sexual desires into paternal feelings. In addition, his wife may be the most deserving, though at first almost impossibly idealized, mother-figure in the novel, but she comes together with a mother-in-law who has surprising affinities with Mrs Westerfield, despite their class differences. Both glory in the manipulation of laws and trials. As such, they double as evil geniuses that allow the effects of such scheming easily to be exorcized at the end of the novel. Thus, both the unnatural mother who abandons her daughter and the overprotective mother-in-law who enjoys scheming against her son-in-law on behalf of her daughter and granddaughter, function as counterpoints to the desirable parents: Kitty's mother and father. In addition, as the main plot's evil genius, the mother-in-law must take the blame for prompting the mother to take legal action as well as for instigating the illegal abduction, in the process facilitating the somewhat improbable reunion of Kitty's parents. If the mother is temporarily condemned for agreeing to the child abduction, her own mother's greater culpability ironically helps to redeem her.

Maternal Abduction: The Mother-in-law and "Poor Lost Papa!"

As the main and subplots of *The Evil Genius* are welded together by two trials, they metonymically bring out a central issue. In a proliferation of legal puns, the protagonists undergo trials or take things on trial. The governess "offers her services on trial" (82), characters are judged according to their "endurance under trial" (163), especially when faced with "a trial to [their] self-control" (159), and remembrance of their once happy marriage "is the terrible trial" to the divorced parents (198). "Before the Story" is subtitled "Miss Westerfield's Education," of which the first part is "The Trial." The novel ends with the child "appeal[ing] from the Law of Divorce to the Law of Nature," taking "it for granted that her father and mother should live together, *because* they are her father and mother" (348), as the sentimental, paternal, lawyer sagely puts it. Father and mother are forced back together. Even more incongruously perhaps, the final domestic scene unites Sydney with her dead father's

friend: it is “as pretty a domestic scene as a man could wish to look at. The arrival of Kitty made the picture complete” (348). If this celebration of the father’s return disturbingly reads like displaced incest, in that the pairing of a father and a father-surrogate is followed by the latter’s sexual interest in his “adopted” daughter, it puts the family on trial only the more effectively.

The sensation novel’s domestic Gothic of course always tends to underscore the troubled family’s usefulness for fiction, but when custody fiction is turned into a mission novel in *The Evil Genius*, the novel additionally insists on the unreliability of any judgement on its (re)arrangement. The instability of personal memory and opinion (and hence testimony) permeates Collins’s re-creation of court proceedings, yet it becomes nowhere so pertinent and personally involved as in the parents’ tug-of-war. A mother-in-law who continuously harps upon “maternal interest” (154), or indulges in an ironically presented “outburst of maternal love” (304), aptly acts as the evil genius in a novel that blames the law for failing to recognize natural, rather than legally sanctioned, relationships. In the subplot, the father’s murder is seemingly effected by the law, but in reality perpetrated by his heir’s manipulating mother. Mrs Westerfield has evidence of her husband’s innocence in her hands, but she prefers to retain it to take financial advantage of her knowledge: the letter that proves his innocence also contains ciphered instructions leading to the stolen diamonds. She literally trades her husband’s life for money. Even more deviously, the mother-in-law of the main plot declares Kitty’s father dead to “widow” Mrs Linley and to “orphan” Kitty: “If the man who was once your husband isn’t as good as dead to you, I should like to know what your Divorce means!” (242). Hence, Sydney’s father dies of heart failure while his wife profits from the jury’s carelessness, while Kitty loses her father through a “shameful falsehood” (339) which (at least in the mother-in-law’s interpretation) is legally sanctioned: “[t]he cruel falsehood which had checked poor Kitty’s natural inquiries [and] raised an insuperable obstacle to a meeting between father and child” (273). His resurrection brilliantly exhibits fatherhood as lachrymose spectacle:

She put her hands on his shoulder and lifted her face to him. In the instant when he kissed her, the child knew him. Her heart beat suddenly with an overpowering delight; she started back from his embrace. “That’s how papa used to kiss me!” she cried. “Oh! You *are* papa! Not drowned! not drowned!” She flung her arms round his neck, and held him as if she would never let him go again. “Dear papa! Poor lost papa!” His tears fell on her face; he sobbed over her.

(Collins *The Evil Genius*, 343)

This arraigns the law as well as the mother-in-law for depriving a child of her father, but poor lost papa’s recognizable kiss disturbingly undercuts the reunion. The “dead” father resurfaces after having been falsely shipwrecked by the mother-in-law “as the shortest way of answering inconvenient questions”

(269). In closure of the frame-story, the dead father's friend, Captain Benny-deck, emerges just as fortuitously to assert that Westerfield is innocent. The neatly paralleled reunion scenes suggest that, like Kitty's new doll, daughters long for fathers as well as mothers: "Kitty's arms opened and embraced her gift with a scream of ecstasy. That fervent pressure found its way to the right spring. The doll squeaked: 'Mamma!' – and creaked – and cried again – and said: 'Papa!'" (139). In "Before the Story," the recently orphaned Sydney similarly plays piteously with her ragged dolls, and she is "obliged to be papa and mama to them, both in one" (60). More ominously, the first time Linley encounters Sydney, he thinks "of his pretty little girl, the spoiled child of the household" (83). Sydney becomes not so much his child's governess as "her friend and playfellow" (108), and when kissing her Linley calls her "My poor child!" (119) and "Dear little Sydney!" (122). To complete this circle of recognizable kisses, Bennydeck seals his "fatherly interest" (274) by "kiss[ing] her as he might have kissed a daughter of his own" (332). Marriage to the father's friend of course presents a fortuitous solution, but the suppressed incest that runs through the childlike governess's relationships casts a very disturbing light on this seemingly neat closure.

In short, as the law denies them a father by taking him into custody, or taking custody from him, it compels them to approach paternal surrogates whose interest in them is not necessarily innocent. Even as the new family man expresses paternal love that is significantly different from a patriarch's pride in his offspring, too much time spent in the nursery may lead to an infatuation with "papa's governess, so sweetly fresh and pretty" (130), if not incestuous desire.⁴ The novel, in fact, is deliberately ambiguous in its representation of the father's new role. And yet it is really only fatherless daughters that crave paternal, or pseudo-paternal, attention at any cost. Even the wife's lawyer takes a sudden paternal interest in the husband's mistress: "I confess I was interested in her. Perhaps I thought of the time when she might have been as dear to her father as my own daughters are to me." (261). Like the prostitute in *The Fallen Leaves*, abducted and abandoned by her father, Sydney appeals to the "fatherly interest" that masks sexual desire. A similar fate seems to loom over Kitty, an increasingly troublesome child after her father's fraudulently established death: "Since the day when her grandmother had said the fatal words which checked all further allusion to her father, the child had shown a disposition to complain" (282). Not only does Kitty's interest in Bennydeck as her potential "new papa" (298) replicate both her mother's and (more disturbingly) Sydney's infatuation with the generally patronizing captain, but the child also takes "impudent [...] lib-

⁴ I discuss Collins's critical representation of masculinity and fatherhood in more detail elsewhere (Wagner "Overpowering Vitality," *passim*; Wagner *Longing*, 230-3).

erties” by hanging on to another father surrogate, the lawyer Sarrazin, “with her arms *and* her legs,” at the same time demanding news of her lost papa: ““Mamma’s going to have a new name. [...] And I must be Miss Norman. I won’t! Where’s papa? [...] Do you hear? Where’s papa?”” (219).

* * * * *

The effects of custody disputes, as of parental abduction, on the child and, even more strikingly, on the adult the child later becomes, are the core of Wilkie Collins’s late contributions to Victorian custody fiction. Mysteriously concealed and disappearing children may figure from his early writing onwards, yet *The Evil Genius* deliberately, and self-reflexively, takes one of the most sensational plot-devices and filters it through a growing interest in psychological realism, as anticipated most effectively by Trollope’s pointedly titled anti-sensation custody novel, *He Knew He Was Right*. Long regarded as simply marking his decline (Pykett, 20), Collins’s “mission novels,” in fact, fascinatingly reshape hackneyed plots, reviving their narrative potential and social currency. *The Evil Genius* thus helps to prepare the way for literary dissections of domestic Gothic that make “a masterly anatomy of human motives” (89) their business.

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The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (1)

William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, & Paul Lewis

This is the first of a series of planned annual updates to *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, published in four volumes by Pickering & Chatto. The editorial principles, transcription conventions, and abbreviations employed here remain consistent with those described in the prefatory sections of Volume I. In the course of time, it is hoped that this material will be incorporated into a revised edition available in digital form with the added benefit of searchability. Though *The Public Face* appeared as recently as June 2005, in the meantime eleven more letters have come to light, including three to Georgina Hogarth and one to James Payn. This raises the number of known extant letters to those recipients to eighteen and sixteen respectively, and the total sum of recorded letters to 2998. The opportunity has also been taken to correct one or two substantial editorial slips. We hope readers of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* will be able to draw our attention to further sins of omission and commission.

(A) Addenda

* TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 20 AUGUST 1860

MS: Texas (Ms Works, W. Collins, Ellery Queen Collection).¹

A Square in a Country Town.

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“There was a bare little plot of grass in the middle, protected by a cheap wire fence. An elderly nursemaid and two children were standing in a corner of the enclosure, looking at a lean goat tethered to the grass. Two foot-passengers were talking together on one side of the pavement before the houses, and an idle little boy was leading an idle little dog along by a string on the other. I heard the dull tinkling of a piano at a distance, accompanied by the intermittent knocking of a hammer nearer at hand. These were all the sights and sounds of life that encountered me when I entered the square.”

From “The Woman In White”² | By | Wilkie Collins | August 20th 1860

1. Accompanied by a photograph of WC, the full-length miniature portrait by Herbert Watkins – see to him of 12 June 1861. The photograph and autograph face each other on opposite sides of a folded sheet of paper to which they have been pasted.

2. From 5. The Narrative of Walter Hartwright, VIII, where Hartwright seeks out Mrs Catherick in Welmingham, ‘an English country town in the first stage of its existence’. This appears to be the first extant example of WC providing an autograph hunter with a signed passage from one of his novels.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, [25] DECEMBER 1862**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Catalogue of Myers & Co., Autumn, 1955.

Summary: *Signature, subscription and date cut from a letter, Christmas 1862.*

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 12 FEBRUARY 1867**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Puttick & Simpson (sold to Woodhouse for 10s., 11 November 1915, according to E. H. Courville in *Autograph Prices Current* I, August 1914-July 1916).

Summary: ‘A.L.s. 3 pp. 8vo. Feb. 12, 1867, mentioning Chas. Reade, Dickens and his reading tour etc, etc.’

*** TO MARY MOTLEY,¹ 22 MARCH 1870**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie’s (Sale 5621, 7 June 2005, South Kensington, Lot 12).

90 Gloucester Place | Portman Square | March 22nd 1870
Mr Wilkie Collins accepts with much pleasure the honour of dining with the Minister of the United States and Mrs Lothrop Motley on Monday 28th March at ¹/₄ to 8 ’oclock. /

1. The reply to the invitation would have been formally addressed to Mary Motley, née Benjamin (d. 1874), the wife of John Lothrop Motley (1814-1877: *ANB*), American ambassador in London from April 1869 to December 1870. Born near Boston, Massachusetts, Motley was a distinguished historian and diplomat who spent much of his life in Europe.

*** TO LLEWELLYN JEWITT,¹ 29 OCTOBER 1875**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie’s (Sale 5621, 7 June 2005, South Kensington, Lot 12).

Brussels | 29th October 1875

Dear Sir,

I have been travelling – and there has been some occasional delay in forwarding my letters.² This circumstance will, I hope, plead my apology for not having written to you sooner.

Having already subscribed to the Testimonial, I must beg you to excuse me if I refrain from availing myself of the proposal which you are so good as to address to me.³

I remain, Dear Sir, | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
Llewellyn Jewitt Esqr

1. Llewellyn Frederick William Jewitt (1816-1886: *DNB*), engraver, art historian, archaeologist and Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Friend of Samuel Carter Hall, editor of the *Art Journal*, with whom he wrote *The Stately Homes of England* (1874-7).

2. WC seems to have left London for the continent on or about 10 October, returning around a month later.

3. The nature of the proposal remains unclear, though the testimonial might be that of £1,600 presented to Samuel Carter Hall and his wife Anna Maria on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary, 20 September 1874.

* TO GEORGINA HOGARTH, 18 JULY 1879

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie's (15 July 1999, lot 186/2). Extracts and partial images: Christie's catalogue, pp. 139-40.¹

18th July 1879

My dear Georgina,

The terms seem to me to be simply preposterous.² You are quite right in refusing to accept them. Ouvry's calculation is unanswerable.³ I send you a brief sketch of the terms that I should insist on. The 3rd Clause leaves you free, if you are not satisfied with the result of the sale of the first edition, to try another publisher, or to adopt a new method of publication, in regard to the second edition....

Terms

=

[10 per] cent commission

[Accoun]ts to be rendered [regul]arly – and profits, [deduction]s stipulated [*cropped*], to be paid [promptly] at the date [when th]e account is rendered.

...

1. The lot includes three of the many extant letters to Georgina Hogarth concerning the edition of Dickens's letters planned by her and Mamie Dickens. The three are described thus in the catalogue: '13 pages, 8vo, the first letter incomplete ... London and Ramsgate, 18-29 July 1879.' The accompanying illustration shows five overlapping leaves, exposing seven pages of text, of which five are visible only in part, though we have recorded cropped text wherever this is meaningful. This image suggests that the incomplete letter of 18 July is made up of two small leaves, each torn from a sheet of folding notepaper. Christie's

catalogue states that the letter shows WC ‘expressing his opinion that the terms seem to him “to be simply preposterous” (“...Ouvry’s calculation is manoeverable [*sic*]...), sending fresh proposed terms (including 10% commission) which he thinks Chatto & Windus would accept, and suggesting that another publisher (such as Macmillan) could be approached for a second edition’.

2. As the following letter to Hogarth makes clear, the ‘preposterous’ terms must have been those initially proposed by Chapman & Hall who published the volumes on commission for the authors.

3. The solicitor Frederic Ouvry (1814-81: *DNB*), who had served Dickens for many years. Also in the Christie sale (Lot 186/1) was a two-page memorandum on the costs of printing Dickens’s letters, dated 17 December 1878, suggesting that the profit on an edition of 2000 copies priced at 30 shillings each should be around £1100.

* **TO GEORGINA HOGARTH, [27] JULY 1879¹**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie’s (15 July 1999, lot 186/2). Extracts and partial images: Christie’s catalogue, pp. 139-140.²

. . . [the] alternative lies [between] £2.... and £1..10... [there] is no harm in [a delay o]f a day or two [to wr]ite confidentially [to Mr] Bentley, and [consult h]is experience. . . .

Notes on the Agreement³

=

1st Clause:- “The first edition of the Work of 2000 copies” – deducting such copies as may be required for presentation, ~~and~~ for the newspapers, and for delivery to the British Museum & [*illegible*]

Query:- Add to the Clause words to this effect (?)

5th Clause. I fancy the sale of copies over the counter to ...

2)

[Mr Chap]man has [consented] to the altered [terms – i]t might be [more grac]ious to [consult hi]m on [this as we]ll as [on the point] respecting [the agents’ Com]mission [which is quite] a [new element so far as my experience goes.]

1. Conjectural dating based on the fact that WC writes on the same day from Ramsgate to George Bentley, consulting his experience on the question of the pricing the Dickens’s letters (Baker & Clarke, II, p. 423).

2. The image suggests that the letter comprises five pages in all, four on a single sheet of folding notepaper, and the fifth on a separate half-sheet headed ‘2)’. The third page is fully visible, the second and fifth partially so.

3. According to Christie’s catalogue, in this letter WC considers ‘the agreement with Chapman & Hall “beyond criticism”, but quibbles about certain clauses including the

proposed price of the volumes (“... I should be inclined to say £1..10....”), cites advertisements in the *Athenaeum* as “a safe guide to follow”, and seeks clarification of some wording (“... Or – seeing that Mr Chapman has consented to the altered terms – it might be more gracious to consult him on this as well as on the point respecting the agents’ Commission which is quite a new element so far as my experience goes ...”).

* TO GEORGINA HOGARTH, 29 JULY 1879

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie’s (15 July 1999, lot 186/2). Extracts and partial images: Christie’s catalogue, pp. 139-140.¹

. . . [cou]nseled caution in the matter of those “people living abroad” – mentioned in Mr Chapman’s letter.

. . . – to [Mr Lippin]incott, and [ask h]im for his [prop]osal by return [of] mail. It may not be amiss, in the mean time, to ask Mr Chapman to name the person . . .²

1. The image suggests that this letter consists of four pages of text on a single sheet of folding notepaper, though only lower portions of the second and third pages are clearly visible.

2. According to Christie’s catalogue, in this letter WC ‘refers to George Bentley’s view of the price, suggests seeing “what Forster did, in the case of the ‘Life’” (“...His account with Chapman would be of some use as a guide...”), notes that Smith & Son and Mudie “are monopolists who have you at their mercy”, mentions arrangements for correcting proofs, and comments on the “anonymous applicant” whose potential offer should be considered.’ Given the apparent mention of the Philadelphia publisher J. B. Lippincott, this last reference probably concerns the question of publication in North America, reverted to in the letters to Hogarth of 11 and 16 October 1879.

TO A.S. BARNES & CO., [SPRING] 1880

MS: Unknown. Extract: *International Review* NS 8:6 (June 1880) p. 18.

It [this article] has my name attached to it because I wish to take on myself the entire responsibility of the tone in which this little protest is written. If the article is published, I must ask as a condition that it shall be published without alterations of any kind, excepting palpable errors or slips of the pen, *exactly as it is written*.¹

1. WC refers to ‘Considerations on the Copyright Question’, published by A.S. Barnes & Co. of New York in their monthly *International Review* (June 1880) pp. 609-18. Following the signed article appears the following note:

The editors agree with Mr. Collins in thinking that a treaty securing International Copyright is in every way just and proper; but they must disclaim all responsibility for the language adopted by him in his argument. In a letter to the publishers of this Review Mr. Collins says: [*cites extract as above*] The article is printed in exact accordance with this request.

TO JAMES PAYN, 6 OCTOBER 1884

MS: Lewis Collection. Published: Lewis Website.

Ramsgate | 6th Oct: 1884

My dear Payn

Two questions:

1. Has “By Proxy” escaped the clutches of the ordinary Italian translator?¹

2. If yes – do you care to extend the influence of that interesting story to a new circle of readers in Italian newspapers?

By far the best translator whom I have yet met with is the Italian lady who translates my books.² She is not dependent on her pen, and she follows her original conscientiously and gives herself all the time that is required for her difficult task.

On the other side, let me add, that you would be served up in daily teaspoonfuls, in a feuilleton.³ Also that the translation fees are so contemptible that they are not even to be thought of, either by you or me.

I go back tomorrow to 90. Gloucester Place – after some glorious sailing. On the deck of the yacht, I read with sincere pleasure some friendly words relating to poor dear Charley and to myself, in “Literary Recollections”, which added to the delights of my holiday.⁴

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Payn’s most highly regarded novel, with the opening scenes set in the north of China. It was serialised in *Belgravia* from July 1877, before appearing the following year in two volumes from Chatto & Windus.

2. Presumably Lida Cerracchini, who translated both *The Black Robe* (as *La Vesti Nere*; Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1882) and *Heart and Science* (as *Cuore e Scienza*; Milan: Eduardo Souzogno, 1884). The latter volume is recorded on the title page as an authorised translation.

3. That is, serialised in a daily newspaper.

4. Payn’s *Some Literary Recollections* was published by Smith, Elder in 1884. There is in fact very little in the book about the Collins brothers: WC’s reaction to a book of Payn’s occupies ten lines on pp. 242-3, while a couple of anecdotes concerning CAC are found on pp. 255-8.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 24 SEPTEMBER 1888**

MS: Unknown.¹ On sale: Swann Galleries, New York, 22 November 2005, sale 2058 lot 321.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
82 Wimpole St | London | 24th September 1888

1. On a small rectangular piece of card. Presumably an autograph scrap only.

(B) Corrigenda

TO SYDNEY DAVIS, 1 MARCH 1873

II, pp. 381-2, Note 2, latter part:

The paragraph below had appeared . . . unauthorized dramatic version of *Poor Miss Finch*.

Should read:

The following paragraph had appeared in the *Hornet*, 7:225 (3 May 1873), p. 13a, in the ‘Buzzings at the Wings’ column devoted to theatrical gossip:

Mr. Charles Reade is often blamed for plain speaking, but Mr. Collins can put a point quite as bluntly. Take this, for example: ‘My Poor Miss Finch has been dramatised (without asking my permission) by some obscure idiot in the country. I have been asked to dramatise it, and I have refused, because my experience tells me that the book is eminently unfit for stage purposes. What I refuse to do with my own work, another man (unknown in literature) is perfectly free to do against my will, and (if he can get his rubbish played) to the prejudice of my novel and my reputation.’ ‘Obscure idiot’ is good!

This brief notice had appeared the following week, in the *Hornet*, 7:226 (10 May 1873), pp. 13c-14a:

BLYTH | At the Octagon Theatre there were performances of the new comedy-drama *Shipmates* and *Poor Miss Finch*, the play recently alluded to by Mr. Wilkie Collins, who mentioned the author in terms the reverse of courteous. The leading performers were Mr. Sydney Davis and Miss Emily Cross.

The original source of WC’s complaint was a letter to John Hollingshead of 25 February 1873 (Baker & Clarke, II, pp. 362-3), written in response to a request for support in the fight against the unauthorized dramatic adaptation of published works of fiction. Along with opinions from the likes of George Eliot, M.E. Braddon, and W.S. Gilbert, the paragraph in question was reprinted by Hollingshead in April 1873 in a pamphlet entitled *Copyright Reform, as Affecting the Right of Stage Representation of Novels* – see John Hollingshead *My Lifetime* (2 vols, London: Sampson Low, 1895), II, pp. 50-4. We are unfortunately unable to identify the ‘obscure idiot’ and his unauthorized dramatic version of *Poor Miss Finch*.

TO ADA CAVENDISH, 23 JUNE 1883

IV, Addenda, pp. 403-4: The following revised transcript of a letter not previously seen by the editors incorporates a number of minor corrections:

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

23rd June 1883

My dear Ada,

The business letter – relating to your tour – is enclosed. The terms – to you – are £3,,-, for each representation. Let us consider them confidential (because I have refused to accept them in the case of proposals not made by my own original Mercy Merrick).

As to the January revival (1884) in London, here are my “sentiments”:-

If the contemplated performances are supported by a capitalist who finds the money, I will at once send you a Draft of agreement, stating the conditions on which I will consent to ~~the~~ a new series of representations in London next year.

But – if the responsibility of the speculation is your’s; I don’t like making you answerable to me (or to my Executors?). To insist on a guaranteed “run” and on stipulated payments – with you – if the venture turned out to be less successful than we had hoped, would (as I am sure you must know, my dear) be simply impossible. And, in that disastrous case, what would my position be? After having refused over and over again to allow the piece to be prematurely revived – I should be left with a worthless dramatic commodity on my hands for years to come. This (after the pecuniary sacrifices I have made in keeping the play in my desk) is a prospect which I cannot afford to contemplate. In one word – I must be paid, and I wont say “must” to you. There it is – roughly ~~as~~ stated as if I was writing to a man. Will you forgive me?

I still hope to hear that the risk is not your risk.

There has been some electric disturbance in the atmosphere, which you are feeling, I suspect. Let me hear that you are better.

Always affectly yours, | WC

I have been away – or I should have written earlier. My illness is – feeling ninety years old, and badly preserved for my age.

~~Reviews~~

Lyn Pykett. *Wilkie Collins*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Series: *Authors in Context*. pp. xviii + 254. ISBN 0-19-284034-7.

Lyn Pykett's lucid new contribution to the study of Wilkie Collins is part of a series entitled *Authors in Context*, published by Oxford University Press and designed to provide students and other general readers with a manageable introduction to important authors. The series, which "examines the work of major writers in relation to their own time and to the present day," takes its place alongside several other introductory guides that publishers have favoured of late. Such introductions will surely be welcomed by literature students, particularly those faced with long Victorian novels and the additional difficulty of coming to terms with an increasingly diverse body of historical and critical material, and in general I think that books of this sort are a good thing. They are, however, extremely difficult to write: authors not only have to make complex and extensive material accessible for students; they have to negotiate reviewers, fellow academics, and other experts on the subject in question, all of whom want to hear something new and all of whom are quick to note what has been left out.

I will certainly be recommending this volume to my own students. Aside from anything else, it is full of helpful material: chapter one offers a brief biography, the next two chapters examine the social and literary context, chapter four through six are thematically focussed, and the final chapter "recontextualizes" Collins by considering the afterlife of his work, with special reference to adaptations and criticism. As my brief description of the chapter headings indicates, the book has plenty of appeal beyond its student audience—I, for one, found myself thoroughly engaged by the material covered. Pykett is at her best when she pursues thematic discussions, all of which are built around thoughtful close readings of Collins's work. The discussion takes in a wide range of writing by Collins; inevitably, the texts treated at greatest length are *The Woman in White*, *The Moonstone* and *Armada*, yet considerable space is given to other novels such as *Basil* and *The New Magdalen*. While all the thematic issues addressed by Pykett are handled with the confidence and deftness one would expect from an experienced commentator on Collins, the strongest and most dynamic textual readings are those relating to gender and marriage, reflecting Pykett's particular interest in this area. Chapters six and seven, covering, among things, science and adaptations, are also very stimulating, and I suspect that they will encourage readers to undertake further work in these important areas. Whether or not this extends to anyone taking on Pykett's challenge for a musical version of *The Moonstone*, is another matter. With a mischievous gesture to Andrew Lloyd Webber's recent adaptation of *The Woman in White*, Pykett writes: "As far as I

know, there are no plans to stage a musical version of *The Moonstone*. However, one could envisage some splendid song opportunities for the lovelorn Rosanna Spearman, the embittered Limping Lucy, and the garrulous Miss Clack. Moreover, Franklin's opium-induced re-enactment of the theft of the diamond has distinct balletic possibilities" (204).

Although the book should be considered a success, it is not without its faults. The decision to separate consideration of the social and literary context from the subsequent thematic readings of the texts seems odd. Some of the material overlaps and threatens to become repetitive, and a number of the claims made in the section on social context are too detached. No-one would argue that "[a]literation, invention and competition" are "Victorian keywords" (29), but the recognition of this needs to be rooted in a more extended discussion if it is to avoid sounding too general. The problem is less to do with the synopsis of nineteenth-century history that the book provides, which seems perfectly reasonable, and more to do with the implication of the structural division of chapters, that historical background somehow precedes textual discussion. In recent years cultural and literary historians have gone to great lengths to blur the division between text and context; rightly, I think, for, as Pykett makes clear in chapters four through six, the most effective way to deal with the interaction between history and text is to consider them in combination. The other major weakness of this book concerns its relative neglect of criticism published after 2000. Graham Law's *Serializing Fiction in the Victorian Press* (2000), which sheds new light on Collins's readership, is referred to in the footnote to a paragraph on newspaper syndication but does not make it into the bibliography, while there is no mention at all of Caroline Oulton's *Literature and Religion in Mid-Victorian England: From Dickens to Eliot* (2003), despite its extensive discussion of the theological implications of Collins's novels. Nor does Pykett acknowledge the existence of Lillian Nayder's *Unequal Partners: Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins and Victorian Authorship* (2002), Maria Bachman and Don Richard Cox's essay collection *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins* (2003), or indeed any material from the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal—New Series*.

The problems with structure and the absence of any reference to key recent works of criticism do not, ultimately, detract from the value of this book. As I began by saying, writing an introductory guide is an extremely difficult task, and, on the whole, Pykett rises to the challenge commendably. Anything that helps orientate and introduce a new generation of students to the work of Wilkie Collins, an important nineteenth-century writer who still does not always receive the recognition he deserves, is to be welcome, not least because, as Pykett begins her book by reminding us, he offers "a curious combination of respectability and social fragility, of orthodoxy and unconventionality" (1).

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***The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters.* William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, and Paul Lewis, eds. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005. 4 volumes. pp. lxx + 335 + viii + 430 + viii + 455 + viii + 456. ISBN 1851967648.**

Writing to Edward Pigott in July 1854, in a letter marked “Private,” Wilkie Collins offers his “deep sympathy” to his close friend and associate—not because Pigott has lost a family member but because the scandal surrounding Thornton Hunt’s adulterous relationship with Mrs. George Lewes, and sanctioned by her husband, threatens to damage the reputation of Pigott’s weekly, the *Leader*, with which all four men are connected. “If you take the steps, which I believe you will think as necessary as I do when you hear all particulars,” Collins advises, “you will...extricate yourself from a dangerous and degrading connection” (1:106). Coming from a man who would eventually live with another man’s wife—Mrs. Joseph Clow, also known as Caroline Graves—while fathering three children with a second partner, Martha Rudd, Collins’s harsh disapproval of Lewes and Hunt seems particularly ironic, and helps to gauge the distance he traveled in becoming a figure largely celebrated for his lack of convention. Perhaps more significantly, Collins’s letter calls into question the opposition it seeks to secure—the divide between private and public matters. In so doing, it testifies to what Karen Chase and Michael Levenson term “the spectacle of intimacy” among Victorians. In a letter marked “Private,” Collins helps to circulate various “reports” about Hunt and Lewes, discussing a scandal that publicized intimate details, and in which the domestic lives of the *Leader*’s editors threatened to damage Pigott professionally. Providing his friend with “testimony” against Lewes and Hunt, Collins imaginatively puts them on trial, and in the process renders suspect the alleged separation of the spheres.

Addressing the relation of public to private in their Introduction and illuminating their choice of title, the editors of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* explain that “the noticeable majority of Collins’s letters are concerned less with artistic and personal issues than with business and public affairs” (xxiii). Identifying each of Collins’s letters as belonging to one of four major categories (“Social, Artistic, Publishing and (other) Business”) and then regrouping the four categories into two—“the spheres of Private and Public”—they note that “the number of letters concerning Publishing affairs” nearly doubles those “devoted to either Social or Artistic matters” and belonging to what they consider the private realm (xxiii-xxiv). There can be no doubt that the correspondence made newly available to us in these volumes has great importance because it provides “an extraordinarily rich insight into key developments in print culture in the later decades of the Victorian period,” as the editors claim (xxx). Written over a span of nearly sixty years, Collins’s letters chart developments in the laws governing copyright and in the professionalization of authorship as well as revealing the rise of the literary

agent and the challenge posed to the circulating libraries and three-volume publication in the second half of the Victorian period.

But if most of Collins's letters concern the public world of publishing and derive significance from that fact, they also prove valuable in showing how Collins challenged the very divide between public and private. From nearly the outset of their Introduction, the editors note that their categorizations involve "judgement calls that would be complex to justify in open court" (xxviii)—conceding, for instance, that while they list Collins's correspondence with Charles Ward as "Social," it also addresses business matters. Yet Collins's letters do not simply *bridge* categories: at times, they evade or subvert them, merging private with public, social with artistic, and demonstrating that their author not only constructed a "face" for public view but assumed various persona in his intimate relations as well. Distinguishing their four volumes from the two edited by William Baker and William M. Clarke in 1999, which foreground Collins's correspondence with his mother and with his friend Charles Ward and thus provide "a life in letters," the editors present *their* work as one that exemplifies "the business of letters" (xxx). Yet Collins *personalized* his business relations, as the editors show—while also devoting himself to the business of private life.

The publication of this extensive and well-edited collection of letters is most welcome: a major event in Collins scholarship and in Victorian studies generally. It aptly follows the appearance of the twelfth and final volume of the Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's letters and enables us to read the letters of the two friends and literary collaborators side by side. Organized chronologically, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* transcribes approximately 2,500 letters from more than 80 archives and private collections worldwide, with over 2,100 published in full for the first time. It also cites and briefly describes, in their proper chronological positions, all of the letters included in the 1999 Baker and Clarke collection that are not transcribed in full in the four new volumes. Transcribing—or, rather, re-transcribing—dozens of letters that were included in an incomplete or summarized form in Baker and Clarke, it corrects errors that, at times, substantially obscured Collins's meaning and cast doubt on the overall reliability of that earlier collection. The "sharp unfragmented walks" to which Collins allegedly refers in writing to his mother from Normandy in August 1847 (Baker and Clarke, 1:47) become "dark unfrequented walks" in the new collection (1:17), as they should, and a "ghostly set of people" (Baker and Clarke, 1:46) becomes a "ghastly" (1:17). The new volumes also correct the dating of many letters in Baker and Clarke and revisit and correct a less familiar, annotated edition of Collins's letters—those from the University of Texas, transcribed in William Coleman's 1975 doctoral dissertation. The editorial principles of the new collection are well conceived, clearly explained and consistently applied. Each volume contains facsimiles of two autograph letters, and useful appendices in the last include correspondence written for Collins in his last days and about his affairs after his death as well as various publishing agreements. In a final "Addenda" section, the editors provide several letters made known to them after the volumes were in proof.

One of several tables in the Introduction lists every person who received at least two letters from Collins, citing the number of letters in each case, the time span in which they were written, and assigning them to one specific category ("social" or "artistic," for example). While these categorizations seem too rigid to be of much help to readers, the factual information conveyed here is very useful. We learn, for example, that Collins addressed nearly 300 letters to his literary agent A. P. Watt in the 1880s, over 160 to his mother between 1831 and 1868, and 125 to his solicitor William Tindell in the 1860s and 1870s, with these three topping the list of recipients in the four volumes. But numbers can be deceiving, as the editors explain, since letters to some recipients (Collins's mother, for instance) are generally much longer than those to others. Whatever their length, Collins's letters were received by a wide and sometimes surprising range of correspondents, including such figures as Charles Edward Mudie, Catherine Dickens, and Lillie Langtry, with men (or male-gendered corporations) outnumbering women by a ratio greater than five to one.

Neither Caroline Graves nor Martha Rudd are included among Collins's female correspondents, a "significant gap" in the record, the editors observe (xx). Nonetheless, these women make their way into the collection—through references and allusions in Collins's letters to others as well as in his telling silences and the evidence of physical destruction to pertinent portions of the correspondence. Their mediated presence in the four volumes helps us understand how Collins constructed and negotiated his intimate relationships while providing glimpses of their complexities. Martha Rudd first enters into the correspondence in Volume 2, as the single initial "M."—when Collins writes to his solicitor in 1871 about his will and the "ready money to be left to C. and M. on [his] death" (2:268). She resurfaces at wide intervals: Collins refers to her in a second letter to Tindell, in 1874; he alludes to her in 1882, when telling his Canadian publisher of his "'morganatic' family" (3:360); and he identifies her as "Mrs. Dawson" in an 1886 letter to his wine merchants (4:142). As the "C." to Martha's "M.," Caroline Graves appears in at least as many permutations, as the correspondence Collins dispatched from Whitby in August 1861 reveals. To his landlord at 12 Harley Street, he refers to Caroline as "Mrs. Collin's [sic]," showing the two passing for husband and wife (1:242); to Charles Ward, he writes of "Caroline," who is "getting great benefit from this fine air" (Baker and Clarke, 1:201); to his mother, he writes as if he were in Whitby alone, completely eliding Caroline's presence. "I am at last established here, in excellent rooms, and in one of the finest places in England," he tells her, a statement that suppresses at least as much as it reveals. "Despite appearances," the editors point out when annotating this first of the Whitby letters, "WC was travelling in company with Caroline Graves" (1:240, 241 n. 2). "Note ... that in the following letter to his mother [Collins] uses the first personal singular throughout," they remind us in glossing correspondence he mailed from Paris in October 1863, during a "trip made with Caroline Graves and her daughter" (1:306 n. 2).

In providing such directives, the editors offer an implicit commentary on Collins's letters to his mother, flagging significant and purposeful elisions. But generally speaking, their annotations are less interpretive than factual—although the process of determining the facts sometimes requires keen interpretive skill on their part. While the editors recognize that today's readers need "a good deal of . . . assistance" to understand Collins's letters, they "have tried hard to make [their] interventions unobtrusive" (lvii). They succeed in doing so, supplying annotations that are useful and to the point—considerably more substantial and well researched than those in Baker and Clarke though still rather less extensive than those in the monumental Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's letters. When possible, they identify and place Collins's correspondents; they explain a wide range of biographical, literary and political references, and provide publication information and details of dating and physical bibliography; and, on occasion, they refer readers to pertinent secondary sources and quote from them. Out of thousands of annotations in the four volumes, only a handful seem to require emendation—the glossing of "Thompson" as T. J. Thompson rather than George Thompson appears questionable in one instance (1:81 n. 4) as does a possible reference to "Alfred [Dickens]" as "unidentified" (1:138 n.2). In glossing Collins's 1858 recommendation of Charles Reade to Francis Underwood and the *Atlantic Monthly*, the editors might note the furor ultimately created by the publication of Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* in 1865–66, which brought the novelist into court and set Collins in opposition to Dickens; and a note might explain Collins's reference to "the last two pages . . . written expressly for this [1861 Sampson Low] edition" of *Hide and Seek* (1:245)—Collins's own "Note to Chapter VII," which outlines his debt to John Kitto's *Lost Senses*. Considering the impressive editorial achievement of these four volumes, however, such emendations and suggestions are merely quibbles.

The extensive new material in this collection should influence and inspire Collins scholarship for years to come. It illuminates Collins's artistic aims and methods and his work as a dramatist, identifies little-known source materials, reveals Collins's sense of himself as an increasingly significant figure in the literary landscape, and shows how that landscape altered during his lifetime. It illustrates the savvy Collins developed in negotiating agreements with publishers as well as the changing nature of those agreements, and demonstrates his willingness to share his knowledge and strategies with writers less experienced than himself.

Nearly fifty letters to Harriet Collins from the collection at Pembroke College, Cambridge, deepen our understanding of his relationship with his mother—the intimacy of their bond, its charm and humor—while also showing that restraint or reservation, and a sense of audience, inevitably limited his closest family ties. At the same time, letters to Collins's publishers and his literary agent, most previously unknown, disclose striking moments of intimacy in his more distant, professional relationships. Writing to his mother, Collins persistently declines to acknowledge the presence of his companion Caroline Graves; writing to his Canadian publisher George Maclean Rose, a

man he barely knows and appears to misunderstand, Collins explicitly refers to his illegitimate children and alludes to his “irregular” tie to Martha Rudd (3:360). His intermingling of reserve and intimacy, the personal and the professional, also characterizes his relationship with A. P. Watt, which takes shape in the third and fourth volumes of the collection. Difficult to categorize, mixing distance with disclosure, Collins’s dealings with Watt, like his relationship with his mother, confirm our sense of him as “the king of inventors,” as Catherine Peters aptly puts it. He emerges from these four volumes as a figure whose “public face”—or, more aptly, whose public *faces*—appear in intimate contexts, and for whom public and private are not simply “two faces of the same human coin” (xliii) but currencies that are easily exchanged and sometimes conflate the counterfeit with the real, devaluing that opposition. *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* reveals the many faces of a writer inspired by his sense of audience, reveling in his ability to construct multiple plotlines for his own life, and animated by a desire to perform.

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Mary Elizabeth Braddon. *The White Phantom*, ed. Jennifer Carnell. Hastings, East Sussex: The Sensation Press, 2005. pp. xx + 366. ISBN 1-902580-09-5.

In his essay on “The Unknown Public” in *Household Words* in August 1858, Wilkie Collins assumed a great gulf fixed between the middle-class literary audience (“the subscribers to this journal, the customers at publishing houses, the members of book-clubs and circulating libraries, and the purchasers and borrowers of newspapers and reviews ...”) and the huddled mass of working-class readers (“the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel-Journals”). Yet only a few years later critics were outraged that the sensation novel was encouraging a dangerous narrowing of the gap between bourgeois and proletarian tastes. According to W. Fraser Rae in the *North British Review* of September 1865, by publishing her “stories of blood and lust, of atrocious crimes and hardened criminals ... in three volumes in place of issuing them in penny numbers,” Mary Braddon was turning “the literature of the Kitchen” into “the favourite reading of the Drawing Room.” In a notice of Collins’s *Armada* in the *Westminster Review* in July 1866, J.R. Wise saw “Sensational Mania” as a “virus . . . spreading in all directions, from the penny journal to the shilling magazine, and from the shilling magazine to the thirty shillings volume.” Yet, despite the quantity of university seminars and academic articles dedicated to the sensation novel over the last few decades, we have come little further in understanding its true relations to the popular melodramatic fiction of the mid nineteenth century. The main reason is that few people are familiar with “penny bloods” because they are now so difficult

to get hold of. Though novels issued in penny numbers like Reynolds's *Mysteries of London*, or serialized in penny fiction papers like the *Family Herald*, reached hundreds of thousands of Victorian readers, these publications were both physically fragile and aesthetically unappealing to contemporary librarians or collectors, so that few original runs survive. So, while major publishers like Oxford, Penguin and Everyman are happy to issue competing scholarly editions of *The Woman in White* or *Lady Audley's Secret* in cheap paperback format for class use, writers like Reynolds remain vastly underrepresented even in the British Library catalogue and fail to show at all in the Gutenberg Project. For this reason alone, we should be grateful to the Sensation Press, a small independent publisher committed to reprinting popular Victorian literature, and with a special interest in Braddon.

From the start Collins had found little difficulty in placing his work in prestigious middle-class periodicals like *Bentley's Miscellany* or Dickens's *Household Words*, but Mary Braddon began her literary career writing bloods for the unknown public, and continued to appear anonymously in the cheapest weekly papers well after *Lady Audley's Secret* had brought her name to public attention. *The White Phantom* appeared originally from May 1862 in weekly parts in *The Halfpenny Journal; A Magazine for All Who Can Read*, and the Sensation Press edition represents its first appearance in volume form. In all, half a dozen other Braddon serials seem to have appeared in the same paper, which was published by her partner and agent John Maxwell, of which two have already been reprinted by the Sensation Press—*The Black Band* (1998) and *The Octoroon* (1999). In her introductions to these volumes, Jennifer Carnell paints a vivid picture of the conditions in which they were written. Following the lead of Collins in "The Unknown Public", she refers extensively to the "Answers to Correspondents" columns of the paper in order to convey the attitudes and aspirations typical of its subscribers. She argues that the plates that headed the weekly instalments—all reproduced here in their appropriate places—are more likely to be acquired from French sources than freshly commissioned, and thus that the unexpected twists and turns of the plot may be attributable to constraints other than the looming deadline. And she quotes tellingly from Braddon's correspondence with her literary mentor Edward Bulwer Lytton, where the following self-deprecatory postscript must refer to one of the closing episodes of *The White Phantom*:

I do an immense deal of work which nobody ever hears of, for Halfpenny & penny journals. This work is most piratical stuff & would make your hair stand on end, if you were to see it. The amount of crime, treachery, murder, slow poisoning, & general infamy required by the Halfpenny reader is something terrible. I am just going to do a little paracide [*sic*] for this week's supply.

In the narratives themselves, though, there is little sense of Braddon writing tongue-in-cheek. Indeed, since we know that both the composition and serialization of, say, *The White Phantom* and *Aurora Floyd*, were largely simultaneous, what is striking is the facility with which the author supplies the different demands of the penny journal and the shilling magazine markets, just

as later in her career she would become the darling of both the circulating libraries and the newspaper syndicates.

What then are the general characteristics of Braddon's halfpenny bloods, in contrast to her shilling sensations? First, the short weekly instalments lead to a rather more episodic, anecdotal, syncopated narrative. Second, there are more frequent appeals to conventional radical sentiments, whether sympathy for the down-trodden masses or anger at aristocratic vice. Lastly, the moral scheme tends much more uniformly towards monochrome, as typified in the closing lines of *The Black Band*:

We have followed the innocent and the guilty alike impartially through the intricate labyrinth of life. We have seen the innocent for a time oppressed—the guilty for a time triumphant; but we have also seen that the wondrous balance of good and evil will infallibly adjust itself in the end; and that a dire and unlooked for vengeance will alight upon the heads of those who defy the Power which rules this marvellous universe, or laugh to scorn the just and merciful laws of an All-Wise Providence.

That said, in *The White Phantom*, Braddon does blur the boundaries to a significant extent. Though there are a number of heavy stage villains, like the hired murderer Gambia, an Indian devotee of the Thug cult, the narrative is a good deal less steeped in blood than *The Black Band*, and there is a rather more tonal variation and moral ambiguity. The angelic foundling heroine Aurora (a far cry from Floyd, it must be stressed) is brought up as a showgirl by the tender-hearted huckster John Primmins, and this leads to a number of interludes of Dickensian humour which can counterbalance the Gothic excess:

“... Walk up, ladies and gentlemen, walk up! Come and see the new and original drammer hentitled the Mountain Spectre, or the Bleeding Finger! with real blood, which is drawn fresh for every performance from a gentleman who is kept on purpose to 'ave his throat cut hevery three quarters of a hour ...”

At the same time, the golden-haired, alabaster-skinned anti-heroine Lady Blanche Vavasour, with marked homicidal tendencies and a talent for disguise, reveals something of the complexity of Lady Audley when her guilty secrets are finally revealed. It is probably this interest in “the dangerous edge of things” that makes *The White Phantom* such an absorbing read.

Through her meticulously researched biography with its wealth of new material on Braddon's career as an actress, as well as the Sensation Press editions of Braddon's plays, Jennifer Carnell has also done a great deal to aid our understanding of the relations between sensation fiction and the popular Victorian theatre. Crisply printed and handsomely bound in black cloth with an attractive dust-jacket in “yellowback” style, this edition of *The White Phantom* is another valuable contribution to our understanding of the market for melodrama in the mid-Victorian decades.

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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* (ISSN: 0897-2982) is an annual volume, sponsored jointly by the Wilkie Collins Society and the Wilkie Collins Society of North America, and is dedicated to original scholarly essays and reviews of publications relating to Wilkie Collins, his writings, and his culture.

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Contents

~~Articles~~

- My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the Letters from Collins*
PAUL LEWIS 3
- A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins*
GRAHAM LAW 43

~~Notes~~

- From "A Journey in Search of Nothing" to "The Lazy Tour":
Collins, Dickens, and the "Tyro Do Nothing"*
CHRIS LOUTTIT 53
- The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)*
WILLIAM BAKER, ANDREW GASSON, GRAHAM LAW, & PAUL LEWIS 59

~~Reviews~~

- Tamara S. Wagner, *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the
British Novel*
MARK KNIGHT 71
- Rob Warden, *Wilkie Collins's The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case,
and Wrongful Convictions*
LILLIAN NAYDER 72
- Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, ed. Maria K. Bachman &
Don Richard Cox
ANDREW MAUNDER 76

Editors' Note

We are very pleased to bring you this year's issue of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, largely devoted to Collins's relationships with two other writers of his day, and to questions of influence and collaboration. Continuing his work on the letters exchanged between Collins and Dickens, Paul Lewis reconstructs Collins's side of the correspondence, deducing the existence of around 170 letters presumed lost, and illuminating a relationship that Chris Louttit also considers in his Note on "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices" and the problem of its biographical significance. Pointing to the conflicting attributions of "The Seige of the Black Cottage," a work claimed in turn for both Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell, Graham Law considers the implications of such confusions over authorship in "A Tale of Two Authors", foregrounding Dickens's role in the Victorian publishing industry in the process. In addition to reviews of current work in the field, this issue provides important addenda and corrigenda to the Collected Letters, the second such update since the publication of *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* in 2005. We hope you enjoy the Volume.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the letters from Collins

Paul Lewis
Independent Scholar, London

In the introduction to his edition of *Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins*, Lawrence Hutton explains “[w]hy it is not possible to print herewith Collins’s replies” (HUTTON p. 3), by citing the letter from Dickens to W. C. Macready of 1 March 1865 in which Dickens states that he burned all his letters in “a great fire in my field at Gad’s Hill ... and now I destroy every letter I receive not on absolute business.”¹ The result is that, despite the physical survival of more than 160 letters from Dickens to Collins, only three letters from Collins to Dickens are extant,² though textual fragments from four others have now been recovered from quotations in letters from Dickens. This essay analyses the texts of the known letters from Dickens to Collins, together with content of other letters from Dickens and Collins to other people. It uses that information to deduce the existence of more than 170 letters from Collins to Dickens which are presumed irrevocably lost either in the fire at Gad’s Hill on 3 September 1860 or through Dickens’s subsequent policy of burning almost all his letters. Further analysis is carried out to reconstruct as much as possible of the content of those lost letters, and to show something of the quality of the written dialogue between these two close friends over a period of nineteen years.

I Dickens to Collins

This analysis must start with the letters written by Dickens to Collins, as they represent the best and fullest evidence concerning the letters written in the other direction. My earlier article on these letters listed the 165 already known and identified four more (Lewis, “My Dear Wilkie”). Further work has brought to light evidence of another ten, taking the total of known letters from Dickens to Collins to 179. To the 169 listed in “My Dear Wilkie” we can now add:

1. **[1] July 1856** Invites Collins to visit them at Boulogne. This letter is inferred from the extant letter 13 July 1856 which is a reply to a letter from Collins which is itself a reply to an earlier invitation.
2. **16 October 1857** Concerning meeting. The evidence is found in the next.

¹ See PILGRIM XI p.21. HUTTON incorrectly allocates the letter to Macready to 1855. An appraisal of the evidence for the fire and its literary context can be found in Lewis, “Burning: the Evidence”.

² For the texts, see BGLL I p. 50 and B&C I pp.185, 249.

3. **17 October 1857** A new extant letter written under the printed letterhead of the *Household Words* office,³ which reads

Saturday Seventeenth Oct 1857

My Dear Wilkie

A note of mine yesterday crossed a note from you. Of course it did.

Your luck – my luck. (I'll begin to grumble).

I will come up to you this afternoon at 4

Ever faithfully | Charles Dickens

4. **[12] June 1858** Enclosing a letter from the archaeologist Austen Henry Layard. This letter is mentioned in Collins to Layard of 14 June 1864: "Dickens has forwarded your letter to me ..." (BGLL I pp.162-163).
5. **[24] October 1862.** This letter is inferred from Dickens's letter to Collins of 14 October in which he closes a letter giving his views on the final parts of *No Name* with these words: "I break off hastily, to get this into the box before it is cleared at the gate here. From Paris, I will write again. My address there until further notice, Hotel Meurice." (PILGRIM X p. 141).
6. **[1] April 1864** Agreeing to meet with George Russell at Collins's rooms on Friday 8th April. Collins writes to Russell on 4 April: "Dickens's answer has just reached me. We meet at my rooms, at three o'clock, on Friday next." (BGLL I p. 315).
7. **9 September 1864** Confirming that Collins can come to Gad's Hill for a few days. This letter is inferred from Collins's extant letter to Dickens of Thursday 8 September, in which he writes: "Have you got a bedroom empty (in which I can do a little work) on Saturday next. And, if so, may I come on that same Saturday – by the 4.5 Express to Gravesend – for two or three days?" (B&C I p. 249). Also from his letter to his mother of the next day, in which he confirms: "I am going tomorrow to Gadshill for a few days, taking my work with me." (B&C I p. 250). Dickens was at Gad's Hill that week, so we can presume that he received the letter the next day and replied at once, giving Collins time to catch the afternoon train on Saturday.
8. **9 October 1864** Inviting Collins to Dover as Dickens cannot make a trip to Paris at the moment. The exchange is evidenced by Dickens to Georgina Hogarth of 12 October 1864 (PILGRIM X p. 438).
9. **[1 June] 1866** Giving his views on *Armada*. Part of this letter is quoted in one from Collins to his mother dated 4 June 1866 (B&C II p. 275). Collins writes "Dickens and Forster have both written to me about the last chapter. Here is Dickens:–". The quotation supplies these three sentences from Dickens to Collins:

I think the close extremely powerful. I doubt the possibility of inducing the reader to recognize any touch of tenderness or compunction in Miss Gwilt after that career, and I even doubt the lawfulness of the thing itself after that so recent renunciation of her husband – but of the force of the working out, the

³ This letter, which which is not found in Pilgrim, is held in private hands. I am grateful to the owner for allowing access.

care and pains, and the art, I have no doubt whatever. The end of Bashwood I think particularly fine and worthy of his whole career.⁴

10. [7] **July 1868** Concerning Charles Collins's poor health. On 8 July 1866 Collins writes to his brother's doctor Henri de Mussy: "I have received a very alarming account of my brother today in a letter from Dickens". (BGLL II p. 117).

Adding these ten letters gives 179 letters from Dickens to Collins for which there is firm evidence, and we have more or less complete texts of 163 of them. Others manuscripts will no doubt come to light.

II Collins to Dickens

A. Extant and recovered letters

Three letters from Collins to Dickens exist in manuscript form: 2 November 1851 (BGLL I p. 50), 7 August 1860 (B&C I p. 185), and 8 September 1864 (B&C I p. 249). In addition, partial texts of four more can be recovered from letters from Dickens recorded in Pilgrim:

1. [5] **October 1859** These words are recovered from Dickens to Collins of 6 October 1859 (PILGRIM IX pp.127-8), in which he replies to Collins's questions about *A Tale of Two Cities*:

could it have been done at all, in the way I suggest, to advantage?

Dickens puts these fourteen words in quotation marks and adds "... is your question.", clearly indicating he is quoting directly from Collins's letter.

2. [8] **January 1862** The following paragraph is recovered from Dickens to W. C. Macready of 9 January 1862 (PILGRIM X pp. 10-11), in which he writes, "This morning I have a letter from Wilkie, from which I extract a passage...", putting the 129 words in quotation marks:

Fechter by the bye. I have seen him in an utter and unspeakable failure. Badly dressed even. Wrong throughout, in conception and execution. If he gave me any idea at all, he gave me the idea of a Sepoy. The play is beautifully got up; but Mr. Ryder trying to be intelligent, and relapsing into boisterous stupidity at every available opportunity – Miss Leclercq pawing Fechter – Mr. Somebody or other acting Roderigo so that the fourth Act ended amidst the hearty laughter of the pit – Mr. Somebody else imitating Anderson (!), in Cassio – everybody concerned doing everything with the promise of extraordinary intelligence, and the performance of downright stupidity – so disgusted me, that I have registered a vow to see no more of that much-injured man, Shakespeare, on the stage.

3. [6] **December 1867** These four words are recovered from Dickens to Collins of 24 December 1867 (PILGRIM XI p. 520):

at your sole discretion

There Dickens asks concerning the staging of *No Thoroughfare*: "But my dear boy, what do you mean by the whole thing being left 'at my sole discretion'?" Is not the play coming out, the day after tomorrow???"

⁴ Although published in B&C, this fragment seems to have escaped the Pilgrim editors.

4. **11 January 1868** These words are quoted by Dickens in a letter to Fechter of 24 February 1868 (PILGRIM XII p. 56):

Here Fechter is magnificent. ... Here his superb playing brings the house down. ... I should call even his exit in the last act one of the subtlest and finest things he does in the piece. ... You can hardly imagine what he gets out of the part, or what he makes of his passionate love for Marguerite.

Dickens introduces the quotations: "Wilkie has uniformly written of you enthusiastically. ... he described your conception and execution of the part in the most glowing terms." After quoting the 53 words above he writes: "These expressions and many others like them crowded his letter."

Though these fragments add four more letters from Collins to Dickens to the known correspondence, they represent only the start. The following section looks beyond direct quotes to reconstruct far more of Collins's correspondence.

B. Quantity of inferred letters

Letters between friends form a dialogue, so it is reasonable to assume that, if Collins received at least 179 letters from Dickens, a similar number were written to Dickens. This assumption is borne out by the following analysis. Using the texts of the letters in one direction as evidence, it infers the existence of a similar number in the other direction. It is noteworthy that their correspondence was so frequent that their letters crossed on two documented occasions.⁵

1. Letters by Collins inferred from Dickens's replies

Many letters from Dickens to Collins clearly constitute replies. The following are examples where the fact is referred to explicitly in Dickens's text:

* "A thousand thanks for your kind letter..." (25 May 1858, PILGRIM VIII p. 567)

* "I have been down to Brighton to see Forster, and found your letter here on arriving by Express this morning..." (24 October 1860, PILGRIM IX p. 329)

* "I have been going to write to you ever since I received your letter from Whitby..." (28 August 1861, PILGRIM IX p. 447)

* "On coming here just now (half past one) I found your letter awaiting me, and it gave me infinite pleasure..." (31 October 1861, PILGRIM IX p. 489)

* "I came home last night, and found your letter." (12 October 1862, PILGRIM X p. 139)

* "I am horribly behind hand in answering your welcome letter" (25 January 1864, PILGRIM X p. 346)

⁵ See 10 September 1867, PILGRIM XI p. 423, and 17 October 1857, the new letter cited above and held in private hands.

* “Coming back here yesterday, I found your letter awaiting me.” (12 February 1867, PILGRIM XI p. 312)

These replies represent clear physical evidence of letters from Collins to Dickens. And because Dickens normally dated his own correspondence, the dates of Collins’s letters can also be deduced. When both parties were in London – which had six deliveries a day at this time – the letter and its reply could well have been on the same day and are unlikely to be separated by more than 24 hours. Later on when Dickens was in Gad’s Hill, or either was elsewhere in England, they could be a day apart. And when they were in different countries a longer interval separated letter and reply. On just one occasion Dickens gives us a definite date for a letter from Collins. Writing from the USA on 31 January 1868, Dickens writes: “My Dear Wilkie, Your letter dated on the eleventh reached me this morning.” (PILGRIM XII p. 30). Thus we can be certain that Collins wrote a letter dated 11 January 1868 to Dickens, which took a surprisingly long 20 days to reach Dickens in Philadelphia.

Not all inferred replies can be secured by such palpable evidence. Others clearly represent replies though they do not specifically mentioning a letter received, for example:

* “Many thanks for the book...” (1 January 1863, PILGRIM X p. 186)

* “I came back yesterday and was truly concerned to read your poor account of yourself ...” (29 January 1863, PILGRIM X p. 200)

* “... I am heartily glad you have got away at last ...” (22 April 1863, PILGRIM X p. 236)

Taken together, these explicit and implicit indications of the document’s status as a reply are found in 87 separate letters from Dickens to Collins, which thus represent textual evidence for 87 letters from Collins to Dickens which no longer exist.

2. Letters by Collins inferred from Dickens’s letters wanting a reply

Yet Dickens’s letters to Collins also contain evidence of traffic the other way. Letters which are not a reply to Collins in many cases explicitly request a reply from him:

* “Will you enlighten me at once...” (14 December 1853, PILGRIM VII p. 226)

* “I shall be glad to hear what you say” (12 July 1854, PILGRIM VII p. 366)

* “Do send me that piece of information” (4 April 1855, PILGRIM VII p. 585)

* “Let me know what Wigan says” (17 July 1855, PILGRIM VII p. 675)

* “Pray let me know by return” (24 February 1856, PILGRIM VIII p. 62)

* “Just a word in answer here” (1 November 1857, PILGRIM VIII p. 475)

* “Let me hear from you ... at Radley’s Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool.” (24 January 1862, PILGRIM X p. 20)

* “Write soon and tell me how you are, and that you are better.” (22 April 1863, PILGRIM X p. 236)

* “If Thursday, write by return, if Friday, – don’t write.” (10 September 1867, PILGRIM XI p. 423)

Even where there was not such a specific demand for a response, many letters represent the kind of invitation to which it was Collins’s practice to respond. *The Public Face of Wilkie* contains numerous examples of such responses to other friends. A few represent refusals:

* “Dear Mrs Ward, I should have liked of all things to have made one of the party which you kindly invite me to join, but ...” (To Henrietta Ward, 14 February 1861, BGLL I p. 223)

* “Mr Wilkie Collins regrets that an engagement for the evening of Friday the 5th will deprive him of the pleasure of accepting ...” (To Mrs Puzey, 22 March 1861, BGLL I p. 226)

Rather more are acceptances:

* “Mr Wilkie Collins accepts with great pleasure the honour of Mrs Sartoris’s invitation for the evening of Thursday the 12th July.” (To Adelaide Sartoris, 5 July 1866, BGLL I p. 42)

* “My best thanks for your kind note. On Sunday the 30th – at 7 sharp – I shall be delighted to make one among your guests.” (To Isabelle Frith, 22 April 1871, BGLL II p. 254)

* “I most gladly accept your kind invitation for the 2nd May at 7.30” (To Fanny Mitchell, April 1865-67, BGLL II p. 70)

So an invitation implies a reply. All these examples from Collins’s correspondence are to and from women: it was an established Victorian tradition for the woman of the house to make invitations and receive the replies. But there is no suggestion in Dickens’s letters to Collins that the two friends followed this convention. Dickens invites Collins and replies to Collins’s invitation. So it is assumed that not only that, where Dickens responds, Collins has issued an invitation, but also that where Dickens issues an invitation, Collins responds.

There is also evidence that Dickens expected such a reply. He wrote at length to Collins on 16 August 1859 with news of family life and business. Towards the end he writes, “Send me another when you have any time ...” (PILGRIM IX p. 106). But just nine days later he is writing to Collins, good-naturedly: “What do you mean by not answering my beautiful letter from the office?” (25 August 1859, PILGRIM IX p. 110). On the other side, it is clear that Collins normally did reply to letters, even from strangers. In 1888 he wrote to a correspondent:

The only letters from my readers which I deliberately leave without a reply are requests for autographs which are not accompanied by a stamped and directed envelope – and other requests which invite me to read manuscripts and find publishers for them. In every other case, I answer my letters – and I may say for myself that I am incapable of knowingly neglecting to thank a lady when she is so kind as to write to me.” (To Mrs Flint, BGLL IV p. 334)

Altogether we can infer 87 letters which represent replies from Wilkie to a letter from Dickens.

3. Sequences

Because Victorian letters between friends represent a conversation, much as email does today, we can expect to build up sequences of letters from those that remain. There are several pairs of letters from Dickens, one of which wants a reply and the next is a response to the reply that Collins must have sent. For example, on 24 June 1853 Dickens writes from Boulogne inviting Collins to visit. On 30 June he writes again, “sorry to hear” that Collins is ill and hoping he will recover in time to visit. Another exchange relates to a visit by Collins to Brighton. Dickens writes on Tuesday 9 November 1858 giving him the option of coming to Brighton for dinner on Saturday, or waiting to visit Gad’s Hill on Sunday (PILGRIM VIII p. 700). Collins clearly chooses the former, as Dickens leaves him a note at the hotel on Saturday giving him instructions (13 November 1858, PILGRIM VIII p. 703). From this we can infer Collins’s reply of 11 November in which he must have said he could not make Sunday at Gad’s so prefers Brighton on Saturday.

On occasion sequences of several letters – extant and inferred – can be built up. For examples in the extensive Table found at the end of this article, see 20-23 December 1852, 3-8 February 1855, 23 March to 15 April 1855, 11-19 October 1855, 25 January to 14 February 1856, 9-30 April 1856, 26-30 July 1860, 18 September to 16 October 1862, and 14-16 February 1869. On the other hand, there are sequences where letters – or at least conversations – are clearly missing but there is not enough evidence to infer specific items of correspondence. For example, there are several letters about the progress of *The Frozen Deep* from September 1856 to early January 1857 which, although they represent a sequence, it is clearly a sequence with a number of gaps. The same is true of the letters exchanged while Collins and Dickens were working on *No Thoroughfare* in the autumn of 1867.

On the other hand, there are some letters which Dickens wrote to Collins from which we can infer neither that it is nor wants a reply. For example, on 9 June 1855 Dickens writes to all the cast of *The Frozen Deep* informing them of a change in the rehearsal schedule (PILGRIM VII p. 644). No reply is called for or needed. And on 9 September 1867 he writes to Collins details of the plot of *No Thoroughfare*, saying “This note requires no answer” (PILGRIM XI p. 422). Altogether there are only sixteen letters from Dickens to Collins that fall into in this category: 6 June 1854, 9 June 1855, 13 August 1856, 13 December 1856, 19 June 1857, 26 June 1857, 17 August 1857, 16 October 1857, 29 April 1858, 13 November 1858, 3 February 1859, 25 March 1862, 10 May 1862, 2 July 1867, 9 September 1867, and 27 January 1870.

4. External sources

Finally there are letters that can be inferred from letters to or from others. Ten letters from Collins to Dickens have been reconstructed in this way, and in three cases fragments of text can be recovered.

* On 30 May 1854 Dickens writes to Mark Lemon a friend and editor of *Punch* that “Collins wants to make a day in the country with us, next week.” (PILGRIM VII p. 341)

* On 4 April 1864 Collins writes to George Russell “CD’s answer has just reached me. We meet at my rooms here, at three o’clock, on Friday next.” (BGLL I p. 315). This document enables us to infer two letters – the letter from Dickens mentioned by Collins which is itself a reply to an earlier letter of Collins.

* Six months later Dickens wrote to his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth with this information: “Old Mrs Collins is fretting about Charley, and Wilkie is with her. He wrote from Tunbridge Wells to ask me if I could go to Paris with him? I replied No, but told him we were going to Dover, if that would do. He proposes to join us on Saturday.” (12 October 1864, PILGRIM X p. 438). This account enables us to reconstruct a sequence of three otherwise unknown letters. One from Collins to Dickens around 7 October about his mother and inviting Dickens to Paris. A reply from Dickens about 9 October saying “no” to Paris but inviting him to Dover. And a reply to that from Collins by 10 October accepting.

* On 8 July 1868 Collins wrote to his brother’s doctor, Henri de Mussy, saying “I have received a very alarming account of my brother today in a letter from Charles Dickens ... I called in the hope ... of hearing whether you would be able to see him at Gadshill ... If you are ... it would be as well perhaps if Mr Beard and I could arrange to accompany you.” (BGLL II p. 117). This letter enables us to infer not only the letter from Dickens but also a reply from Collins warning Dickens that de Mussy, Beard and he may be calling at Gad’s Hill shortly.

Altogether the evidence from Dickens’s replies, his letters wanting a reply, and evidence from outside sources enables, us to infer a total of 172 letters from Wilkie Collins to Charles Dickens, in addition to the three letters which have survived in manuscript. These are all listed in the Table, together with the evidence underlying their inclusion.

C. Content of inferred letters

Identifying the existence of these 172 letters may be relatively straightforward, but what can usefully be reconstructed of their contents? The Pilgrim edition interpolates letters for which there is no copy text but which are referred to in other letters, though it confines itself to only a brief indication of the content. For example:

To Henry Morley, [?Late May 1855] Mention in Morley to Thornton, 20 Dec 59 ... *Hoping that Morley would give a favourable notice of Leigh Hunt’s Stories in Verse and expressing his own truest regard for their author.* (PILGRIM VII p. 636).

Indeed one of Dickens’s letters to Collins, that of [10] May 1862, is inferred in this way from a reference in the letter to the lawyer Frederick Pollock of the same date (PILGRIM X p. 81).⁶

⁶ Though the letter is found in its correct chronological position in Pilgrim, a typographical slip assigns the letter to 1861.

Yet work on the missing Collins letters indicates that the content can be reconstructed much more fully by employing five different sources of information:

- Dickens's replies – these often refer to points raised in Collins's original letters
- Dickens's letters which request a reply – either explicitly or implicitly
- Information from letters by Dickens to other people
- Information from letters by Collins to other people – Collins's letters to other people written around the same time often contain parallel thoughts or descriptions and there is ample evidence that Collins commonly repeated similar remarks in letters to family members and friends⁷
- Details of Collins's activities gleaned from documents other than correspondence

1. Dickens's replies

Of the 87 replies from Dickens, many go through the topics raised in Collins's original letters in some detail. For example, on 30 September 1855 Dickens wrote back to Collins who had written immediately on his return from a sailing trip to the Isles of Scilly. Dickens writes:

Welcome from the bosom of the Deep! If a hornpipe will be acceptable to you at any time (as a reminder of what the three brothers were always doing) I shall be ... "happy to oblige" (PILGRIM VII p. 711).

We know details of the journey to the Scillies from "The Cruise of the Tom-Tit", Collins's account of it written for *Household Words*. There Collins writes: "Our crew is composed of three brothers: Sam Dobbs, Dick Dobbs, and Bob Dobbs; all active seamen, and as worthy and hearty fellows as any man in the world could wish to sail with", and that he and his companion found themselves "boxing the compass, dancing the hornpipe, and splicing the main-brace freely in our ocean-home." (Collins, "The Cruise of the Tom-Tit", p. 490). So clearly Collins included in his letter to Dickens an account of the three brothers Dobbs and their hornpipe dancing. From other parts of Collins's description of the trip we know that the ship was small, so it must have been a fairly confined hornpipe. It is also likely that he recounted more details of his trip and perhaps suggested writing it up for *Household Words*.

In his reply Dickens also writes: "Of course the H.W. stories are at your disposition." Before his sailing trip Collins had spent time with Dickens at Folkestone and was working on a manuscript by mother giving an account of her early life. Still considering how to make use of it, he wrote to his mother on 2 September to say that Dickens

felt as I did that without more story it would not do with the public. Strangers could not know that the thing was real – and novel-readers

⁷ See, for example, the letter written from Rome to Anne Procter of 16 December 1863 (BGLL I pp.310-13) and those to his mother, Charles Ward, and brother of late 1863 and early January 1864 (B&C I pp238-46).

seeing my name on the title-page would expect a story. So I am going to try back, and throw a little dramatic interest into what I have done – keeping the thing still simple of course and using all the best of your materials. As soon as I have made the alterations and have started again, I will let you know how I proceed.⁸

By this point it seems that Collins was already thinking of using the autobiographical account not as a self-contained story, but rather of adapting it to form the basis of a frame narrative linking together some of his short tales from *Household Words* in a collection that was to become *After Dark*. He clearly asks Dickens about the copyright position regarding reprinting the tales from *Household Words* – to which Dickens replies – but from Dickens's reply it seems that Collins has not yet revealed his plans in full. Collins's lengthy stay at Folkestone, and Dickens's account of life there, make some greeting to the family there an essential ingredient of Collins's letter. Dickens wishes Pigott well, realising from the return address where Collins was. Thus we can tentatively summarise Collins letter as follows:

Just back from sailing with Pigott to the Scilly Isles. They took their time going and stayed just two days but they returned in just over 48 hours - a distance of 200 miles - and he feels so fit he writes at once of his trip. He mentions in particular the three brothers Dobbs who were the ship's crew, and how they contrived to dance the hornpipe despite the narrow confines of the boat. He wishes well to all at Folkestone. By the bye he has a notion to collect some of his pieces from *Household Words* in a book. Would CD release the copyright to him? He will tell him more of his plans when he has worked them out.

More detail of the trip could of course be added, since the length of Collins's letter remains unclear.

Let us take a second example. Writing from the Champs Elysées on 19 January 1856, Dickens replies to a letter from Collins, remarking that "[I]t is excessively pleasant to me to get your letter, as it opens a perspective of theatrical and other lounging evenings, and also of articles in *Household Words*." (PILGRIM VIII p. 28). This is a very long reply of thirteen paragraphs, many of which are taken up with news and gossip from Paris, though five clearly represent specific responses to Collins's letter, which we can thus assume was also fairly lengthy. The five points can be inventoried as follows:

- Dickens had no idea Collins was so far on with his book
- Dickens will find a lodging for Collins in Paris
- The portrait of Collins is extraordinary
- Collins's tale of the Bean Stalk and the Wigs was remarkable
- Dickens and Collins may be able to knock out a *series* of Parisian descriptions for *Household Words*

From the details we can reconstruct the following elements of Collins's original letter of 16 January 1856, which form the basis of the Table Summary:

⁸ Revised version of the transcription in B&C I p.144, from the MS at Pierpont Morgan Library, MA 3150(45).

- He reports he is making excellent progress on his book *After Dark*. (It is probable he adds more detail about writing a whole extra new story as well as all the linking material and editing the five pieces from *Household Words* to make them work.)
- So he is pleased to say he can join Dickens in Paris – would February (when he in fact went) suit? And can he find somewhere not too dear but comfortable and of course *près des* Dickenses?
- He encloses a portrait. (This is probably a photograph, though no photographs of Collins are known until 1858. It may be a small drawing by one of Collins's artist friends, but the novelty of a photograph is more likely.)
- He has seen the pantomime "Jack and the Beanstalk" and recounts a story about the Wigs.
- He fancies there may be potential stories for *Household Words* with Parisian settings such as the Catacombs. What has Dickens found?

There was almost certainly more about Collins's trips to the theatre and probably something concerning 'lounging' in town. There was possibly news of Collins's mother and brother, to whom "All unite in kindest remembrances" in Dickens's reply. And there were certainly good wishes and fond memories of his earlier time in Paris.

Often when Collins was travelling overseas, he wrote a series of long letters to family and friends, and it is likely that Dickens was one of the recipients. But only where there is an explicit indication are such letters postulated. For example, on 22 April 1863 Dickens replied to a letter Collins had written from Aix-la-Chapelle on his search for a cure for his gout. Dickens's reply gives little away as to what Collins said, but the likely content can be reconstructed from the long and detailed letters to his mother, his brother and his intimate friend Nina Lehmann (B&C I pp. 219-23). This forms the basis of the summary of the inferred letter to Dickens of 18 April 1863 found in the Table.

2. Collins's replies

Of the 87 Collins letters inferred from letters sent by Dickens which want a reply, the content can be reconstructed to a greater or lesser extent from the content of Dickens's letter. Many are invitations. As shown earlier, Collins was an assiduous repplier to letters, even to those from strangers, and we can automatically infer a response to an invitation. Other evidence can help us reconstruct whether it was an acceptance or a refusal. Given the closeness of the friendship, it is assumed that Collins would accept if he could. Illness, absence, or another unbreakable appointment would be his only reasons for a refusal. In many cases rather more detailed content than a straight "yes" or "no" can be inferred. For example, in his reply to Collins of 30 September 1855 Dickens writes:

My fair Laura has not yet reported concerning Paris, but I should think will have done so before I see you. And now to that point. I purpose being

in town on *Monday the 8th* when I have promised to dine with Forster. At the office between 1/2 past 11 and 1 that day. I will expect you unless I hear from you to the contrary. (PILGRIM VII pp. 711-12)

Given this injunction, whether Collins replied or not probably depends on whether he went to the meeting or not. It seems likely that he was still well when the letter was received. But Dickens invites him for “Monday the 8th” and we know that by then Collins was ill, since he wrote a letter on that day declining on grounds of illness an invitation to a Thackeray dinner (To Peter Cunningham, 8 October 1855, BGLL I p. 130). So it seems highly likely that he wrote to Dickens at some point in the week before to say he could not make the meeting on 8 October. It is also probably that in that letter he would thank Dickens for the permission to use the *Household Words* pieces, and might clarify the use he was going to make of his mother’s story. Asking for more news concerning Paris would also be natural. The result is the summary found in the Table of the inferred letter speculatively dated 6 October 1855.

There are other cases there can be no doubt that Collins must have written to refuse. For example, on 12 February 1867, Dickens wrote: “This day fortnight [26 February] I shall be at St James’s Hall ... perhaps we can have a word” (PILGRIM XI pp. 312-13). But Collins’s reply must have been to refuse. On 26 February we know he was in Paris because he wrote from there to his mother (To Harriet Collins, 26 February 1867, B&C II pp. 283-84). He was there working with Régnier on the French dramatic version of *Armadale*. This took some time and he didn’t return until around 10 March (To Harriet Collins, 11 March 1867, B&C II pp. 284-5). And we know the trip was planned when he replied to Dickens, because on 13 February Collins wrote to Beard: “Friday [15 February] I leave London to go and see my mother ... I return next week and go to Paris on Saturday [23 February]” (BGLL II p. 65). So it is inevitable that when he replied to Dickens he declined the invitation.

Letters accepting invitations from Dickens are not always as easy to infer automatically. Yet Collins’s habit was to do so with other friends, and it is generally assumed that an invitation would receive a reply unless the context makes clear that one is not required or that the proposed meeting is too close to permit a written response. The summaries offered in the Table of such inferred replies thus typically touch on Collins’s response to the invitation, his response to other issues raised in the letter, and provide contextual information from Collins’s letters to others around the same time.

On 12 December 1855, for example, Dickens wrote at length to Collins from Paris, where Collins had been staying until recently. Dickens letter seems to be in six paragraphs (PILGRIM VII p. 762), which can be summarised as follows:

- Dickens supposes Collins has heard the story of Hopeful from Pigott
- Dickens leaves Paris on Saturday – “if you are free on Wednesday [19 Dec] ... I shall be happy to start on any Haroun al Raschid expedition.”
- Dickens later goes to Sheffield “[I]n the bitter Winter” and then back to Paris
- Collins’s Christmas story is immensely improved – look at the Boots story

- What the Pilgrim editors assume to be a short, subsequently excised paragraph referring to the venereal disease Collins caught on an earlier trip to Paris with Dickens
- Dickens's gossip from Paris, including comments on the odd way locals write begging letters

From this we can infer a reply letter from Collins along the following lines:

- Yes, Pigott has told him the whole tale. (Collins's intimacy with Pigott makes this likely.)
- Collins is free on 19th and looks forward to their Arabian Night!
- 'Boots', Dickens's extra chapter for the Christmas number, is highly original. The Ostler in Collins's tale is improved by Dickens's suggestions.
- Collins is feeling better and if work will permit – *After Dark* is still proving tricky – he hopes to be in Paris in the New Year. He probably also refers jokingly to the attack of venereal disease.
- At least Parisians are more imaginative than Londoners in their begging.

In the Table the corresponding summary is allocated to 15 December 1855.

A further example of the type of content that can be postulated in response to a relatively simple invitation is the reply inferred to the letter from Dickens of 1 January 1863 (PILGRIM X p. 186). This itself constitutes a reply to Collins who must have sent him the finished version of *No Name* on the last day of the previous year. Dickens's letter can be summarised under these heads:

- Dickens thanks him for the book which has created a sensation
- Dickens will certainly be at the office next Thursday [8 January]
- Dickens will be in Paris on the 15th
- Will Collins dine at the office next Thursday [8 January]?
- Dickens advises him to get set up regarding the game leg – what about baths?
- Dickens is open to a foreign proposal himself at the end of February
- Dickens sends good wishes for the New Year

Using letters written a fortnight later to Charles Ward (15 January 1863, BGLL I pp. 289-90) and to his mother (16 January 1863, B&C I pp. 214-15), we can postulate the following content for his reply to Dickens:

- Collins reciprocates the New Year wishes
- Collins has hobbled out each day for a half hour but hopes that he can really sort out these problems this year – we know that two weeks later he was "confined to my chair", only able to get up a single flight of stairs.
- Collins has been thinking of visiting Paris himself and Ward has found a suitable billet, but at the moment if he can travel he must go to see his mother who is unwell in Oxford
- Collins has heard good things of the baths at Aix-la-Chapelle and Wildbad and may try them for his ailment. (He travelled to those springs three months later.)
- Health permitting he will try to hobble to a cab and get to the office next Thursday. (Though in fact he probably didn't make it due to his illness.)

In the Table the corresponding summary is also allocated to 1 January 1855.

In a few cases the letters in both directions are inferred. For example, on 26 September 1860 Dickens wrote to his sub-editor W. H. Wills: "I write by this post to Wilkie, in order that notice of the feast my reach him on his coming to town" (PILGRIM IX p. 319). In his letter to Collins, Dickens presumably hopes Wilkie is safely back from his sailing trip, informing him that he dines with Charles Reade and Wills next Saturday [6 October] and inviting him to be one of the number. Collins returned on 30 September and we can infer a reply from him dated 1 October, stating that he has found his friend's letter on his return from the deep. As for whether Dickens's invitation was accepted or not, we know that Collins was in London that weekend from a letter to Charles Ward on 5 October inviting him round after church as "the train returns at such an inconvenient time we have given up the Farnham notion on Sunday" (BGLL I p. 213). So perhaps his reply to Dickens can be reconstructed as follows: "He is planning a trip to Farnham on Sunday 7 October, Bradshaw permitting, but dinner on the 6th would be capital."

3. External evidence

Correspondence with others can also help to reconstruct the content of Collins's letters to Dickens. For example, on 12 October 1864 Dickens wrote to his sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth: "Old Mrs Collins is fretting about Charley, and Wilkie is with her. He wrote from Tunbridge Wells to ask me if I could go to Paris with him? I replied No, but told him we were going to Dover, if that would do. He proposes to join us on Saturday." (PILGRIM X p. 438). This letter enables us to recover: a letter from Collins inviting Dickens to Paris; a reply from Dickens saying "no" and inviting Collins to Dover instead; and a reply from Collins accepting. Dickens's letter also enables us to reconstruct part of the content of Collins's first letter. The Table sets out the inferred content of the missing letters according to these principles, which each point backed by textual evidence of some sort.

D. Forms of address

In the companion article on Dickens's letters to Collins (Lewis, "My Dear Wilkie", pp. 14-5), I showed that Dickens changed his salutation from "My dear Collins" to "My dear Wilkie" from 22 October 1857 onwards, and on 25 May 1858 changed his valediction from "Ever Faithfully" to "Ever Affectionately". He continued to use both those forms up to his death. I associated those changes with the increased intimacy of the two friends during the break up of Dickens's marriage.

We have less evidence of how Collins addressed Dickens as there are merely three letters extant. Their dates are 2 November 1851, 7 August 1860, and 8 September 1864. All three are addressed to "My dear Dickens". This form of address is typically used by Collins to male friends, though not his closest friends. For example, in 1851 Collins already addressed his old friend Edward Pigott as "My dear Edward" (11 November 1851, B&C I p.75), and by 1864 this had become "My dear Ted" (24 September 1864, B&C I p. 250). Of

course, Pigott and Collins were contemporaries whereas Dickens was twelve years senior to Collins and this difference may have been reflected in way the younger man addressed the older. However, in the valediction, we do find a major change. In 1851, referring to Dickens's role as manager of the play they were both acting in, Collins closes with elaborate politeness: "... and always my excellent manager's attached and obedient servant, W. Wilkie Collins". In 1860 Collins is writing a formal "letter on absolute business" (PILGRIM XI p. 21), to use Dickens's phrase for those letters he kept rather than burned. Nevertheless Collins signs himself off, "Ever yours | Wilkie Collins", a form he used only with close acquaintances. However, in 1864 Collins ends his letter "Ever yours afftly", an abbreviation of "affectionately". This valediction he only used at the time for his mother Harriet, and from 1859 occasionally to his close friend Edward Pigott (see 11 December 1859, BGLL I p. 184), though he still routinely signed off "Yours affectionately" to his brother Charles. Later he enlarged the circle signed off in this way: to Nina Lehmann from 1866 (9 December 1866, BGLL II pp. 52-5), to Holman Hunt – first on the occasion of his representing the sick Collins at his mother's funeral – from 1868 (21 March 1868, B&C II p. 308), and to Dickens's sister-in-law Georgina Hogarth from 1871 (12 October 1871, BGLL II p.282). Thus the little evidence we have from the three extant letters, one of which is a business letter, confirms that Dickens belonged to Wilkie's most intimate circle by 1864 at the latest.

III. Letters to others

Analysing Dickens's letters to Collins provides evidence not only of letters to him from Collins, but also of two lost letters written by Collins to others.

1. 29 January 1853 to Mark Lemon

On 28 January 1853 Dickens wrote to Collins with a paragraph in French saying that Mark Lemon and Dickens were going to the Britannia Saloon on Monday next [4 February] and that, if Collins wished to accompany them he, should write to Lemon to say "Je serais charmé et flatté de faire un des convives a [*sic*] cette reunion spirituelle! Commande (mon cher Citron) le diner pour 4 personess [*sic*] au lieu de 3." (PILGRIM VII pp. 17-18). So we can clearly propose a letter to Lemon, possibly in very similar style dated 29 January. The evidence suggesting that Collins went to this event is a letter to Ned Ward sent on the following day, in which he writes: "I told Dickens that you were pleased with his mention of you" (To E. M. Ward, 5 February 1853, BGLL I p. 82).

2. 9-26 August 1861 to Charles Collins

On 28 August 1861 Dickens wrote to Collins, "I hear from Charley that you are coming home and must be addressed at Rue Harley." (PILGRIM IX p. 447). Collins was then in Whitby and on 7 August had written to his mother who was staying in Tunbridge Wells: "Charley and Katey are at Gadshill I suppose? I heard from Charley last week, and will write to him in a day or two." When Collins wrote that letter his return plans were not finalised. He

wrote to her again on 22 August as follows: “I propose at the moment getting back the first week in September”, that is, the week beginning Sunday 1st. He also referred to plans of his mother’s “which I heard from Charley”. So Collins must have received correspondence from his brother while in Whitby. Several sequences of events are possible but this seems the most likely:

- 7 August – Wilkie tells his mother that he will write to Charley in ‘a day or two’
- 8-15 August – Wilkie writes to Charley
- 15-21 August – Charley replies
- 22 August – Wilkie writes to his mother that he has heard from Charley and gives his return plans
- 23-28 August – either Charley visits his mother in Tunbridge Wells or she forwards Wilkie’s letter to him at Gad’s Hill
- Before 28 August – Charley informs Dickens of Wilkie’s return date.

Whatever the precise sequence, the context indicates that Collins wrote at least one, and possibly two, letters to his brother from Whitby. Given that only eight manuscript letters from Wilkie to his brother seem to have survived – only slightly more than the few to Dickens that escaped the latter’s bonfires – this also represents a significant addition to our knowledge of Collins’s intimate correspondence.

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2. Other

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Other Abbreviations used in the Table

AYR	<i>All the Year Round</i>	HW	<i>Household Words</i>
CAC	Charles Allston Collins	WC	Wilkie Collins
CD	Charles Dickens	WIW	<i>The Woman in White</i>
HC	Harriet Collins		

Date ¹	Summary	CD's reply to WC		EVIDENCE		WC letter extant or Other		NOTES
		date	content	date	content	date	content	
11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
2 Nov 1851	Happy to do second performance in Bristol						Extant	BGLL I 50
13 Jan 1852	Sends CD a copy of <i>Rambles Beyond Railways</i> and writes about a baby home	20 Jan 1852	"thank you for the very pretty book. Next as to Infants at nurse." Apologises for "tardy" reply.					
6 Dec 1852	Encloses a copy of <i>Basil</i> which he hopes CD will enjoy.	20 Dec 1852	Remorse for "...not having sooner thanked you for Basil". Long complimentary remarks about <i>Basil</i> .. Open to any proposal to go anywhere any day this week.					
21 Dec 1852	Suggests meeting on 23rd to go out of town.			20 Dec 1852	"I am open to any proposal...if I could only find an idle man..."			
23 Dec 1852	Will be glad to meet later tomorrow afternoon instead for dinner and Whitechapel. Thanks for the note from his namesake.			23 Dec 1852	Can't now make today "If you will come there tomorrow afternoon" in the City?			
7 Jan 1853	Writes to ask about the order of CD's early work in order to settle an argument.	8 Jan 1853	Gives the order - Pickwick started, then Oliver Twist, then Pickwick finished, then Oliver Twist ended.					The argument was in fact a bet between Millais and his sister. See PILGRIM VII 5 n3
19 Jan 1853	Agrees to meeting for the theatre on Saturday and in principle happy for a shorter trip to Italy.			18 Jan 1853	Invites him to theatre trip on Saturday and wants to curtail Italian trip with Egg.			WC had much less money than CD and is likely to agree at once to a shorter trip and is unlikely to refuse the theatre trip.
27 Jan 1853	Encloses a letter with a story of a bonnet possibly set in Australia. He offers help with a plot problem, and asks what he owes CD perhaps for an Italian opera ticket.	28 Jan 1853	"Many thanks for the enclosed letter" Rejects the idea as he already has too much Australian material, the Free Trade solution is marvellous, and it was ten shillings. "Ecrivez donc a Lemon, et dites-lui..."					
27 Jun 1853	WC regrets he is too ill to visit CD in Boulogne. Sorry to hear from Ward that CD had been too ill to sit for a portrait earlier in the month. What was the trouble?	30 Jun 1853	"I am very sorry to hear..." he is so ill but hopes he will recover in time to visit. His own illness was a chill on the kidney.	24 Jun 1853	Hopes he is well and invites him to Boulogne			
15 Dec 1853	Tells CD how much he borrowed in Turin, probably £5, and about certain other items of expenditure on their recent Italian trip. He will be glad to go to Birmingham to hear CD read, what train should he get?	16 Dec 1853	"Gone carefully over the accounts" - Wilkie owes him £43-11s-8d - "pleased to hear..." and gives the details of Birmingham train.	14 Dec 1853	"Will you enlighten me at once" on petty cash and loans on Italian trip.			Another letter from CD enclosing the ticket and one or more from CD accepting, there is no evidence of them. For a ticket see CD to WC 6 June 1854 (PILGRIM VII 347)
27 Feb 1854	Thanks CD for the idea of using Montaigne's Italian trip. Replies to invitation to Rochester on Saturday March 4th.			24 Feb 1854	Why not do extracts from Montaigne's Italian journeys or Hazlitt? Is he free on 4 March?			CD wrote late on Friday, so letter posted Saturday 28th and probably arrived Sunday or Monday. WC didn't write many letters on Sunday.
25 Apr 1854	Probably accepts a dinner invitation with Egg for Sunday 30th March. Tells CD that <i>Hide and Seek</i> is in fact just about done, and that makes him even happier to accept the Boulogne invitation which won't be spoiled by work. Shares his views on Townshend's birthday.			24 Apr 1854	Invites WC to dinner with Egg, explains location of Boulogne house, will he write 'that book' there, Townshend in Town 12 May.			
14 May 1854	Would CD do WC the honour of letting him dedicate <i>Hide and Seek</i> to him?	23 May 1854	He would be delighted.					Clearly a reply to a request from WC.

		date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.				
	15/29 May 1854	Does CD fancy a day in the country with Mark Lemon, perhaps Thursday 8 June?				30 May 1854	CD to Lemon: "Collins wants to make a day in the country with us, next week."	
16	7 Jun 1854	A quick note to let CD know his letter received in time and respond to his invitation for Sunday at 2.		7 Jun 1854	Lemon has a bad foot so "Will you take a stroll...and dine here on Sunday...if yes will you be here at 2"			CD sends his letter by hand and WC replies at once.
17	15 Jul 1854	Accepts CD's invitation to travel to Boulogne with him on 25th July and he would be delighted to 'dissipate' in the metropolis. He had said he would visit Ward and see Lytton but can put that off. He will write to Ward about the sitting, and he looks forward very much to the Champagne which he trusts is dry. Salutes to Plornishgenter.		12 Jul 1854	Will you return to Boulogne with me on Tuesday and meanwhile how about a bit of dissipation this weekend in London? "I shall be glad to hear what you say"			WC wrote to Ward on 21 July and informed him of CD's sitting. In that letter he complained about his work keeping him in London but it may have been for dissipation with CD that he stayed in "this unutterably hot metropolis". That conjecture is used in the reply here.
18	18 Sep 1854	Gives a full account of his trip back on Friday 15 September in the company of Robert Keeley, an actor who performed a perhaps uncharacteristic Good Samaritan act on the journey.	26 Sep 1854	"I received your letter" Much pleasure at it. About Keeley, news of Boulogne since he left.				
19	2 Nov 1854	He enjoyed the portrait of the Boulogne character Beaucourt in a piece on Boulogne which CD had written for HW. And would he be kind enough write a note to Scott Russell assuming he is a director of the Brighton Line?	3 Nov 1854	"I am glad you like the portrait" Russell is likely to be a Director but not sure, anyway here is the note and he hopes the portrait of Beaucourt will help him let his houses.				PILGRIM (VIII 458) suggests this refers to John Scott Russell (1808-1882) a Scottish engineer who assisted Brunel with the Great Eastern.
20	12 Nov 1854	Replies to invitation to see the play.			11 Nov 1854	Invites WC to see The New Wags of Windsor at the Strand Theatre on 18 November "If this day week ...will suit".		
21	16 Dec 1854	Writes to CD about some doubts he has over George Cowell who had appealed for public help after being left destitute following a strike in Preston a year earlier.	17 Dec 1854	"Many thanks for your note" Had his own doubts after a meeting on 7 December and wrote to Lemon accordingly.				
22	25 Dec 1854	Accepts part as Gobler in CD's adaptation of <i>Fortunio</i>			24 Dec 1854	Offers WC a small part in <i>Fortunio</i> on 28 December. "Will you join the joke..."		WC played the part - PILGRIM VIII 489 n2. Even though it was Christmas urgency forced WC to reply on 25th.
23	21 Jan 1855	Cannot go next week but perhaps 29th or 30th? Agrees to a week in Paris but leaves exact date to CD.			20 Jan 1855	Invites WC to the Marylebone Theatre for the pantomime. And how about a week in Paris mid February?		WC also writes to Pigott on 21st inviting him to Marylebone on 29th or 30 'on one of which days, most likely, CD will be here.' They go to Paris on 11 February.
24	31 Jan 1855	Accepts CD's invitation to his birthday party on 7 Feb.			30 Jan 1855	"Don't forget Wednesday in next week..." Invites WC to Wates, Gravesend at 5pm		WC was 'engaged' on 7th most likely at CD's birthday. To Pigott 6/2/1855
25	4 Feb 1855	Accepts 11th and will see him at London Bridge at 1030. Looks forward to dining with Frank and Alfred CD in Boulogne.			3 Feb 1855	Train times suggest 11 Feb will suit admirably for Boulogne and then Paris.		
26	8 Feb 1855	WC replies in French agreeing.			8 Feb 1855	Encloses Regnier's reply and says, in French, that the suite on the 3rd floor will suit.		They left for Paris on 21 February.

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
11	May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
27	5 Mar 1855	Would be glad to see him in his sick bed but Friday may be better than Thursday and after seven better than after eight.			4 Mar 1855	Reports on Antony & Cleopatra at Sadler's Wells. "If you will...I will come up at about 8 o'clock" to visit the sick WC on Thursday or Friday? Hopes he will see land "beyond the Hunterian Ocean"			John Hunter (1728-1793), surgeon, wrote his Treatise on Venereal Disease in 1786 based on his own cases and treatments. On Friday (9th) CD writes to Lemon that he "must" go to see WC. So it seems likely that WC picked up some venereal disease in Paris. He adds that if Lemon cares to join him he will wait. After 8 should do as well as after 7. At this time WC had already begun his relationship with Caroline Graves
28	16 Mar 1855	Encloses first two parts of 'Sister Rose'.	19 Mar 1855	"I have read the first two portions ... " Long critique of the "excellent story, charmingly written."					
29	20 Mar 1855	CD is very helpful and he discusses which changes he will make to Sister Rose and which not. Thanks for invite to Ashford on 27th. The family has all been ill, as well as his own ailment, even Millais who is staying with them, so not sure if he will be up to Ashford trip even to see CD speak. Pigott's address is.			19 Mar 1855	"How are you getting on..." Will he be well enough for a trip to Ashford on 27th? Plus account of CD's speech to Literary Fund. What is Pigott's address?			WC writes to Ward probably on 20 March that his mother, Charles and even Millais are also ill and that he will speak to CD when he sees him or, if he remains ill, when CD calls. (B&C I 139)
30	23 Mar 1855	Pleased to report that his illness is showing signs of improvement. So he hopes he will be able to accompany him to Ashford on 27th. He did toddle out to see Millais's who is working on a new painting of a fireman rescuing a child from a burning building. In his view it promises to be the best he has done. He read Dinah Mulock's 'A Ghost's Story' and knowing that writer believes that CD had a big hand in improving it.	24 Mar 1855	"I am charmed to hear of the great improvement" and gives him the train times for Ashford trip. "You have guessed right..." he did indeed take out 'stifflings' etc in Mulock. Suggests a quote from Gay as a tag for Millais's painting.					
31	1 Apr 1855	Would CD mind passing on the Gay lines to Millais as he does not have a copy? In any case he is feeling worse and has had to call back the doctor. He fears what the treatment will involve. He encloses a piece from The Leader by his friend Pigott about how Napoleon would be received in England which CD may find interesting.	4 Apr 1855	"I have read the article...with entire concurrence..." on Pigott on the way Napoleon would be received. Hopes the doctor will not "cut your nose off to be revenged on your face. You might want it at some future time." Has mislaid Pigott's address please resend.					These lines confirm that WC had picked up something nasty on their trip to Paris. CD wrote to Millais on 10 April enclosing the lines from Gay's <i>Trivia</i> .
32	5 Apr 1855	Not much better. Encloses Pigott's address			4 Apr 1855	Has mislaid Pigott's address "Do...send me that piece of information..."			
33	14 Apr 1855	Thank the Lord the treatment worked and has left him intact. He can emerge from his lonely state and is not only up to 27th but also to eat and drink with CD at a proposed trip to the Ship and Turtle.	15 Apr 1855	"Hurrahl!" Next Friday [20th] at Garrick for Ship and Turtle. Apologies for Wills not changing the name in second part of 'Sister Rose'.					
34	10 May 1855	He has turned his story 'Gabriel's Marriage' into a play called for now 'The Storm at the Lighthouse'. Would CD read it and tell him what he thinks? And if he likes it would he consider staging it? Called at the HW office but Wills was not there. Is he still suffering after the accident?	11 May 1855	"I will read the play...if you will send it to me" hopes to go to Folkestone for the autumn then spend 6 months in Paris, will he join them, Wills and Gas.					In fact <i>The Lighthouse</i> was played on 16, 18, 19 June at CD's amateur theatricals and on 10 July at Campden House.
35	12 May 1855	Thanks and encloses play.			11 May 1855	See letter above			
36	23 May 1855	Will be ready with the revisions to <i>The Lighthouse</i> tomorrow and will come round to the HW office in the early evening.	24 May 1855	"I shall expect you tomorrow evening..." Does he have a copy of Mr Nightingale's Diary or even his own part?					<i>Mr Nightingale's Diary</i> was played with <i>The Lighthouse</i>

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
1	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
37	31 May 1855	Thank goodness parts are here at last and yes will be there tomorrow.			31 May 1855	Parts will arrive today, "Will you come and dine...tomorrow" at 6 to sort out details			
38	23 Jun 1855	He has heard CD is to speak on 27 June at the Administrative Reform Association at Drury Lane Theatre. Does he have a ticket? And what is he going to say?	24 Jun 1855	He is glad to say he has one ticket to spare. Not quite sure how to approach the speech.					
39	8 Jul 1855	Thanks CD for his trouble over the play. Webster has indeed turned it down and he is going to send it to Wigan who has asked for it yesterday. Responds to dining invite.			8 Jul 1855	Expects Webster to turn down doing a professional production of <i>The Lighthouse</i> so he has been thinking about how to promote it. "I dine at home...if you are disengaged..." at 5.30?			Alfred Wigan of the Olympic Theatre eventually turned it down too. See WC to Charles Ward 13 July 1855 (BGLL I 127) 20 August 1855 (B&C I 142) and to Harriet WC 2 September 1855 (B&C I 143-4)
40	17 Jul 1855	Writes at once to say 'yes' he would love to come to Folkestone especially as CD describes the place. He will have to work while there as he has commitments to Pigott and <i>The Leader</i> . No word from Wigan. He agrees not sensible to try it elsewhere in England but fancies offering it to R. grier in Paris.			17 Jul 1855	"Will you come...to this breezy vacation...Let me know..." at Folkestone on 31 July? "Let me know what Wigan says." If 'no' leave it.			
41	29 Sep 1855	Just back from sailing with Pigott to the Scilly Isles. They took their time going and stayed just two days but they returned in just over 48 hours - a distance of 200 miles - and he feels so fit he writes at once of his trip. He mentions in particular the three brothers Dobbs who were the ship's crew, and how they contrived to dance the hornpipe despite the narrow confines of the boat. He wishes well to all at Folkestone. By the bye he has a notion to collect some of his pieces from HW in a book. Would CD release the copyright to him? He will tell him more of his plans when he has worked them out.	30 Sep 1855	"Welcome from the bosom of the deep..." CD will dance a hornpipe as a reminder. He is getting on slowly with Little Dorritt. Of course WC can publish his HW stories. Will expect him at the HW office between 1130 and 1pm. News of Folkestone, regards to Pigott.					
42	6 Oct 1855	Many thanks for agreeing to his republishing the HW stories. He has decided to use ideas from his mother's manuscript autobiography - which CD will recall he was working on at Folkestone - as a framing device for the stories. He thinks that is the best, indeed the only, thing he can do with it. Glad to hear news of Folkestone, sorry he missed the boat launch. He had hoped to see him at the office as suggested hence his lack of reply but he now fears that he cannot make that nor the breakfast at the Garrick as his doctor has told him to stay in following an attack of gout in the eye. Does he have definite news of Paris yet?			30 Sep 1855	"I will expect you unless I hear to the contrary..."			
43	11 Oct 1855	He writes poste restante. Has CD found lodgings yet? WC suggests an idea for a sketch by the ostler in the Christmas number.	14 Oct 1855	From Boulogne CD says "The Ostler shall be yours and...the Sketch involves an extremely good...idea," but think about the ending. Will WC dine on 13 November when he is back in London briefly.					

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
44	22 Oct 1855	WC replies to the letter of 14 October with the postscript of 19 October from Paris. He will look at the end of 'The Ostler'. Can make 13 November assuming the gout in his eye is recovered.			19 Oct 1855	In fact the address is 49 Avenue des Champs Elysees			See to Catherine CD 16 October for problems in finding lodgings. In fact CD is in London from 31 October to 8 November see letters in PILGRIM VII 729-39 and is in Paris on 13th - PILGRIM VII 744.
45	15 Dec 1855	Yes Pigott had told him the whole tale. CD's extra chapter for the Christmas number, 'Boots' is highly original. 'The Ostler' was improved by CD's suggestions. He is feeling better and if work will permit, After Dark is still proving tricky, he hopes to be in Paris in the New Year. He hopes he crosses the Channel rather than the Hunterian Ocean! He is free on 19th and looks forward to their Arabian Night! At least Parisians are more imaginative than Londoners in their begging.			12 Dec 1855	CD writes about Pigott, "If you are free on Wednesday" for "any Haroun al Raschid expedition" [paragraph deleted]			The deleted paragraph is so sensitive it is torn out of the letter. WC's reply to it is speculative.
46	16 Jan 1856	WC reports he is making excellent progress on his book <i>After Dark</i> even though he decided to write a whole extra new story as well as all the linking material and editing the five pieces from HW to make them work. So he is pleased to say he can join CD in Paris - would February suit? And can he find WC somewhere not too dear but comfortable and of course <i>pres des</i> Dickens? He fancies there may be stories for HW to be written. What has CD's found? by the bye he encloses the result of submitting himself to the horrors of photographic art. He can't see the likeness but it may help CD and Plorn remember him! He has seen the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk and recounts a story about the wigs. Best wishes to all Dickens's family - not least Georgina and Plorn.	19 Jan 1856	"I had no idea you were so far on with your book and heartily congratulate you on being within sight of Land. It is excessively pleasant to me to get your letter." A long letter replying to WC's points, so glad he is coming over. Etc. "the Portrait is the most astounding thing ever beheld upon this globe."					The portrait is unknown. No photograph of WC is known until the following year (by Watkins and see note to 20/3/1858). But WC's letter mentioned there to Watkins makes it clear that he has taken at least one other. CD enthusiasm implies it is something special and could be a reference to the first ever photograph of WC. WC hated having his photograph taken.
47	25 Jan 1856	After Dark is just about done but he has domestic matters to sort out. Hopefully that will be done soon. When is CD coming over to London so that he may plan when to return to him to Paris?	30 Jan 1856	Will be in London Monday or Tuesday [4th or 5th Feb] and will expect him at HW office for an evening out on Wednesday. Plans to return to Paris on Sunday or Monday [10th or 11th] if it suits WC.					Around this time WC began living part-time at least with Caroline Graves at 22 Howland Street.
48	10 Feb 1856	He is so sorry he was not able to accompany CD as he had planned. The lodgings have proved difficult to sort out but he hopes it will be done shortly and he will then be free to come over to Paris.	12 Feb 1856	"I am delighted to receive your letter - which is just come to hand - and I heartily congratulate you upon it." Advice on boats. "I told them here you had a touch of your old complaint and had turned back to consult your doctor. Thought it best...with your mother on one hand and my people on the other."					
49	14 Feb 1856	Having claimed to be ill he now really is and must delay his trip further. It really is a bad attack. He will be in touch.							This letter fills a gap in the correspondence. WC was clearly not ill when he delayed his trip and was probably sorting out Howland Street to where he returned from Paris in April. It is possible that CD replied to it.
50	26 Feb 1856	Have no fear, he is recovered. All other matters settled. He will leave Thursday and hopefully arrive by evening.			24 Feb 1856	Concerned he has not heard from WC. "Pray let me know by return" how he is.			

		date	content	date	content	date	content	
11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
51 3 Mar 1856	In the interest of avoiding the end to CD's creativity, Jollins suggests a trip to the darkest depths of Paris and will call on him at 5.			3 Mar 1856	CD jokes that he has to be taken out to restore his imagination. Will Jollins [ie Collins] help?			Living next door, the reply is at once. WC may of course have called rather than written but a humorous note is more likely.
52 9 Apr 1856	Sorry to ask him but he has run out of Francs and could he pay the portress in the Pavilion the small sum he still owes her?			13 Apr 1856	"Your portress duly appeared with the small account and your note."			See CD's reply of 13 April.
53 10 Apr 1856	Arrived back late tonight after a half gale across the channel with everyone but him filling, and overflowing, pudding basins. It was a terrible journey but at last he is here, safe with the Doctor, his mother still believing him to be in Paris. He hopes CD didn't mind paying the woman who helped him travel but he had run out of Francs.	13 Apr 1856	Sorry to hear of the gale which we didn't anticipate. He paid the portress. News from Paris. All miss him, especially CD in the evening.					WC's life at this time is confused. There seems little doubt that he was ill - he wrote about the contrast of being ill in Paris and London in HW 'Laid up in Two Lodgings' 7 & 14 June 1856, his mother was giving up Hanover Terrace, and WC did spend time with Caroline Graves at 22 Howland St.
54 19 Apr 1856	Having been unwell he became suddenly much iller, having had a seizure which really laid him up. It is now improving but he has rheumatic gout and a badly upset stomach. Before his seizure he went as ever to the Royal Academy with Charley to see his picture being hung in the Summer Exhibition. Tells a story about the language used by the carpenters in that august company!	22 Apr 1856	"quite taken aback by your account of your alarming seizure." News from Paris. Very amused at swearing of Academy Carpenters. Will be in London on 3 or 4 May and will visit then.					
55 29 Apr 1856	Still not at all well. Why do doctors always have a watch with a brass tail?	30 Apr 1856	"Wills brought me your letter this morning." Will visit him in Howland St at 11 on Saturday. Likes his idea, suggested to Wills, but not until he feels better. What time is it by the watch with a brass tail?					WC's idea was probably writing 'Laid up in Two Lodgings'
56 5 Jun 1856	Thanks him for the dinner on Tuesday, excellent company and talk as ever. He forgot to mention that Emile Forgues, who has written about WC and is to be trusted, wants to do a profile of CD. Could WC trouble him for a few details about his early life and the dates of publication of his early works?	6 Jun 1856	"If you want to prime Forgues you may tell him..." Gives the details.					re dinner see WC to Townshend 5 June 1856 BGLL I 135.
57 10 Jul 1856	He has just got back from sailing to Torquay and Cherbourg and found CD's kind invitation. Regrettably pressure of work means he cannot hope to visit until the middle of August at the earliest. He encloses Forgues's biography accompanying his translation of <i>The Lighthouse</i> .	13 Jul 1856	"I answer your letter at once" Sorry he can't come until middle of August, but will he stay until 10 October? Write at the end of July. Loved Anne Rodway. Annoyed with Forgues.	1 Jul 1856	Would he like to visit them in Boulogne where they are once more at the Villa des Moulineaux.			CD's letter of invitation could have been written any time while WC was on the yacht RY'S Coquette from about 22 June to 10 July.
58 27 Jul 1856	As requested he is replying towards the end of the month about his visit which he now anticipates will be 15th. He has been getting very annoyed about art 'experts' telling people which old masters are good and which bad. People can see and decide for themselves. Not least because one 'expert' says one thing, one another. At the moment two are arguing over a picture bought by the National Gallery. Would he like a piece for HW along these lines? And he has had a notion for the new play - set in the Arctic - which he will discuss when they meet.	29 Jul 1856	"I write you at once, in answer to yours received this morning" Change of plans. Keep next Sunday free. We will expect you here on 15th. He likes the picture story, when can WC do it by? Glad to hear about the play.					It is quite possible that WC came up with the whole plot for The Frozen Deep at this time.

		date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851		Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.			
59	1 Aug 1856		Hopes that this reaches him before he departs. He will try to have copy for the piece during next week. Looks forward to meeting on Sunday.			29 Jul 1855	"Will you hold yourself disengaged for next Sunday"	CD clearly asks for a reply by return
60	11 Sep 1856		Has been struggling with <i>The Frozen Deep</i> and thinks that it may work and heighten the dramatic effect if he gives Nurse Esther second sight.	12 Sep 1856	An admirable idea. "Not sure about the idea and gives others. In a PS mentions what WC owes for a trip through Kent returning from France.			Although this letter is clearly part of an exchange of ideas, WC and CD were in London and clearly meeting frequently so there is no reason to think WC replied by letter - nor to CD's subsequent letter of the next day.
61	9 Oct 1856		Not sure about the changes but will wait for his explanation when he sees him at 6.			9 Oct 1856	Wants to show him some changes to the play. Can come at 6 today?	
62	16 Oct 1856		Thanks. He prefers <i>Animal Magnetism</i> to <i>Turning the Tables</i> which he finds dull and not very funny			15 Oct 1856	"Will you read <i>Turning the Tables</i> ...and let me know whether you care to play...Courcy... Send me back the book, when you answer."	<i>Animal Magnetism</i> was chosen but was replaced with <i>King John</i> after one performance.
63	26 Oct 1856		Replies at once to say he will tell Pigott but he is not sure when he will return. Tuesday 4th is free. He will of course see the ladies rehearse on Thursday. Tomorrow he hopes to make one of the times but don't wait for him.			26 Oct 1856	"Will you tell Pigott...Will you dine ...on...4th...Will you come and see the ladies...If you can come at the first of these times..."	
64	3 Nov 1856		Forster is wrong about the nurse and he is sure Janet can overcome her natural timidity. It would be too early to presage the women leaving at the end of Act One. Not at all sure that going away is of sufficient important to be subject to second sight which is for the big things in life. They can discuss later when he will be glad to dine before rehearsal and settle any changes then. Stanfield is excellent and he is sure set is coming on well. Tuesday is free so Cobham sounds a good idea, if he still had Cobham in mind?			1 Nov 1856	"This afternoon I get the enclosed from him (which please read at this point) Forster's suggestions on <i>The Frozen Deep</i> , Stanfield's progress on the set. "Will you dine with us at 5 on Monday" and walk in Cobham Wednesday. Audit dinner is Tuesday week. So how about this Tuesday for a walk.	PILGRIM points out that none of Forster's suggestions appears to be incorporated.
65	13 Nov 1856		He is looking for some other examples of heroes and heroines - of the standard variety - for his piece on novels and novel-writers. Would CD have any that would be of help? He thinks he has the central idea now for the final section of <i>The Wreck</i> .	14 Nov 1856	"I could not send you the books before" Will he swap proofs on the Xmas number? "bring me those when you come tonight"			WC was writing 'A Petition to the Novel-Writers' for HW. He was also working on two sections for 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary', the first of which was already in proof.
66	16 Dec 1856		Unlucky is the word, it has got worse, so he will excuse himself on Thursday if the others will forgive him so that he can be sure of being up to the mark for the next rehearsal. He also has to make sure that he keeps up with the instalments of <i>The Dead Secret</i> .			16 Dec 1856	"I send round to ascertain that you are all right...unlucky dog". Stage progressing well. Rehearsing <i>Animal Magnetism</i> on Thursday.	WC's own correspondence is non-existent at this time so any responses are conjectural. Apart from the play and the Christmas number, <i>The Dead Secret</i> began serialisation in HW on 3 January. CD "sends round" so CD could reply at once.
67	11 Jan 1857		Pretty hard at it so don't expect him Monday but he may make a celebratory lunch before the final performance on Wednesday. In any case he will see him on Monday and glad the dance is postponed, not sure he is up to that either.			10 Jan 1857	"On second thoughts" no dance rehearsal Monday. Lemon and he dine at 3 Monday and Wednesday if WC would care...	
68	20 Jan 1857		He has plans to shut himself up in a lodge at East Sheen, overlooking Richmond Park, to try to get ahead with <i>The Dead Secret</i> and it would be foolish to count on his presence with Davy Roberts' on Sunday. Regrets.			19 Jan 1857	"Will you come and dine here next Sunday at 5?" [25th]	WC writes from East Sheen on 31 January to W R Sams apologising for being "shut up from the world, in a hermitage overlooking Richmond Park, driving my pen as hard as I can make it go." (BGLL 1142)

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
69	6 Feb 1857	Sensible to stick at home in this weather, would not suit his gout at all to be out. A command performance of his play at Windsor would be an interesting idea!			5 Feb 1857	The weather being so severe, we will dine here on Saturday" [7th]. Strange conversation about <i>The Frozen Deep</i> being performed at Windsor.			
70	11 Feb 1857	He is finding the deadlines snapping at his heels all the time and feels it would help to have a weekend away. Does CD fancy a trip to Brighton? Perhaps 28th? He needs to see - and to smell - the sea.	12 Feb 1857	"We will then discuss the Brighton or other trip-possibilities"					
71	13 Feb 1857	He knew he could count on him! See him Thursday!			12 Feb 1857	"Will you come and dine at the office on Thursday..."			
72	2 Mar 1857	At last he feels he is ahead enough - that is to say not horribly behind - with the <i>Dead Secret</i> - and thinks that this weekend is now the time for Brighton.	4 Mar 1857	"I cannot tell you what pleasure I had in the receipt of your letter yesterday" Rooms are booked, pick him up at 1130. And he will now read the first parts of the book!					There are probably other letters in this sequence. It seems very unlikely that CD had not read the lead story in his periodical for two months. The story was not published as a book until mid-June.
73	11 May 1857	Oh dear, he is sorry but since the weekend away - so good! - he is behindhand again - now correcting book proofs as well as writing the story - and he has to pull out of the dinner tomorrow. Hopes that CD is further ahead than he is and has finished [<i>Little Dorrit</i>]. But when WC is done he hopes CD will join him for a celebration!	11 May 1857	"I am very sorry that we shall not have you tomorrow" I have finished. Any mad proposal...and remember Tuesday [next week] at Gad's Hill.					CD replies in the evening so it is likely WC wrote in the morning in view of the time. On proofs see WC to Evans 9 May 1857 (B&C I 161-2)
74	12 May 1857	He may not have finished but he would not miss the Gad's Hill inauguration whatever he had to write. Let him know the details in good time.			11 May 1857	"We shall have to arrange about Tuesday at Gad's Hill. You remember the engagement?"			
75	18 May 1857	No. No. No. But he will let Wills guide him as suggested.			17 May 1857	"Have you done...put yourself under the guidance of the gallant Wills" Train details.			
76	21 May 1857	He has written those two best words and they release him for a celebration! When please is CD free??? by the bye he went to the Royal Academy and an artist called William Gale, whom WC does not know personally but he is known to Millais and his brother, has hung a portrait of Mr F's aunt from <i>Little Dorrit</i> ! It is quite fine and ten guineas would secure it. Since finishing he has begun to read again and is dismayed by the quality of modern writing.	22 May 1857	"Hooray!!!!...shall we appoint to meet..." Wednesday for any Sybarite voluptuousness. He looks upon the picture as his. Wills despairs of story writing too.					For Gale and his picture see PILGRIM VIII 347 n4 and WC to Gale 9 June 1857 (BGLL I 146 and note)
77	2 Jun 1857	Wednesday is free, but if he needs a bed tomorrow he only has to ask.			1 Jun 1857	Gad's Hill problems of moving in. "Will you consider our appointment... Wednesday."			
78	13 Jun 1857	A very full programme that should raise a significant amount for the family of our dear old friend. If Her Majesty graces the event all the better. A couple of typo points.... He cannot come down on Sunday as he is off to the country for a week to stay with []. He would have sent a copy of <i>The Dead Secret</i> but Evans has not been very efficient. Perhaps both he and the book could visit CD the following Sunday? Has he had the revision of <i>The Dead Secret</i> ?			12 Jun 1857	Encloses proof of programme for Jerrold Fund. "I should like to see you as soon as convenient...could you run down on Sunday?"			See to Evans about the book and to him and Henrietta Ward 12 June 1857 about the trip to the country (BGLL I 146 and 147). But CD's next letter makes it clear that he doesn't go - or returns early - due to some mishap.

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111	May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.				
79	14 Jun 1857	He writes this in some ignominy from his chair with his leg up on a stool having twisted his ankle so badly on the journey he had to return before getting beyond the station. Tomorrow he will repair to his mother's as she was fussing. If CD is in town he would be glad to receive him and present a copy of THE BOOK which at least he has now been able to receive.	16 Jun 1857	Unlucky fellow! "I write this to Harley Place, having been unable to write yesterday" Will visit at 12 on Thursday [18th].				CD's letter makes it clear the trip to the country did not happen and the reference to the foot makes it plausible that WC hurt it. He twisted his ankle very badly in September on their trip to Cumberland. See also CD to WC 17 January 1858.
80	16 Jun 1857	The lady is Frances Dickinson, an old friend, and her address is Farley Hill Court, Swallowfield, Reading, Berkshire. I am sure she will be excellent in the part if she can make rehearsals at such short notice.			16 Jun 1857	You once said you knew a lady who could <u>Ac</u> ts that lady producible?" to play Nurse Esther in <i>The Frozen Deep</i> .		It is also possible that she lived in London as well as at the family home in Berkshire.
81	4 Aug 1857	Amazed at the news. Can they really fill a real theatre? Is confident Charley will feel up to it. But not sure if Mrs Dickinson will want to be seen as a professional actress, pronounc_e or not! He will be glad to see CD Friday.			2 Aug 1857	Wants to perform <i>The Frozen Deep</i> at Manchester in a real theatre with actresses though Frances Dickinson might cope, he will ask Charley. The Olympic wants him to go to a rehearsal "I have appointed next Friday, if agreeable and convenient."		
82	31 Aug 1857	Understands his feelings. Happy to go and have an adventure and write something in a new vein for HW. Maybe they can talk when they meet. He will make himself free on Monday. Why doesn't he call into the office at 5.30 and they can go for dinner			29 Aug 1857	Grim despair, what can we do, must escape, blankness inconceivable. "I shall be in town on Monday. Shall we talk then? Shall we talk at Gad's Hill?"		CD has fallen in love with Ellen Ternan, an actress in the Manchester production of <i>The Frozen Deep</i> . This is one of two extant letters to WC where CD expresses his feelings. See also 21 March 1858.
83	16 Oct 1857	As he is still feeling a bit unwell, shall they meet at 4 at his lodgings?	17 Oct 1857	A note of mine crossed a note from you." He will come to WC at 4.				This is the point where CD stops addressing 'Dear WC'. He changes here to 'Dear Wilkie' and thereafter all his letters to WC were addressed 'My dear Wilkie'. On WC's health see CD to him 22 October.
84	23 Oct 1857	Sorry but he would rather not travel out, so could CD come to his? Morley references may help with planning his parts of the Christmas number.			22 Oct 1857	Morley doesn ' t help. "Shall we meet here tomorrow... or shall I come to you... Let me know."		CD and WC were writing the HW Christmas number 'Perils of Certain English Prisoners' between them.
85	2 Nov 1857	Yes he will come, health much improved.			1 Nov 1857	Proof of the start follows Monday, can he come on Tuesday to discuss? "Just a word in answer, here"		
86	15 Jan 1858	He is so annoyed that his foot has been bad again. Since spraining it earlier in the year, and then twisting it so badly in Cumberland, it never seems to get right. But confined as he is to his rooms, unable to walk far even with a stick, he is at least progressing on the new play which he hopes CD will enjoy.	17 Jan 1858	"I am very sorry to receive so bad an account of the foot." Suggests an idea about Insanity for a HW piece. "Rejoiced to hear such a good report of the play."				WC was writing <i>The Red Vial</i> which was not performed until October but which he read to CD in February. It is possible that WC was writing instead about the US performance of <i>The Lighthouse</i> which opened on 21 January at New Theatre, New York. PILGRIM (VIII 505 n3) is wrong to say the foot trouble is gout - see WC to Watkins 20 March 1858 (BGLL I 157).
87	6 Feb 1858	His ankle [sic] is so painful he is not sure if he can make a train journey to Gravesend, he finds the shaking about hard to put up with. But as it is his dear friend's 46th he will try. And Sunday is his day for recreation.			5 Feb 1858	Will you come and dine with me ...Train which leaves at 3." for birthday a week on Sunday.		Whether WC went or not is pure speculation as neither his nor CD's letters mentions the event anywhere else. But we know that WC's ankle was still bad see note above. For WC's spelling of 'ankle' see to Agnes London 2 October 1857 and Herbert Watkins 20 March 1858 (BGLL I 152, 157)
88	7 Feb 1858	So kind of him to arrange the fine special binding of the Christmas story. At such a time it should be WC sending a present to CD. He hopes that CD will resolve his restlessness.			6 Feb 1858	Encloses bound volume of 'Perils of English Prisoners'		

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11	1 May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.				
89	20 Mar 1858	When he visited the other day WC promised to give him the copy of the profile of self by Watkins but as he left WC forgot. He has ordered more and is pleased to enclose it. Could he trouble CD for the payment for the last two weeks? Wills normally sent it regularly but had clearly omitted to do so. Is he feeling any more resolved over the Doncaster business? He couldn't ask when he called in view of the company.	21 Mar 1858	I too had intended to come to the enclosed subject-and I too forgot it." Cheque enclosed. Doncaster unhappiness strong.				The same day, WC wrote to Watkins "Your admirable (profile) Photograph of me has been taken out of my portfolio by an enthusiastic friend who was determined to have it." It is likely that WC replied to CD's letter but there is no evidence he did so.
90	18 Apr 1858	He will be delighted to support his dear friend in his new venture which he is sure will be an enormous success. He anticipates CD will be asking for the seats back to sell to the crowds of people clamouring to get in.			17 Apr 1858	Arthur Smith will send him two stalls tickets for each of his readings. "You will find some Sherry... in my little room."		CD wrote an identical note on the same day to his doctor Frank Beard. Although this letter does not call for a reply it seems more likely than not that WC would respond to such a note and in such a way.
91	24 May 1858	Forster has told him, in strict confidence, that he has finally separated from Catherine. How brave he has been and how much WC hopes this will be the first step to resolving his restlessness and the strain he has been under. He can always count on his friendship and support.	25 May 1858	A thousand thanks for your kind letter" Can WC come round in the morning to hear all? "a long story--over, I hope, now."				Instead of the normal 'Ever faithfully' CD signs his letter 'Yours affectionately', a form he used from then on until his death. Forster had negotiated the settlement on 21 May and it was formalised by lawyers shortly after. The affair was made messier by the suggestions that CD had been unfaithful to Catherine with her sister, Georgina Hogarth. There is not really time for a reply from WC, though it is conceivable one was sent to say 'yes'.
92	5 Aug 1858	CD's letter arrived here in Broadstairs a day or so ago but he delayed replying until he could be sure that his letter would arrive at a real address. What secrets does he have that some locations are so mysterious? Music halls and flea-pits? Is he having liaisons with persons unknown - or indeed known? How, by the bye, have his readings gone down with the 'Unknown Public'? WC is feeling much better, the air and the rest are what he needed and his pen is fair flying across the page all day.	11 Aug 1858	The 'Unknown Public' has been toned down here and there. No mystery and no energy for furtive purposes! Have been doing very well but will be glad to be home.	1 Aug 1858	I am off from here today, and enclose... my address at each place." Hopes he continues to enjoy Broadstairs and be well. Charley's paper good.	9 Aug 1858	CD to Wills: "I am very glad to hear from Wilkie that he is at work again."
93	7 Sep 1858	Writes to Huddersfield in the hope that he will be there. He is indeed in Broadstairs, with Charley, who has the idea of parodying their time there in one or two pieces for HW. He will be glad to write about the prejudice against actors. Not sure if he and CD will be able to cope with the whole Xmas number themselves, but they can discuss on 20th when he is indeed free. He too was surprised to see the letter widely published.			6 Sep 1858	A very long letter, encloses a letter from Wigan with a good idea for a HW piece, will be free from 15 November for Xmas no. will WC be free? Can he dine on 20/9, answer according to his list, off to Huddersfield, annoyed at letter being printed, penny newspapers cannot make money, "I direct this to Broadstairs.--I hope you are there."		WC had been at Broadstairs on 10 August and his brother Charles wrote two pieces for HW about 'Smallport' which seems to be Broadstairs. WC himself also wrote a piece with CD about the way towns responded to visits by the Queen and it may have referred to his experience there and in France ('A Clause for a New Reform Bill' HW 9/10/1858 pp365-367). WC wrote the story about actors' sons not being accepted at schools ('Highly Proper!' HW 2/10/1858 361-363). The outline in CD's letter for the Xmas number was not followed and there were contributions by two other writers apart from CD and WC ('A House to Let' HW Christmas Number 7/12/1858). WC did not seem to join in CD's criticism of friends like Lemon whom CD saw as disloyal over his separation.
94	11 Nov 1858	As he cannot make Sunday at Gad's Hill would prefer to fit in between the two readings on Saturday to celebrate the triumphant end of the Readings.	13 Nov 1858	Dinner is ordered at 5 punctually. They will show you up into the sitting-room..."	9 Nov 1858	would propose to you to come and celebrate the end of the Tour" at Brighton on Saturday or perhaps prefer to visit him at Gad's Hill on Sunday?		

		date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list				
95	25 Jan 1859	Thursday is fine for him. Has CD thought of a title yet? If not, he has some ideas but doesn't want to mention them unless he knows they are needed.	26 Jan 1859	"Look over the jotted titles" and they can discuss tomorrow.				There is clearly more missing correspondence here of which this conjectural letter is part. We now know that CD suggested 16 titles of which WC liked three but in fact suggested himself the one chosen 'AYR', as well, ironically, as 'Once a Week', the title used by its rival published by Bradbury and Evans after CD's acrimonious split with the publisher of HW. (See PILGRIM IX 16n2)
96	7 Feb 1859	He would not believe it another year gone but for the fact that his own 35th has just occurred. He would be delighted to spend two nights by the sea. He will be at the Brighton Terminus at Victoria station at 1.45.			6 Feb 1859	Tomorrow is his birthday. Would he come to Brighton with the girls until Wednesday?		There is no evidence one way or the other whether WC went but his work was light at this time mainly consisting of writing pieces for HW. We know he was at the HW office the day after this trip on Thursday 10 Feb (To Bentley that day, BGLL I 171) so may have returned with CD. The reply is speculative.
97	8 Apr 1859	Could CD add those two paragraphs he mentioned?	9 Apr 1859	"The insertions in the enclosed, just supply what was wanting." and alter so title fits, will send material for Occasional Register, urgent.				CD's letter clearly implies it is a reply. WC may have replied or in view of the urgency may simply have delivered the material to the HW office.
98	10 Apr 1859	Replies to invitation for Tuesday, probably positively, and agrees to dinner after.			9 Apr 1859	"On Tuesday afternoon I shall go over it finally. Will you come here, then? And will you let me know, at Tavistock House, whether we shall dine somewhere afterwards?"		Again there is little evidence of what WC was up to at this time, but he was keen to make AYR a success and this item was for the first issue. On 21 April WC wrote to W F Mayus "At present, my literary engagements are so numerous..." (BGLL I 175)
99	15 May 1859	A line to say he will be there at 5.			14 May 1859	Changing date for dinner to Monday		
100	10 Jun 1859	Thanks for the invitation to Gad's Hill. But his old trouble, gout, has struck him down. He is recovering and invites CD and Wills to visit for dinner on Monday. He is so fed up with his illness he is considering taking a medical holiday to take the waters at Malvern. Of course when he is feeling up to the trip he would enjoy a recuperative stay at Gad's Hill.	12 Jun 1859	Sorry he has been unwell again, his views on Malvern, his room at Gad's Hill always ready, his cold clearing. "Wills and I will dine with you (since you propose it) tomorrow."	9 Jun 1859	Will he come to stay at Gad's Hill?		The invitation is inferred from CD's reply which seems to be a reply to WC turning it down. WC did visit Gad's Hill for an extended stay - with occasional trips to London for post and so on - shortly after this. See to Townshend 29 June 1859 (BGLL I 178) and to Harriet WC 14 July 1859 (B&C I 166-7)
101	15 Jul 1859	Thanks CD for allowing him to spend so much time at Gad's Hill. He has been back in Town for three days and feels ill already from the heat and air. He passed on CD's invitation to Charley who is glad to accept and they will accompany CD back when he returns next week.	17 Jul 1859	WC should go to Gad's Hill without him by the train at 9 on Tuesday evening.				For content see to HC 14 July 1859 (B&C I 166-7)
102	17 Jul 1859	Once more, his thanks to his dear friend. As instructed they will get the 9 train and look for the Basket at the station. Hope to see CD himself the next day.			17 Jul 1859	See letter above		
103	3 Aug 1859	He has taken a charming cottage on the Ramsgate Road just outside Broadstairs, nothing between it and the sea, and he hopes they can expect a visit from CD in the six weeks they have let it for. They have it to themselves. He is in the early struggling stages of his story when as many pieces of paper go in the basket as do not and he could not really be said to have started the story, though he has had several false starts.	16 Aug 1859	Should have written last week but has been very busy. Wills got his note this morning - the title of titles! Want to come to Broadstairs but still mired in A Tale of Two Cities. Write when you have time and hopes to hear the problems solved.		15 Aug 1859	WC to Wills: Encloses title and asks "My love to CD. How does he do. When will he write?" (BGLL I 180)	For invitation see WC to Ward 7/8/1859 (B&C I 175). The ms of WIV records it was begun on 15 August 1859 (Pierpont Morgan MA79).

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
104	28 Aug 1859	That is wonderful news. He went at once into the town to talk to Ballard - who was ennobled last Queen's birthday - and the room is booked with writing desk and overlooking the sea. He has been so hard at work his correspondence is behind and CD prevented his reply by his own welcome letter.			25 Aug 1859	He would like to visit on Wednesday [31st] and stay until Monday [5th]. Will he book a room. "What do you mean by not answering my beautiful letter from the office?" (presumably that of 16 August)			CD's visit is described in WC to HC 2 September 1859 (B&C I 177).
105	13 Sep 1859	All good things end and here is the last full day at the Cottage. They repair to London tomorrow and he writes to arrange to meet CD at the HW office on Tuesday morning when they can discuss the work in hand. Since he left evangelists have called and Harriet was rather taken with them and is now trying to convert everyone, to her mother's consternation! How can anyone take the ugly Great Eastern seriously? The boiler explosion has put him off steamships for life.	16 Sep 1859	a word to say that I have received yours, and I look forward to the Reunion on Tuesday" Charmed with [Harriet] why did [Caroline] stop her? Agrees about the ship - he has seen it. Bucolic news from Gad's Hill.					See extensive notes in PILGRIM (IX 123) for content.
106	5 Oct 1859	WC likes and admires <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> so much, the characters, the evocation of Paris and the Terror, the powerful human story. But now that he has read to the end he wonders why CD didn't indicate the connection between Dr Manette and Darnay earlier? "Could it have been done at all, in the way I suggest, to advantage?"	6 Oct 1859	I do not positively say that the point you put..." CD explains why his way was best.					The content of WC's letter is clear from CD's reply which includes 14 words written by WC. <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> ended in AYR on 26 November and was published in one volume on 21 November. It is clear that the story was finished by now - see CD to Regnier 15 October (PILGRIM IX 132 - though CD writes there that only Foster has seen the ending.)
107	6 Jan 1860	With the latest portion, just sent in proof to CD, he has now written up to what he intends to be the conclusion of volume I of <i>The Woman in White</i> . He is not sure how CD has been keeping up with it, perhaps foregoing reading the episodes one by one until there was a complete part to read. In any case, now it is finished he would be glad to be sent his criticism of this first 'book' of the story.	7 Jan 1860	"I have read this book, with great care and attention." CD loves it with one or two caveats. CD would like to write something jointly perhaps to follow WW. "let me see some more when you have enough...to show me".					WC was writing just ahead of the press, about a month in advance of publication. The dramatic conclusion to what would be Vol I - Marian's diary leading up to the marriage of Laura and Glyde - was published in AYR on 4 February. It seems likely from CD's letter that he had not read any of it yet, trusting WC to write and Wills to subedit. It may also have been what WC preferred - see CD to WC 29 July 1860, below. WC wrote later 'The late Mr. Charles Dickens neither read, nor wished to read, a line of <i>The Woman in White</i> before we signed our agreement for the appearance of the work in 'AYR' "To Watt 8 February 1862 (BGLL III 330).
108	26 Jan 1860	Glad to accompany him to both 'performances' and if Yates is there on Saturday even better.			25 Jan 1860	"Let us dine here on Sunday at 5" and details of weekend trip.			Even though WC's 'weekly race with the press is beginning to weigh heavily' on him (To Ward 11/1/1860 BGLL I 189) that letter and the next to Mrs Bicknell (12/1/1860 ditto) show he did still take time off to attend social events. There is no indication in the piece CD wrote (' <i>The Uncommercial Traveller</i> ' AYR 25/2/1860 pp416-421) that he is accompanied but he did book a box (CD to Lane 25/1/1860 PILGRIM IX 201-2).
109	25 May 1860	In sorting out his books in the wonderfully spacious rooms he now has, he realises that he has no copy of <i>The Frozen Deep</i> . Does CD have one he can spare? He also realises that he lent CD his only copy of <i>Antonina</i> when he was so kind some months ago as to say he would like to read WC's first published effort and he wonders if CD would be so kind as to return it if he no longer needs it.			2 Jun 1860	Sends the <i>Frozen Deep</i> prompt book and sends home <i>Antonina</i>			There is clearly a conversation in the middle of this correspondence hence the week between the letters. WC moved into 12 Harley Street in March but was still under the pressure of writing WW.

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111	May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list					
110	26 Jul 1860	Hooray! He has at last written at the end of 490 pages of manuscript written those two noble words The End and it will be delivered to the noble Wills in person.	29 Jul 1860	"my heartiest congratulations on your having come to the of your Aclast labor...I presume that the undersignedAcmay read itnow?"					See to HC 26 July 1860 (B&C I 184).
111	30 Jul 1860	He had indeed heard the sad news after he closed and sent his last. His deepest sympathy and will hear more when they meet on Tuesday.			29 Jul 1860	Let us dine at the office on Tuesday at 5... Perhaps Wills has told you that poor Alfred is dead?			CD's younger brother Alfred Lamert CD died of consumption and pleurisy in Manchester.
112	7 Aug 1860	Accepts his engagement on AYR for two years at 7 gns a week and a 1/8th share of profits.						Extant	Extant letter see B&C I 185. It is likely that Wills negotiated the deal on CD's behalf but WC wrote formally to CD to accept.
113	1 Oct 1860	He has found his letter to greet him on his return from the deep. He is planning a trip to Farnham on Sunday [7 Oct]. Bradshaw permitting, but dinner on 6th would be capital.			26 Sep 1860	He trusts WC is safely back from his call on Neptune and writes to inform the sailor that he is dining with Reade and Wills on Saturday in next week [6 Oct] and hopes WC will join him.			CD's letter is inferred (to Wills "I write by this post to Wilkie, in order that notice of the feast may reach him on his coming to Town" 26/9/1860 PILGRIM IX 319). W/C was sailing with Pigott and Benham and returned on 30 September (see to HC 3 October 1860 BGLL I 212 and to Ward 14 August 1869 BGLL I 208) and to Ward 5 October 1860 BGLL I 213).
114	17 Oct 1860	He arrived late last night after one of the very worst trips in his experience, such a gale, everyone sick - except him of course. Caroline was ill but so brave not complaining at all. They are comfortably ensconced at the Meurice, just a <i>deux</i> after Ward refused to sell a child to pay his £ 4 return fare first class. They dine at the <i>Trois Freres</i> , drink Bordeaux, go to the theatre, and enjoy all that Paris has to offer (well almost!). He will be back in good time for the trip to Penzance if CD will let him have the details.	24 Oct 1860	"I have been down to Brighton to see Forster, and found your letter here on arriving...this morning." What a terrible passage! Hails [Caroline] as Albania Nelsona. What a shame he cannot make the third at the <i>Trois Freres</i> , sleep through plays and enjoy the Meurice. List of delights to do.					WC went to Paris about 14 October returning two weeks later. On 13th he writes to Tennent "I go to Paris tomorrow for the same time" is a fortnight. On 31st he writes to Marston he is "just back from Paris". (B&C I 191). Content is based on CD's long and detailed reply.
115	27 Oct 1860	He has just arrived and replies in haste to agree to meet at the Terminus at 9 o'clock on 1 November. Looks forward to reading the four numbers of AYR which will pass some of the long journey to Penzance. For the rest he will enjoy hearing more about the ghost. And he will tell CD how many of his errands in Paris he was able to perform! Hoping for a calmer return on Tuesday.			24 Oct 1860	"I propose that we start on Thursday morning the 1st. of Novr. The train for Penzance leaves the Great Western Terminus at a quarter past 9 in the morning."			
116	24 May 1861	Flushed with success he was cheered and applauded out of the room. If he can obtain a Daily Telegraph in Dover then he will see a very brief account of it. He had prepared for one toast but found called on to do more and he was surprised how fluent he was. He quite enjoyed it and has already been 'booked' for another by Webster. He hopes that CD has used the free evening well to improve his health and work and when does he expect to return?	24 May 1861	"I am delighted to receive so good an account of last night" sure it was a success. Dull in Dover. Will write at the end of next week, but Wednesday week [5 June] should be booked for the office.					WC had taken the chair at the Newsvendors' Benevolent Institution's annual dinner in CD's place. For WC's account of it see to HC 24 May 1861. And for an account see <i>The Critic</i> 1 June 1861.

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11	May 1851	12 May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.			
117	21 Jun 1861	23 Jun 1861	He is still struggling with the complex scaffolding of his new book. But the poles tumble, the lashings come loose and the boards won't fit. It is not helped by the East wind, as hot as he has known it, blowing through the back of the house to the front and to top it all his old enemy called <i>Luxer</i> has been attacking him again. Don't tell Beard. He honestly thinks time at Gad's Hill hospital will be the best cure if he may and they can discuss the Xmas number and all other things under the cool oaks in the fine ground. Meanwhile he will be at the office on Wednesday when they no doubt will meet.	23 Jun 1861	Will arrange the Xmas no. under the Oaks. Will be in town Thursday and return here with him Friday [28th]. Details when they meet Wednesday.			For content background see to Reade 4 June 1861 and to Ward 27 June 1861 (BGLL I 235, 239) and CD's reply. WC's house, 12 Harley Place, faced west.
118	11 Jul 1861	12 Jul 1861	Arrived Friday and intends to stay only until next Thursday [18th] so hopes CD can visit before then. Broadstairs is filling up with the fine weather, it almost seems the same people showing the same legs as when they last visited. He is under the care of the excellent and noble landlord Ballard at the Albion Hotel and he has the fine room which CD occupied last time. His visit is curtailed by the need to collect material before his trip to Lowestoft where part of his novel will be set.	12 Jul 1861	"It happens very unfortunately that I cannot get to Broadstairs before Thursday." Thought he was staying there for longer but will try to catch him at Lowestoft.			CD calls WC's letter 'amusing' and it was no doubt longer and full of detail about the Broadstairs crowd, some of which is in WC to HC 11 July 1861 (B&C I 196-7)
119	7 Aug 1861	28 Aug 1861	Greetings from Whitby! A fine town, a splendid hotel, and one of the best railway journeys to get there. The line follows the winding valley with the Moors on either side and woods, streams and heath to enchant the traveller. The Royal Hotel has given them the best rooms, he can see the German Ocean, the pier, cliffs and a harbour full of herring boats. That is through three bow windows on one side. On the other another fine window shows him the town and the ruins of Whitby Abbey.	28 Aug 1861	Have been planning to write "ever since I received your letter from Whitby" Hears now from Charley he must be addressed at Harley St. Other news.			For content see to HC and to George Gregson, both dated 7 August BGLL pp241-2.
120	29 Oct 1861	31 Oct 1861	He will send this to Ipswich hoping to be sure of catching him there. He has been thinking of a title and <i>Our Hidden Selves</i> seems to fit the idea. He likes the sketch so far but when the characters enter Mr Traveller (as I will call him) must make his agreement with Mr Mopes at the Gate. And he thinks that a child should be in at the end. How did Norwich go? And the other places in the east?	31 Oct 1861	"I found your letter awaiting me" What pleasure to be working together again. Agree about the compact at the gate. Likes the child. News of how readings have gone.			Clearly WC wrote a long and detailed critique of CD's start on what was to become 'Tom Tiddler's Ground' but we can only hint at what he said from CD's reply. Strangely this is the only letter about the collaboration on this Xmas number.
121	end December 1862		Now that the Xmas number is done and he is getting ahead with No Name, he thinks it is the right time to say that, as CD knows, he will leave AYR to fulfil his contract with Smith, Elder when his present contract expires at the end of July 1862. It is needless to say that he has learned more and gained more from his long association with CD's periodicals than any other aspect of his literary life. He hopes they will work together again.					It is clear from CD's letter of [5] January that WC wrote such a letter around the turn of the year. Although it is not definitely known when he ended his formal agreement the contract agreed in his letter to CD of 7 August 1860 lasted for two years and it is reasonable to expect that he would let it come to an end then. He received two payments after July - one from CD one from Wills - totalling £ 218-2s-2d perhaps in payment for <i>No Name</i> after his contract and the weekly payments ended.

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111	May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list					
122	4 Jan 1862	Thursday should be fine to meet at the office at 6 to let him get his work done. The horrors of the rheumatic gout have returned with a vengeance, though he does not know what he has done to incur its wrath. Now he has got ahead with the book he has a mind to try a new treatment recommended by Beard of complete infusion for eight and forty hours. He had a letter from Wills acknowledging his to say that he would leave AYR when his contract ended in July.	5 Jan 1862	Has to be Friday not Thursday. And at 5.30 not 6 Don't accept Beard's remedies. Re AYR he let Wills reply. Sorry that they part company "but I hope we shall work together again, one day."					
123	8 Jan 1862	Friday at 5.30 is fine. He will consider his points about Beard's treatment but he is desperate. He is sorry too that their literary cooperation is temporarily halted but shares CD's hopes that they will work together again. [For recovered text about Fechter see notes column and BGLL IV 401-2.]			5 Jan 1862	see letter above	9 Jan 1862	CD to Fechter: Quotes long paragraph from WC's letter "received this morning" about Fechter's acting	
124	21 Jan 1862	Now that the first part of the new book is complete, he encloses the proofs for CD to read. As ever he values his opinion above all others (in the absence of public readers!) and he awaits his view. No hurry to return it, he has other copies.	24 Jan 1862	"I have read the book...and as I know you don't want it at once." Gives his view and comments on the proposed titles.					No Name' began in AYR on 15 March 1862. So WC was well ahead. No wonder he was agreeing to have his photograph taken (to Watkins 28 January 1862 BGLL I 254-5). It is probable that there was also a letter to Forster, the Proctors, and possibly Pigott as well. We know they all read it at this time (to HC 4 February 1862 BGLL I 255-6).
125	27 Jan 1862	He has considered his letter over the weekend and thanks him for his encouragement and kind remarks. He has also heard from Wills that he sat up til after 1 am reading it and could not sleep for wanting to know what happens next. Charley and Katie also very positive. He will consider his remarks especially those on adding humour and softening the edges. But still the real problem is the title. He notes CD's preferences and still feels the title - the great title - the title of titles as he called The Woman in White - has not yet been found. Wills's excellent suggestions 'Under a Cloud' has been recently used as the title for a			24 Jan 1862	"Let me hear from you, between this and Thursday morning inclusive, at Radley's Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool"			When WC wrote to his mother on 4 February (BGLL I 255-6) only one of CD's choices, 'Behind the Veil', was included in his possible list of eight on which he sought her opinion. Among the eight was 'Man and Wife' a title WC was to return to in 1870. For the details of how 'No Name' was chosen and stealthily inserted in the story see 'The Naming of No Name' by Virginia Blain <i>Wikie Collins Society Journal</i> IV 1984 pp25-9. The letter she cites there was omitted both from B&C and BGLL and will be included in a later Addenda & Corrigenda.
126	18 Jul 1862	He is now hard at work having had set backs of the stomach and liver variety from the change of location and the appalling weather with gales that would sweep you off your feet - and which even this fortress seems to sway in. The house though is truly magnificent to live in - now that he is in a state to appreciate it. What an astonishing location.	20 Jul 1862	I rejoice to learn that you are all right now" in the house of houses, Georgina's health alarms, "my own old load (of which you know something)" weather, that infernal Church of yours, send second volume to the office, family news					
127	28 Jul 1862	Georgina's illness is distressing. What does Beard say? He would rather not take the whole family over to Dover, as some are not as quickly recovered as he. Better for both his books, so to speak, if CD comes to him as suggested.	30 Jul 1862	Can only now stay Monday due to dinner engagement. Will be with him halfpast 6 Monday in a fly.	27 Jul 1862	Shall he come over on Monday week [4th] and stay til Wednesday. Or would they come to Dover and then return with him? Georgina ill. "Answer to the office: so that I may find your note there on Wednesday"			

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
111	May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list					
128	18 Sep 1862	He encloses the proofs up to the end of the second volume and would as usual appreciate his friend's appraisal - and honesty.	20 Sep 1862	I have gone through the Second Volume at a sitting, and I find it wonderfully fine, then much praise for No Name . One small slip of grammar. Would love to visit again but there may not be time. Can he do anything for the Xmas number? Georgina improving. Personal anxieties. Leech and play.					It is possible that CD got the proofs from Wills at the AYR office without a letter from WC. However, that seems less likely than WC at least giving him the go-ahead, as seems to have been their wont, that a 'volume' was complete.
129	22 Sep 1862	Many thanks for the commentary. If he was the vainest man alive he could not have written such a review of his own work! As for 'lay' and 'laid' his poor father spent £90 a year on his education and he still makes errors of grammar - but then the money only bought Latin and Greek grammar! He will change it at once. He is not sure if he will be able to write for the Xmas number. He is struggling now against the press, having been so well ahead at the start. And various matters of detail, crucial to the plot, have to be researched by Ward and posted to him. They are leaving around the end of October but that could be brought forward to the middle. Glad to hear Georgina improves.			20 Sep 1862	I forget how long you stay there. Will you tell me?"			For WC on CD's letter see to HC 1 October 1862 (B&C I 211) and for his thoughts on education and grammar see to Nina Lehmann 2 February 1887 (B&C I 531-2) and to Hayne 17 August 1885 (BGLL IV 111-12). During this time WC wrote frequently to Ward about the time letters took from London to the continent.
130	6 Oct 1862	The Xmas number looks of great interest but he is really struggling now with the book, and feeling a bit under the weather and he must say no, though it was his dearest hope to work again collaborating with CD. Perhaps CAC can do his load and write two sections for it? Has CD thought of changing the approach slightly....incidentally he was interested to hear in the letter about Mary.	8 Oct 1862	I didn't open your letter 'till I left home this morning. "Concerned he has spent such energy on the Xmas no. never expected him to etc. His suggested change difficult... Mary is returning for Paris next week. Georgina improving, the demon visiting.	4 Oct 1862	Encloses first and last of Xmas number and plan for the others.			WC did not write for the Xmas no. but CAC wrote two pieces.
131	11 Oct 1862	He is on the final stretch but before CD goes to Paris would he look at the proofs of the Fifth scene and let him know what strikes him? He fears there are too many threads in his hand to see clearly how it strikes a new reader. He will have them finished by Monday morning - could CD send round for them and let him know before he goes to Paris? Which is when by the bye?	12 Oct 1862	came home last night and found your letter" Will send Frank for the proofs tomorrow and read them and write again by Tuesday's post. Am leaving for Paris Thursday. Enclosed a story for Xmas No.					CD did write on 14th - once to make 1r5 distinct suggestions many of which WC acted on and again after seeing Beard to commiserate on his health. And offer to take over the end of No Name if he is not able to do so.

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	11 May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
132	16 Oct 1862	No need to worry. He had a very bad turn on Friday last [10 Oct] and it persisted but Beard rushed down and has helped him back to his old facility. If anyone in the world could carry on his book it is CD but relax in Paris, his services will not be required on this occasion. When they do collaborate again it will be on better terms he hopes! He will be returning to London next week as the delays to and fro with proofs are making his problems worse and the incessant rain and the low tide and smell of sewage are all driving him back. He hopes six more weeks and it will be over - if he is not over first! He directs this to Hotel Maurice trusting it will arrive before its intended recipient!			14 Oct 1862	CD wrote two letters - one making about 15 distinct suggestions on the proofs, some of which WC acted on. He then wrote a second after seeing Beard commiserating on WC's health and offering to finish No Name if WC not up to it. "Write to me at Paris at any moment"Ac			For details of weather and tide and return to London see to Ward 14 October 1862 BGLL I 278. This sequence of seven letters is the longest we have deduced.
133	31 Dec 1862	He is delighted to be able to enclose <i>No Name</i> . It was published today - 4000 copies printed and only 400 left at five this afternoon! But his liver torments him still, that wind and rain at Fort House the culprit, and now he is tormented further in his right knee with rheumatic gout. He despairs of what he might do.	1 Jan 1863	"thanks for the book...delighted ...to hear of its wonderful sale" At the office Thursday next week [8th]. Get well now, baths or something.					
134	1 Jan 1863	He writes back at once and heartily reciprocates his new year wishes. 1863! He has hobbled out each day for a half hour but hopes that he can really sort out these problems this year. He had been thinking of visiting Paris himself and Ward has found a suitable billet, but at the moment if he can travel he must go to see his mother who is unwell in Oxford. He has heard good things of the baths at Wildbad and may try them for his ailment. Health permitting he will try to hobble to a cab and get to the office on Thursday next week.			1 Jan 1863	"Will you dine at the office on Thursday in next week at 6?"			We don't know if WC made it to the office but on 15 January he writes to Ward "for the last three days the gout has confined me to my chair" (BGLL I 290) and about his mother's health. CD was in Paris from 15th and in France for a month. WC went to Wildbad for his ailments in May 1863.
135	22 Jan 1863	Sorry to say that on this occasion Paris and CD will have to do without him. He never recalls such pain and he cannot use the foot at all. For a while a cabbage leaf poultice in oiled silk kept it at bay not no more and he is now going to try mesmerism with Dr John Elliotson to see if that will work. Beard has also been ill with Erysipelas and Wilkie has been under the care of another quack who has been prescribing rubbish. He would like to know when he might come to Paris but really it is very unlikely. In any event he will need a more luxurious place than Hotel du Heider, perhaps the Grand Hotel at Louvre with a fine view would suit him, then he could sit in a chair and do nothing but admire the view. Poor John - left to the wickedness of Paris with all the prejudice of the English working class!	29 Jan 1863	"came back here yesterday, and was truly concerned to read your poor account of yourself." Had heard about poor Beard. Will be there until next Wednesday [4th] Paris more wicked than ever. John has no British prejudices!	20 Jan 1863	Delphic reference to his private life and invites WC for when he returns to Paris on 27 or 28. "Whether you come over or no, of course you will write."			On the remedy see to HC 16 January 1863 (B&C I 214-15). On Elliotson see to Beard 30 January 1863 (B&C I 215-16). On hotels and John see CD's reply. This letter and the previous make obscure references to CD's private life and it is clear he was doing something with Ellen Ternan. If the beliefs of the Dickens family that she had a child are true, this is the time they could have been dealing with that event. See for example Lucinda Hawksley <i>Katey</i> London: 2006, p.354, though she gives a different date for the event.

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	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
136	18 Apr 1863	He writes from Aix la Chapelle where he arrived yesterday after leaving Dover on Tuesday [14th]. And if this town's springs do not work he has Wildbad in his sights. He has already tried Dr Caplin's electro-magnetic baths and they did help but he had resolved to try natural remedies. So here he is. Aix is a pleasant town making cloth and needles and looking glasses to admire the result. Factories here are pleasant to look at! This is not the Black Country but it is in a valley. He has yet to try the doctors or the baths - very hot he hears. His ailment the best excuse for missing the Fund dinner! Travelling in France reminds him of the happy time he and CD and Egg spent here. Poor Egg, one in ten thousand. Artist, actor,	22 Apr 1863	"I am heartily glad you have got away at last" He met Dr Caplin a few weeks ago. Glad he is away at last. WC is saved up for Fund dinner next year. News and reminiscences.					CD's long and detailed letter to WC gives a real sense of the chat between two friends separated by a thousand miles. We cannot reconstruct that in the reply. But see to HC 21 April 1863, to CAC 22 April 1863, and to Nina Lehmann 29 April 1863 for his sense of the place (B&C I 219-23)
137	21 May 1863	Apologies for the long gap between his letters but there was nothing to report and he has been following strict instructions to 'rest'. Aix was pleasant but he feels he needs the stronger medicine of Wildbad. Already he likes the bath - clear clean and hot resting on sand, unlike the cloudy sulphurous hell of Aix. If ever a man was prepared for hell it was there. Here in Wildbad the air is full of the balsamic odour of the Black Forest. A band plays, it is a small town full of foreigners, with no other trade. Even the children dance for the arrivals - we still come by carriage as the railway is not yet arrived. Etc. He will write again when the cure is			22 Apr 1863	"Write soon & tell me how you are, and that you are better"			The suggestion is that WC writes back once he has got to Wildbad. Before that there was nothing new to report. No letters from WC are known between 29 April and 21 May. On 21 he wrote at length to his mother (B&C I 223-4) about the place and it also featured in the Prologue of <i>Armada</i> - This reconstruction could have gone on at even greater length given those two sources.
138	2 Jun 1863	Halfway through his treatment he has felt all the pain and none of the benefit. From now on the balance should be reversed. Did he mention that he feels a fraud? Everyone else here is so ill. Some hobble, some clatter with sticks, and then some glide in adult Perambulators and could sweep the halt and lame off their feet if they didn't have their wits about them. [a full and lengthy account]. He hopes to be back in London by 18th after 24 baths. And he looks forward to spending some quiet and tranquil times at Gad's with his friend and telling him all about his trip.							This letter is speculative. He wrote to his mother on 2 June and on 18 June (when he was at Strasbourg having taken another four baths at Wildbad. It is likely he wrote to CD as well on at least one of these occasions and it seems fairly clear from CD's letter of 28 June that he had an interim report and at some stage WC said he looked forward to being back in the quiet of Gad's Hill.
139	28 Jun 1863	He is back! Feeling so much better, the baths took every morsel of gout from him and he will be going back as the doctor there recommended. When is he at the Office?	28 Jun 1863	"Welcome home!-I heartily desire to see you." Wants to hear it all. Can he dine Friday at 5 and then to the play?					
140	29 Jun 1863	There is no point in being better if not to see friends and plays! Yes, yes, yes.			28 Jun 1863	"Give me a word in answer by return."			His good health was not to last.

			date	content	date	content	date	content	
	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
141	4 Aug 1863	Just back from what should have been a month's sailing but after ten days he gave it up. Although it was a fine yacht and Pigott of course the best company, the dampness of the sea air attacked his back without mercy. There is nothing for it now but to go to Italy this winter. Before that he has to visit the Isle of Man as he is erecting the skeleton of his next book, which is of course getting urgent, and between Man and Uomo he hopes he can visit Gad's Hill where his aches and pains always seem relieved. Meanwhile he is having work done on the house and the carpets will be up for as long as the British	9 Aug 1863	"your account of yourself...I rejoice to hear from you" Plans for the winter the best he can make, hope he will visit, news from Gad's Hill.					Date and contents from 'just back' letters to HC and Charles Ward 4 August 1863 (B&C I 228-9, BGLL I 300).
142	23 Sep 1863	The gout has returned once more and his toe is the size of a fist. He cannot walk and until it is better he cannot say definitely when he will be leaving for the Continent, though he hopes it will be the start of October. Whenever it is he is forbidden travelling before his trip to Italy and so will not be able to visit Gad's Hill as he had hoped. Hopes the mighty labours of British workmen are going well. His own bare boards long covered, think Heavens. He will let him know when he leaves and where he can be contacted.	24 Sep 1863	"I hope the abominable gout...will not detain you long" He should go to Europe when he can, girders are up, workmen drink beer.					It is likely that WC wrote to CD prior to this from the Isle of Man which he visited at the end of August. And equally likely that he wrote again to CD to let him know when the gout improved and of his departure date on 3 October. But we have no evidence of that. Within a week he was improved and planning his departure - see to HC 27, 29/30 September 1863 (BGLL I 304-5).
143	4 Dec 1863	He is back in Rome at the comfortable hotel overlooking the Piazza del Popolo. He tried Naples but the stink and vaporious atmosphere drove them back to Rome. Despite the pleasant English summer weather the lameness in his foot grew worse and worse and after consulting locals on the climate around the Bay he returned to Rome. He is not convinced by the attempts to unify the country and on their travels it seemed not to make any difference save to the flags He is feeling better for being in Rome and may stay there for some time. He is keen to know about the Xmas number, how did it do? He thought it very fine (Charles sent him a copy). He hears that CD has started a new book. Tell him about it. He is writing the framework of his new book here and, health permitting, fancies beginning the writing in Florence. Please tell him other news of their friends. Back in the Holy City he still has much he wants to see now he is more ambulant. Harriet was fascinated by the frescos stretching round St Stefano and she was even more fascinated by the 'models' on the steps of Trinita del Mor	25 Jan 1864	"I am horribly behindhand in answering your welcome letter." Xmas no has sold 220,000 copies. Book difficult but he hopes very good. News of friends. Thackeray's death.					It is likely that CD was on the list of people whom WC wrote to on his progress around Europe but this is the first evidence of the correspondence. WC arrived in Rome on 1 November and it is likely that he wrote shortly after that. If so CD was indeed 'horribly behindhand' with his answer. Perhaps more likely that he is replying to a letter from WC when he returned to Rome from Naples around the start of December. The contents are largely from CD's reply and WC's letter to HC 4 Dec 1863 and 8 January 1864 (B&C I 240-2) as well as to Mrs Procter 16 December 1863 (BGLL I 310-12) where WC sets out the details of his whole journey so far.

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	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
144	3 Apr 1864	He has heard from Russell who would like to discuss Garrick business with them. Could CD meet at Harley St on Friday next at three o'clock?	4 Apr 1864	Of course he can meet with Russell at Harley St on Friday next [8 Oct].			4 Apr 1864	WC to George Russell: "CD's answer has just reached me. We meet at my rooms here, at three o'clock, on Friday next."	There were at this time plans to reform the Garrick Club which was building expensive new premises. The three of them were involved in these discussions - see PILGRIM X xi. For WC to Russell see BGLL I 315 and 316 n4
145	8 Sep 1864	"I shall never get to Gadshill at all, if I wait for a proper opportunity." Asks if he has a room from Saturday. Has to move.	8 Sep 1864	Of course he can come for a few days from Saturday.				Extant	One of the three physically extant letters to CD which shows that at this time he addresses him as he always has 'My dear CD' but signs off 'Ever yours affly' a form of words which at this time was otherwise reserved exclusively for his mother and his close friend Edward Pigott. The CD reply is not extant. But on 9th WC writes to his mother that he is 'going tomorrow' to Gad's Hill for a few days (B&C I 250)
146	7 Oct 1864	He is with his mother at Tunbridge Wells. She is fretting about where Charley and Katie are and that they are taking care. He really fancies a trip to Paris himself. Would CD be free for it?	9 Oct 1864	He can't make Paris but if WC merely wants a change of air and an excuse to get away from Tunbridge Wells which is not London, he and the family are staying in Dover at the Lord Warden hotel from Friday probably for nearly a week.			12 Oct 1864	CD to Georgina Hogarth: "Old Mrs Collins is fretting about Charley, and Wilkie is with her. He wrote from Tunbridge Wells to ask me if I could go to Paris with him? I replied No, but told him we were going to Dover, if that would do. He proposes to join us on Saturday."	CD's letter to GH is evidence of two letters from WC to CD and one from CD to WC.
147	10 Oct 1864	Dover sounds capital. He will join them on Saturday and stay until Thursday if he may. Would CD secure him the best room there is?							See note above. We know that WC was there from Saturday 15 October and left on Thursday 20th (see to HC 19 October 1864 B&C I 251-2).
148	12 Jan 1866	He has had problems with the printer, problems getting the copy the right length, still behind following the wretched damp winter which set him back before Christmas. But he has just sent off the proofs for the March instalment. So he has asked for a spare set to be sent to CD at once. He thinks there will be three more numbers. And CD shall have them as soon as he may. After it is ended he plans a long rest but after that who knows? Some joint work with CD would be most welcome and he is as ever grateful that the pages of AYR remain open to him.			10 Jan 1866	"Proofs, Proofs, Proofs! - [Where are the Armadale proofs I was to have? O where and O where!-&c." Invites him back to work with CD on AYR.			For progress on Armadale see to Enoch 12 January 1866 (BGLL II 24) and to HC 6 February 1866 (BGLL II 25). On the winter see to Nina Lehmann [as to Mrs E.M.Ward] 6 December 1865 (B&C I 260). WC later worked with CD on No Thoroughfare in 1867 and wrote The Moonstone for AYR in 1868.
149	1 Jun 1866	At last he has his own copies of <i>Armadale</i> and can send that which he could not bring down to Portsmouth for the reading on 25 May. He would be glad to hear what he thinks by and bye.	3 Jun 1866	I think the close extremely powerful ..."					We know of CD's reply from WC to HC 4 June 1866 where he quotes it at length (B&C II 275). It is possible, though the dates make it less likely, that WC took <i>Armadale</i> with him to Portsmouth.

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	11 May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
150	8 Jul 1866	Sends the play of <i>Armada</i> and would be glad of CD's comments. Please treat it as highly confidential and return it by hand. Two questions -- he will see he has rewritten in ms a part of the play. Is it an improvement? And should he change the narration (on pxx) to act out the events? He has read the proofs of Trollope's piece and comments on the embrace of Margaret and change in her feelings towards the child. He has had a letter from a reader asking if Aunt Margaret is written by Mrs Brookfield?	10 Jul 1866	"I have gone through the play very carefully" Comments at length on dramatic <i>Armada</i> . Doubts if an English audience would accept parts of it. "In reference to your two questions..." Disagrees about Trollope. Comments on Mrs Brookfield!					In the event WC did not attempt to have this version performed. He rewrote it as <i>Miss Gwilt</i> in 1875.
151	12 Jul 1866	Asks he cannot visit on 21st as he will be travelling to the Isle of Wight for sailing with Pigott and Benham.			10 Jul 1866	At ten minutes past 2 on the said Saturday in next week, I purpose coming down here. Can you come with me?" [i.e. 21 July].			See to HC 24 July 1866 (B&C II 278-9)
152	3 Oct 1866	Does CD know if the scenery they used for <i>The Frozen Deep</i> was painted over or still exists as he thinks it would help the painter working on the scenery for the professional performance at the Olympic to see it. He hopes the play will work on the professional stage. People he has talked to are sceptical if it will sustain. On 17th of the month he leaves for Italy and hopes to spend the winter there. So no chance of any collaborative writing on an Xmas no. Before he leaves he is visiting his mother and friends in the country so regrets he will not be able to take his leave in person.	4 Oct 1866	None of the scenery was painted over" It was cut up as decoration for Tavistock House and is now in Chapman Hall's warehouse but would be of little help "Retain your last faith"					It is unlikely that WC would not have written to CD from Italy and on his return but no evidence of these letters exists.
153	8 Feb 1867	He writes to Gad's Hill not knowing quite where CD will be from day to day. Has he read Reade's latest novel? There is a move to prosecute him for indecency. The most ridiculous charge but if there should be a trial would CD stand as witness? If not in person in writing? How is the latest tour going? It seemed a very heavy programme of travelling. He would like to meet when CD is free but he plans to visit Paris towards the end of February to discuss the Paris production of <i>The Frozen Deep</i> with R. gnier. When is CD in London?	12 Feb 1867	Coming back here yesterday, I found your letter awaiting me" Has not read Reade's latest. Cannot be a witness as he is off to Scotland then to Ireland. Fresh as can be expected, but hates railways since Staplehurst. At St James's Hall a fortnight today. Can they meet then?					CD's movements make it likely that WC wrote around 8 February so the letter arrives after CD has left for Bath on 7 or 8.
154	13 Feb 1867	Sorry that he can't meet at St James's. On his present plans he will be in Paris by then as he plans to leave the Saturday before that date.			12 Feb 1867	"I shall be at St James's Hall... perhaps we can have a word"			For WC's Paris plans see to Beard 13 Feb and to Moschelles 20 Feb (BGLL II 65).
155	11 Mar 1867	Back from Paris he finds CD's letter about Reade. May he show it to Reade? It may assist him. R. gnier full of energy and ideas and he is confident that the play will be staged as a great success. The frightful cold in Paris concerned him at first but the threatened gout did not occur. He will give a full account when they meet. When might that be?	13 Mar 1867	"By all means let Reade see my letter" He is off to Ireland. Glad to hear of R. gnier.	20 Feb 1867	"I have read Charles Reade's book, and here follows my state of mind -- as a witness -- respecting it." He finds it "extremely coarse and disagreeable". Brief news of tour.			CD's letter of 20 Feb is a further response to WC's of 8 Feb. WC responds and CD replies on 13 March. The long gaps are due to their travels - CD reading and WC in Paris.

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111	May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851 "My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
156	2 May 1867	In principle he would be delighted to work with CD on the Xmas no., taking half each. As long as it would not interfere with a project he was going to put to CD. He would be delighted if his next Story, which has been forming in his mind and which he will send a summary of shortly, could appear in AYR. Could both be accommodated? And of course they still need a trip to Paris together! PS He has it in mind to begin the story sooner rather than later as it is all in his head.	4 May 1867 "On reading your letter (and particularly Postscript) with attention" Delighted they will be working together.	1 May 1867	Would he like to work together on a Xmas no. for AYR? "I shall be at Gad's from Saturday to Monday... after that, either Gad's or the Office will find me."			
157	6 May 1867	Will take his hand on Wednesday and they can discuss all the details then.		4 May 1867	"I shall be here on Wednesday at One o'clock, and shall be glad to take that – or any – occasion – of joining hands upon it."			
158	24 Aug 1867	Thanks him for the news and the idea of the plot. He is in the middle of moving but is at CD's service when he is ready to say what he wants him to do.	28 Aug 1867 "I am now ready for you to come into the story..."	23 Aug 1867	Has done overture and suggests how the story might go.	24 Aug 1867	WC to HC: "You shall hear again as soon as I hear from CD"	The letter of 23 August does not specifically ask for a reply. But evidence that a reply is sent is in WC to HC 24/8/67 (B&C II 291 - misdated see BGLL II 80)
159	28 Aug 1867	He will see him Friday but cannot come down Monday. Tuesday is the earliest and he could stay to Thursday or Friday. They can then make a good start on the story.		28 Aug 1867	come to the office on Friday [30th]... Reade is coming down on Monday...can you come with him"			See to HC 2 Sept (BGLL II 83) for CD's trip to Gad's Hill.
160	9 Sep 1867	Makes suggestions for the introduction of Obenreizer into the story. When is he free to meet? And when does he want WC to write?	10 Sep 1867 "Odd that we should...write cross letters" Meet on Friday. Unless he prefers Thursday at the Athenaeum. Very anxious to finish as if he goes to America it will be soon.					
161	11 Sep 1867	Thursday at the Athenaeum would suit.		10 Sep 1867	"If Thursday...write by return. If Friday, - don't write."			WC was in Southborough with his mother during this exchange. He wrote to her on Thursday 12th "I am just back from dining at the Club with CD"
162	20 Sep 1867	His letter has just reached him in Highgate staying with the Lehmann's to get some quiet from the workmen who have still not finished the work on his new house. He is grateful to CD for his work with Chapman and with Smith. He is also working slowly - at the pace of a snail with gout in his single foot. Not that the Lehmann's are unkind - quite the opposite he is distracted by their kindness at every turn. He is thinking out the next act at odd times.	23 Sep 1867 "Like you, I am working with snail-like slowness." Here is an idea for WC's at-odd-times-thinking-out of last act. Will write before Friday. "I see a great chance for Act II.--Don't you?"	18 Sep 1867	"Chapman came here yesterday..." Negotiations with him and with Smith. "I am jogging on (at the pace of a wheelbarrow propelled by a Greenwich Pensioner)"			Although CD's letter does not demand a reply, one is evidenced by CD's reply to it of 23 September. For WC's movements see to HC 25 September 1867 (B&C II 293-4). For his difficulty at working in friends' homes see 'Save me from my Friends' HW 16 January 1858 XVII 97-102. CD presages another letter by 28th and WC could reply to it.
163	3 Oct 1867	What has happened with Marguerite and Vendale? Explains how he thinks the denouement should go. When is he going to America as that is the absolute deadline for finishing?	5 Oct 1867 Marguerite and Vendale. Sees denouement as WC does. Does not go until 9 November. "Whenever you may give me notice of your being ready we will appoint to meet"					WC's letter of 3 October could be a reply to CD's of 23 September and the later letter promised in that of around 28th.
164	7 Oct 1867	Sends more copy.	9 Oct 1867 "Will you notice, in the chapter..." Comments on it.					
165	10 Oct 1867	Why should Obenreizer not die in an avalanche? That would be suitably dramatic and avoid the need for guilt on the part of the others? This is it now really and they should go to Gad's Hill to finish it off. Tonight he goes to the Lehmanns' and will stay. So he can meet him at the office tomorrow afternoon.	10 Oct 1867 That suits CD.	9 Oct 1867	"I am racking my brains for a good death" for Obenreizer.	11 Oct 1867	WC to HC: "I am going to Gad's Hill this afternoon with CD to finish the Christmas number."	CD's reply of 10 October is inferred from WC to HC of 11 October.

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111	May 1851	Asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
166	6 Dec 1867	Encloses the completed play. It is essential that it is brought out simultaneously in New York and London. He has benefited in point of health from his large airy rooms and the dry soil on which his new house is built. His questions. Should he explain the mechanism of the clock or just the outcome? Should Vendale and Marguerite remain on the stage? And should Obenreizer die on stage from laudanum rather than offstage in an avalanche? Should the play end there? He is not sure if Mme D'Or is needed or not. But He leaves it the decisions "at your sole discretion" .	24 Dec 1867	The play is too long, he doubts its success. Answers the three points and asks "what do you mean by the whole thing being left 'at my sole discretion'"	28 Nov 1867	Needs plots and the play of <i>No Thoroughfare</i> and ideas that Fechter has. "I shall want them as soon as I can possibly have them"			Although it seems unlikely that CD's letter of 28 November arrived in time for reply a mere eight days later on 6 December, WC to HC on 6 December makes it clear that he is writing by the mail on 7 December enclosing the play. That may be a coincidence or there may be a later letter that was sent to which CD replied on 24 December, but here it is assumed that this is the reply to WC's of 6 December.
167	26 Dec 1867	He writes at the end of an exhausting but wonderful day. The play was an immense success. The audience were delighted with it and all the actors - especially Fechter but also Miss LeClercq as Marguerite and Henry Neville as Vendale - superb. He has spent much time with his mother who is suffering badly from the bitter cold winter and for whose health he fears. He also writes to ask if he would be so kind as to call on one of the brothers Harper and say that he is behindhand with <i>The Moonstone</i> - and that he fears he will not be able to send the copy 50 clear days in advance. Instead it will be just six weeks. He hopes that will not cause him any problems .	12 Jan 1868	Delighted the play has been such a success. Expected the change to the 4th act "of which you tell me in your letter received yesterday." No chance of a production in NY, went to Harper who can cope with six weeks if he gets a plot direction for the illustrators. Sorry to hear of his poor mother. Readings going well but he looks forward to returning. Visit to murder scene.	2 Dec 1867	More about copyright.			See to HC 27 December 1867 and to Henrietta Ward 28 December (BGLL II 99). The phrasing of CD's letter of 12 January indicates that WC wrote twice in a short space of time - the second letter informing CD of the change to the end of the fourth act and reminding him of the need to visit Harper. CD answers both on 12 January.
168	27 Dec 1868	He writes again first to say that he did make the alteration to the end of the 4th Act so that Obenreizer does die on stage - from laudanum. Also he does need an answer from Harper - perhaps by telegraph?							
169	11 Jan 1868	He writes at the end of the second week. He was too afraid to see the play after the first wonderful night but he went back tonight and the audience is still overwhelmed by it, applauding till their hands ache. They will be rich from it! " Fechter is magnificent " in another scene " his superb playing brings the house down " " I should call even his exit in the last act one of the subtlest and finest things he does in the piece... " You can hardly imagine what he gets out of the part, or what he makes of his passionate love for Marguerite. " Behind the scenes the actors are excited and the machinery and sets work well. Has he heard from Mr Barrett about the possible staging in New York? It is such a success that he is confident it will still be playing when CD returns to London. Write and tell him how the readings are going.	31 Jan 1868	" Your letter dated on the eleventh reached me here this morning. " Delighted with account of play. Has heard nothing of Barrett. Pirates abound. Smaller halls for readings.					The quotes are recovered from CD to Fechter 24/2/1868 (PILGRIM XII 56) "In a letter I had from him, dated the 10th of January" CD goes on to say "these expressions, and many others like them, crowded his letter." Despite the date confusion it is likely WC wrote one letter on this occasion. He clearly gives CD an account of what goes on behind the scenes in the play which is hard to reconstruct. The rest is reconstructed from CD's reply and other information. On 17 January WC writes to HC "The Play goes on wonderfully. Every night the theatre is crammed." (BGLL II 105).
170	5 Jun 1868	He gets on well, another three weeks should do it. The book will end with the 32nd or 33rd part. His teeth have been giving him trouble but he cannot see Gregson until his labours are over. Excellent news from Paris, many thanks, he would so have liked to visit himself. But he had every confidence in what CD and Fechter had done with it.			4 Jun 1868	"You are getting on, I hope?" He is just back from three days in Paris and the piece [L'Abime] a great success.			For content see to Harper 6 June 1868 (BGLL II 115-16) to Gregson 8 July 1868 (BGLL II 117).

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111	May 1851	asks if Charles Ward can have a ticket to the performance of <i>Not So Bad as We Seem</i> on 27 May	12 May 1851	"My only hesitation in the matter is this". Not completely sure as Edward Ward and wife already on the list.					
171	8 Jul 1868	He writes at once to thank him for the letter. He has asked de Mussy to visit Gad's Hill and also asks if he has any objection to Beard examining him. All three of them may well arrive shortly after this letter.			7 Jul 1868	He is sorry to alarm him but he should know that Charley is very ill with terrible pains in his gut, awake all night and vomiting...	8 Jul 1868	WC to de Mussy: "I have received a very alarming account of my brother today" in a letter from CD	It is not known if WC went to Gad's Hill as he suggested in his letter to de Mussy. He was certainly back home on 11th.
172	7 Dec 1868	How are the readings going? Has CD developed the ending of <i>Oliver Twist</i> into a reading as WC suggested? He has read the first number of the New Series of AYR. He enjoyed CD's account of being on board the steamer - it reminded him of sailing to Italy with CD and Egg all those years ago. He enjoyed the first part of Fitzgerald's 'Zero' and was most interested in the idea he has had. Will be interested in seeing how he works it out. He is working hard on a new play which he has great hopes for and which should open in March. It is a daring new and original idea, well developed from Fechter's original thoughts. For now, the dramatic	8 Dec 1868	Hard at work, developing <i>Oliver</i> but not performing until the New Year, weather. "I am glad to hear that you like the steamer" "P.S.-I have read the whole of Fitzgerald's 'Zero', and the idea is exceedingly well wrought out."			12 Dec 1868	CD to Fitzgerald "Fatal Zero goes on famously...I had a letter from Wilkie Collins yesterday, much interested in perceiving your idea and in following your working out of it."	Although CD says to Fitzgerald that he had a letter from WC 'yesterday', it seems likely that he is referring to the same letter of 7 December rather than another in reply to his of 8 December. But if CD is accurate about the date, it is evidence of another pair of letters with WC questioning what Zero was about and then seeing CD's PS makes the comments quoted by CD to Fitzgerald. WC's content is largely from CD's reply of 8 Dec.
173	14 Feb 1869	At last he has finished his new play in good time for its opening on 29 March. He would like to hear CD's views.	15 Feb 1869	"I have read the play with great attention" Likes it. Here are a few suggestions.					
174	16 Feb 1869	Many thanks for his suggestions which he will consider as the play develops in rehearsal.			15 Feb 1869	See letter above			In fact WC adopted very few of CD's suggestions - see PILGRIM XII 289-90 notes.
175	26 Jan 1870	Charley will bring this letter with a formal one which makes clear that the copyright in all the pieces I wrote in HW and AYR remains mine. Sorry to ask for this but he needs to be free to negotiate new deals on some of them and he might as well include them all. Charley will bring it because he is confined to his room, suffering from a blinding attack of gout in the eye, hence the hand of this letter is that of his amanuensis to whom he has dictated it.	27 Jan 1870	"Within, you will find the original draft...with my version of the same under my hand." Concerned to hear of his bad attack					For gout see WC to Tindell 25 January 1870 (BGLL II 170). From then and up to 21 February all WC's known letters were in the hand of Carrie Graves. It is possible that WC replied, not least about his health, in Carrie's hand.

A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins

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In the issue for February 1857 of the New York *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, there appeared a short, dramatic narrative of a young woman's bravery, entitled "The Siege of the Black Cottage".¹ The story was published unsigned, and it has subsequently been claimed for both Elizabeth Gaskell and Wilkie Collins. My objectives here are first to confirm the bibliographical status of this tale, and then to suggest what can be learned from the confusion over authorship concerning the interaction of the publishing format and literary form of shorter fiction around the middle of the nineteenth century.²

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Founded in 1817, well before there was any American law to protect the copyright of aliens, the New York literary house of Harper had long specialized in reprinting fiction originally published in Britain, with or without authorization. In the early 1840s, at the time of Charles Dickens's first visit to the United States, Harper & Brothers were still known as "the redoubtable champions of literary piracy" (Barnes, p. 80), though not long afterwards they acquired a London agent, Sampson Low, and began to offer payment to English authors whenever there was an economic incentive to do so. In June 1850, only a couple of months after the appearance in London of the first issue of *Household Words*, the New York house had started its own literary miscellany, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*. With each issue containing nearly 150 double-column pages, including a generous supply of quality illustrations, and selling at only a quarter, this represented even better value than Dickens's twopenny plain weekly paper. A major reason was doubtless the magazine's policy of "transfer[ing] to its pages as rapidly as they may be issued all the continuous tales of Dickens, Bulwer, Croly, Lever, Warren, and other distinguished contributors to British Periodicals".³ Indeed, two of the

¹ "The Siege of the Black Cottage", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 14:81 (February 1857) pp. 334-41. A searchable facsimile edition of the volumes of *Harper's New Monthly* for 1850-1899 is available on Cornell University Library's webpages. Go to: <<http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>>. Last visited: 12 March 2006.

² This article is based upon a guest lecture under the title "Other Tales", given at the Annual Conference of the Japan Gaskell Society, held at Waseda University, Tokyo, on 2 October 2005. I am grateful to the other participants for their helpful and encouraging comments.

³ "A Word at the Start", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 1:1 (June 1850) pp. 1-2.

lengthier items in the opening issue were the first serial installment of *Maurice Tiernay* and the complete narrative of “Lizzie Leigh,” lifted from the April issue of the *Dublin University Magazine*, and the first three numbers of *Household Words*, respectively. Both on the paper cover of the June issue and in the index to the bound volume containing the first six, *Maurice Tiernay* was correctly assigned to Charles Lever, while “Lizzie Leigh” was ascribed mistakenly to Dickens rather than to Elizabeth Gaskell. It is now difficult to ascertain whether or not the mistake was intentional.⁴

Though it appeared along with a number of unsigned sketches of local origin, like the satirical “Pursuit of a Wife” (p. 346-56) set in New York, “The Siege of the Black Cottage” itself was clearly from the pen of a British author. The heroine Bessie, a stone-mason’s daughter without “a farthing of money of her own”, acts as the narrator of her own story which is set “in the midst of a moor in the West of England”. The main events take place when the eighteen-year-old Bessie is left alone at night in an isolated cottage, and acts with unexpected courage and ingenuity to protect the money left in her care by a wealthy neighbour from a violent gang of ruffians. This narrative opens:

To begin at the beginning, I must take you back to the time after my mother’s death, when my only brother had gone to sea, when my sister was out at service, and when I lived alone with my father . . .

But there is also a frame narrative, beginning:

Young Lady, As you were leaving my house, I accidentally heard you ask your sister if it was true that I had begun life as the daughter of a poor working stone-mason of the lowest degree . . .

In this the adult Bessie, now “wife of one of the largest and richest gentlemen-farmers” in the area, explains to a young visitor, curious about her humble origins, how her social advancement came as an indirect reward for her heroic performance during the siege. The tale’s underlying theme is indeed a questioning, at once restrained and persistent, of the conventionally assigned class and gender roles of the mid-Victorian period. Although there is apparently no reference to the story among the author’s private papers, it is not difficult to find parallels, whether of setting, characterization, plot or subject, elsewhere among the shorter works of fiction by Gaskell. On the basis of the textual evidence, then, claiming the story for her does not seem unreasonable.

⁴ Typically for that period, neither *Maurice Tiernay* nor “Lizzie Leigh” was signed in its original British periodical appearance; the first signed British volume editions appeared only in 1852 and 1855, respectively. *Household Words* carried the legend “Conducted by Charles Dickens” prominently on its masthead, and, either for that reason or because his name would sell more copies, unauthorized American reprints of material from that journal by other authors often identified Dickens as author. For example, Wilkie Collins’s tale “Sister Rose”, appearing in *Household Words* from 7-28 April 1855, was reprinted in the same year as a slim volume by Peterson of Philadelphia under Dickens’s name. Indeed, in May 1850 *Lizzie Leigh* had appeared in a similar volume carrying Dickens’s name, from Dewitt and Davenport in New York; according to Smith (pp. 27-34), the story “continued to appear under Dickens’s name in America as late as the 1870s”.

The source of the ascription to Gaskell appears to be the Harpers themselves. Though there was no indication of provenance on the February 1857 magazine cover, or in the index to the bound volume appearing in the May, in mid-1870 the New York house issued a cumulative index where “The Siege of the Black Cottage” and the name of “Mrs E.C. Gaskell” were linked together in the alphabetical lists of both authors and works (*Index to Harper’s Monthly*, pp. 191 & 371).⁵ This attribution still has a certain currency today. The rapid growth of academic interest during recent decades in both Victorian women’s writing and Victorian periodicals has inevitably encouraged a search for lost work. Most notable for our purposes is the 1981 article by Unsworth and Morton, which attributes eight new items to Gaskell, based mainly on stylometric analysis.⁶ It is then perhaps unsurprising that many modern Gaskell scholars have been keen to add “The Siege of the Black Cottage” to the total. Mitsuharu Matsuoka includes the tale in his listing of shorter works of fiction by the author, though he notes that this is an “uncertain attribution”; Linda Hughes and Michael Lund (p. 118), on the other hand, discuss the story confidently as a product of Gaskell’s pen.

Yet there is incontrovertible evidence that the story was written by Wilkie Collins.⁷ It was reprinted under the author’s name as “Brother Owen’s Story of the Black Cottage,” the first tale in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859), a collection of ten set within a frame narrative, which was published in October 1859 in three volumes from Hurst & Blackett. There, it is true, the original frame of Bessie’s address to the young visitor is stripped away. Instead we find the Sheherazade-like conceit of an elderly lawyer and his two brothers spinning stories to detain his beautiful young ward, so that his absent son will have time

⁵ The author entry for Gaskell again overlooked “Lizzie Leigh” which remained assigned to Dickens, but correctly identified three other works – “A Love Affair at Cranford,” March 1852, “The Doom of the Griffiths”, January 1858, and “An Incident at Niagara Falls,” June 1858. The Cranford episode, originally appearing unsigned in *Household Words* on 3 January 1852, was reprinted under Gaskell’s name as chs. 3-4 in the 1853 single-volume edition from Chapman & Hall. The two 1858 items had both appeared in *Harper’s Monthly* signed “Mrs Gaskell”: “The Doom of the Griffiths” had been purchased through Sampson Low, while “An Incident at Niagara Falls” seems to have been “transferred” from Gaskell’s edition of Maria S. Cummins’s *Mabel Vaughan*, which had appeared as a single volume from Routledge in 1857.

⁶ See Anna Unsworth & A. Q. Morton. “Mrs Gaskell Anonymous: Some Unidentified Items in *Fraser’s Magazine*”, *Victorian Periodicals Review* 14 (Spring 1981) pp. 24-31. In the 1999 CD-ROM edition of the *Wellesley Index*, the six items attributed on internal evidence alone are flagged as uncertain. Both Angus Easson in the Gaskell entry in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, 3rd ed. IV (1999), pp. 1291-1301, and Joanne Shattock in her edition of *The Works of Elizabeth Gaskell* (10 vols; London: Pickering & Chatto, 2005-6), take a similarly cautious approach. See Joanne Shattock, “The New Complete Edition of the Works of Elizabeth Gaskell”, *Gaskell Society Journal* 19 (2005), pp. 100-106, especially pp. 104-5.

⁷ The fact that the attribution to Gaskell was spurious and the true author was Collins is indeed noted in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, 3rd ed., IV pp. 1299-1300, though there Easson traces the origin of the mistake only back to the 1885 edition of the cumulative index to *Harper’s Monthly*.

to return from the Crimean War to claim her heart. This opens:

WE were three quiet, lonely old men, and SHE was a lively, handsome young woman, and we were at our wits' end what to do with her. . . .

Yet the text of the main narrative remains the same in all but the most minor details, and opens unmistakably, "To begin at the beginning, I must take you back to the time after my mother's death . . .". What remains uncertain is how the New York publishers obtained the story, since the pattern does not match that of any of the three other pieces by Collins carried by *Harper's Monthly* during the 1850s. These were two anecdotes in April 1851, reprinted without authorization from the volume *Rambles Beyond Railroads*, and "A Marriage Tragedy" in February 1858, which the New York firm had clearly purchased from the author via Sampson Low. Like "The Black Cottage" itself, "A Marriage Tragedy" appeared first in *Harper's Monthly* and was later incorporated into *The Queen of Hearts*, as "Brother Griffith's Story of a Plot in Private Life". When it was published in New York, though, "A Marriage Tragedy" was clearly signed and headed "Written Exclusively for Harper's Magazine," as indeed was Gaskell's "Doom of the Griffiths" the previous month. It is difficult to explain both these variations and how the editors came eventually to attribute Collins's tale to Gaskell. Amongst Collins's surviving correspondence, there is only a single reference to the story, in a letter written to the editor of the *Athenaeum* objecting a review of *The Queen of Hearts*, on the grounds that it dismissed the book as merely "a reprint from Household Words":

If the critic in question will be so obliging as to open the book, he may make acquaintance with three stories ("The Black Cottage," "The Biter Bit," [first published in the Boston *Atlantic Monthly*] and "A Plot in Private Life") which he has not met with before in Household Words, or in any other English periodical whatever; and he will, moreover, find the whole collection of stories connected by an entirely new thread of interest which it has cost me some thought and trouble to weave for the occasion,

(26 October 1859, *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, I p. 181)

While this suggests that Collins had in fact authorized the publication of "The Black Cottage" in New York, it does not otherwise help to explain the confusion over authorship.

* * * * *

I have described this affair in some detail not only to set the bibliographical record straight, but also because it can tell us a good deal about the earlier Victorian market for shorter fiction in general, and Dickens's impact upon it in particular. In other words, the simple question, "Was 'The Siege of the Black Cottage?'" written by Gaskell or Collins?", leads to another and more complex one: "How is it possible for informed observers to confuse the work of writers as different as Gaskell and Collins?" For, while it is true that the two authors may coincide in their probing of the boundaries of social class, and in their depiction of strong female characters, in almost all other respects

their positions seem strongly opposed. This remains true whether we focus on the generation to which they belonged, their social background, gender identity, regional affiliation, religious beliefs, or literary style. Things become clearer if we consider whether it would have been possible to confuse the authorship of full-length novels by Gaskell and Collins, say *Wives and Daughters* and *Armada*, whose initial serial runs in the *Cornhill Magazine* happened to overlap to a considerable extent.⁸ The answer must, of course, be a resounding negative. Here it is important to recognize a further commonality, the complex influence of Dickens as editor and publisher, at the same time empowering and overbearing, on the development of their early literary careers. Nevertheless, we must note that this influence was less crucial regarding novel serialization in the case of Gaskell at least, none of whose full-length narratives were to appear in either of Dickens's weekly miscellanies after the problems in 1854 with *North and South*. These left the author convinced that the form of the work had been distorted, that "[e]very page was grudged" to her so that she was "compelled to desperate compression" (to Anna Jameson, [Jan 1855], *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, #225, pp. 328-9). In contrast, the form of Collins's mature sensation novels was shaped to a considerable extent by the fact that four out of five of them, from *The Dead Secret* (1857) through to *The Moonstone* (1868), appeared initially in weekly installments in *Household Words* or *All the Year Round*; and here there was relatively little in the way of tension with the editor. In the space remaining, I thus wish to consider the impact of publishing format on literary form, in relation to the shorter fiction produced by Gaskell and Collins in the course of their literary careers.

* * * * *

So far I have consciously avoided using the term "short story". This is because, in Britain at least, the phrase did not come into common use until late in the nineteenth century, when it was associated with the aesthetics of early modernism with its preference for realism, irony and compression. Around this time, there appeared a number of articles claiming that the form had originated in America, where short narratives of local colour had long been popular. Yet there was clearly no shortage of British shorter fiction earlier in the Victorian period, especially in periodicals.⁹ There the term "tale" was still preferred for narratives that tended either to function as fillers between the runs of full-length installment novels, or to be associated with the Christmas season, which thus imparted a distinctly gothic flavour. (A similar argument can be made concerning the terms "novella" and "novelette"; until the *fin de siècle* the

⁸ *Wives and Daughters* ran in 18 parts from August 1864 until January 1866, while *Armada* appeared in 20 parts from November 1864 to June 1866. The overlap was thus of 14 months including the whole of 1865.

⁹ See, for example, Bret Harte, "The Rise of the 'Short Story'", *Cornhill Magazine* NS 7 (July 1899) pp. 1-8; or "Editor's Study", *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 112 (March 1906) pp. 638-40, where it was stated that: "The short story is peculiarly an American institution" (p. 638). See also Keating (p. 39), where he suggests that the term "short story" was "first coined by the American critic Brander Matthews in an article in the *Saturday Review*, July 1884".

latter is far more commonly found.)¹⁰ This is only one among a number of dissatisfactions with Harold Orel's monograph *The Victorian Short Story* (1986), which remains the most detailed historical treatment of the subject. Another is that, while Orel recognizes the importance to the changing aesthetics of shorter fiction of "the development of mass-circulation periodicals" (p. 184), his book is extremely short on detailed knowledge of publishing history. In the twenty years since Orel's work appeared, of course, the study of what is now often called "print culture" has become a burgeoning academic enterprise. Here I can mention briefly only three among many relevant projects: first, Simon Eliot's bibliometric work on nineteenth-century publishing trends, which shows how the Christmas season gradually emerged as the climax of the publishing year (Eliot, esp. pp. 26-42); next, my own work on popular fiction serialization from the mid-century, which shows the growing importance of both the weekly installment and the newspaper as a venue for it (Law, esp. pp. 3-38); and last, John Plunkett's works on the reign of Victoria as the first "Media Monarchy", which shows how important the illustrated press then was in melding the concepts of bourgeois family and nation state (Plunkett, esp. pp. 1-12). In their different ways, all three help us to understand that Dickens's impact on the growth of mass-circulation journals was determined not just by his massive talent and personality, but also by the fact that his editorial projects captured the spirit of the age.

By any calculation, even excluding "novelettes" like Gaskell's *The Moorland Cottage* and Collins's *Mr Wray's Cash-Box*, both writers produced well over fifty works of shorter fiction, of which a large proportion made their first appearance in either *Household Words* or *All the Year Round*. In fact their careers as writers of tales run in parallel fashion to a remarkable extent. Both made their early appearances in monthly journals edited by others (Gaskell in *Howitt's Journal* and Collins in *Bentley's Miscellany*, most notably), and defected late in their careers to George Smith's *Cornhill*, a rather more prestigious and remunerative venue, but in between they remained very faithful to Dickens's cheap weekly miscellanies. In Gaskell's case this phase spanned from "Lizzie Leigh" (*HW*, 30 March 1850, the first number) to "Crowley Castle" (*AYR*, Christmas 1863); in Collins's from "A Terribly Strange Bed" (*HW*, 24 April 1852) to a share in *No Thoroughfare* (*AYR*, Christmas 1867). Within these periods, among the most telling tales were those appearing in the Extra Christmas Numbers. Altogether there were sixteen such numbers, published continuously from 1852 to 1867, to which either Gaskell and/or Collins contributed to twelve, the four omitted all being found in the mid-1860s. Gaskell appeared in a total of five, but in the first two cases, *A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire* (*HW*, 1852) and *Another Round of Stories by the*

¹⁰ The *OED*, for example, provides the first citation of "novelette" as early as 1814, while the first cited usage of the term "novella" is by the *doyen* of American Realism, W.D. Howells: "Few modern fictions of the novel's dimensions . . . have the beauty of form many a novella embodies." See W.D. Howells, "Some Anomalies of the Short Story," *Literature and Life* (New York: Harper, 1902), pp. 110-24; here p. 116.

Christmas Fire (HW, 1853), as the titles suggest, there was no frame narrative or unifying concept other than that of Yuletide itself. Collins appeared in a total of nine, all with strong conceptual frameworks, including eight continuously from 1854-61, and, as Lillian Nayder has emphasized (pp. 9-14), in two cases (*The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*, HW 1857, and *No Thoroughfare*) the work was co-authored by Dickens and Collins alone. But it could also be claimed that Gaskell and Collins were occasional literary collaborators, since both contributed to not only *A House to Let* (1858) but also *The Haunted House* (1859), respectively, the last Christmas number of *Household Words* and the first of *All the Year Round*. Moreover, during the 1850s at least, even those works of shorter fiction by Gaskell and Collins that were *not* subject to Dickens's control as editor reveal his influence to a remarkable extent. Indeed, both *The Moorland Cottage* (Chapman & Hall, 1850) and *Mr Wray's Cash-Box* (Bentley, 1852) are apprentice Christmas books following the format popularized by the master Boz, with *A Christmas Carol* (Chapman & Hall, 1842), and the rest. And in the later 1850s, when both authors begin to gather their shorter tales from the periodicals into collections for book publication, the model of the *Household Words* Christmas Numbers with their elaborate narrative framework is apparent. Having already alluded to Collins's *The Queen of Hearts* in 1859, we need to mention here only *Round the Sofa* from the same year, where Gaskell employs the device of a weekly *soirée* at the residence of a doctor in Edinburgh's Old Town to contextualize her tales.

However, these examples also serve to remind us that, when we look more closely at the parallel outputs of shorter fiction from the pens of Gaskell and Collins, there are significant differences of literary form alongside the similarities of publishing format. Above all, the disparities concern the degree of tension with the models laid down by Dickens, the general point being that Gaskell typically displays a good deal more resistance than Collins. Let me briefly offer some examples. Regarding the early Christmas Books, Collins's *Mr Wray's Cash-Box*, with oral narrative style, gothic cast of eccentrics, wry humour, and sentimental ending around the yuletide fire, clearly endeavours to "strike the chord of the season".¹¹ It is far more in keeping with the Dickensian Christmas spirit than Gaskell's sombre *The Moorland Cottage*, where the *dénouement*, with its symbolic drowning and resurrection of the heroine, seems more in the Easter vein. In the case of the collections of tales, Gaskell's narrative framework in *Round the Sofa* is far more perfunctory, accounting for only 3% of the total word count as opposed to 18% in the case of Collins's *The Queen of Hearts*.¹² And in contrast to his stout public defence of his method in

¹¹ The phrase is from Dickens's letter to the Revd. James White of 22 November 1852 (*Letters of Charles Dickens* VI, p. 809), where he describes "the spirit of the Christmas number"; see the discussion in Thomas, p. 66ff.

¹² This was in fact the only occasion on which Gaskell attempted to create a frame narrative. Her collections of tales published in Britain without such a device were: *Lizzie Leigh*; and *Other Tales* (Chapman & Hall, 1855); *Right at Last, and Other Tales* (Sampson Low, 1860); *Cousin Phillis, and Other Tales* (Smith, Elder, 1865); and *The Grey Woman, and Other Tales* (Smith, Elder, 1865). Collins, on the other hand, had already produced a "new thread

the letter to the *Athenaeum*, she dismisses her own construction in private correspondence with a friend:

You will be seeing a book of mine advertized; but don't be diddled about it; it is only a REpublication of H W Stories; I have a rascally publisher this time (Sampson Low . . .) & he is trying to pass it off as new. I sold the right of republication to him in a hurry to get 100£ to take Meta [her daughter] abroad out of the clatter of tongues consequent on her breaking off her engagement. . .

(to Anne Robson, [February 1859], *Letters of Mrs Gaskell*, pp. 530-1)

Perhaps the most telling cases, though, are found in those Extra Christmas Numbers to which both Gaskell and Collins contributed. Here the varying levels of resistance are obviously related to the fact that, as a woman, Gaskell was excluded from any editorial role in Dickens's journals, while from October 1856 until January 1862 Collins was a paid member of staff. In *A House to Let*, Collins's "Trotter's Report," with its focus on the restoration of the lost boy, not only reinforces Dickens's theme of the Christmas gift of the Christ child, but it is so committed to the narrative frame (constructed together by the two men) that it cannot stand independently as an short tale.¹³ In contrast, Gaskell's contribution, "The Manchester Marriage," now one of her most anthologized tales, works entirely independently of the frame, and again, with its *dénouement* in the sacrificial death of the first husband, Frank Wilson, and the consequent redemption of the second, the Manchester man Openshaw, more strongly evokes the spirit of Easter. Moreover, the sympathetic treatment of Openshaw can be interpreted as a challenge to Dickens's attack on Manchester values in the person of Gradgrind in *Hard Times*. Since the serial run of *Hard Times* in *Household Words* had immediately preceded that of *North and South*, there might even be a sense in which Gaskell was getting her own back for the damage done to the form of that narrative.

A similar argument could perhaps be made about "The Crooked Branch," Gaskell's contribution to *The Haunted House*, but here I will focus instead on the nature of the frame narrative itself, in this case constructed by Dickens alone. There, each of the fictional guests telling a story in the haunted house is given a persona that parodies the personality of the real contributing author, and thus reveals his or her identity to those in the know – with the marked exception of Gaskell herself. The Bohemian George Augustus Sala becomes "Alfred Starling, an uncommonly agreeable young fellow ... who pretends to be 'fast' (another word for loose, as I understand the term)". Feminist versifier Adelaide Anne Procter becomes "Belinda Bates, ... [who]

of interest" for the earlier collection, *After Dark* (Smith, Elder, 1856). For purposes of comparison, we should note that, taking *A House to Let* as a typical Dickens Christmas number, there, even excluding "Trotter's Report", the frame narrative accounts for just over 30% of the total word account.

¹³ It was thus excluded from *Wilkie Collins: The Complete Shorter Fiction*, where the editor, Julian Thompson, notes that "Trotter's Report" belongs to a group of contributions to Christmas numbers that "do not seem to me to be sufficiently self-contained to merit reprinting here" (p. xiii).

has a fine genius for poetry, combined with real business earnestness, and “goes in” for Woman’s mission . . .”. The sailing fanatic Wilkie Collins, already more than a little overweight, becomes “one ‘Nat Beaver’, . . . captain of a merchantman . . . with a thick-set wooden face and figure, and . . . a world of watery experience.” Gaskell, in contrast, is disguised as Dickens’s legal representative Frederick Ouvry: “Mr Undery, my friend and solicitor: who came down, in an amateur capacity, . . . and who plays whist better than the whole Law List . . .”. In thus symbolically excluding her from the group around the Christmas fire, Dickens seems to have been signalling his awareness of and annoyance at Gaskell’s persistent resistance to his narrative schemes. Indeed, she was not asked to contribute to the extra number for several years, and returned for one last contribution only in 1863, with “Crowley Castle” in *Mrs Lirriper’s Lodgings*. This, of course, was after Collins himself had jumped ship.

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Seen in the general context of Dickens’s impact on both the literary form and the publishing format of the mid-Victorian tale, the confusion concerning the authorship of “The Siege of the Black Cottage” becomes rather more comprehensible and enlightening. Perhaps I can conclude by differentiating my position from those of a couple of earlier commentators on the process of collaboration with Dickens. First, despite my admiration for its patient unravelling of the ideological tensions between Dickens and Collins in their co-authoring of the Christmas numbers, I think that Lillian Nayder’s *Unequal Partners* slightly overdoes their personal and political conflicts. Something in the way of a control experiment, more systematically comparing and contrasting Dickens’s acts of collaboration with women writers – and Gaskell is really the only viable candidate here – might have produced a more nuanced account. On the other hand, I am convinced that Harold Orel considerably underplays the importance of Dickens’s relations to his co-authors in “Charles Dickens: establishing rapport with the public,” the relevant chapter of *The Victorian Short Story*. There, for example, Orel is surely wrong to claim that, in the Christmas numbers they worked on together, “Collins was responsible primarily for sections of the framework used by Dickens rather than for the narratives themselves” (p. 63). More generally Orel seeks to stress the uniqueness of Dickens’s sense of fictional form: “A short story by Dickens may resemble short stories by his contemporaries much less strikingly than it does longer stories by himself. In this genre, as in so much else that he wrote, Dickens created his own universe.” (p. 78). I could not disagree more with this conclusion.

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From “A Journey in Search of Nothing” to “The Lazy Tour”: Collins, Dickens, and the “Tyro Do Nothing”

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“The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices,” a collaborative travel piece by Dickens and Collins published in *Household Words* in 1857, has often been interpreted as a straightforward representation of biographical “truth.” Catherine Peters, for instance, suggests that “‘The Lazy Tour’ ... is a good example of Wilkie’s skill at complementing Dickens ... It is, under the not very opaque cloak of anonymity, candid about both the Idle Apprentices” (180). Ellen Moers takes this further, claiming that “A constant interplay between the two temperaments provides all the interest in *The Lazy Tour*,” which is “otherwise a foolish piece of hackwork” (240). She continues by offering a summary of this “interplay”: “Goodchild runs about, plans, manages and runs about again, while Idle drifts, yawns, lounges, waves his hand languidly and goes to sleep in protest” (240).

This oppositional view of the Dickens-Collins relationship is, it is true, the one presented in “The Lazy Tour.”¹ Dickens—or rather, his alter-ego Francis Goodchild—is, as we might expect, “laboriously idle, and would take upon himself any amount of pains and labour to assure himself that he was idle; in short, he had no better idea of idleness than it was useless industry” (Dickens and Collins, 313). Collins, as Thomas Idle, becomes

an idler of the unmixed Irish or Neapolitan type; a passive idler, a born-and-bred idler, a consistent idler, who practised what he would have preached if

¹ Biographers of Dickens have tended to stress the difference between the temperaments of Dickens and Collins. Dickens thus emerges as upright, manly, and hard-working—to the point, even, that his vast resources of energy wear him out. Collins, in contrast, appears worryingly effete, and is described as being “indolent and sybaritic” (Johnson, II 879), or “lazy, sceptical, epicurean, languid” (Moers, 239). If less stridently, Ackroyd also emphasises an active Dickens at the expense of an idle Collins. Thus when Collins enters Dickens’s life Ackroyd notes the “many and great contrasts between them ... the younger man was untidy, unpunctual, indolent and alarmingly vague on occasions.” (671). Later, in describing the summer they spent finishing *The Frozen Deep* in 1856, Ackroyd underlines the fact that “Collins’s habits did not entirely conform with those of his host. Dickens’s rule was that breakfast should be served at nine o’clock and no later. Collins ... often did not rise until eleven o’clock, and was to be seen eating pâté de foie gras by himself” (813).

he had not been too idle to preach; a one entire and perfect chrysolite of idleness.

(Dickens and Collins, 313)

Is it particularly convincing, though, to claim, as Peters and Moers do, that this off-kilter travel piece presents “candid” biographical evidence about the two men? Viewing “The Lazy Tour” in the context of two travel essays that Collins wrote for journal publication suggests, interestingly, that, for him at least, it is not. Rather the tale can be seen to represent what Deborah Thomas, in her general comments about “joint writing” by Collins and Dickens around this time, calls “a kind of creative game” that the collaborators “might play with one another and the reader” (80).

During the summer of 1847, Collins and Charles Ward went on a painting expedition to Normandy. Collins subsequently wrote up the misadventures of one of their artistic excursions as “A Pictorial Tour to St George Bosherville,” published in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in 1851. This early example seems initially to confirm Collins in the role of the “born-and-bred idler,” even without the presence of Dickens as a “laboriously idle” foil. He demonstrates his idling credentials from the start by writing a long ironic digression refuting the benefits of early rising (496). Then again, once he and Ward—Mr Scumble in the public account—have breakfasted, in the role of the narrator, Collins feels the urgent need to rest, to enjoy “an hour or so of profound meditation, in a horizontal position” (500). Ward/Scumble, however, takes up the “laboriously idle” role and reproves his friend’s laziness:

Again the enthusiasm of antiquarian research, the fire of pictorial ambition, burned within that capacious bosom, as my friend arose, and declared that it was now full time to examine the old church, and to sketch the beauties of Nature in all directions, wherever we could find them. Vainly did I plead for a half hour of delay. Mr. Scumble ... exultingly ended his oration by pointing to my painting-box, and asking me whether I had carried it all the way to Bosherville for nothing?

(Collins “A Pictorial Tour”, 500)

Scumble’s speechifying does not seem to provoke his friend into industry. When they reach the church it is locked; as a result the narrator “sat down on the steps, and quietly went to sleep” while his friend “knocked, peeped through the key-hole, and walked round and round the building with a remarkable perseverance” (500).

A comic transformation occurs, however. Realising that to take back his painting-box “without once having made use of it, was too ridiculous!” (502), Collins as narrator earnestly proclaims: “I felt that I must make a sketch, or cover myself with ignominy as an artist and a man!” (502). Having set “to work resolutely and in a mighty hurry” (502), he ironically discovers Scumble “extended flat on his back, and fast asleep already—with his drawing book and pencil lying idle by his side” (502). Having satirised the hypocrisy of his friend, the narrator mockingly claims that “I felt my own superiority, as I turned from the humiliating spectacle behind me, and resumed my work with redoubled ardour” (503). Scumble’s idleness makes him even more energetic.

As a point of comparison, it is interesting to look in some length at

Collins's account of the day's events in a private letter to his mother dated 2 August 1847. There he writes:

we breakfasted à la fourchette on wine, meat, omelette &c &c – which gave Ward a violent head ache and made me very sleepy and unideal – After our meal we started to see the Abbey Church but the Beadle was practising agriculture – i.e. labouring in the fields, so we went into a pine wood to wait his return. There Ward fell asleep and I made a sketch – One of the failures already alluded to. When I had finished my failure and Ward had finished his nap, we returned – but the agricultural fervour still possessed the beadle ... and though I penetrated into the priest's garden and asked everyone I met to let us into the Church – and 'drummed' at the Church doors, and so forth, we could not get in, after all

(Collins *Public Face*, I 18).

Given the epistolary form that this takes, it is perhaps inevitable that it is more compressed than the equivalent version in article form. Despite this reservation, it is still worth considering how their emphases differ. What is particularly striking in relation to "A Pictorial Tour" is how little Collins dwells on his own idling: almost all we learn is that his breakfast made him "very sleepy and unideal." The letter version of what is the climactic, punch-line moment in the article is equally as matter-of-fact: "There Ward fell asleep and I made a sketch." As the account proceeds, in fact, it is the active and energetic side of Collins, rushing around, stopping passers-by, and drumming at church doors, that comes to the fore. Reading the private letter alongside the public account, then, stresses several important points. It emphasises, first of all, the difficulty of drawing a narrowly defined notion of biographical "truth" from a piece like "A Pictorial Tour." Like its counterpart "The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices," published six years later, "A Pictorial Tour" is much too playful for that. Rather, in the spirit of Thomas's "creative game", it highlights the variety of poses Collins adopts in presenting himself while in Normandy, both as a "born-and-bred idler" and earnestly strenuous amateur artist.

"The Lazy Tour" seems even more problematic as "candid" biographical evidence when it is considered in the context of another travel essay by Collins, published only a month before it in *Household Words*. A connection between this piece—"A Journey in Search of Nothing" (5 September 1857)—and "The Lazy Tour" has been observed previously. Nuel Pharr Davis hypothesises, in fact, that Collins's article provided the impetus for their excursion to Cumberland. Dickens, in restlessly miserable mood, "happened on the proofs of Wilkie's article about his spring vacation," causing him to ask "Wilkie to work out a similar junket for him" (204). This is probably true, as far as it goes. But what Davis and other critics have not noticed is how very different the unnamed narrator in "A Journey" and Thomas Idle in "The Lazy Tour" are as projections of Collins's own identity.²

² Lillian Nayder uses "A Journey in Search of Nothing" as context for her reading of "The Lazy Tour." She, however, is not concerned with the essay as biography, viewing it instead as a "story" in which "Collins's narrator is a professional author" (110).

Catherine Peters assumes an autobiographical basis for “A Journey in Search of Nothing.” Describing it as “a humorous account of the author’s attempt at a rest-cure in the country, on doctor’s orders, with his wife,” she points out that “Wilkie used many personae for his *Household Words* pieces, of all ages, both sexes, and varied marital status; but in this article the circumstantial detail sounds convincing” (195).³ If this is correct then it can be intriguingly noted that, rather than being languid, the persona he adopts seems almost more “restless” and unable to “keep quiet, and do Nothing” than Dickens himself (“A Journey”, 217). Much of his “restlessness” can be attributed not to an actual lack of peace in this country retreat, but rather to his own state of mind. Thus it tends to be self-generating, and to over-emphasise the actual volume of working noise: “No manufacture is carried on in this peaceful place, no new houses are being built; and yet there is such a hammering that, if I shut my eyes, I can almost fancy myself in the neighbourhood of a dock-yard” (218). The couple eventually leave what is (but does not feel like) a “pretty retired village” (217) for “a large watering-place” on the coast (220). Yet, once there, an inability to be idle persists. Collins muses that he is “Perhaps ... naturally of a restless, feverish constitution.” Doing nothing is categorised, as a result, as “harder” work than hard work itself (220). His difficulty in being idle is evident once again later in the account when he falls to watching an “aged repairer of ships.” Categorising him as “a great professor of the art of doing nothing,” he sets out to observe his ability to occupy his time with a minute task and therefore to “learn how to idle systematically” (221). This, too, is a comic failure, so that he admits he is merely “a tyro Do Nothing” (221). His frustration with doing nothing eventually reaches such a pitch that he must return to his writing desk. At the end of their first day at the “watering-place” on the coast we learn that he has “stolen away at the dead of the night in flat defiance of [his] doctor’s directions, to relieve the unspeakable weariness by writing these lines” (223). With great archness, then, this short article itself actually represents the narrator’s insufficiencies as an idler “vainly trying to vegetate” (223).

Collins presents a very different version of himself as Thomas Idle in “The Lazy Tour.” Rather than being “a tyro Do Nothing” like the unnamed writer in “A Journey in Search of Nothing,” he is particularly suited to a lazy life. A “born-and-bred-idler,” he achieves the idle state effortlessly. Indeed, he expends so little effort on it that it almost flows through him: “Prone on the sofa, Thomas made no attempt to get through the hours, but passively allowed the hours to get through *him*” (Dickens and Collins, 363). Idle’s languorous pose is, moreover, comically grounded in his boyhood experiences. In one of the piece’s sections he catalogues his unhappy encounters with industry, and concludes that “all the great disasters which had tried his patience and

³ It is also possible that this experience informs the beginning of Collins’s short story “John Jago’s Ghost” (1873–74), in which the narrator, Philip Lefrank, is prescribed a rest-cure because of “overwork” (Collins *Mad Monkton*, 248).

equanimity in early life” have been brought about by strenuous “activity and industry” (363).

Viewed without the context of the two travel essays discussed above, Collins’s persona in “The Lazy Tour” does give an example, as Peters puts it, of his “skill at complementing Dickens.” But this also ignores another important aspect of the relationship, namely Collins’s attempts to emulate the working methods of the older writer. Nuel Pharr Davis implies that it was the influence of Dickens’s friendship in the early 1850s that made Collins start to work more arduously:

[In the summer of 1853] Dickens was editing *Household Words*, bringing *Bleak House* to an end, and composing the weekly instalments of *A Child’s History*. Mere proximity to him led Wilkie to set himself a Herculean schedule. Wilkie’s intention was to complete the entire novel before leaving for Italy with Dickens in the fall.

(Davis, 134)

Davis’s claim—that Dickens’s impressively demanding work schedule somehow rubbed off on Collins—is confirmed by close attention to letters from this period written while he was staying with the Dickens family. In a letter to Charles Ward in the autumn of 1852, for instance, he writes about his change in habits with wry amusement: ‘In bed at half past ten—up at seven—ten mile walk every day—What do you think of that for W.W.C., of late-hours-and-no-exercise notoriety?’ (Collins *Letters*, I 90). In another slightly more serious letter of 1853 he informs his brother Charles that “Since our little trip we have not left Boulogne. Dickens has been, and is still, hard at work; and I am hardly less industrious in my smaller way” (Collins *Letters*, I 94). These letters, although markedly different in tone, show Collins to be self-deprecating about his industriousness, and reinforce the influence of the older writer.

Yet, as the close attention paid above to “A Pictorial Tour to St George Bosherville” and “A Journey in Search of Nothing” makes clear, even this is far from the whole picture. These relatively little-known essays indicate instead that before he met Dickens, and also without Dickens as a foil, Collins was capable of performing at least two very different kinds of personae—the effortlessly lazy and the restlessly incapable of being idle—with ease. Catherine Peters suggests that this mix of qualities is what attracted Dickens to him in the first place. Collins had many of

the habits common to the young Bohemians who clustered around Dickens, but there was one difference which Dickens quickly appreciated: Wilkie was already a professional ... [He] was a prolific and reliable journalist, prepared, like Dickens, to take infinite pains over the slightest article.

(Peters, 98)

An intriguing piece of primary evidence from the Pilgrim edition of Dickens’s letters forcibly confirms Peters’s claim. In a letter dated 20 December 1852, Dickens writes to congratulate Collins on his professional attention to detail in the composition of *Basil* (1852):

It is delightful to find throughout that you have taken great pains with it besides, and have ‘gone at it’ with a perfect knowledge of the jolter-

headedness of the conceited idiots who suppose that volumes are to be tossed off like pancakes, and that any writing can be done without the utmost application, the greatest patience, and the steadiest energy, of which the writer is capable.

(Dickens *Letters*, VI 824)

The habits Dickens assumes that he and Collins share in their approach to writing—"application," "patience," and "energy"—are precisely those associated with the committed, professional mid-Victorian man-of-letters. In the postscript, however, Dickens shows that the two men agree on more than just an interest in careful attention to literary detail. As Dickens playfully puts it: "If I could only find an idle man (this is a general observation) he would find the warmest recognition in this direction" (Dickens *Letters*, VI 824). In this letter, then, Dickens shows his awareness of both sides of Collins's character—the hard-working professional writer, and the languid, pleasure-seeking Bohemian. In the light of such evidence, it becomes difficult to maintain the narrow and oppositional understanding of the Collins-Dickens relationship with which I began. Instead, in the shape of the apparent fluidity of Collins's authorial persona, we can see the pressure of much wider cultural tensions at work. This is a fluidity that is determined, finally, not so much by the influence of Dickens, but rather by conflicting definitions of the role of the Victorian literary man, as both a Bohemian and a middle-class professional.

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The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)

William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, & Paul Lewis

This is the second in the series of annual updates to *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, published in four volumes by Pickering & Chatto in 2005. The editorial principles, transcription conventions, and abbreviations employed here remain consistent with those described in the prefatory sections of Volume I. In the course of time, it is hoped that this material will be incorporated into a revised edition available in digital form with the added benefit of searchability.

Since the publication of the first of the series in December 2005, eighteen more letters have come to light, raising the total sum of recorded letters over the 3000 mark to 3016. The opportunity has also been taken to correct a few more substantial editorial slips that we have become aware of. We hope readers of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* will continue to draw our attention to omissions and errors in the published volumes.

(A) Addenda

* TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF LONGMAN & CO.,¹ 8 MARCH 1845

MS: Unknown. Draft: BL (Ad. Ms. 42575 f.158).²

March 8/45

My dear Sir

I am sorry ~~to~~ again /to/ trouble you, but the business between us has suddenly taken so ~~unfortun~~ and ~~un~~ /unexpected and/ to me so unaccountable a turn, that I cannot but express to you my /great/ surprise. When I left the MS with you so long since as the 25 of Jan^y. you ~~did not~~ gave me ~~every~~ reason to hope that sh^d the gentleman you were in the habit of consulting approve of the work (although in most cases you did not venture to publish ~~the first work of an author an unknown~~ /at your own risk works of unknown/ authors) that ~~as a favor~~ you might accede to my wishes, and at this and /a/ subsequent ~~interviews~~ meeting, you asked me whether I would object to be responsible for some ~~share~~ part of the expenses, sh^d the work not ~~have a fav~~ succeed, I did not absolutely decline this proposal ~~but~~ stating that, I /as/ I sh^d be sorry you sh^d be a sufferer I had no objection to the your suggestion, to a moderate extent.

Now Sir judge my surprise, when, after the approval of your friend had been obtained and he ~~and all as well as ourselves~~ /all were

agreed/ /and all/ agreed on the necessity of no time being lost in ~~the~~ bringing out the work (from the interest the public ~~felt~~ /feel/ at this moment in the local nature of the subject)³ ~~you-d and at I say you~~ /and/ that after the lapse of more than a month, you decline ~~having~~ taking any risk in the publication, and only express your willingness to publish the work for me, why surely if I had intended to do this at my own expense, not a moment need have been lost, no consultations ~~were~~ /would have been/ required ~~but one in the way of business~~ and the book ~~w~~ could have been in the hands of the public at this moment.

I regret that your pressing occupations will not allow you to favor me with a call visit and /that/ my state of health prevents my again calling upon you – ~~but~~ I have no idea of offering it to any other house to meet with ~~more~~ /fresh/ delays and with this very great disadvantage, that I cannot now offer the MS to any other person as I did to you, with the ~~knowl~~ /assurance/ that not one line of it had been read by any other Bookseller publisher – seeing then that there

And now my dear Sir, if upon ~~the review of the~~ consideration of the above circumstances you ~~we~~ are disposed to agree to ~~the~~ your original plan proposal, of publishing the work upon my ~~taking a making myself~~ becoming responsible for a portion of the loss, sh^d there be any – I am willing to consider myself liable to the amount of one third of the outlay; ~~and /begging/ you will favor me oblige me by~~ /you will oblige me by as early/ an answer as early may suit your convenience, or ~~will~~ /that you will/ favor me ~~with /of/ /with/~~ a call you will oblige

I remain yours [truly] | W. Collins

1. Probably either Thomas Longman (1804-79: *DNB*) or William Longman (1813-77: *DNB*), the brothers then in control of Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, the Paternoster Row publishing firm to which the MS of WC's novel 'Ioláni, or Tahíti as it was' was first submitted. The identification of the firm itself derives from an 1887 journal article based on an interview with WC: "'While in the tea-merchant's office, I completed a wild extravagant story, the scene of which, I remember, was laid in Tahiti before its discovery by the English. The manuscript of this tale I induced my good father to submit to Messrs Longman, whose reader presently returned it with an intimation that the story was hopelessly bad, and that in his opinion the writer had not the smallest aptitude for romance-writing, and had no possible prospect of succeeding in a literary career. I met the worthy man years after at a dinner party, when 'The Woman in White' was running through *Household Words*, and I remember that neither of us could forbear from bursting out a-laughing at the *rencontre*.'" ('Our Portrait Gallery: Mr Wilkie Collins', *Men and Women: A Weekly Biographical and Social Journal* 3:36 (5 February 1887) pp. 281-2). Two earlier accounts of the rejection of 'Ioláni', both also based on information from WC, do not specify the publishing house to which the MS of was initially submitted. Compare: 'he wrote a novel of the most wildly impracticable kind, on the subject of savage life in Polynesia, before the discovery of the group of islands composing that country by civilized man. This curious work was offered to all the publishers in London, and, it is needless to say, declined' (Edmund Yates, 'Men of Mark. No. 2 – W. Wilkie Collins', *Train* 3:18 (June 1857) pp. 352-7); and "'The scene of the story,'" says he [WC], "was laid in the Island of Tahiti, before the period of its discovery by European navigation! My youthful imagination ran riot among the noble savages, in scenes which caused the respectable British publisher to declare that it was impossible to put his name on the title-page of such a novel' ([George M. Towle], 'Wilkie Collins', *Appleton's Journal*

4:75 (3 September 1870) pp. 278-81). The letter to HC of 13 September 1845 suggests that the MS was by then in the hands of Chapman and Hall (Baker & Clarke, I, pp. 27-9).

2. Though Peters (pp. 64-5 & 451n25) assumes that WmC both submitted the novel and wrote the letter, we are convinced that the draft is in the hand of WC, though the signature points towards his father. The contents (notably the reference to 'my state of health') suggest that the initial visit to the publishing house was indeed paid by WmC, but the nature of the revisions suggests that the draft itself was written entirely by WC, though formally on his father's behalf. Given that there are no other extant letters concerning this matter, we have concluded that it is appropriate to include this item in the run of WC's correspondence. These special circumstances also explain why here we have given as full as transcription as possible, including all cancellations and evidence of later insertion.

3. In the mid-1840s, there were many reports and discussions in the British press concerning conflicts between the English and French generally in the South Pacific, and specifically on the island of Tahiti, which had been in the British sphere of influence since the Society Islands were named by Captain Cook in 1769. In 1842, the French military persuaded the ruling monarch, Queen Pomare IV, to accept a French protectorate, and in the following year occupied the island, deposed the Queen, and expelled the acting British Consul, the missionary Rev. George Pritchard. News of these events, of course, took several months to reach Europe. Though disclaiming the act of occupation, the French government declared the protectorate valid. Tahitian resistance to the French presence seems to have continued until 1847, while the protectorate remained in force until 1880, when the island formerly became a French colony.

*** TO LORD JOHN RUSSELL,¹ 23 MAY 1848**

MS: National Archives (PRO30/22/7C 87-88).

1. Devonport Street | Hyde Park Gardens | May 23rd 1848

My Lord

I have just completed a Memoir of the life of my late father – Mr Collins R.A. – whose pictures of coast and cottage scenes, your lordship may have remarked among the private collections of this country, and in the former Exhibitions of the Royal Academy.

The work is to be published by private subscription during the ensuing autumn. Having already received for my list of subscribers the names of many noblemen and gentlemen distinguished as connoisseurs and as patrons of Art, I have been induced to hope that it would not be entirely inappropriate to communicate my plan of publication to your lordship, should you be willing to permit me the honour of adding your lordship's name to my subscription list – as patronising a work which has for its object to increase (however humbly) the existing collection of Biographies of English Painters.

The Biography will be published in two volumes – with a portrait; and will be sold for one guinea.

I have the honour to be | My Lord

Your lordship's most obedient servant | W. Wilkie Collins

To | The Rt. Honble | The Lord John Russell, M.P.

1. John, First Earl Russell (1792-1878: *DNB*), Whig statesman who first served as Prime Minister from 1846-52.

TO CHARLES DICKENS, [5] OCTOBER 1859

MS: Unknown.¹ Partial transcript: CD to WC, 6 October 1859. Published: Lawrence Hutton, ed., *Letters of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins* (1892), pp. 103-5; Pilgrim, IX, pp. 128.

... Could it have been done at all, in the way I suggest, to advantage? ...²

1. Judging by CD's reply of 6 October 1859, the letter (presumably later destroyed by CD) contained WC's thoughts on reading the ending of *A Tale of Two Cities* in MS or proof. (The serial run in *All the Year Round* finished only on 26 November). CD's letter concluded: 'I am very glad you like it so much. It has greatly moved and excited me in the doing, and Heaven knows I have done my best and have believed in it.' (Pilgrim, IX, pp. 127-8).

2. WC had presumably suggested that, by allowing the reader access to the thoughts of Dr Manette (imprisoned in the Bastille for uncovering the corruption of the Marquis St Evrémonde), CD might have indicated rather earlier in the narrative the connection between him and Charles Darnay (nephew of the Marquis and in love with Manette's daughter). CD writes: 'I do not positively say that the point you put, might not have been done in your manner; but I have a very strong conviction that it would have been overdone in that manner – too elaborately trapped, baited, and prepared – in the main, anticipated and its interest wasted. This is quite apart from the peculiarity of the Doctor's character, as affected by his imprisonment; which of itself would – to my way of thinking – render it quite out of the question to put the reader inside of him before the proper time, in respect of matters that were dim to himself through being, in a diseased way, morbidly shunned by him. . . .'. CD later summarizes: "Could it have been done at all, in the way I suggest, to advantage?" is your question. I don't see the way, and I never have seen the way, is my answer. I cannot imagine it that way, without imagining the reader wearied and the expectation wire-drawn.'

TO CHARLES DICKENS, [6] DECEMBER 1867

MS: Unknown.¹ Partial transcript: CD to WC, 24 December 1867. Published: Pilgrim, XI, pp. 520.

... at your sole discretion ...²

1. Probably a letter of some length to CD in Boston, accompanying a copy of the completed *No Thoroughfare*. Presumably destroyed subsequently by CD.

2. In his reply, after praising the construction but criticizing its length, CD answers queries about the staging of the play – concerning the mechanism of the clock, whether Vendale and Marguerite should remain on stage, whether Obenreizer should die on stage, and whether the part of Mme D'Or is necessary. CD then continues: 'But my dear boy, what do you mean by the whole thing being left "at my sole discretion"? Is not the play coming out, the day after tomorrow???' Since the London production indeed opened at the Adelphi on 26 December, it seems likely WC might have been referring to the projected production in New York by Lester Wallack.

TO CHARLES DICKENS, [10] JANUARY 1868

MS: Unknown.¹ Partial transcript: CD to Charles Fechter, 24 February 1868. Published: *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, edited by his Sister-in-law and his Eldest Daughter (London: Chapman & Hall, 1880, 2 vols), II, pp. 361-3; Pilgrim, XII, pp. 56-8.

... Here Fechter is magnificent. . . .

... Here his superb playing brings the house down. . . .

... I should call even his exit in the last act one of the subtlest and finest things he does in the piece. ...

... You can hardly imagine what he gets out of the part, or what he makes of his passionate love for Marguerite. ...²

1. Apparently a letter of some length, presumably destroyed by CD.

2. Referring to *No Thoroughfare* running at the Adelphi, with Charles Fechter playing Obenreizer to Carlotta Leclercq's Marguerite. CD introduces his quotation of WC's comments with: 'Wilkie has uniformly written of you enthusiastically. In a letter I had from him, dated the 10th of January, he described your conception and execution of the part in the most glowing terms.' The paragraph written by CD concludes: 'These expressions, and many others like them, crowded his letter.' CD had earlier written to WC: 'Your letter dated on the eleventh reached me here [Philadelphia] this morning. ... I am indeed delighted by your account of the Play, and do begin to believe that I shall see it! Every word of your account of your last visit "Behind", I have read – and shall read – again and again.' (31 January 1868, Pilgrim XII, pp. 30-1). Despite the slight uncertainty concerning the date, this is likely to refer to the same letter from WC.

*** TO HENRY BULLAR, 1 JANUARY 1870**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie's Sale 4072, 6 June 2006, lot 200.¹

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | New Years' Day 1870
My dear Henry,

Thank you for your good wishes. I return them with all my heart.

Come to London when you can. I go for two days to Gloucestershire next week. My next holiday I hope will be celebrated by a visit to Basset Wood.²

Yours affectionately | Wilkie Collins

1. In an autograph album compiled by Louisa Haigh.

2. Family home of the Bullars.

*** TO THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE, CHICAGO RELIEF FUND, 31 OCTOBER 1871**

MS: Hanes.¹

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 31st October 1871
Gentlemen,

I beg to enclose a cheque for Five pounds, offered to your Fund, as a trifling expression of my sympathy with the sufferers by the Fire of Chicago,² and of my sincere admiration of the heroic spirit with which your countrymen have met the disaster that has fallen on them.³

I remain, Gentlemen, | Your obedient servant, | Wilkie Collins
To | The Committee of the American | ~~£~~ Chicago Relief Fund⁴

1. A torn half sheet of notepaper tipped on to a piece of card.

2. The Great Fire burned from the evening of Sunday 8 October to the early hours of Tuesday 10 October 1871, devastating much of the city, and leaving 300 dead and 90,000

homeless. News of the fire was first reported in the *Times* in a brief cabled article entitled 'Awful Fire at Chicago', sent on the Monday and appearing on Tuesday, October 10, p. 3a. A full report, written on October 10 and sent by ship, appeared on 25 October, p. 10a-c.

3. Compare these sentiments with WC's rather unsympathetic account of Chicago and its rebuilding during his later visit to the city; see to Jane Bigelow, 17 January 1874.

4. The *Times* report of October 10 was followed by details of the relief fund being raised jointly by the Lord Mayor of London from the Mansion House and 'The American Committee Chicago Relief Fund' based at 22, Old Broad Street. WC's contribution was clearly sent to the latter address; the cheque appears in his bank account at Coutts on 3 November, confirming that it was indeed directed to a local address.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 7 MAY 1872**

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay (February 2006), priced \$180 with nine other autographs.¹

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins | May 7th 1872

1. On a rectangular sheet the size of a visiting card; given the position of the date, this is likely to be an autograph for a collector rather than the excised ending of a letter.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 23 MAY 1873**

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay (19-26 February 2006), by Michael A. West of Schoharie, New York, item 6606925349.¹

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins | May 23rd 1873 /

1. Written at the top of a small sheet of mourning stationery, this appears to be simply a dated autograph.

TO GEORGE CLARIDGE,¹ 1 AUGUST 1877

MS: Lewis Collection, clipped front of envelope only.² Published: Lewis Website.

George Claridge Esqre | 23. Harp Lane | E. C.
Wilkie Collins

1. City of London wine merchant with premises just behind the Custom House, who appears as payee in WC's bank account at Coutts & Co. on a number of occasions around this time.

2. Post-paid, postmarked as dated.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT,¹ 13 MARCH 1878**

MS: Yale (Tinker 720), accompanied by signed photograph.²

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, PORTMAN SQUARE. W. | London | 13th
March 1878

Dear Sir,

Two famous Indian Diamonds – the “Sancy Diamond”, and the “Koh-i-Noor” (now in the possession of the Queen of England)³ – were originally ornaments in Idols worshipped by the Hindoos. Being “sacred

gems”, they were watched night and day by the priests attached to the Temples – and certain disaster was predicted to any sacrilegious person who might attempt to steal them.

These were the only facts known to me when I wrote “The Moonstone”.⁴ The journey of the three Priests to England in search of ~~the~~ their diamond (and every other incident in the book), took its rise in the imagination of

Yours vy truly | Wilkie Collins

I write in great haste to catch the mail

1. Judging from the enclosure and the postscript, perhaps an American fan of *The Moonstone* requesting an autograph.
2. An oval portrait taken during winter 1874 by Napoleon Sarony of New York, one of the series of the author in a fur coat; signed ‘Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins’.
3. Famous jewels apparently of Indian origin, each with a chequered history. After being purchased in 1570 by the French Ambassador to Constantinople, the Seigneur de Sancy, the first is now held in the Louvre. The second may have belonged to the early Mughal emperors. Under the Treaty of Lahore following the British conquest of the Punjab, it was controversially presented by Duleep Singh to Queen Victoria in 1851. It was first put on display at the Great Exhibition and is now held in the Tower of London among the Crown Jewels. See Lawrence L. Copeland, *Diamonds: Famous, Notable, and Unique* (Los Angeles: Gemological Institute of America, 1974).
4. See the Prologue to *The Moonstone*, ‘The Storming of Seringpatam (1799)’.

*** TO MARIAN J. SNOOK,¹ 21 MAY 1879**

MS: Unknown, with envelope.² On sale: Jeffrey Thomas, Fine & Rare Books, San Francisco 94147-1205, December 2005, priced \$950.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, PORTMAN SQUARE. W. | London
21st May 1879

Dear Miss Marian,

I am quite incapable of disappointing a young lady who is one of my kind readers. Your first letter never reached me – so far as I can remember. I contribute with the greatest pleasure to your collection of autographs, and I hope you will excuse me for keeping you waiting – quite unintentionally.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

To | Miss Marian J. Snook

1. An autograph hunter writing from San Francisco; from the census data, probably Marian J. Snook (b. 1855), daughter of George A. Snook, a plumber and gas fitter.
2. Directed to ‘Miss Marian J. Snook | Nth cor: Franklin & Fell Streets | San Francisco | California | U. S. A.’, with legible postmarks ‘LONDON W | ZX | MY 21 | 79’ and ‘SAN FRANCISCO | CAL | JUN | 10 | 1 PM’. The stamp has been roughly torn away and the letters is redirected in pencil to ‘San Diego | Cal’. The envelope is pasted on the inside of the blank leaf of the folding notepaper.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 26 FEBRUARY 1884

MS: Lewis Collection.¹ Published: Lewis website.

With Mr Wilkie Collins's compliments

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins | 26th February 1884

1. Comprising a rectangle of heavy wove paper of visiting card size (bearing the dated autograph itself), which is glued to a slightly larger rectangle of lighter laid paper (on which the accompanying compliments appear in WC's very small hand).

*** TO D.W. HOWLAND,¹ 24 DECEMBER 1885**

MS: Private.²

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W. | London
28th Decr 1885

Sir,

I beg to thank you for your kind letter, and to express my regret at not being able to contribute to the work which you are contemplating. It is, I fear, one of the perversities in my nature, to dislike making speeches myself, and to feel no pleasure (excepting the cases of one or two great orators) in listening to speeches made by other persons. On the few occasions when I have spoken in public, because I felt it a duty to others to do so, I have said as little as possible, and of that little I have not preserved the newspaper reports.³ Pray accept my excuses, and believe me

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

D.W. Howland Esqre

1. Presumably the overseas or provincial editor of a projected collection of speeches by authors or notable persons of the day, though we can find no evidence that this was published. It might well be D.W. Howland, an educator formerly resident in Calcutta, the author of "Baboo Lore" in the "Bric-à-Brac" column of the New York quarterly *The Century* 26:2 (June 1883) pp. 319-20.

2. On lightweight monogrammed paper with faint horizontal rules.

3. One lengthy speech by WC reported in the press was that as Chairman at the Twentieth Anniversary Festival of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, held on the evening of 12 April 1865. See WC's letter to HC of the following day.

TO NAYLOR & Co.,¹ 10 JANUARY 1887

MS: Lewis Collection, tipped into a copy of Thomas F. Madigan's *Word Shadows of the Great: The Lure of Autograph Collecting* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1930).²
Published: Lewis Website.

90. Gloucester Place | London. W | 10th January 1887

Dear Sirs,

In case of accidents by mail, I write to say that my signed receipt to the Manhattan Insurance Company was sent to you by registered letter post on Saturday last.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

1. The letter must be to Messrs Naylor, who held WC's life insurance policies first in Boston and then (from early 1884) in New York – see to Sebastian Schlesinger, 28 January 1884. For details of the policies with both the Manhattan Insurance Company and the New England Mutual Insurance Company, see to William Tindell, 3 March 1874 (Baker and Clarke, II p. 381).

2. The letter has been trimmed and has an impressed stamp bottom left, that of Harold E. Harris, Notary Public of New York County. Facing the letter is a 'Certification of Genuineness', notarized by Harris and signed by Madigan. In the book, Madigan notes that '[c]ollectors for years to come will probably never suffer for want of' the letters of prolific Victorian correspondents such as Browning, Ainsworth, Reade, and Collins (p. 217).

*** TO B. E. JOSEPH,¹ 13 MARCH 1887**

MS: Yale (Tinker 717).²

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, PORTMAN SQUARE. W. | London | 21st
March 1887

Dear Sir,

I am indeed greatly obliged to you for your kindness in copying, and sending to me, the interesting letter by Sir Walter Scott which it is your good fortune to possess. It will be kept by me, among the letters that I most highly value.² As a writer, and as a man, Scott is (to my mind) one of the most admirable and perfect characters that has ever conferred honour on Literature. More than thirty years' study of the art of writing fiction have convinced me that he is, beyond question, the greatest novelist that this country – or any other country – has produced.³

Believe me, dear Sir, | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

B. E. Joseph Esqre

1. Unidentified.

2. The letter in question also remains unidentified.

3. Compare the similar phrasing in the letter to J. A. Stewart of 8 January 1888.

To [COUTTS & Co.],¹ 1874-1889²

MS: Lewis Collection.³ Published: Lewis website.

Pay to the order of | Naylor & Co | Wilkie Collins

1. The order to pay is most likely to have been made through WC's London bankers.
2. From early 1874 in Boston and then in New York City from early 1884, WC's American life insurance policies were held by the firm of Naylor & Co., to which Sebastian Schlesinger long belonged. See the letters to Charles Ward of 27 February 1874 and to Schlesinger of 28 January 1884.
3. On a torn scrap of tissue-paper; this may be a carbon copy from a company letter-book rather than the original manuscript.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE**

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay (March 2006), by Voyager Press Books of Seattle, Washington, item 6613997427, an album containing 53 autographs.¹

... interest,

and believe me | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Apparently cut unevenly from the end of a letter for the autograph. Judging by the hand and signature, this is likely to date from WC's later decades.

(B) Corrigenda

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, [6-7] SEPTEMBER 1857**

IV, Addenda, p. 401: The MS has been located, and the fragment of text on the verso deciphered, necessitating revisions alike to recipient, date, source line, transcription, and annotations. The entire entry should now read:

*** TO [W.S. EMDEN],¹ [5-7] SEPTEMBER 1857²**

MS: Private.³

... – is anxious to be personally introduced to you, for the purpose of submitting a dramatic proposal to your notice ...

...

I am just away for the moors of Cumberland
Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. The recipient must be a theatre manager, and is likely to be to Emden, then lessee of the Royal Olympic where *The Lighthouse* was running, and to whom WC sent a receipt for the payment for performance rights on 5 September. It is possible that this personal letter accompanied the formal receipt.
2. Conjectural dating based primarily on the reference to the trip to Cumberland. Following the Manchester performances of *The Frozen Deep* and in a state of 'grim despair and restlessness', CD proposed on 29 August 1857 that he and WC should 'cast about ... go anywhere – take any tour – see any thing – whereon we could write something together.'

(Pilgrim, VIII, p. 423). By early September, CD had announced to Forster that the decision was for a 'foray upon the fells of Cumberland' (Pilgrim, VIII, p. 428). CD and WC left London on 7 September and the collaboration became *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, appearing in *Household Words* 3-31 October 1857.

3. Fragment roughly torn away for the autograph, formerly inserted in an album. Judging by the folds, the portions of surviving text may be from around the middle of the third and fourth pages of a sheet of folded notepaper. Beneath and to the left of the signature is still visible a stroke of the pen that may well be a remnant of the excised addressee line.

*** TO GEORGE M. TOWLE, 21 MAY 1870**

II, p. 186: Fragments of the text of the memoir which accompanied the letter have been restored from the phrases quoted in Towle's unsigned article appearing in Appleton's Journal, and should follow the transcript of the letter.

[*Memoir*]²

[*the rudiments of Latin and Green learned at school*]. . . which have not been of the slightest use to me in after-life . . .

[*regarding his literary activities while working in commerce*] . . . to descend from epic poems and blank-verse tragedies . . .

[*regarding his studies at Lincoln's Inn*] . . . I am now a barrister of some fifteen years' standing, without ever having had a brief, or ever having even so much as donned a wig and gown. . . .

[*regarding 'Ioláni'*] . . . The scene of the story was laid in the island of Tahiti, before the period of its discovery by European navigation! My youthful imagination ran riot among the noble savages, in scenes which caused the respectable British publisher to declare that it was impossible to put his name on the title-page of such a novel. For the moment I was a little discouraged. But I got over it, and began another novel. . . .

[*to the favourable reviews of Antonina*] . . . many of my literary elders and betters kindly adding their special tribute of encouragement and approval . . .

2. Fragments of the lost memoir can be restored from the quotations in Towle's article.

*** TO FLORENCE MARRYAT, 15 JUNE 1872**

II, p. 350: The MS has now been located, and the defective text confirmed. The source line, transcription, and associated notes should now read:

MS: Yale (Marryat Papers: Uncat. MSS. 104/GENM).²

90. Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 15th June 1872

Dear Madam,

Pray accept my thanks for your kind letter.

I have engagements – not yet fulfilled – to write two stories for serial publication,³ I have a play coming out in the autumn,⁴ and I possess an inveterate enemy who constantly gets in the way of my work, and whose name is – Rheumatic Gout. Under this combination of obstacles, I have been obliged, this year, to refrain from accepting any proposals for Christmas work. I do not abandon the hope of being able to contribute to “London Society”, if I may trust to your kindness to ~~wa~~ let me wait for my opportunity. In the meantime, I sincerely regret that it is not possible for me to appear in the Christmas Number.⁵

With my best wishes for your success,

Believe me | Dear Madam

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

2. Pasted into an album of autograph letters and photographs; an L-shaped cut has been made in the lower half of the folding notepaper to facilitate attachment, but without loss of text. With grateful thanks to Beth Palmer, of Trinity College, Oxford, who located the letter at the Beinecke.

3. Apart from *The New Magdalen*, no other serial published at this time has been identified.

4. Possibly referring to *The New Magdalen*, although this did not open until 19 May 1873.

5. See to Florence Marryat of 17 July 1873.

*** TO FREDERIC LEIGHTON, 12 MAY 1873**

II, p. 400: The MS has been located. The summary and note 2 should be deleted, with the source line and transcription now reading:

MS: Leighton Archive, Kensington Central Library, London (Folder 1 LH/1/5/31).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 12th May 1873

Dear Leighton,

Mr Edward Pigott – a very old friend of mine – is among the Candidates for the Secretaryship to the Royal Academy. If you are still free to give him your support at the election, I can answer for him as a fit man, in every respect, for the position. I speak from a knowledge of him which extends over more than twenty years.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

TO NATHANIEL J. BEARD, 13 AUGUST 1877

III, p. 166: The initial should be corrected from ‘J.’ to ‘T.’ in both recipient and addressee lines, with note 1 revised to read:

1. The younger son of Francis Carr Beard, Nathaniel Thomas Beard became chief clerk at Bentley’s in the later years of the publishing house.

Tamara S. Wagner. *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel, 1740-1890*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004. pp. 297. ISBN 0-8387-5600-X.

Tamara Wagner's book seeks to "reassess common misinterpretations of nostalgia as a cloying sentimentality or an emotionally distorted memory" (12), and to show that there is much more to be said on the subject. Appreciating the complexity and significance of nostalgia sheds light on a range of crucial scenes in novels such as Wilkie Collins's *Man and Wife*, where the tears of the hero, Arnold Brinkworth, denote more than a lack of manliness and are a "sign of moral superiority" (11). As Wagner observes, characters such as Brinkworth "raise intriguing questions about changing attitudes to nostalgia as well as to tearful men" (11), and these questions invite critics to think more carefully about the deployment of nostalgia in the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. All too often, critics have ignored such questions and dismissed nostalgia as an inherently conservative emotion that is ideologically suspect because of its orientation to the past. The allegation of conservatism is one that Wagner rejects—"Nostalgia for an absent ideal can never be simply pre or 'con-servative,' as it is emphatically not the *status quo* that is desirable" (21)—and throughout the book she reveals that nostalgia is much more than an ideological mask needing to be torn away.

The book begins by tracing two meanings of the term nostalgia: a medical understanding of the term, describing a severe state of home-sickness, and the broader use of the word to describe an emotionally wistful longing for an earlier age. Both meanings signal the density of the word nostalgia, and Wagner's subsequent discussion helpfully shows how conceptions of the term shifted, overlapped and sometimes conflicted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The elusiveness of the term makes it impossible to chart a simple chronology through the period in question, and Wagner responds by focussing on a series of influential historic moments and literary texts. Wagner's methodology offers an intelligent basis for the examination of nostalgia yet it does not always succeed in reining in a wide-ranging discussion that is sometimes overly ambitious. The problem emerges in Chapter One, which looks at the aesthetics of affliction in the novel of sensibility: while the links between nostalgia and sensibility are clear, the broader debates concerning sensibility and emotion threaten to shift the spotlight away from nostalgia. Chapter Two recovers the book's focus by exploring competing clinical and Romantic discourses of nostalgia in the novels of Jane Austen, and locating these views under the headings of "headaches" and "heartaches". Wagner adopts a similar method in Chapter Three when she locates another specific instance of nostalgia, this time regarding the way in which Dickens explores nostalgia and lost childhood through the figure of the orphan; however, the discussion here overreaches itself once again. Part of the problem is that the engagement with a new range of related critical debates weakens the link to Wagner's previous chapter on Austen. The other difficulty in the chapter on Dickens is that the extensive exploration of the orphan in Dickens makes no reference to Laura Peters's important study *Orphan Texts: Victorian Orphans, Culture and Empire* (2000). Of course, any study covering 150 years of literary history is bound to contain a few gaps, but Wagner's decision to think about nostalgia in the context of a very specific pre-existing debate means that the failure

to engage with one of the key works in the field becomes a significant omission, exposing the danger of using too elastic a definition of nostalgia. There are few obvious critical gaps in the broader subject matter of Chapter Four, which considers the idea of homesickness in a selection of Victorian domestic novels, but by the time we get to Chapter Five, on men of feeling in Wilkie Collins's novels, it is difficult to recall the arguments that have led up to the main subject matter of the chapter. As a result, the intelligent reading of Collins's later fiction seems rather disconnected from what has gone before, and Wagner does not fully make the case for reading Collins's later work as an important development within the literary history of nostalgia.

Despite the gaps in the preceding discussion, the chapter on Collins is illuminating. Wagner reads Collins's men of feeling as recovering older, most praiseworthy notions of nostalgia. Whereas the privileged status of individual energy and a self-help ethic in the mid-nineteenth century had left men of feeling appearing weak and discredited, nostalgia is resurrected in Collins's later work as a more heroic and insightful emotional state. "[V]ital villains" are shown to contrast with "a series of hypersensitive heroes" (193) in novels such as *Man and Wife*, *Heart and Science*, and *The Evil Genius*. Wagner argues that the positive view of feeling in these later novels differs from the more ambiguous descriptions that appear in Collins's novels of the 1860s. Reading Collins's later novels in this way offers suggestive links to the rise of the "new *fin de siècle* antihero, as typified by Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*" (215), although Wagner says relatively little about these links and does not consider at length the question of how influential Collins's work is in this regard.

This book contains a lot of thoughtful material and succeeds in its attempt to encourage critics to take nostalgia more seriously. However, a more focussed argument would have made the case more cohesive, as well as making the book a more fluent read. The writing needs more discipline on occasion, from references to Sarah Waters's *Fingersmith* and Michel Faber's *The Crimson Petal and the White* that are too isolated from the surrounding discussion to serve a useful purpose (136), to a paragraph that features six sentences beginning with the word "In" (176-7). Yet in spite of these reservations, I do think that the book has some important things to say and it is encouraging to see a reading of Collins's fiction that finds a way of interpreting his later work outside the dominant paradigm of sensation fiction.

Mark Knight
 Roehampton University

Rob Warden. *Wilkie Collins's The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case, and Wrongful Convictions*. Forward by Scott Turow. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005. pp. xii + 178. ISBN 0-8101-2294-4.

Writing in the *Fortnightly Review* on 1 November 1889, shortly after Collins's death, A. C. Swinburne penned the now-famous couplet linking the social "mission[s]" of Collins's late novels with the near-"perdition" of his artistic genius, expressing as well as questioning the idea that the artistry of a literary work is necessarily compromised when that work serves an explicit, didactic end. Rather than regretting the didacticism of Collins's fiction from the 1870s, as generations of literary critics have done, Rob Warden instead suggests that Collins was not

didactic enough. In this new edition of “The Dead Alive,” a story first serialized at the close of 1873 in the *New York Fireside Companion* and, as “John Jago’s Ghost,” in *The Home Journal* (London), Warden claims that Collins failed to fully exploit his subject matter—the conviction and capital sentencing of men whose alleged murder victim is found alive. Basing his story on the 1819 conviction, in Vermont, of Stephen and Jesse Boorn for the alleged murder of their still-living brother-in-law—a legal case that calls attention to serious and persistent flaws in the way forensic evidence is gathered and handled—Collins represents the case as “a regrettable and freakish anomaly in an otherwise functioning criminal justice system,” Warden contends. He thus unwittingly missed a chance to help change that system: “Had Collins been aware of the extent of the problem, *The Dead Alive* might have been more didactic, given that Collins, by all accounts, was never hesitant to champion a cause” (pp. 133-4).

The cause is certainly a worthy one, as Warden makes clear, not only in his detailed review of the 1819 Boorn case (pp. 105-47), which follows Collins’s story in this edition, but also in his summary of “Other Dead Alive Cases” (pp. 152-64) and his listing of Wrongful Conviction in U.S. Capital Cases” (pp. 165-74), 235 in number as of 1 January 2005. In his discussion of the Boorn case and his analysis of wrongful convictions, Warden foregrounds the selective and artful use of evidence (including false testimonies) by prosecutors, and he is particularly critical of the manner in which false confessions are obtained from the accused and put to use in court, objections that Collins, too, raises in his story. Pressured to do so by political and legal authorities, Ambrose Meadowcroft confesses to a murder he did not commit in “The Dead Alive”, hoping to reduce his murder charge to manslaughter, avoid the gallows and protect the family name. In the process, he loses the respect and affection of his fiancée, Naomi Colebrook, who henceforth considers him “a liar and a coward” (p. 88), and he is condemned to death nonetheless.

In this edition of “The Dead Alive,” Collins’s story proves a useful means to publicize the dire problem of wrongful convictions, to expose the procedural and evidentiary flaws that contribute to such convictions, and to benefit the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University School of Law, which receives all of the profits from the publication. Yet while it makes available a relatively unknown story by Collins, Warden’s edition proves less useful than it might be to those interested in Collins himself. Not only is Collins’s biography ineptly summarized by Scott Turow in the Forward (“Despite his uncommon success, Collins’s life was not especially happy. He never married and in his later years became an opium addict” [vii-viii]). Warden provides no bibliographical information about “The Dead Alive,” its serializations, or the copy text used in his edition, and although he discusses in detail the Boorn case and dispels several errors long associated with it, he neither reprints nor outlines the source on which Collins based his story: Leonard Sargeant’s *Trial, Confessions and Conviction of Jesse and Stephen Boorn*, a 48-page pamphlet published in Vermont in 1873. Thus, while Warden’s discussion makes clear the differences between the actual legal case and Collins’s fictional rendition of it, the extent and manner in which Collins reworked his source material is much less clear.

In the Boorn case, the alleged victim, Russell Colvin, was married to the sister of the accused. After Colvin’s disappearance, his wife Sally gave birth to two children he could not have fathered. Suspicion of murder was first cast on Stephen Boorn when, in trying to help his sister obtain child support, he claimed that Russell Colvin was dead. In “The Dead Alive,” however, the missing man, John

Jago, is a widower who hopes to marry Miss Colebrook, despite her evident attachment to her cousin Ambrose Meadowcroft. Jago purposely casts suspicion on his rival by secretly moving away after arguing with the Meadowcroft brothers. After their conviction and sentencing, he offers to reveal himself to the authorities only if Miss Colebrook will become his wife. Focusing on power dynamics among the Meadowcrofts in reworking the case, Collins replaces the adulterous Sally Colvin with Miss Meadowcroft, a sour, pious and self-righteous spinster who sets her father against her brothers and outmanoeuvres them to become his heir. To Miss Meadowcroft, Collins opposes his heroine, the frank and courageous Miss Colebrook, who helps to vindicate Ambrose Meadowcroft and saves the life of the English lawyer who narrates the story, whom she marries at its conclusion. Collins diverges substantially from the original case in writing “The Dead Alive,” but without much information about Collins’s source, we are unsure about his debt to Leonard Sargeant and uncertain to what extent, if any, his characterizations of Miss Colebrook and Miss Meadowcroft draw from or reverse the portrait of Sally Colvin that Sargeant provided.

Discussing “The Dead Alive” in *The King of Inventors* (1991), Catherine Peters notes Collins’s use of the American legal case while also pointing to the striking affinities between the story and Dickens’s final, unfinished novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, published three years previously. Including “The Dead Alive” in his collection of Collins’s short fiction, *Mad Monkton and Other Stories* (1994), Norman Page pays particular attention to the American heroine in his Introduction, arguing that her bravery and resourcefulness set her apart from her English contemporaries. But whatever their approach to “The Dead Alive,” few Collins scholars are likely to agree with Warden that the novelist, here and elsewhere, considers the criminal justice system to be functioning adequately. More often than not, Collins’s characters must take the law into their own hands if they are to see justice rendered—those who do so include Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White*, the three Hindu priests in *The Moonstone*, Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name*, and Valeria Macallan in *The Law and the Lady*, to name a few. Not only does Collins question the ability of the court system to aptly render justice; he often exposes the injustice of the laws themselves, which perpetuate a range of social inequities and condemn married Englishwomen, in particular, to a living death under the doctrine of coverture. In bringing out an edition of “The Dead Alive” without properly researching Collins and his writings, Warden might be seen to do an injustice to the novelist himself. But considering the importance of Warden’s mission in publishing “The Dead Secret,” we would be wise to pardon him.

Lillian Nayder
Bates College

Wilkie Collins. *The Woman in White*, ed. Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox. Peterborough, ONT: Broadview Press, 2006. pp. 694. ISBN 1551116448.

This well-printed, nicely-presented volume is the latest to appear in the Broadview Editions series. Earlier reprints of *Heart and Science*, *The Moonstone* and *The Evil Genius* are now followed by the novel of 1859-60, which established Collins as the most influential sensation novelist. As the editors note, the themes of “disguise, misrepresentation and altered identity were such successful elements of *The*

Woman in White that several of the best-selling sensation novels of the period almost instantly took up the same themes" (12). Although their idea of Collins as the "inventor" of the sensation novel surrounded by those copycats Ellen Wood and Mary Braddon is overplayed, there is little doubt of the novel's enormous impact. At first some of this was due to Collins's lucky break in having the novel serialised in Charles Dickens's magazine *All the Year*, but the benefits were also mutual. Collins' cliff-hanger serial helped raise the weekly circulation to 100,000 plus. This new edition of the text prepared and annotated by Professors Cox and Bachman is based on this original serial version which, as they note, "galvanised" the novel-reading population, electrifying them with the twists and turns of its plot and became a "media sensation" (11).

In their introduction the editors give an authoritative and discerning account of the appeal of the novel for its first readers. They suggest that this had more to do with Collins' ability to "hook" his readers than in his ability to draw three-dimensional characters—the latter skill, they suggest, he never really picked up. This is a reading which misses out on the ways in which characters like Walter Hartright and Marian Halcombe are constructed, but it is true that readers came to *The Woman in White* for shocks and thrills. Bachman and Cox are very good at unpicking the importance of key sensation scenes in the novel including Walter's first meeting with Anne Catherick on the Finchley Road and they examine in ample and exact ways the different—slightly spurious—accounts of its origins in real life. Bachman and Cox also make good use of Collins's often-overlooked account of why the novel is written the way it is—which appeared as the 1861 preface to the French edition, *La Femme en Blanc* translated by Emile Forgues. They use this to explain the importance of different narrators to the remainder of Collins's work. They then go on to offer an erudite and very accessible account of the ways in which concerns in the 1850s about asylums, dreams and nightmares and mesmerists find their way into the novel and, in an uncanny way, tie in with its much admired narrative structure. "It is fitting", they argue "that the publication of *The Woman in White* generated a craze of unprecedented proportion, for indeed mania and nervous energy are at the every heart of the novel's plot and narrative structure" (20). In the same way, the emphasis on dreams and vision-like states "encapsulates the dynamics of 'telling' in *The Woman in White*; these fictive fragments are memorial attempts to recover from a disordered state of mind which is dramatically manifest in the novel's multiple plot and structures" (26).

Inevitably the attention paid to different elements of the novel varies: the discussion of marriage laws must be one of the most detailed and erudite around, and the discussion of the Italian Question is only a little less full. Some other aspects of the edition, however, are less clear. This is particularly the case when Bachman and Cox try to explain which version of the novel this current edition is based on. In the introduction they maintain that the copy text has been culled faithfully from the *All the Year Round* serial version. So far so good. However they also write:

We have collated the serialised version ... with both the 1860 and 1861 editions, as well as with Collins's original manuscript and the annotated pages that exist for the 1861 edition. In general we have restored manuscript readings when there have been textual questions that could not be resolved by comparing the multiple versions. In instalments 33-35 we have chosen to restore a number of passages that Collins himself restored in the three volume edition on the grounds that these readings were apparently the version he had originally intended (and preferred).

This editorial tinkering prompts a question: What text of the novel are we being offered? Answer: It is and isn't the serial version. This may be unfair but it is not clear, at least to this reader, what passages have been reinstated and where. As far as I can see, the only restoration indicated as one reads through the novel is a description of hanged curates in instalment 33. This is a passage which Collins apparently cut as being too similar to one in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. If, as the editors imply, they have inserted other passages, then it seems essential to indicate where these are located. Otherwise we are left with what seems to be a mongrel text—being neither one thing or the other and representing not what Collins ever saw but what twenty-first century editors imagine he would have liked to see. One might say that such mysteries are appropriate for a work abounding in questions of identity and illegitimacy, but they are surely weaknesses in a text offering itself as a scholarly edition.

Other textual apparatus is of the high standard that traditionally characterises Broadview texts. Like other editions this one also contains an Appendix of contemporary reviews and source documents. These point to the novel's relationship to the "lunacy panic" of the late 1850s and to its interest in "The Woman Question." The reviews and comments from friends like Dickens also add usefully to the details provided in the Introduction. The editors have also taken the imaginative step of including several of the illustrations accompanying the novel. These include John Gilbert's evocative frontispiece to the 1861 edition and illustrations by Francis Fraser accompanying 1875 Chatto and Windus edition. At least, I am assuming they are Fraser's since it is not made clear; the only reference to him is in a footnote in the introduction. So whilst the generous number of illustrations is a good idea and they reflect the centrality of pictures in the Victorian novel-reading experience, there is again some slight confusion. If these illustrations are important more needs to be said about them; if they are not important then why include them? Since great play is made of the way in which this text conforms to what Collins would (probably) have wanted, it would, at the very least, be useful to know if Collins approved of the illustrations scattered though it.

Alongside its advantages, then, this edition does have flaws and loose ends. It is also pricey. Intended for the student market it will have to compete—at least in the British market—with cheaper editions from OUP and Penguin. Having said this, it is student-friendly in many ways and does flag up something of the immense scope and complexity of Collins's most famous novel. Bachman and Cox editors have a sure grasp of their subject, but it is a pity that they have left readers guessing concerning a number of the editorial decisions that they have made.

Andrew Maunder
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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



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Contents

~Articles~

- "A Bed Abroad": Travel Lodgings and the "Apartment House Plot"*
in *Little Dorrit* and *The Haunted Hotel*
NATALIE B. COLE 3
- A Land of Angels with Stiletos: Travel Experiences and Literary
Representations of Italy in Wilkie Collins*
MARIACONCETTA COSTANTINI 13

~Notes~

- The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (3)*
WILLIAM BAKER, ANDREW GASSON, GRAHAM LAW, & PAUL LEWIS 34

~Reviews~

- William Baker, *A Wilkie Collins Chronology; Lives of Victorian
Literary Figures, Part V: Vol. 2 Wilkie Collins*, ed. William
Baker & Andrew Gasson
ANDREW MAUNDER 70
- Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays*, ed. Andrew Mangham
LILLIAN NAYDER 72
- Andrew Mangham, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime,
Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture*
GRAHAM LAW 75

Editors' Note

Though the 2007 issue of the *Journal* includes a bumper crop of sixty new Wilkie Collins letters in the third of the series of "Addenda and Corrigenda" to *The Public Face*, shortage of space dictates that quite a number of more recent finds have had to be held over until next time. The grateful thanks of the editors are due especially to Susan Haynes, whose sterling labours in pursuing Collins on his North American reading tour have brought to light many of the items of correspondence included here for the first time. Her *Wilkie Collins's American Tour, 1873-4* will be published by Pickering and Chatto in April 2008, and is scheduled for review in our next issue. Also featured in this year's *Journal* are articles by Nathalie B. Cole and Mariaconcetta Costantini, both concerning Collins's representations of overseas travel, and both deriving appropriately enough from presentations at the International Conference on "Dickens, Victorian Culture, Italy" held at Genoa in June 2007. The issue is rounded off by reviews of two useful new reference works edited by William Baker and Andrew Gasson, plus two new books from Andrew Mangham, one a monograph and the other an edited collection of essays. We apologize for the delay in the appearance of this volume, so that the bumper crop arrives in untimely fashion in mid-winter, but hope that it has been worth waiting for.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

~~Articles~~

“A Bed Abroad”:
Travel Lodgings and the “Apartment House
Plot” in *Little Dorrit* and *The Haunted Hotel*

Natalie B. Cole
Oakland University

Away from their private residences in England, temporarily sheltered in the less rigidly structured spaces of travel lodgings, the travelers in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* and Collins’s *The Haunted Hotel* find their leisure practices more anxious than they had anticipated. Some of these anxieties cluster around where travelers will sleep. Such lodgings mimic the urban form of housing Sharon Marcus describes in *Apartment Stories*, combining as they do “the relatively private spaces of individual private units with the common spaces of shared entrances, staircases, and party walls,” and therefore [embodying] the continuity between domestic and urban, private and public spaces” (Marcus, 2). Marcus characterizes the spaces thus formed as “miniature cities ... whose multiplication of individual dwellings both magnified domesticity and perturbed its customary boundaries” (2). Further, Marcus describes an “apartment house plot,” which “[situates] the city’s flow and multiplicity *inside* the home” (Marcus, 11-12, *her emphasis*). Both *Little Dorrit* and *The Haunted Hotel* spatialize the bed abroad, and complicate its meanings through the apartment house plot.

While Dickens and Collins investigate the effect that strange, ambiguously bounded lodgings have on the tourist, this essay also reads their fictional spaces through Gaston Bachelard, who theorizes how houses and rooms may act as metaphors for “humanness,” offering a “topography of our intimate being” (Bachelard, vii, xxxvi). This essay considers briefly how Bachelard’s poetics of space appear in Dickens’s and Collins’s fiction.

Peter Bailey has noted that “leisure was haunted by the imperatives of a rigid work discipline” among the British nineteenth century middle class, noting that English travelers abroad could find it more difficult there to control the entry of “social undesirables” into one’s circle (Bailey, 17). Contemporary travel guides support this anxiety. A guidebook describing the advantages of traveling to the continent by way of Dieppe claims: “There you may meet the elite of fashion from all parts of the world, mingled not ungracefully, with people of the middle ranks” (*Dieppe*, 5). J.C. Parkinson, in a travel essay describing a 1864 Thomas Cook tour to the continent, is ridiculed by his fellow club-members:

Genteel people ask whether I really am going abroad “with a mob of people.” “It may possibly suit you, as a fellow who writes things, and who

looks out for what you call *character*; but I couldn't bear to be mixed up with a ruck of people myself."

(Parkinson, 585, his emphasis)

He strives to relieve his readers' class anxieties, telling them at the beginning of the essay, "my dignity was never ruffled, nor my gentility flyblown" (Parkinson, 585-6). But in fact, he goes on to describe a night during which he goes not only without a private bedroom but even without a bed:

Our beds were nefariously taken before our arrival. A particularly short sofa in a room where gentlemen are supping and don't mean to go to bed; a balcony from which moon, lake, and stars are seen to advantage, and which is frequented in consequence at all hours during the night; two shakedownns occupied by tourists of forty-snoring power; and a courier who knocks chairs and tables about in the dark, and calls the process "settling himself," – are not calculated to promote slumber;

(Parkinson, 588)

Parkinson describes a sleeping arrangement that violates the Victorian ideal that "every important function of life required a separate room" (Flanders, 37). Here sleep and touristic scene-viewing indiscriminately mingle, and employers and couriers bed down together, breaching class boundaries. Proper beds are not even available, but couches are appropriated as beds, and the floor is used in makeshift, "shakedown fashion."¹ For some travellers this could be part of the adventure of travelling, but for others this would add to their anxieties about travelling diminishing their class status, comfort, even their health. Further, the travellers themselves become part of the touristic spectacle, identifiable as the ones with no bedrooms roughing it in the common room to which all have access. Parkinson's experience, therefore, highlights the anxieties of bedding down abroad, reminding one of the multiple meanings of the word *abroad*: *foreign, alien, out of doors, out from one's own roof, even wide of the mark of truth* (OED).

* * * * *

Dickens in *Little Dorrit* repeatedly shows how private, seemingly "safe" spaces are contiguous to public entryways and open to violation by dangerous strangers. He demonstrates the perils of bedding down in strange places in multiple scenes of the novel, beginning with Clennam's return home to his hellish attic bedroom, and continuing with his unexpected lock-in in the Marshalsea, which resembles a sojourn in a foreign land. In fact, Nicola Bradbury has linked *abroad* as a concept of alienation "comparable to the [novel's] prison imagery" (Bradbury, 83). Two tables pushed together comprise Clennam's makeshift bed in the "Snuggery" where the Collegians socialize, underscoring both the entertainment his discomfiture has provided to the jaded Tip, and the tribute of money he has provided to Mr Dorrit. On these tables where the Collegians drink and around which they congregate in a parody of the public community from which they have been banished, Clennam makes his temporary bed. Here he feels an empathetic claustrophobia that points him to a symbolic symmetry between his mother's self-imposed exile to her bedroom and the involuntarily imprisoned Dorrit family. All night he imagines scenarios of entrapment: fires within the Marshalsea walls; how bodies are disposed of, and whether death liberates one from the Marshalsea;

¹ "Shakedown" refers to "any makeshift bed, esp. one made up on the floor" (OED).

and even escape routes over the walls with a cord and grapple. Dickens emphasizes the psychological and physical intrusiveness of the scene, since Clennam is forced to share the room with another man, and awakened by someone raking out the fire. "Little disposed to linger in bed, though his bed had been in a more private situation," Clennam hurries out of the Snuggery when he awakens (104).

Exiting the "little outer courtyard," beyond the prison, he sees the shabby "go-betweens" returning with break-fast items and thinks this about them: "Their walk was the walk of a race apart. ... They eyed him with borrowing eyes, hungry, sharp and speculative Mendicity ... leaked out of their figures in dirty little ends of tape and issued from their mouths in alcoholic breathings," representing the extreme end of indiscriminate domiciling. "When they coughed, they coughed like people accustomed to be forgotten on door-steps and draughty passages" (106; ch.9; I). In pursuing Little Dorrit, even to assist her, he voluntarily becomes an "in-between," leaking money to her needy father, and moving through the leaking valve of the entryway into the prison proper, and back outside again. Thus the contiguous public/private spaces of the Marshalsea and its denizens slowly cease to be a foreign territory to Clennam, as he lingers to explore it, going to acquaint himself next with Frederick Dorrit, another "in-between." Clennam's "bed abroad" literalizes a position he already holds as a returned exile, and the "barely intact" Marshalsea hangers-on offer an externalized image of his own emotionally forgotten, beggared self.

Also abed abroad, Rigaud using the alias of Lagnier discovers Cavalletto as his roommate at the Break of Day caberet in rural France. Rigaud locks the door, telling Cavalletto, "And this is the bed to which society consigns me, is it?" metaphorizing as a low social rank the rustic bed of the French caberet (147; ch.11; I). Shared chambers and lumpy beds represent social slumming for Rigaud, as well as further opportunity to exploit and make a servant of another man. Cavalletto is shocked by this unwelcome proximity, escaping at the first opportunity onto the open road; the incident of shared chambers and one man watching another man in a state of unconsciousness is eerily rewritten by Collins in the collaborative travel narrative he authored in October 1857 with Dickens, *The Idle Tour of Two Lazy Apprentices*.

In contrast to the unwanted proximity of males sharing bedchambers, Little Dorrit seeks out Minnie Gowan in the cold bedroom "cell" at the Convent of the Great St. Bernard. Minnie's adjournment to the bedroom and her bruised side figure both the risks of foreign travel, incurred in a fall from a mule on the precipitous climb up this highest slope of the Alps, and the risks of marriage (see Freedgood). Here Little Dorrit can show her desire for Clennam in a triangulated fashion, tending and identifying with Minnie's bruise, through which she feels connected to Clennam. Minnie can cover Amy Dorrit with her travelling wrapper and rest her arm on her shoulder, bestowing the tenderness Gowan lacks (468; ch.1; II). This bed abroad demonstrates Bachelard's claim that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home," for Minnie is linked through Clennam to Twickenham, and her parents' home, and Amy is once again allowed to offer solace to the wounded in a humble shelter, to share emotional vulnerability and strength as she did in the Marshalsea (Bachelard, 5). The easy access to Minnie's bedroom shows again the precariousness of a bed abroad. Gowan, the husband, must be kept out of the secret of the note. Blandois, the spy, listens from the stairs. Little Dorrit,

sharing the staircase with him, fears him. The Convent's common room also exposes the labor of leisure, as Dorrit and one of the convent's brothers converse about the confinement of the monastic order. Even small talk is work for William Dorrit, and every word he speaks about the space of the monastery evokes his home, the Marshalsea. As Bachelard writes, "An entire past comes to dwell in a new house," and Dorrit's follows him wherever he goes (5).

In Venice, the Dorrits live precipitously in one of the grand palaces described by Louis Simond: "No quays, no terraces, no landing-place before them; they plunge at once into the briny deep, which however here is very shallow; splendid marble stairs with marble balustrades lead up once from the water to the hall door" (Simond, 35). Little Dorrit notes the discrepancy between their formidable lodgings and their social accessibility:

Little Dorrit observes as she climbs the staircase of the Venetian palace they rent, that Blandois has made his way too easily into her father's house. But, so many and such varieties of people did the same, through Mr Dorrit's participation in his elder daughter's society mania, that it was hardly an exceptional case. A perfect fury for making acquaintances on whom to impress their riches and importance, had seized the House of Dorrit.

(535-6; ch.7; II)

Dickens's spatialization works in several ways: the palace is too easy to enter, even though it can only be approached by water; in fact, the acquaintance of the Dorrit family can travel through space and be caught like a "mania," a "fury," an infectious disease, like stock speculation later in the novel. Little Dorrit's Venetian palace bedroom is a "humbled state-chamber in a dilapidated palace," "six times as big as the whole Marshalsea" where she wakes up dreaming of her old home (489, 491; ch.3; II). About this bed abroad Dickens underscores Little Dorrit's sense of the surreal life she leads with her family, too much attended upon and incessantly watched, and her sense of disproportion, "of not being grand enough for her place in the ceremonies" (489; ch.3; II). The palace as a lodging is a perfect panopticon of servants and native Italians, always waiting on and observing the Dorrit family; Amy feels her body shrink to nothing within its giant walls.

However, she finds a refuge in her bedroom balcony. Bachelard calls the refuge a place of "centralized solitude," where the hermit is "alone before God," in a world lighted by a distant gleam that is the hermit's candle (Bachelard, 32). Little Dorrit, although she feels herself "little indeed" from her balcony on the top floor, is more largely psychologized in the section of the novel, in reverie and letters to Clennam (491; ch.3; II). Dickens uses the bedroom balcony space as a refuge and Little Dorrit as a hermit figure; in this scene she both sees the "distant gleam" of illuminated palaces and is the lonely figure, a tourist site: "she soon began to be watched for, and many eyes in passing gondolas were raised, and many people said, There was the little English girl who was always alone" (491; ch.3; II). Her own watching returns her always to the original home and refuge of the Marshalsea, as she watches the stars: "To think of that old gate now!" This balcony refuge foreshadows the refuge she provides for Clennam, when she transforms his prison bedroom in the Marshalsea from sickroom to betrothal space. Dickens lifts one character horizontally and spiritually beyond the apartment house plot.

Two other contiguous passageways merit attention: the London hotel staircase which leads to William Dorrit's chambers, and his bedroom suite itself. The first brings that luminary, Mr Merdle, who encounters clerks and

servants, “hovering in doorways and at angles, that they might look upon him” (641; ch.16; II). Hotel stairways allow such brushes between classes, and run counter to prevailing architectural theories of the mid-century in France and England, which stressed “the most complete separation possible between contiguous apartments” as well as between masters and servants (Daly; 203; quoted in Marcus, 160). Merdle’s money-making ability makes his vicinity magical or fertile, and humbler types move into the contiguous space hoping to be enchanted or inseminated by his proximity.

Through this passageway, Merdle brings his infected Midas touch to Mr Dorrit, much flattered by the pretended intimacy of this early morning call, while he is still at breakfast. Merdle’s inability to look at his host, his resistance to sharing the physical space of the hotel suite with him, is no different than his discomfort in his own home, where he also seems a transient, passing through. He shares this state with Dorrit. Further, both men’s masculinities are affected by their relative homelessness, even though they have wealth. Mr Merdle’s house is not a refuge for him, and its social gatherings seem to show him distinctly ill at ease with his own guests. He seems like a lodger there. Dorrit has not chosen to buy property and settle somewhere in England where his past might be scrutinized. As Marcus notes, “It was a cliché of architectural discourse to state that apartment houses were incompatible with national ideas of masculinity” (Marcus, 162), and in this regard, both Merdle and Dorrit have compromised masculinity as temporary lodgers in hotels and homes they don’t feel at home in. Further, citing Viollet-le-Duc, Marcus argues that “only a personalized residence can develop a habit of being oneself” (160) Neither man knows how to enjoy leisure, and both fear showing a genuine or authentic self to others, so they avoid a personalized residence, choosing instead the impersonality of hotels or of a residence decorated and socially constructed by another, someone like “the Bosom” or Fanny Dorrit. Finally, their attempts at leisure are so laborious, the pathology of this labor is exposed, and they die.

* * * * *

Collins’s *The Haunted Hotel* also concerns the practice of leisure, the danger of contiguous public and private spaces, and the work of travel abroad. The congestion of modes of travel and foreign travel spaces begins to emerge in Collins’s writings. Travelling with Augustus Egg and Dickens, Collins writes from Naples to Edward Pigott in 1853:

I cannot shut my eyes to the palpable fact that the travelling part of the human race wants thinning. We have encountered crowds everywhere. No Hotels are large enough, no coaches numerous enough, no post-houses indefatigable enough to accommodate, hold and draw the legions of tourists who are now overflowing the Continent in every direction.

(Collins, *Public Face*, I 91)

Collins slept “shakedown” amidst grocery drygoods on one sea-crossing, and laughed about it in the same letter: “Did you ever sleep in a Store Room?” (92). The conflation of edible consumables with the human body as they share space points forward to *The Haunted Hotel*, in which a private space, the scene of a family tragedy, is transformed into a public enterprise for entertainment and capital investment. The slippage between public and private spaces is prepared for at the novella’s very beginning, when a patient waylays the physician Dr Wybrow in the hallway of his residence when he tries to avoid a consultation with her by leaving his residence without going through his consulting room.

This unwanted encounter demonstrates that the convenient placing of the consulting room adjacent to/within the home has its drawbacks. Forced to give the preternaturally pale and foreign woman a consultation, Dr Wybrow wonders later, “Had the woman left an infection of wickedness in his house, and had he caught it?” (Collins, *The Haunted Hotel*, 97).

The blurring of separate functions for space occurs also in the mysterious foreign woman’s own lodgings, as they are gossiped about at a men’s club in London. This woman, the Countess Narona, who has “stolen” the heart of the Baron Montbarry away from his respectable English fiancée, is reputed to have had an “apartment” in Paris [that] had been denounced to the police as nothing less than a private gambling-house” (*The Haunted Hotel*, 99). This aspersion on the Countess’s character points to one of the oft-stated justifications of the English for single-family homes in England, as quoted in Marcus’ study. In the 1851 census, Registrar General George Graham writes that “The possession of an entire house is ... strongly desired by every Englishman; for it throws a sharp, well-defined circle round his family and hearth” (Marcus, 232). Further, multiple-family dwellings are associated with sexual promiscuity, and the apartment-dwelling of Countess Narona with her compromised reputation is no exception (Marcus, 105).

Collins’s decision to move the scene abroad to the Venetian palace increases the tale’s gothicism, both in the palace’s setting with its subterranean vaults and mysterious chemical experiments by the Countess’ “brother,” and in its idea that “irrational and evil forces threaten both individual integrity and the material order of society” (Fowler, 105). The English Baron Montbarry, who owns land in Ireland and who has spurned his English fiancée in favor of a dark foreigner reputed to be an adventuress, seems spoiling for trouble. Montbarry, an apparent recluse, chooses his own honeymoon exile, oddly accompanied by his brother-in-law. Collins depicts here two travellers who are antithetical to travel: one man works at science, while the other shuts himself away from the delights travel can afford: “the imaginary space outside of ordinary life” (Buzard, 34); liberation from the “values and norms of the traveller’s home society” (Korte, 98); and the chance to “[heighten] one’s perceptive, imaginative, emotional and sensory powers” (Morgan, 10), especially in erotic ways, as the Baron is on his honeymoon with the woman he has defied Society to marry.

Instead, though, of a triumphant travelling awakening, the Baron meets an unexpected death in Venice from bronchitis, and insurance inspectors are sent to investigate the circumstances of his death. They discover nothing unusual. This same palace is converted into a grand hotel – the Palace Hotel – a destination for foreign travellers working hard at leisure.

The Palace Hotel fulfills multiple narrative functions. As a hotel, it uses elements of the apartment house plot, and also the haunted house story. Close to the square of St. Mark’s, inside it Collins situates “the city’s flow and multiplicity,” conflating public and domestic spaces and incurring the threat of mistaken identity, chance encounters, and the increasing interplay between isolation and community (Marcus, 11-12). The locus for all of this is the bed abroad, chamber 13A and number 38 above it, and the mystery concerning what took place there is intertwined with the fever of stock speculation in this new business venture. This fever has even spread to Ireland, where an old family retainer who has invested one hundred pounds urges a wedding party

and honeymoon couple to book rooms there, so she can see a ten percent return on her investment.

Collins critiques the cold-hearted Henry Westwick's callous indifference to his older brother's death by the fact that he has invested money in the scene where the death occurred, and that further, he actively solicits the monetary investments of others. Once at the Palace Hotel in Venice, Henry is at first assigned another room, one lit by gaslight. Gaslight consumed oxygen in bedrooms, and adequate ventilation was a major problem in Victorian bedrooms, as home, in lodgings and in hotels, as Lady Barker notes in her *The Bedroom and Boudoir* (1878) :

It is imposible to over-estimate the value of refreshing sleep to busy people, particularly to those who are obliged to do brainwork. In the following pages will, we hope be found many hints with regard to the sanitary as well as the ornamental treament of the bedroom.

(Barker, *Preface*)

A bedroom with gaslight, despite being well-lit, would be apt to be stuffy and uncomfortable, and Henry is happy to exchange bedrooms with an American gentleman who must have gas laid on in his chamber and so takes Henry's room in another part of the hotel. The ordinary Victorian bedroom was haunted not by ghosts, but by "bad air, like a slaughterhouse," and the "want of freshness" was thought to be caused by "old walls" and "soiled clothes" (Emerson, quoted by Barker, 1; Barker, 4). Nevertheless, Henry experiences a real haunting: although he usually slept "as well in a bed abroad as in a bed at home ... [that night] He never slept at all. An indescribable sense of depression and discomfort kept him waking through darkness and daylight alike" (Collins, *The Haunted Hotel*, 169). Here Collins incorporates the ghost story, with its haunted house that "broadcast[s] the urban deformation of the domestic ideal" (Marcus, 50). That deformation occurs, despite the restructuring of the hotel into smaller, lavishly decorated chambers, and its slavish catering to its guests to create a grand hotel that will continue to woo English tourists away from English hotels to continentals ones (*The Haunted Hotel*, 158-9; Bence-Jones, 1062). Marcus argues that Victorian ghost stories "amalgamated realism and unreality" thus compromising each (121). Thus, Collins shows one brother discrediting the supernatural elements and burning the manuscript that unfolds the uncanny events, while the other follows up on the clues emanating from the apparition of the severed head and the confession/playscript. At the same time, the haunting of the family members cannot be denied, and such haunting links the luxury hotel, despite its distinctly upper-middle-class inhabitants, with the "characteristics attributed to the urban poor": pestilential living conditions, spying and surveillance, and the unwanted incursion of foreign bodies in close quarters.

Visiting the hotel's chambers 13A and 38, the other siblings all experience various physical, mental, and dream disturbances such as disgusting odors and nightmares, and a niece sees a bloodstain on the ceiling, but the worst horror is reserved for the jilted fiancée of the dead man, the idealized Agnes Lockwood. She experiences a chamber of horrors when she lights a match after midnight, reenacting a part of the experience of the English Baronet's murder by two foreigners; she discovers foreign bodies in her room: the widow of her dead lover, the scandal-ridden Countess Naronia lying in a trance in an armchair, and a floating severed head, too disfigured to reveal its identity.

Agnes's "bed abroad" in Venice epitomizes the English fear of lacking separation from and of mingling with social and ethnic others abroad. This crowded bedroom mirrors the hotel's popularity as a tourist destination, for the hotel is a congested site. Collins emphasizes its lack of vacancies: "So much interest . . . had been aroused, at home and abroad, by profuse advertising, that the whole accommodation of the building had been secured by travellers of all nations for the opening night" (Collins, *The Haunted Hotel*, 168). Beyond the fear of congestion, Agnes's bedroom resurrects the dead Baron, eerily intimating his ghostly desire for her. In Bachelard's terms, the cellar space is "the dark *entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces" (Bachelard, 18). The visitation of the severed head in the bedroom recreates that space in the image of the cellar, the place of "buried madness," "walled-in tragedy," where the Countess's brother/lover performed his chemical experiments and tried to destroy the Baron's corpse (Bachelard, 20). The Countess Narona's trance-like state, and Agnes's loss of consciousness plunge them both into Bachelard's spatial and psychological "cellar dream" that Collins has created using the architecture of the Venetian palace and the apartment house and haunted house plots.

The hotel also functions as an example of Britons working at leisure, one of whom is Francis Westwick, the deceased man's brother, and a theatre manager. Westwick has travelled to Italy to celebrate a family wedding, but he is actually working the whole time he is there, scouting continental theatres for talent, and imagining new theatrical productions: he wants to produce a "ghost-drama," and its "title occurred to him in the railway: *The Haunted Hotel* – put that in red letters six feet high, on a black ground all over London and trust the excitable public to crowd into the theatre!" (175). Impervious to the bad taste of this idea, he is not impervious to a horrible smell in the room in connection to his brother's death, and his attention is solicited by his brother's widow, the Countess Narona in St Mark's Square, one of the public places where tourists cannot always control their social contacts.

The coffee houses on three sides of St. Mark's are populated, nineteenth-century travel writer Louis Simond estimates, by forty-thousand people each evening (Simond, 42). Simond reassures British tourists that "the different classes of people do not meet promiscuously" (Simond, 42), while W. E. Norris, writing in *Belgravia* in the same issue in which the final part of Collins's novel was serialized, tells a Venetian story in which his protagonist deliberately seeks out contact with ethnic others at St. Mark's Square: "I always like to associate with foreigners while I am abroad" ("Bianca," 49). The consequence of this meeting in public and their adjournment to a café, is the writing of a three-act play by the Countess which is also a confession.

Collins's bed abroad and its shared proximity become metaphors for the ultimate threat to Englishness: death, disappearance, mistaken identity. The Venetian palace/Palace Hotel converts too easily the domestic to the commercial, its bedroom the space for hiding a foreign body and exposing a foreign body, for forbidden intimacies such as cross-cultural marriages, adultery, and incestuous liaisons between brother and sister, for treachery, murder, and the neglect of family honor. The English body abroad feels restless, diseased and intruded upon, and Englishmen abroad work overtime on vacation to compensate for this insidious dis-ease, as Dickens and Collins both show. The once intact and honored English body of a Baron becomes the "multilated remains" (*The Haunted Hotel*, 235) that go undiscovered,

unclaimed and unburied for many months, hidden in a secret vault, echoing Dickens's anxieties in *Pictures from Italy* about what he experiences as a cavalier attitude to the treatment and burial of the dead (*Pictures*, 379-80).

The foreign body shows its ultimate horror when it is offered for narrative and casual, almost touristic display. Invited by the hotel's manager to visit the expiring Countess, Henry Westwick watches:

The Countess was stretched on her bed. The doctor on one side, and the chambermaid on the other, were standing looking at her. From time to time, she drew a heavy stertorous breath, like a person oppressed in sleeping. "Is she likely to die?" Henry asked. "She is dead," the doctor answered. "Dead of the rupture of a blood-vessel on the brain. Those sounds that you hear are purely mechanical – they may go on for hours. Henry looked at the chambermaid. She had little to tell.

(Collins, *The Haunted Hotel*, 230)

While James Bower Harrison's *Medical Aspects of Death* (1852), owned by Dickens in his Gad's Hill library, suggests "the observance of respiration be taken as the indication of life, and its absence as a proof of death," Harrison does note exceptions to this rule (14). More importantly, the multiplicity of purposes for the deathbed space which violate its sanctity – the lack of dignity afforded the dying/dead woman, who has no privacy, nurse or religious attendant; the doctor's casual display of his specimen/patient; Westwick's desire to question the Countess and her maid – all make this space the ultimate act of voyeurism in *The Haunted Hotel* as the onlookers watch the extinction/expulsion of the foreign body.

* * * * *

Finally, although W.H. Wills advocates in his 1855 *Household Words* essay "Paris Improved" that London should adopt Paris's model of apartment dwellings: "When the cobbler meets the baronet or the government official, or madame or mademoiselle on the stairs, he claims them as neighbors only by a bow, and a bon jour" and that neighbors in such proximity do not "interfere" with each other (Wills, 354), the apartment house with its common spaces, and similarly, the prison and the hotel, were perceived to compromise safety, sexuality, hygiene, privacy and class distinctions in ways that unwind in the apartment house plot, first identified by Sharon Marcus, and variously constructed in Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and Collins's *The Haunted Hotel*.

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A Land of Angels with *Stiletto*s: Travel Experiences and Literary Representations of Italy in Wilkie Collins

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Italy held an enduring fascination for Wilkie Collins. The intriguing views of *Il Bel Paese*, offered by his fictional and non-fictional works, prove that his interest was neither purely aesthetic nor prompted simply by an age-long literary taste for the exotic. As an artist's son, Collins was a genuine admirer of Italian art and landscape. But he also felt a strong attraction for the culture of the Mediterranean country, which he strove to represent from a realistic, unbiased perspective.

This attraction for Italy is closely connected with Collins's sustained curiosity about *alterity* – a recurrent topic of his fiction, which has lately become a focus of critical scrutiny. *The Moonstone*, in particular, has been interpreted as a text that problematizes colonial relations with otherness. First raised by John Reed's early study of *The Moonstone* (1973), the interest in Collins's critique of imperialism has led to compelling readings of his racial images, which have been examined in the light of his constant swerving from mainstream Victorian ideology.

What is noteworthy, however, is the gap in critical attention paid to his different images of the non-British. In comparison with his extra-European representations of otherness, his European ones have received less scholarly notice. The need for a critical assessment of Collins's "pictures from Europe" – and especially from Italy – is compelling given the wide range of Continental figures, places and habits we can trace in his works. Altogether, these recurrent *topoi* show that Collins's curiosity about foreign cultures had no fixed boundaries. Enthralled as he was by the mysteries of the Caribbean or India, he was also drawn to less remote cultures, which he explored in two ways: indulging his ethnological curiosity about the Other, and underscoring, by comparison, some aporias and flaws of his own society. Italy fulfils both functions in his writing. In addition to offering effective examples of cultural diversity, his Italian figures and contexts work as sort of blueprints for the Victorian world, since they unveil its contradictions either by allusion or by explicit denunciation.

More than other countries visited or imagined by Collins, Italy acquired a cultural and epistemological relevance worth examining. But when and how did this attraction originate?

* * * * *

Collins was a frequent traveller to Italy. At the age of twelve, he accompanied his parents on a two-year visit to the Continent. The family spent a long time in Rome and Naples and, despite some health problems, enjoyed their stay. As an adult, Wilkie made other trips to the "land of lost delight" (Peters, 129). In 1853, he went on a tour around Italy with Dickens and

Augustus Egg, and returned to many cities he had seen with his parents. He visited Milan and Rome again with Edward Pigott, in 1866. And he chose Italy as the destination of two trips he made with Caroline Graves in 1863 and 1877.

Every time he returned to Italy, he was overwhelmed by the happy memories of his first formative journey. His thrill at seeing again the art treasures he had admired with his father, his joy at discovering that the family's "favourite haunts" in Rome and Naples had hardly changed, are amply testified in his letters. On his first return to Rome, in 1853, Collins wrote to his brother Charles:

This place seems, and really is, unaltered. I recognised, this morning, all the favourite [erased word] haunts on the Pincian Hill, that we asked to run about as little boys – I saw the same Bishops, in purple stockings, followed by servants in gaudy liveries – the same importunately impudent beggars – the same men with pointed hats and women with red petticoats and tightly swaddled babies that I remembered so well in England since 1837 and 1838.

(13 November 1853, *Letters*, I 113)

A few days later, in a letter from Venice, he conveyed similar impressions to his mother: "Here as at Rome, nothing seems to have altered for the last fifteen years" (25 November 1853, *Letters*, I 117). Although he found Naples "altered in one or two important respects" (*Letters*, I 113), he was assailed by reminiscences and strove to detect signs of continuity with the past whenever he happened to visit the city again. (The Collinses had stayed in the area from May 1837 to February 1838, moving to Sorrento and Ischia while cholera was raging in town, and returning to Naples when fears of contagion had abated.) On his first voyage back to Naples, he felt the lure of the city as soon as he caught sight of it:

The sea was of the real Mediterranean blue [...] the Islands in the bay showed their lovely forms with a soft indistinctness indescribably visionary and beautiful to look at – and the unrivalled scene of Naples itself, with its gardens its lofty houses, and its grand forts, gleamed again right under the sunny portion of the sky. Every part of the view was familiar to me, though it is 15 years since I saw it last.

(To Edward Pigott, 4 November 1853, *Public Face*, I 93)

His later visits to Italy renewed his sense of putting the clock back. Compared to London, whose life-style and social structure were being transformed by the fast pace of progress, the Italian cities he had explored as a boy were familiar *loci* in which the culture of the past was preserved against traumatic changes.

The missives written on the occasion of his third journey to Italy, which he made with Caroline Graves and her daughter in 1863, record this pervasive sense of standstill. In writing to his mother, on 13 November 1863, Collins mentioned two transformations fostered by progress (the enlarged garden sites, the use of gas-light), but he undermined these novelties by listing a number of contextual and cultural parallels with the past:

Naples – as far as the rain has allowed me to see it – is not much changed. The Villa Reale is twice the size it was in your time, and the Toledo is lit with gas. But the hideous deformed beggars are still in the street [...] no two members of the populace can meet in the street and talk about anything without screeching at the tops of their [erased word] voice, with their noses close together and their hands gesticulating madly above their heads. – Here are all the old stinks flourishing – all the fruit-stalls and

iced-water stalls at all the old corners of the streets – here are the fishermen with the naked [mahogany] legs – here are the children with [erasure] a short shirt on, and nothing else, and here are their fond mothers hunting down the vermin in their innocent little heads. Political convulsions may do what they please – Bourbons may be tumbled down, and Victor Emmanuels may be set up – Naples keeps its old cheerful dirty devil-may-care face in spite of them.

(*Letters*, I 237)

Dirty, poor and smelly though it might be, Naples still preserved the “old cheerful face” it had shown to the Collinses twenty-five years before. A place of visual, auditory and olfactory contrasts, which inspired both pleasure and disgust, the city was nonetheless endowed with a marked cultural identity. Its power of resistance to change derived from the strength of communal bonds and from a primeval innocence, which made it impermeable to political transformations (including the annexation to Piedmont referred to in the letter). Isotopically evoked by the image of the fond mothers hunting down the lice (“vermin”) in their children’s heads, this idea of *innocence* problematized the cultural opposition Italy vs. Britain, since it implied that the North-European cities of *experience* and *progress* had lost some communal and family values that were still strong in Southern Europe.

Collins’s enthusiasm for Italy was not always shared by his travel companions. On their 1853 tour, Dickens often showed annoyance at the Italian memories and extravagances of the young Collins. His lack of interest in painting made him resent Collins’s learned discourses on art (Peters, 125). And he missed no chance of blaming his friend’s relish for various Southern *pleasures*. “He tells us about the enormous quantities of Monte Pulciano and what not, that he used to drink when he was last here”, Dickens wrote to his wife (quoted in Clarke, 73). In another letter, he mockingly refers to a transgressive story told him by Collins, who claimed he had made his first sexual experience with a married woman in Rome during his boyhood (Peters, 138).

Whatever the truth may be, these testimonies confirm the strong emotional response that Collins had to Italy, a country he was never afraid of exploring and tasting. The large variety of his interests – ranging from folklore to art, from food to women – prove that he was neither a detached observer nor a strict censor of foreign customs. When he was in Italy or thought of Italy, Collins tended to acquire the identity of “Guglielmo Collini”, the funny pseudonym he used to sign two letters sent to his mother after their return to England. Both written in Italian, these missives are riddled with errors of grammar, vocabulary and spelling (*Letters*, I 7, 8). But they bear witness to Collins’s wish to revive, through the Italian language, the memories of a land that he had come to love. Even his later reports on unpleasant aspects of Italian life – the piled-up dirt, the popular habit of shouting, the crammed ships, the aggressive mosquitoes – show a capacity for adaptation and enjoyment uncommon among British travellers.

* * * * *

More light on Collins’s attitude to Italy is shed by his *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins, Esq., R.A.*, a biography of his father, the well-known painter William Collins. This commemorative work, which he wrote in 1848 after William’s death, includes long records of the family’s sojourn in Italy. Wilkie aimed to depict the foreign country through the eyes of his father, who

had refined his painting techniques during his stay in the land of Raphael and Michelangelo. Indeed, the biography offers good samples of the aesthetic approach that William had to Italian landscapes and people. By inserting letters written or received by his father, and excerpts from his Diary, Wilkie strove to maintain the primacy of William's focalization. But there are also passages that give insights into the son's perception of the foreign land, where he made crucial experiences that would shape his literary career. If carefully examined, Wilkie's memories reveal the important function that Italy fulfilled in broadening his young mind, which was trained to appreciate diversity and overcome the strictures of a monocultural identity.

A telling example is the description of the models engaged by his father in Rome. While the painter's scope was to choose the most suitable figures for his artistic projects, the biographer's focus was laid on the personality of the people sitting for William. His close observation enabled him to perceive a gap between art and life, to discover the inherent ambiguity of human nature, which could not be rendered by ready-made, simplistic categories.

One model, in particular, attracted his attention: a twelve-year-old beautiful boy, who sat for angelic figures but was, in "private life", a *stiletto*-wearing thief and rascal:

Another of his models was a beautiful boy, with features dazzling perfect, who had sat to every one for cupids, angels and whatever else was lovely and refined; and who was in "private life" one of the most consummate rascals in Rome – a gambler, a thief, and a "*stiletto*"-wearer, at twelve years of age!

(*Memoirs*, II 93-4)

The passage conveys an effective idea of the complexity of Italian culture, which the young Collins was learning to see as a land of oxymorons. By highlighting the contrast between the model's pose and actions, between his angelic image and his criminal deeds, Wilkie showed his early awareness of the danger of founding one's moral judgments on appearances. Such awareness would be later activated in his famous novels to unmask the hypocrisy of his own society.

But the ambivalence of the Italian boy did more than alert Collins to the artificiality of behavioural norms. It also instilled in him a sense of ethical relativity, which increased with age and inspired his bold characterization of amiable villains, questionable heroes, and lawbreaking heroines. The moral ambiguity of his characters, who mainly challenge the distinction between "sheep and goats", is anticipated by the portrait of the "*stiletto*-wearer", whose angelic nature is strangely enhanced by his criminal disposition. The boy is mentioned again in a later passage, where he is identified as the model of a beautiful picture of Christ titled "Our Saviour with the Doctors in the Temple":

The model for the face of our Saviour, in the picture now under review, was the beautiful Italian boy, mentioned in the notices of Mr Collins's first sojourn at Rome. Although the expression of his countenance is refined and elevated from the original, in the painter's work, the features retain the resemblance to the first study from Nature – thus mingling, in the personation of Christ, the human with the Divine, in a singularly eloquent and attractive manner.

(*Memoirs*, II 167-8)

In his description of the painting, which his father had completed for an Exhibition in 1840, the biographer notices that, despite the artist's refining touches, the boy's features "retain the resemblance to the first study from Nature". And he adds that it is exactly "this mingling of human and divine" that makes his figure so "singularly eloquent and attractive".

By recalling and interpreting his boyhood reminiscence, Collins suggested that his experience of Italy and Italians had been a major source of inspiration. The unorthodox views he had developed, since his first meeting with the Roman boy, were founded on the conviction that life was a blend of the corporeal and the spiritual, crime and pleasure, violence and beauty – a knot of conflicting ideas twisted together, which could not be untied without destroying its vitality.

Collins was not the only British traveller to be struck by the models that crowded the streets of Rome. Dickens himself devoted a paragraph of his *Pictures from Italy* (1846) – an account of a trip to Italy he had made in 1844-5 – to the description of what he called the "great place of resort" of idle models: the steps that lead from Piazza di Spagna to the church of Trinità dei Monti.

In plainer words, these steps are the great place of resort for the artists' "Models" and they are constantly waiting to be hired [...] and the cream of the thing is, that they are all the falsest vagabonds in the world, especially made for the purpose, and having no counterparts in Rome or any other part of the habitable globe.

(*Pictures*, 130-1)

Unlike Collins, however, Dickens detected no positive elements in those people, whom he scornfully called "the falsest vagabonds in the world". This definition is proof of his different attitude to Italy. Although he embarked on a tour which had become commonplace for middle-class Victorians, Dickens kept himself rather aloof from Italians and was mostly critical of their culture.

A comparison between Dickens's *Pictures* and Collins's *Memoirs* confirms the divergence of their views. Close though were in genre and composition, the works bear evidence of Dickens's perception of Italy as a land of corruption, grotesqueness and violence, while Collins looked at the same aspects with greater tolerance and amusement. In all his sketches of Rome, Dickens evoked a pervasive atmosphere of decay. The collapsing monuments of the "Dead City" (*Pictures*, 114) were made more spectral by the moral debasement of the inhabitants and the stifling practices of the Catholic Church. The latter, in particular, is the butt of the author's bitter criticism. The sickened Pope who looks "as if his mask were going to tumble off" (121), the veneration of scary relics (138-40), the many emblems of martyrdom, the humiliating rituals of penitence (such as, the climbing of the Scala Santa, 156), are instances of the Catholic obsession with death and punishment – a tendency that reaches its climax in the gory spectacle of the beheading of a murderer. The involvement of Churchmen in the execution is highlighted by Dickens, who describes "priests and monks" standing "on tiptoe for a sight of the knife" (142) amid a crowd of petty criminals and blood-thirsty voyeurs.

Quite different was Collins's depiction of the city, whose fascinating aspects did not escape his notice. Although he complained about the dirt of their first abode, he enjoyed the grandeur and mysteries of Rome. A case in point is his memory of some penitent figures he had watched inside the Colosseum, whose stature was enhanced by the solemn atmosphere of the amphitheatre. The scene, which had also made a strong impression on William,

was preserved in the son's memory, who, despite his own protest, managed to reproduce it in an effective pictorial language:

The glorious arches of the Colosseum, showing doubly mysterious and sublime in the dim, fading light cast down on them from the darkening sky, alone surrounded this solemn scene, whose tragic grandeur is *to be painted, but not to be described*. It impressed the painter with emotions not easily forgotten [...]

(*Memoirs*, II 97, my italics)

In another passage of the *Memoirs*, Wilkie expresses admiration for the “splendid ceremonies of the ‘Holy Week’” (II 138-9). His aesthetic note of appraisal is in sheer contrast with Dickens's sustained criticism of the gaudy ornaments, the superstitious rituals and the religious fanaticism of the Roman Church.

Equally different are their emotional responses to the scenes of poverty they viewed in Naples. In his “Rapid Diorama” of Neapolitan life, Dickens lays stress on some outdoor activities that might appear “picturesque”, such as the widespread use of gesture language, the habits of “maccaroni-eating at sunset, and flower-selling all day long” (*Pictures*, 166). Yet, he warns his readers against the risks of idealizing those folkloric aspects at the expense of realism:

But, lovers and hunters of the picturesque, let us not keep too studiously out of view the miserable depravity, degradation, and wretchedness, with which this gay Neapolitan life is inseparably associated! It is not well to find Saint Giles's so repulsive, and the Porta Capuana so attractive. A pair of naked legs and a ragged red scarf, do not make *all* the difference between what is interesting and what is coarse and odious? Painting and poetising for ever, if you will, the beauties of this most beautiful and lovely spot of earth, let us, as our duty, try to associate a new picturesque with some faint recognition of man's destiny and capability; more hopeful, I believe, among the ice and snow of the North Pole, than in the sun and bloom of Naples.

(*Pictures*, 166-7)

The hyperbolic expression “the beauties of this most beautiful and lovely spot of earth”, and the reference to the North Pole (a region that epitomized wilderness), testify to his intention of dismantling an artistic cliché which concealed the drab reality of Neapolitan life. In his view, the allure of the Italian city sprang from a distorted perception of its “beauties”, which was commonplace among British poets and painters. While admiring its exotic colourful surface, they tended to ignore the underlying problems of the largest city in Italy, which was plagued with unemployment and urban poverty (Clark 29-30). In comparison with its London counterpart (Saint Giles's), the Neapolitan underworld of paupers and criminals (the Porta Capuana) was even more repulsive to Dickens, who used the paradoxical remark on the Arctic to underline the inhuman conditions of its inhabitants.

At first sight, the crowd of beggars and “ragged lazzaroni” (165) depicted by Dickens is congruent with the heterogeneous mob that Collins portrayed in his *Memoirs*: “Idlers in the street, fishermen, country people, and lazzaroni, church processions and perambulating provision-sellers—all the heterogeneous population of a Neapolitan highway” (II 115). Yet, a careful scrutiny of their works reveals their different attitudes to the wretched population they observed in the streets of Naples. Whereas Dickens insisted on

images of human degradation that betrayed his sense of cultural superiority, Collins exalted the positive endowments and habits of Neapolitans, such as their unswerving capacity for life enjoyment. This idea comes fully to the fore in a passage that highlights the citizens' popular gaiety during a cholera epidemic:

Nothing in Naples, at first sight, conveyed the slightest idea that the city was threatened by a wasting pestilence. The gaieties of the place all moved on unchecked, and the idle and good-humoured populace lounged about the streets with the same sublime carelessness of all industrious considerations that had ever characterized them.

(*Memoirs*, II 167-8)

Through a careful choice of vocabulary, Collins voiced his admiration for the remarkable skills of Neapolitans, whose resilience to adverse circumstances is given a quasi-heroic tinge (notice how the adjective “sublime” aggrandizes their unwillingness to yield to fears of contagion).

These experiences in Naples had a strong impact on the imagination of the young Collins, who came to perceive the whole Italian peninsula as a land of fascinating, insoluble contrasts. Most evident in his representations of Central and Southern Italy, which had a longer history of political and cultural turmoil, this view also emerges in his memories of Northern cities and regions. In this regard, it is interesting to examine the picture of Venice drawn in the biography. Unlike Dickens, who laid all stress on the ghostliness and decadence of the Serenissima, Collins merged literary echoes with personal impressions to create an elaborate image that challenges definition.¹ Melancholy and declining though it seems, the Venice he portrayed is also a city of delightful sights and amenities, where a British traveller like William could spend sunny days “glid[ing] along in his gondola” and be involved in comic situations. (See the comic anecdote of his father’s encounter with the “former cook of Lord Byron’s, named Beppo”, *Memoirs*, II 147-8).

In the main, these Italian memories prove that, from the very beginning of his career, Collins distrusted most British stereotypes and strove to find a hermeneutic path towards a fresh interpretation of what he considered an appealing foreign culture. In spite of their undeniable behavioural flaws (idleness, corruption, superstition), the Italians he met provided a cultural alternative worth exploring, since they burst with a vitality that counterbalanced the rigidity of British citizens. Less strict than the Victorians in moral and behavioural matters, Italians were also proof against despondency and self-annihilation when they faced hardships or happened to overcome the borders of the licit. The ease of mind exhibited by the equivocal “*stiletto*-wearer” exemplifies Collins’s perception of the Southern ability to harmonize strengths and weaknesses – an ability mostly lacking in Northern Europeans, who wavered between prudery and violent passions.

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¹ This picture might appear at odds with the Gothic atmosphere of the late novella “The Haunted Hotel” (1878), set in Venice. Yet, even there Collins attempts to combine literary cliché with real-life observation. The inspiration drawn from a long-established tradition ‘romanticizing’ Venice is counterbalanced by the references to historical phenomena changing the image of the Serenissima, such as the transformation of its ancient Gothic sites (e.g. the *palazzo* where the murder is committed) into modern luxury hotels.

This cultural contrast is well rendered in Collins's fictional works, which offer insightful studies of Italian customs and personalities. In some works, the author sets the events wholly or partly in Italy, and represents natives in their cultural environment. Elsewhere, he portrays expatriates who interact with British culture *from within*. The latter cases are particularly interesting since they lay the focus on some *Zwischenräume*, i.e. intermediate spaces of encounter and exchange with otherness (Ponzo and Borsò, 1-2). In anticipation of twentieth-century theorists, Collins explored the liminal zones that existed within his society and, in so doing, became aware of the volatility of borders. Against the supporters of monoculturalism – and especially against the Romantic celebrators of essentialism and nationhood – he came to see cross-cultural encounters as the harbingers of a “liquid” phase of modernity, in which the idea of heterogeneity would dismantle “solid” patterns of life and identity (Bauman, *Liquid Times*, 1).

Such openness is best rendered in *The Moonstone*, where the “invasion” of the Indians epitomizes a *reverse colonization* that questions basic assumptions of race and civilization (Nayder, *Wilkie Collins*, 101). But the role played by his Italian characters is not so different. Less menacing than the Indians, because of their Mediterranean gaiety and their ethnic closeness as Europeans, these characters are nonetheless charged with a subversive energy. The main function they fulfil is that of embodying *familiar* forms of *otherness*, of providing alternative models and value systems that are not felt as too distant but, for this very reason, have disruptive effects on essentialist cultural notions. This reading is confirmed by a comparative analysis of Collins's texts featuring Italians. As will be shown, the sources for their characterization are manifold. In addition to representing the people he actually met during his travels, Collins drew inspiration from the popular heroes of the Risorgimento who lived in London as refugees in the 1840s and 1850s, as well as from a number of mythicized figures of artists and politicians. Like other Victorians, he saw himself in a literary tradition that gave birth to multifarious images of Italy (as the fatherland of Roman emperors and Renaissance dukes, of great artists and bandits, of popes and *patrioti*). Yet, unlike many contemporaries, he strove to interpret these conflicting images in the light of his personal experiences and made limited use of cultural stereotypes. Although they fit into two main paradigms (the *exile* and the *native*), his Italian characters are far from being types or caricatures. Quite varied in their physical and socio-cultural features, they exhibit a psychological complexity and a moral ambiguity which are thought-provoking. If the hybridized nature of exiles poses a direct threat to their host society, natives living in Italy are made to work as dark mirrors for their Victorian counterparts, since they embody an idea of non-disjunction which challenges Victorian binaries of conduct and morality.

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An early example of the *native* paradigm can be found in the novel *Antonina* (1850). The context of this historical novel, which is set in Imperial Rome during the first siege of the Goths, is remote from Collins's world both in time and space. Yet, a close scrutiny of its plot and characterization throws light onto the author's choice of such a distant setting. Rather than proving his antiquarian taste for the Classics, his reconstruction of the Roman empire on the brink of collapse bears evidence of his wish to explore, by comparison, the reality of two countries that were distressed by social and political troubles at

his time: Victorian Britain and the still-fragmented Italian nation, whose unification was being promoted by the ideologues of the Risorgimento.

Many parallels with nineteenth-century Britain are drawn by the narrator himself. In the early chapters, he makes explicit references to gender differences among the Romans that persisted in his age (28), and uses a slave robbery as a pretext to mention the future rise of the uncultured “middle class” (41-3). Later in the novel, he establishes other worrying links between “Ancient Rome” and “Modern London”, including their common problems of overpopulation and urbanization (219). These overt parallels have encouraged critics to interpret ancient Rome as a mythicized projection of Collins’s society. Indeed, the class conflicts between Roman aristocrats and the hungry populace can be viewed in the context of the political troubles of the 1830s and 1840s (the Reform Bill riots and the Chartist petitions) which, half a century later than the French Revolution, faced the Victorians with the spectre of domestic political instability (Heller, 48-57). Equally convincing is the detection of textual analogies between Roman and British imperialism. Before the colonial revolts of the 1850s and 1860s, and before the late-Victorian identification with *Romanitas* (Vance, 197), Collins warned his readers against the future decline of their prosperous empire which, after thriving on slavery and racial discrimination, was doomed to fall like its Roman antecedent (Nayder, *Wilkie Collins*, 21-9). Skilfully combined with problems of gender inequalities, the class and imperialistic policies exposed in *Antonina* prove that the author turned the myth of late Imperial Rome into a symbolic projection of his own world.

But these parallels do not fully account for the complex symbolism of *Antonina*. In addition to posing questions of class, race and gender that were prominent in mid-century Britain, Collins transposed into historical fiction some issues that did not personally involve his Victorian readership but were nonetheless amply discussed at home. A main issue is the struggle for Italian independence and unification, which is indirectly evoked by the image of the siege of Rome. While Collins was completing *Antonina*, the Continent was upset by the insurrections of 1848 and by the proclamation of the Roman Republic (9 February-3 July 1849), which was governed by a secular triumvirate until the restoration of papal power. The heroic resistance of the Roman revolutionaries for over two months, under the military guidance of Garibaldi, was followed with great interest by British people and was largely debated in the press (Rudman, 80-8).²

Collins did not take an active part in the public discussion, but it is not hard to imagine that he was struck by an event that had so much resonance among Victorian intellectuals. Different though they were in their historical details, the two sieges could be ideologically subsumed into one long chronicle, as crucial moments in the history of a nation that was on the verge of dissolution in the year 408, and was being reconstructed in 1848-9. In *Antonina*, the nexus between the proto-Italian empire of the Romans and the national ideal pursued by nineteenth-century revolutionaries is indirectly traced by the narrator when he describes “the plains of fated Italy, whose destiny of defeat and shame was now hastening to its dark and fearful accomplishment” (Collins, *Antonina*, 10). By using the noun “Italy” with reference to the Roman

² I am grateful to David Paroissien for this bibliographical suggestion.

Empire, Collins seemed to endorse the political ideas of the strenuous defenders of the Roman Republic, who fought in the name of a nation that had ceased to exist shortly after the Goths' invasion (Clark, 2).

Another question that is obliquely connected with the Italian cause for independence is the conflict between secularism and religion. Apart from the *exogenous* Gothic invaders, there is an *endogenous* agent of chaos that threatens to shatter the world of *Antonina* into pieces: religious fanaticism. In line with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88), Collins "portrays a Christian culture that is unwilling to live peacefully alongside other faiths" (Mangham, 104). The depravity of the founders of the Roman Church is rendered in appalling terms by the young novelist, who unveils their mercenary motives, highlights their collusion with politicians, and provides fierce images of their persecution of pagans. Described as a temporal, more than a spiritual, struggle for power, the public conflict between Christians and pagans is reduplicated, at a private level, by the bloody fight between two brothers, Numerian and Ulpus, which tragically affects their family. But what are the reasons for Collins's virulent attack on politicized religion and fanaticism? If it is true that anti-Catholic prejudices were ingrained in the Victorian frame of mind, it is also true that the young author must have responded to some particular events that showed how belief was easily turned into zealotry and a will-to-power.

Some light is thrown on his motives by the political role played by Pope Pius IX in the mid century. The cultural milieu in which Collins lived was strongly influenced by the secular views of Italian radicals in exile, and by the widespread enthusiasm for the short-lived Roman Republic. The restoration of Pius IX posed, with more urgency, the problem of a despotic Church that used faith as an instrument of political oppression. These historical facts validate the hypothesis that *Antonina* was a fictional contribution – or at least a response – to the antipapal campaign conducted by Italians both at home and abroad, a campaign which mounted in the following decades and finally led to the annexation of the papal states to Piedmont. By reconstructing the misdeeds of the early Roman Church, Collins wove a critical discourse against "distorted" uses of religion. As already suggested, this discourse was most likely influenced by the struggles for independence fought in the Italian peninsula. But Collins widened the implications of his critique, which did not only target ancient and modern Roman Catholicism. In depicting both Christians and pagans as blood-thirsty fanatics, he expressed his disapproval of all religious creeds that stifled individual and collective aspirations in the name of God. This view is confirmed by the mad bigotry of Ulpus. Like his Christian enemies, the insane pagan priest is involved in a game for power that has no spiritual scope but only wreaks havoc. Both responsible for bloodshed, the two antagonistic parties are connoted as anomic forces that have betrayed their religious mission, since they have engaged a political conflict that is displacing the mental, physical and spiritual balance of the community.

In this sense, *Antonina* sets the scene for an early dramatization of the difficult relations between clergy and laymen, a problematic issue that the author explored in more details in two later works: "The Yellow Mask" (1855) and *The Black Robe* (1881). In the short story, whose framed narrative is set in Pisa one century before his age, Collins portrayed a scheming Italian priest, Father Rocco, who destroys people's happiness and sanity to strengthen the temporal power of the Church. The dreadful plot he hatches to restore the

former Church properties “to the successors of the apostles” (“The Yellow Mask”, 105), is not only an anticipation of the sense of loss felt by Roman Catholics during the Risorgimento. It also epitomizes a long-established tendency to muddle up spiritual and materialistic interests, which was widespread among clergymen of different faiths and ages. Not surprisingly, Father Rocco adopts a treacherous conduct that recalls the actions of most religious men in *Antonina*. Like Ulpius, who betrays Rome to the Goths, he has no scruples in cheating his family members, and like the sanguinary Christian priests who “strip the pagan temples of the mass of jeweled ornaments and utensils” (Collins, *Antonina*, 280), he uses illegal means to restore economic benefits to the Church.

Both in “The Yellow Mask” and in *Antonina*, the author seems to uphold a prejudiced view of Italy as the fatherland of clerical fanaticism and greed. But a careful examination of other works proves that his criticism was not constrained within geographical and cultural boundaries. In representing Catholicism, Collins also laid stress on its fascinating aspects, as some pictures of the *Memoirs* attest. Nor did he exclusively associate religious perversions with Italy. In *The Black Robe*, for example, the role of villain is played by a British Jesuit, Father Benwell. Like Father Rocco, Benwell seeks retribution for what he considers a “profanation of a sacred place” (*The Black Robe*, 38) and a historical crime – in his case, the seizing of Church properties in Britain during the Tudor Reformation. And, like his fictional antecedent, he pursues his aim with a sort of insane obsession. It is worthy of mention, however, that the *Italian* priest avoids committing murder and is partly redeemed by his pity for his victims, while the *British* Jesuit is a relentless fighter for the cause, who has no scruples in leading his brethren to death.

This reversal of national stereotypes suggests that Collins’s view of religious deviance was transnational and transcultural. His exposure of bigotry and mercenary motives, in spiritual matters, was combined with a criticism of those social rules that curbed individual aspirations to freedom and self-realization. It is no coincidence, therefore, that one year before writing “The Yellow Mask”, he exposed the stifling norms of English Dissenters in *Hide and Seek* (1854). And in other works, he missed no chance to cast a shadow on the hypocrisy of High Church observants and Evangelicals.

Although it was traditionally linked with clerical and political corruption, Italy was not only conceived by Collins as an anti-model which made Britain emerge, by contrast, as a paragon of virtue. In exploring the dark sides of the Southern culture, he was also struck by some elements of diversity that evaded the strictures of Victorian conduct and morality. His search for alternative models is evident in the strange characterization of some Italians endowed with multi-faceted personalities, which epitomize morally perplexing, but also liberating, forms of otherness. An early specimen is the Roman senator Vetrano portrayed in *Antonina*, a pleasure-seeking man who displays a capability for generosity and a healthy cynicism that is proof against religious frenzy.

A prototype of some memorable characters later drawn by Collins, the senator is a living oxymoron that is not encompassed by simplistic categories. Humane and profligate, comic and serious, cynical and caring, he overshadows the gloomy heroism of the Goths, and is more helpful than the stern Numerian in saving Antonina’s life. His epicurism, which is never disjunct from a stoic belief in humanistic values, offers an interesting way out of the fanaticism of

other characters. A lover of good food, music and pets, who is well-known for his kindness to slaves and to the lower classes, Vetrano is the prophet of a hedonistic faith which leads him to chase his objects of desire (such as Antonina) but also saves him from the grips of irrationality. Unlike the sanguinary zealots of both creeds, he is endowed with an ability to sympathize with people. Emblematic is the case of Antonina, whom he first tries to seduce but later rescues from dishonour and death. Another interesting feature is Vetrano's sense of dignity, which makes him prefer death to humiliation. While the sieged Romans are starving in the streets or resorting to cannibalism, the senator refuses to yield to beastly drives and organizes a suicidal banquet (the Banquet of Famine) to meet an honourable death. Even though he fails to commit suicide, he never exhibits signs of fear and, after being rescued by the sight of Antonina, reconverts his hedonism into a nobler form of love.

Initially introduced as an "elegant gastronomer" (85), a description also applicable to Collins himself, Vetrano organizes Lucullan banquets and prides himself on being the author of celebrated sauces. Indeed, he is consistently defined through the dominant trope of the novel: food. Even his final metamorphosis into a sort of paternal figure, who outdoes Numerian in granting Antonina's safety, is achieved through food, or rather through its lack, which is grotesquely shown in the Banquet of Famine. The wine he drinks copiously with the other revellers, in replacement of sumptuous eatables, opens Vetrano's mind to a new kind of emotion: the non-erotic love between parent and child. After having a first glimpse of such love by observing Reburus (the hunchback who delivers the corpse of his dead mother from public scorn), he is suddenly confronted by Antonina, whose materialization on the scene cancels his resolve to die and offers him a new role, as disinterested protector of the girl. In the novel's conclusion, the senator gives the following definition of his new feeling of love: "I know nothing of the mysteries that the Christians call their 'Faith'; but I believe now in the soul. I believe that one soul contains the fate of another, and that *her* soul contains the fate of mine!" (Collins, *Antonina*, 289). Although he mentions the "soul" as a possible explanation for his passional impulse, he expresses his conviction in the power of "fate" and disavows any knowledge of supernaturalism ("Faith"). His object of desire is still a human being and the nature of their bond, which excludes a third party, is strangely rendered in earth-bound terms (notice the physical connotations of the verb "contains"). What Vetrano has undergone, by experiencing the temporary *loss* of his wished-for objects (both food and erotic love), is thus a process of sublimation of his compulsive drives, a process that has refined his hedonism without changing the direction of his passionate trajectories.

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Clearly distinguished from religion, the *spiritualized humanism* of the senator is a variation of his epicurean attitude, which keeps him aiming at wordly objectives. This evolving attitude adds to the intricacy of his personality. A blend of hedonistic and spiritual aspirations, of streaks of cynicism and stoical endurance, the senator embodies an idea of non-disjunction which, in literature, is conventionally rendered by figures of doubleness (Kristeva). His ambivalent complexity is better viewed in comparison with the two Italian characters of *The Woman in White*, of which the senator is a fictional archetype. Like Count Fosco, Vetrano is extremely fond of pets and enthuses about life pleasures with child-like spontaneity – they are both lovers of fine music and food. What he shares with Professor

Pesca, instead, is a sense of responsibility for individuals, whose interests are put before those of society. These three figures are endowed with a psychological depth that becomes a catalyst for transgressive discourses. A main difference among them, however, is in their relation to British society. Whereas Vetrano offers an upsetting, but far-off, model of non-normative conduct, Fosco and Pesca incarnate a dangerous hybridity, since they personally interact with the community that has given them shelter. Their aggressive status of *exiles* enhances the disruptive function of their otherness, since they are shown to inhabit a space of uncanniness *within* the apparently homogeneous world of the Victorians.

Count Isidoro, Ottavio, Baldassare Fosco is one of the greatest figures ever conceived by Collins. “[H]e is more real, more genuine, more *Italian* even [...] than the whole array of conventional Italian villains” wrote Margaret Oliphant (567), who was charmed by the witty Count despite her moral reservations. Cunning and chivalrous, masculine and gentle, wise and scrupulous, Fosco frustrates any attempts at classification. Repeatedly compared to Napoleon for his magnificent self-control (241), he evokes through his first name (Baldassare) and behaviour two models that were dominant in Mediterranean cultures: the courtier elaborated by Baldassarre Castiglione in *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528) and the wise Jesuit dissimulator celebrated by Baltasar Gracián in *Oraculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia* (1647). Fosco himself seems to validate this view when he claims to be “a Jesuit [...] – a splitter of straws” (Collins, *The Woman in White*, 265).

Even more disorienting are the features he shares with some historical figures of the Risorgimento. Initially presented as an Italian exile, he is inscribed within a genealogy of political refugees well-known to the Victorians – apart from punning on the name of Ugo Foscolo, Collins endows the Count with a mesmerizing personality (Collins, *The Woman in White*, 239) that seems to reproduce the “immense magnetic power” exercised by Mazzini (Rudman, 149; Hutter, 196). In the course of the narration, however, the Count puts on other masks that complicate his political position. A former member of a radical secret society (the Brotherhood), he is said to have become a counterrevolutionary and an agent of a foreign government in disguise (584). But this apparent revelation is not devoid of ambiguities. First of all, the Count claims to be “charged with a delicate political mission from abroad” (618) that is not proved to have criminal scopes. Secondly, his betrayal of a violent society like the Brotherhood, which thrives on intimidation and murder, is not automatically readable as a villainous act. A further aspect that deserves attention is his endowment with great political skills. The self-assurance he preserves in dangerous situations, his ability to combine “prompt decision”, “far-sighted cunning”, politeness and audacity (611-13), were highly valued qualities among Collins’s contemporaries, who admired them both in domestic and foreign politicians. A telling example was that of Count Camillo Benso di Cavour. While Collins was publishing *The Woman in White*, Cavour was using his “diplomatic scoundrelism” (Rudman, 271) to achieve the scope that had been missed by revolutionaries: the unification of Italy. Never regarded as a hero, he was nonetheless much respected for his political successes by the British moderate intelligentsia.

Under attentive reading, Fosco displays a number of traits in common with the Piedmontese Minister. Phonically suggested by their names (notice the similar sound-structure of *Fosco* and *Benso*), the parallels between their figures

are reinforced by their Machiavellianism, their aristocratic titles (both are counts), their corpulent frames and their Anglophile leanings. The latter feature, which is evident in Fosco's perfect mastery of his hosts' language and manners, was also a peculiarity of Cavour who was sometimes "more English than the English themselves" (Rudman 271-83).

A most important quality that Fosco seems to share with historical Machiavellians, including Cavour, is his clarity of vision. Both in public and in private affairs, the Count displays an uncommon ability to perceive human weaknesses and compromising attitudes below the surface of exhibited morality. Soon after his arrival at Blackwater Park, for instance, he shocks his British relatives by asserting the primacy of two notions that clashed with the dominant Victorian ethos: the notions of *cultural* and *ethical relativity*.

I am a citizen of the world, and I have met, in my time, with so many different sorts of virtue, that I am puzzled, in my old age, to say which is the right sort and which is the wrong. Here, in England, there is one virtue. And there, in China, there is another virtue. And John Englishman says my virtue is the genuine virtue. And John Chinaman says my virtue is the genuine virtue. [...] John Bull does abhor the crimes of John Chinaman. He is the quickest old gentleman at finding out faults that are his neighbours', and the slowest old gentleman at finding out the faults that are his own, who exists on the face of creation. Is he so very much better in his way than the people whom he condemns in their way? English Society, Miss Halcombe, is as often the accomplice as it is the enemy of crime.

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, 256-8)

Convincingly sustained by experience and wisdom ("old age"), his argument against cultural and moral absolutes is an amazing anticipation of the notion of relativism which became prominent in Western thinking in the late nineteenth century. In addition to providing a historical critique of imperialistic policies – he clearly alludes to "the reprehensible actions of the British during the Opium War" (Nayder, "Agents of Empire", 4), Fosco gives voice to a philosophical problem that was dawning on mid-century intellectuals: the problem of living in an age of transition, in which old certainties were being displaced by ideas of multiplicity and fragmentation.

A clear spokesman for the author, who called a variety of monological systems into question, Fosco is here invested with the role of *embodying modernity*, of giving flesh to its contradictions and merging them together. His strange synthesis of political idealism and scoundrelism poses two thorny problems that faced the Victorians during the Risorgimento: of choosing between loyalty to legitimate governments (like the one which Fosco is believed to serve) and support for revolutionary groups; and of reconciling political with moral scopes in European and colonial affairs. As an intellectual aristocrat, moreover, Fosco incarnates an ambiguous syncretism of class and cultural issues, which renders the irreversible process of change experienced all over Europe.

This latter aspect comes fully to the fore in the relations he establishes with the British representatives of conflicting classes: the aristocracy, the landed gentry, and the rising bourgeoisie. In comparison with the hysterical members of the upper classes, the hypochondriac Frederick Fairlie and the neurotic Sir Percival Glyde, the Italian Count is a model of composure and politeness, who claims to respect the laws of propriety (630) and to believe in "the sacred interests of humanity" (624).

Another remarkable feature he possesses is his deep knowledge of medicine and chemistry, a form of learning that, unlike Fairlie's sterile collection of art objects, could have helpful applications in society. The criminal use he occasionally makes of this knowledge is counterbalanced by his unselfish treatment of Marian Halcombe during her illness, and by his claim to have avoided "committing unnecessary crime" (632) in applying his science. If we consider his learning, Fosco appears as a bizarre aristocrat, who has much in common with middle-class professionals. Like them, he is torn by the difficulty of reconciling theory with praxis, personal profit with public welfare. His relation with Walter Hartright is particularly meaningful in this regard. A member of the intellectual middle class, who initially suffers from social discrimination, Hartright develops a resolution and a cunning which enable him to marry above his station. His climbing of the social ladder is achieved through his imitation of Fosco's shrewdness. By becoming a "spy" of the Italian Count (586-7), in an action that ironically reduplicates the latter's espionage activities, Hartright learns a secret that he uses to blackmail his antagonist. His lack of scruples is most evident in the concluding section of the novel in which he becomes the instrument of Fosco's assassination. His avowal of being innocent of the charge is invalidated by his unscrupled use of the Count's secret, as well as by the strange coincidence between the journey to Paris he makes with Pesca and the finding of Fosco's corpse in the Seine (640-4). Whatever his agency in the murder may be, Hartright is morally responsible for a crime which he strives to justify in humanitarian terms (to restore Laura's identity) but which actually grants him social and economic benefits.

In contrast with Fosco, who tempers utilitarian goals with refined manners and love for knowledge, Hartright comes to embody the materialistic ethos of the rising middle classes. A further clue to this reading is provided by a question of honour raised by the Count. When he yields to Hartright's blackmail and agrees to write the confession, Fosco poses three conditions himself, the last of which has to do with gentlemanly values:

You give me the satisfaction of a gentleman for your intrusion into my private affairs, and for the language you have allowed yourself to use to me at this conference. The time and place, abroad, to be fixed in a letter from my hand when I am safe on the Continent, and that letter to contain a strip of paper measuring accurately the length of my sword.

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, 611)

Never mentioned again by Hartright, the promised letter of challenge from the Continent becomes the symbol of their diverging ideologies. To the obsolete custom of duelling invoked by the Count, the drawing master opposes his utilitarian attitude, which makes him ignore and easily forget the question of honour.

Although he is morally reprehensible for his plot against Laura and Anne, Fosco is no stock villain. What he offers is a cohesive but protean commingling of the values associated with different Victorian classes. Unlike Hartright, who betrays the humanistic ideals of the cultured middle class to espouse the doctrine of self-help, the Italian Count exhibits a *trans-class* identity, since he combines greed with fairness, resolve with equanimity, intellectualism with sophistication, cunning with sense of honour. His syncretic personality suggests that Collins did not take sides with one specific class or value system, but was rather intrigued by new combinations. Whereas Glyde and Fairlie are typical representatives of the declining aristocracy and landed

gentry, Fosco is endowed with a dignity and self-assurance that exude from his body even after his death: "Hushed in the sublime repose of death, the broad, firm, massive face and head fronted us so grandly [...]" (643). At the same time, however, he adapts to the changing reality of his world with chameleonic ability, even though he lacks the uncompromising determination of an acolyte of self-help like Hartright. The errors he makes are attributed to what he calls his "humanity" (632), a personal elaboration of the notion of virtuosity which makes him preserve the life of his victims, and pay unswerving respect to his female antagonist, Marian. The latter case deserves special notice. Whereas Hartright stifles the unconventional energy of the young woman, who becomes his ally but is gradually forced into an orthodox domestic role ("Marian was the good angel of our lives", 646), Fosco is a gallant admirer of her transgressive femininity. A tamer of women, as shown by the strict control he exercises over his "tigerish" wife Eleanor (239), the Count is also capable of relating on equal terms with Marian. The battle of wits he engages with her, and the homage he repeatedly pays to her cunning, prove that he allows the woman more freedom of thought and action than she is later accorded in Hartright's world.

Highly contradictory but innovative, Fosco has been the object of multiple, often diverging, interpretations. If his witticism and cheerfulness have aroused the sympathy of generations of readers, his Machiavellianism and his criminal plotting decidedly inscribe him in the category of literary villains. To get a clue to the author's intentions, in drawing his impressive portrait, we need to take two things into consideration. First of all, we should take into account that Fosco is neither a Briton nor a foreigner. His Anglicized Italian nature, onto which he has grafted other cultural constituents (he easily moves across Europe and claims to understand extra-European customs), connotes him as a cross-cultural hybrid, who proudly defines himself "a citizen of the world" (256). A second element to consider is that, exactly because of his transnationalism, Fosco can sow the seeds of doubt in British soil. His partly familiar strangeness fulfils a double mirroring function, since it brings to the fore the cultural peculiarities of the British characters and simultaneously confronts them with a composite figure in which all sort of barriers (class, gender, national, ethnic) are blurred.

In choosing to activate this function, Collins betrayed his curiosity about the effects of cross-culturalism, a phenomenon that he continued to investigate in subsequent fiction. If it is true that he lived in a nation that still preserved its cultural homogeneity, it is also true that he understood that the uncanny forces of otherness could not be kept at a distance forever. Once transplanted into Britain, these forces eroded the limen between diversity and sameness, and generated hybrid forms which altered the local perception of identity. An early symptom of this change could be traced in the London community of political refugees. The disquieting impact of their ideas was enhanced, in some cases, by their decision to settle down in Britain – a decision which inevitably affected the cultural and social pattern of their host nation. The controversial role played by influential figures like Foscolo, Gabriele Rossetti, or Antonio Panizzi, who often puzzled or divided the British public opinion, shows that they did not undergo a complete process of integration. While acquiring Anglicized habits, they retained an Italian aura that gave them the *neither/nor* identity of "cultural undecidables", an identity

which exposed the artificiality of “the most vital separations” between ethno-cultural categories (Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, 56).

Perfectly embodied by Fosco’s *excessive* body, which is a metaphorical pivot of multiple models and ideas, this liminal condition is also associated with Professor Pesca, the other Italian exile portrayed in *The Woman in White*. Apparently a minor figure, whose imitation of British manners is scornfully described by Hartright, Pesca is mostly absent from the novel. But his late re-appearance on the scene renders a crucial twist to the plot, since he becomes the means of Fosco’s defeat and Hartright’s social ascent. Often disregarded by scholars, the Professor deserves attention since he confirms the important role played by Italy and Italians in Collins’s imagination.

From a historical perspective, Pesca is a fictional testimony to the author’s interest in the community of Italian *patrioti*. Generally viewed as a projection of Gabriele Rossetti (Caracciolo, 384-5; Peters, 219), he also bears resemblance to other men of the Risorgimento, such as the spare-built Agostino Ruffini, whom he also evokes for his mixture of “very British [...] habits” with the Italian “mannerism of gesticulating” (Rudman, 220-2). The difficulties we face in identifying a single source of inspiration suggest that Collins conflated different historical personalities to represent a condition of *hybridity* which challenged cultural absolutes.

The relevance of this goal is attested by some details of Pesca’s characterization which prevent him from ossifying into a stereotypical comic role. Introduced by Hartright as a funny Italian affected by a *mimicry* complex, the Professor is also endowed with physical and psychological traits that add more shades of meaning to his figure. The grotesqueness of his outward appearance, the acumen he shows in some situations, his erudition and his unswerving trust in friendship, are all evidence of a tangled personality that contrasts with the initial impression of a comic caricature. On his first appearance on the scene, Pesca is described as a dwarfish man, whose diminutive body evokes the subhuman specimens of a “show-room”:

Without being actually a dwarf – for he was perfectly well proportioned from head to foot – Pesca was, I think, the smallest human being I ever saw out of a show-room. Remarkable anywhere, by his personal appearance, he was still further distinguished among the rank and file of mankind by the harmless eccentricity of his character. The ruling idea of his life appeared to be, that he was bound to show his gratitude to the country which had afforded him an asylum and a means of subsistence by doing his utmost to turn himself into an Englishman.

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, 35)

More than a funny element, his grotesque smallness is a first hint at his perturbing hybridity which the narrator fails to fully understand at this stage.

After equating his weird corporeality with the “harmless eccentricity of his character”, Hartright intensifies the idea of Pesca’s clumsy innocence with many remarks: he derides his efforts to appear British “in dress, manners, and amusements” (37), exposes his misuse of colloquial English (39), and makes fun of his frequent relapses into extravagant Italian habits. In drawing this humorous picture, however, the narrator provides some clues to Pesca’s intricacy of character which are clarified later in the novel. A first clue is provided by a funny story he tells to ridicule the Professor’s devotion to “English sports and pastimes” (35). Unable to swim, he irresponsibly dives into

the sea at Brighton and is rescued from drowning by Hartright's intervention. The accident reveals an important trait of the Italian's "warm Southern nature" (36): his "overwhelming sense of obligation" (37) to his saviour. Unlike Hartright, who laughs at the ejaculations of the man he has just saved ("I did my best to stop the torrent of his tears and protestations by persisting in treating the whole adventure as a good subject for a joke", 36-7), Pesca shows himself to have a sacred view of friendship and gratitude, which later compels him to reward his rescuer at the risk of his own life.

The gap between his strict code of honour and Hartright's scorn does not only reveal the latter's patronizing attitude as unfair. If read in relation to Pesca's obsessive imitation of Englishmen, it also offers glimpses into an identity problem which became evident one century later, when postcolonial theorists like Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha analyzed the effects of the mimetic process fostered by imperial policies. With an early awareness of this problem, Collins created a perplexing figure of the 'mimic man', who behaves funnily but outdoes the prejudiced narrator with his potential for loyalty and affection. In comparison with Conrad, who was chided by Chinua Achebe for his biased characterization of the fireman (4-5), Collins took a more ironic distance from his narrator to let the humanity of his "mimic man" come to the fore.

Another signal of the Professor's tangled character is the special blend of erudition and wit he displays in a conversation with Hartright, in which he mocks the drab materialism and the ignorance of his employer, a "mighty merchant". The Dantesque references he makes, in his brilliant sketch of "the golden barbarian of a Papa" and the "three young Misses, fair and fat" (40-1), grant him an authority that contradicts the cultural bias against his Anglophilic mimicry. As suggested by Peter Caracciolo (387), "the infernal imagery" of the *Divina Commedia* that the Professor evokes here (he says he is teaching the Seventh Circle of the Hell to the Misses) "is extended and applied to the nineteenth-century economic man" (386). With learning and acumen, Pesca articulates a critique of the Victorian commercial bourgeoisie, whose dominant ideals were turning Britain into a hellish world devoid of taste and creativity. Once again, Collins assigns to a cultural hybrid the important function of deflating Victorian presumptions. Similar to Fosco, who defends the cultural and ethical autonomy of "John Chinaman", Pesca is granted a knowledge and a clarity of vision which make him an authoritative censurer of his host society.

These early elements of ambiguity prelude to his final transformation into a syncretic character. After scaring off Fosco with his mere appearance in the theatre, the Professor is forced to reveal his secret identity to Hartright, who learns with surprise that the comic teacher of Dante is actually a powerful member of an Italian secret society living under disguise. Vaguely referred to as the Brotherhood, the secret association with which Pesca is affiliated might be any of the conspiratorial societies that proliferated on the Continent during the Risorgimento. Whether a Carbonaro, a member of the Sublimi Maestri Perfetti, or a Camorrist, the Professor is at any rate an equivocal figure of patriot/terrorist, who has enrolled a murderous group of outlaws. In spite of their ideological justifications (they claim to pursue "the destruction of tyranny and the assertion of the rights of people", 595), the Brothers belong to an organization founded on ritualized practices of concealment and intimidation:

We are warned, if we betray the Brotherhood, or if we injure it by serving other interests, that we die by the principles of the Brotherhood – die by

the hand of a stranger who may be sent from the other end of the world to strike the blow – or by the hand of our own bosom-friend, who may have been a member unknown to us through all the years of our intimacy.

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, 596)

Forced to loyalty by the threat of a faceless avenger – a threat that materializes in the shape of Fosco's invisible murderer – they are trapped in the liminal condition of prisoners and accomplices, exiles and terrorists. The ambiguity of this condition is well rendered by Pesca who, before outlining the unlawful deeds of the society, vindicates the righteousness of their political fight:

"It is not for you to say – you Englishmen, who have conquered your freedom so long ago, that you have conveniently forgotten what blood you shed, and what extremities you proceeded to in the conquering – it is not for *you* to say how far the worst of all exasperations may, or may not, carry the maddened men of an enslaved nation. [...] In the time of your first Charles you might have done us justice – the long luxury of your own freedom has made you incapable of doing us justice now."

(Collins, *The Woman in White*, 595-6)

In defending their use of violence as a political instrument, he reproaches the British for undervaluing the importance of their struggle after enjoying centuries of freedom. The ironic reference to the tyranny and execution of Charles I strengthens his argument against the political opportunism of the British public, who were involved in heated debates for and against the Italian cause.

Apart from giving flesh to a number of historical contradictions, Pesca's tirade is a further proof of his non-disjunctive character. Like Fosco, with whom he shares the negative phonosymbolism of the consonant cluster *sc* (both in Italian and English, this cluster is highly suggestive of violence, fear, and deprivation), the Professor is an elusive hybrid that escapes classification. A funny and apparently innocent figure in the beginning, he metamorphoses into an advocate for political freedom, a self-assured conspirator and, finally, a mischievous organizer of Fosco's assassination.

* * * * *

Quite similar in their elusive *alterity*,³ Pesca and Fosco are testimonies to the modernizing function that Collins assigned to cultural hybrids. The syncretic quality he had occasion to admire in Italy, since his early encounter with the "*stiletto-wearer*", was more tangibly discernible in the personalities of the London-based exiles, whom he came to perceive as the harbingers of a transnational fluid identity. This cultural awareness accounts for the presence of other fictional refugees in his works, who either foreshadow or reshape the ambivalent duo of *The Woman in White*. Before writing his successful novel, for instance, Collins sketched the intriguing figure of Professor Tizzi, who makes a short but significant appearance in the narrative frame of "The Yellow Mask". A former professor "of the University of Padua" who was exiled "for some absurd political reason, and has lived in England ever since" (3-4), Tizzi is a natural philosopher ruled by a powerful ambition: that of composing "for the press – and posterity" a twelve-volume study of "The Vital Principle, or Invisible Essence of Life" (3). His encounter with the

³ For a racialized reading of the two Italians in relation to Victorian evolutionary discourse, see Ceraldi.

narrator, an English painter whom he hires to make his portrait, is the starting point of a cultural exchange which has interesting results.

First of all, Tizzi is a source of artistic inspiration, since he tells the original story that the painter-narrator appropriates and reworks in the framed narrative (9). Through his agency, the painter makes a double experience of ‘contamination’, linguistic and aesthetic, since he translates the story and shifts from the visual to the written medium. From an epistemological perspective, moreover, Tizzi raises an important problem: that of adopting multiple perspectives and approaches in the pursuit of knowledge. Apart from consulting heterogeneous sources in his work (“the theories of all the philosophers in the world, ancient and modern”, 6), he exposes the limits of the Judeo-Christian interpretation (6), and makes an effort to combine scientific analysis with speculative philosophy. This effort is confirmed by the weird appearance of his studio, which is both a Gothic laboratory and a disorderly library. The stuffed creatures and “horrible objects” in “glass vases” (4) scattered among the dusty books, the “complete male skeleton” dangling from the ceiling (7), and the “coloured anatomical prints [...] nailed anyhow against the walls” (8) form a chaotic mass of epistemological instruments, which he utilizes to create a *summa* of philosophical, mythopoetic and analytical knowledge.

A third effect of hybridization associated with Tizzi is cultural. His praise of vegetarian food in the form of garlic bread is followed by a strong criticism of carnivorous eating habits, which he makes by describing the egg as “a cannibal meal of chicken-life in embryo” and the chop as “a dog’s gorge of a dead animal’s flesh, blood, and bones” (7). People who consume meat are, for him, similar to fierce animals, as shown in the following assemblage of “lions, tigers, Carribbees, and Costermongers” (7) in the same category. Although he never mentions Britain, it is easy to catch a reference to Anglo-Saxon eating habits in contrast with Mediterranean ones. Unlike his carnivorous hosts, Tizzi prefers to have an “innocent, nutritive, simple, vegetable meal; a philosopher’s refectory; a breakfast that a prizefighter would turn from in disgust, and that a Plato would share with relish” (7). An intellectual representative of Mediterranean philosophy, the Professor proposes himself as a model of conduct and good taste. The comic hyperboles he uses and the typical Italian chaos surrounding him do not cancel the cultural relevance of his self-promotion. Through the food metaphors, Tizzi opposes the quieter, meditative nature of Southerners to the aggressiveness and money-making attitude of Northerners – he significantly mentions two groups of *sellers* as cannibals: “costermongers” and “prizefighters”. In spite of his Italian flaws (the dirt of his abode, his inability to carry his project to completion), the Professor offers an *alternative* model of thinking and action that is enhanced by his dignified countenance. “What a grand face it was! What a broad white forehead – what fiercely brilliant black eyes – what perfect regularity and refinement in the other features; with the long, venerable hair, framing them in, as it were, on either side!” (5). Both illustrious and funny, Tizzi gives substance to Collins’ enduring interest in the cultural contradictions of Italians, whose sparkling protean figures served as foils for the pretensions of orthodox Victorians.

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The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (3)

William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, & Paul Lewis

This is the third in the series of annual updates to *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, published in four volumes by Pickering & Chatto in 2005. The editorial principles, transcription conventions, and abbreviations employed here remain consistent with those described in the prefatory sections of Volume I. In the course of time, it is hoped that this material will be incorporated into a revised edition available in digital form with the added benefit of searchability.

Since the publication of the second of this series in December 2006, sixty new letters have surfaced. At the same time, the number of letters recorded in *The Public Face* has been reduced by four, since the text on the recto and verso of four manuscript fragments in the Parrish Collection at Princeton were mistakenly recorded as those of eight independent items of correspondence. In total the sum of recorded letters thus now stands at 3072. The opportunity has also been taken to correct a number of other substantial editorial slips that have come to light. We hope that readers of the *Journal* will continue to draw our attention to omissions and errors.

(A) Addenda

* TO JOHN MURRAY,¹ 22 MAY 1847

MS: NLS (John Murray Archive, Acc.12604/1235).²

1. Devonport Street | Hyde Park Gardens | May 22nd 1847

Dear Sir

I think I once had the pleasure of an introduction to you, when you paid us your last visit to see my father's pictures before they were sent to the Exhibition; and although you have doubtless forgotten the circumstance, my name will I dare say serve sufficiently for my re-introduction to you through the medium of this letter.

I am engaged in writing a Biography of my father, having collected from different sources materials likely to be interesting to the general public in such a work. Before however I proceed further in my task, I wish to obtain advice upon matters practically connected with publication; and I know no one to whom I could apply, under such circumstances, more satisfactorily than yourself.

If therefore you could favour me with a quarter of an hour's conversation upon this subject, at the earliest opportunity convenient to you, I

should feel greatly obliged. At any day and hour you may appoint I shall be happy to wait upon you.

Faithfully yours³ | W. Wilkie Collins
To / John Murray Esqre³

1. John Murray (1808-1892), the third generation of the John Murray publishing dynasty based at Albermarle Street in London.

2. On full-mourning paper with a thick black edge, with the addressee line at the foot of the first page, and addressed and dated at the end of the letter after the signature.

*** TO JOHN MURRAY, 25 FEBRUARY 1848**

MS: NLS (John Murray Archive, Acc.12604/1235).¹

1 Devonport Street | Feby 25th 1848¹

Dear Sir

I have only this morning discovered that a letter I wrote to you, on the day when I received from you my M.S., was, by some mistake, not taken to the Post as I had imagined. This will account for my delay in answering your communication.

I am much obliged by the attention you have given to my Biography of my father, and by your kind advice relative to the best manner of endeavouring to procure its publication. I hope in a few days to submit my M.S. to the revision of a competent literary friend, in compliance with your recommendation to that effect.²

I remain Dear sir, | Very faithfully yours | W. Wilkie Collins
To / John Murray Esqre

1. On half-mourning paper with a thin black edge, with the addressee line at the foot of the first page, and addressed and dated at the end of the letter after the signature.

2. It is not clear who, if anyone, performed this service. Arrangements had already been made to publish the biography by private subscription though Longmans by early May – see to Sir Robert Peel of 4 May 1848.

*** TO ELHANAN BICKNELL,¹ 9 DECEMBER 1848**

MS: Parrish (5/11).

London 9th December 1848

Received of E. Bicknell Esqre The Sum of one Guinea, for one copy of Memoirs of Wm Collins Esqre R.A.

£1 .. 1.. –

W. Wilkie Collins

1. Elhanan Bicknell (1788-1861; *DNB*), art collector.

*** TO LEWIS M. BECKER,¹ 2 DECEMBER 1856**

MS: Massachusetts Historical Society.²

2 Harley Place | New Road | Decr 2nd 1856

Sir,

I have received from Mr Dickens your letter requesting permission to adapt for stage purposes a story of my writing called, "Sister Rose".³

I regret that I cannot give you the permission you seek, as it has already been conceded in another direction.⁴

Your obedient servant | Wilkie Collins
Lewis M. Becker Esqre

-
1. Maybe Lewis Matthew Becker (1832-1909), listed as master engraver in the 1861 census.
 2. In an extra-illustrated edition of *American Actor Series* (Boston: 1882), extended by Curtis Guild, Boston, 1883, and bound 18 March 1886.
 3. See Dickens to Becker, 9 November 1856, Pilgrim VIII p. 220; the tentative identification there of the recipient as Bernard Henry Becker (1833-1900), journalist, is clearly incorrect.
 4. No dramatisation of 'Sister Rose' has been indentified.

*** To F. H. UNDERWOOD,¹ DECEMBER 1857²**

MS: Maine Historical Society (Fogg Collection 420).

11 Harley Place | Marylebone Road | London. | N.W.

My dear Sir,

I must again trouble you with a note to thank you for the first two numbers of the Atlantic Monthly, and to ask you to excuse the delay that has taken place in producing my promised contribution to that periodical.³

When I last wrote to you I was little better than an invalid, and since that time my health has been altogether upset by an accident.⁴ Long confinement to the house has told upon my nerves, and has obliged me to be very careful not to exhaust what little literary energy I have still preserved. I have always been accustomed to plenty of exercise, and the enforced cessation of all bodily activity has sadly affected my health and spirits.

I only trouble you with this characteristic egotism of a sick man, because I am very anxious that you should not think me forgetful of an engagement which I still hope to fulfil. I am able to get out a little now, and I expect to be able to follow up this advantage by working off some of the arrears that have accumulated on me. If I succeed soon, which I trust I may, in doing something for the Atlantic Monthly, my proper course, I presume, will be to send my Mss to Messrs Trübner & Co for transmission to Boston.⁵

I have read the new Magazine with great interest. It seems to me to have the first great merit of appealing to a large variety of tastes; and I can express no better wish for it than that it may have already met with the success which it thoroughly deserves. The first publication of it in the very midst of a great commercial panic was an act of courage which no English publisher, under similar circumstances, would have so much as thought of rivalling.⁶ There must be a genuine interest in literature, for its own sake, in America – or such a speculation as the Atlantic Monthly could never have been launched in such times as these.

Believe me, My dear Sir, | Very truly yours, | Wilkie Collins
F.H. Underwood Esqre⁵

-
1. Founder of the (Boston) *Atlantic Monthly: A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics* – see to him of 12 August 1858.
 2. In another hand, upside down at the foot of the fourth page, a filing note reads: ‘Wilkie Collins | Dec. 1857 | London’. Given the acknowledgement of receipt of the first two issues of the *Atlantic*, dated November and December 1857, the letter seems likely to date from the middle of the month.
 3. Presumably WC had been originally invited to contribute to the opening issue.
 4. The letter remains untraced, but must date prior to 8 September 1857, when WC injured his ankle during the walking tour of Cumberland with Dickens.
 5. WC’s contribution ‘Who is the Thief’ duly appeared in the issue for April 1858; Trübner & Co were the London agents for and distributors of the magazine.
 6. The financial panic of 1857 was triggered by the failure due to embezzlement on 24 August of the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Co.

*** TO FREDERICK LEHMANN,¹ 25 MARCH 1861**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Dreer Collection, Eng. Prose, vol. II, p. 4).

12. Harley Street, W. | 25th March 1861

My dear Lehmann,

Dickens and Forster are coming to dine here on Saturday the 30th at 1/2 past 6.² Will you make another in a free and easy way (No dress)? I write at once instead of waiting till Wednesday – so as to make the surer of your being disengaged.

Enclosed is a little contribution of mine to your domestic postage-stamps. It is my admission to Covent Garden, on that evening when we enjoyed one of the most refined musical treats I ever remember.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

1. See to Wills of the same date.

TO FANNY MITCHELL, 30 MARCH 1861

MS: Lewis Collection. Published: Lewis website.

12. Harley Street, W. | March 30th 1861

Dear Mrs Mitchell,

I have unfortunately no hope of being able to get to Great Stanhope Street today or tomorrow – but in the course of next week I shall be very glad indeed to call at five o’clock.¹ In the meantime I have read Mrs Ferguson’s specimens of versification and I greatly fear that her prospect of obtaining employment in English periodicals is more than doubtful.² In these cases I always force myself to “speak out” – and though the feeling of the little poems is excellent, the expression is not calculated, I am afraid, to recommend them to Editors or to do them justice with the public. This is only my individual opinion – and I am too sincerely anxious to be of service, if I can, to any friend of your’s, to rest satisfied with my own impression. I will therefore submit the “specimens” to the gentleman critically appointed to read all the new contributions (in poetry as well as prose) which are offered to “All The Year

Round”³ – and when I have the pleasure of calling in Great Stanhope Street, I will bring you his opinion as well as mine. I hope, for Mrs Ferguson’s sake, that it may contradict mine as flatly as possible!

With compliments to Mr Mitchell

Believe me | Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. WC writes on a Saturday.

2. Mrs Ferguson and her verses remain unidentified.

3. Presumably W.H. Wills.

*** TO ALFRED-AUGUSTE ERNOUF,¹ 7 MAY 1862**

MS: Massachusetts Historical Society.²

12, Harley Street | Cavendish Square | London. | 7th May 1862.

Dear Sir,

Your letter has reached me today. The copy of the Revise which you have kindly sent to me, has not arrived at the same time.⁵ I have no doubt however that I shall receive it in a day or two. The book-post is always slower than the letter-post.

“The Frozen Deep” and “The Red Vial” are written in the same general plan as The Lighthouse. In all three dramas my intention was to invent a story containing a strong human interest – to work the story out by means of characters as little theatrical and as true to everyday nature as I could make them – and, lastly, to surround events and persons thus produced with the most picturesque and striking external circumstances which the resources of the stage could realise. Thus, the story of The Lighthouse, passes in the Eddystone Lighthouse, and is illustrated by all the little picturesque circumstances of lighthouse-life. The story of The Frozen Deep (a love story) is so constructed as to connect the interest of it with the Arctic Discoveries of England – and the main collision between two of the male characters occurs in a hut of Lost Explorers in the regions of eternal frost, with all the circumstances of danger in that situation interwoven with the circumstances of the plot. The Red Vial traces the slow degrees by which circumstances distort the love of a mother for her child into the commission of a crime by the mother for the child’s sake. And here the climax of the Drama is worked out in the famous “Dead-House” of Franckfort – where all bodies are laid out before burial with a bell-pull attached to their hands, so that no supposed dead person may be buried alive by mistake. Here again, all the terrible and picturesque surroundings of the Dead House are associated with the story of the drama – just as the Lighthouse and the Arctic hut are associated with the other two stories. None of these three dramas have been printed. In the present degraded state of the drama in England – degraded, I mean, in the literary sense – I have refused all proposals to publish them, or to allow them to be acted after the period of their first stage appearance. I mean to keep them till better times come – and if no better times come, I will turn them into Novels.⁴

So much for my Plays. No Name will I hope be finished this autumn. It is – like The Woman in White – an attempt to create a strong interest out of characters and incidents taken from modern life, without inventing any outrageous crimes, or creating any impossible people. The interest, this time, centres round a young girl. The story is told on a totally different plan from The Woman in White, and is carried out by a totally different set of characters. As far as the book has been read here, it is thought the best book of the two. I am trying hard to make it the best book.

I need scarcely say that I shall read your article with no ordinary interest. I have so hearty and sincere an admiration for French literature that I feel honestly anxious to deserve some recognition from French critics and French readers. You only do me justice in supposing that I am incapable of the folly of resenting a plain and fair statement of my faults. Criticism which frankly and intelligently endeavours (as I am sure your criticism will) to improve the artist, in the interests of Art, is, in my opinion a compliment to any man who is the object of it. When you tell me of my faults you show me, by implication, that you think I am worth improving.

Believe me, Dear sir | very truly yours | Wilkie Collins
Monsieur | Le Baron Ernouf

1. Alfred-Auguste, Baron Ernouf, Parisian journalist and scholar.
2. Tipped into extra-illustrated copy of James T. Fields, *Yesterdays with Authors* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1883), extended by Curtis Guild, Boston, 1887.
3. Presumably of Ernouf's forthcoming piece on WC; see to him of 16 September 1862.
4. *The Frozen Deep* was indeed used for his readings in America and published in *The Frozen Deep and other Stories* (1874), while the plot of *The Red Vial* was reworked in *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880).

*** TO UNKNOWN RECIPIENT, 26 MAY 1862**

MS: Parrish (5/11/AM18709).

May 26th 1862 /

“ The poor weak words, which have failed to describe Miss Fairlie, have succeeded in betraying the sensations she awakened in me. It is so with us all. Our words are giants when they do us an injury, and dwarfs when they do us a service.”¹

From “The Woman In White” | By | Wilkie Collins

1. WC copied out the same passage for another fan in February 1861.

*** TO A. VOGUE,¹ 2 FEBRUARY 1863**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Society Collection).

12. Harley Street, W. | 2nd February 1863

Dear Sir,

I have much pleasure in acknowledging the receipt of your kind letter, and in thereby complying with the request which you are so good as to make to me.²

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
To | A Vogue Egre

1. Unidentified.

2. Clearly a request for WC's autograph.

*** TO GEORGE SMITH, 11 MAY 1864**

MS: NLS (Smith, Elder Archive, MS. 43104).

12. Harley Street. W. | 11th May 1864

My dear Smith,

I enclose a letter & poem from a namesake of mine (whom I don't know from Adam) who addresses me as Editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*. I have merely written back to dissipate his delusion, and to say that I have returned his contributions to Messrs Smith & Elder.¹

The infernal East Wind has given me a bad cough and cold – but I am at work in spite of it, and am getting towards the close of the first monthly number of the new story. It is slow work at first – for the form is new to me, and I feel my long want of practice with the pen.² But I am steadily “under weigh” and I feel myself getting into better and better working order. As soon as the number is done, you shall have it.

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

P.S. – Here is a petition. You kindly offered me, a few copies of the Library Edition of After Dark (to range with Low's editions) some little time since. I am making up, and am going to have half bound, on a plan of my own, four sets of my complete novels for presents to certain old friends – and if you will help me with four copies in the matter of “After Dark”, the series will be complete.³

1. The Collins in question remains unidentified. At this time George Smith was one of the editors of the *Cornhill*.

2. The first part of *Armada*, serialised in the *Cornhill* in November 1864. Since WC's previous serial novels had appeared CD's weeklies, he had not written in monthly numbers before; moreover, he had not written for some time after a lengthy period convalescing on the Continent.

3. For later requests by WC concerning specially bound sets, see to Smith of 5 May 1873, and to Andrew Chatto of 4 July 1876.

*** TO FREDERICK ENOCH,¹ 15 SEPTEMBER 1864**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Gratz Collection 10/28).

12. Harley Street, W. | September 15th 1864

Dear Sir,

Will you be kind enough to send a messenger tomorrow – or the next day, if it is more convenient – any time between 11 and 3 o'clock to take some copy to the printers? It is part only of the new number² – but I am anxious, as I may be leaving town shortly, to save time this month in the “setting up”. There will be no need to send me any proof until the copy for the whole number has been received complete.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
Frederick Enoch Esqr /

P.S. There will also be a corrected proof (of No 3) to go back

1. See to him of 21 February 1865.

2. Of *Armada*, which began its run as a serial in the November issue of the *Cornhill Magazine*. The postscript suggests that this is likely to have been the fourth part, appearing in February 1865.

TO UNKNOWN RECIPIENT, 22 AUGUST 1865

MS: Parrish (5/11/AM14749). Published: Parrish & Miller, p. 57 (misdated 22 August 1885).

August 22nd 1865 /

“I must go” he said, as he turned wearily from the window, “before she comes to the house again. I must go before another hour is over my head.” With that resolution he left the room; and, in leaving it, took the irrevocable step from Present to Future.

From “Armada” (Book III Chapter XIII)¹ | By | Wilkie Collins

1. As in the *Cornhill* serialization – in the volume edition it became Book II Chapter XIII.

*** TO FREDERICK ENOCH, 7 DECEMBER 1865**

MS: Massachusetts Historical Society.

9, Melcombe Place | N.W. | Decr 7th 1865

Dear sir,

The duplicate proofs for February have reached me safely,¹ in good time before I go away today.²

Many thanks.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
Frederick Enoch Esqr

1. Of *Armada* serialised in the *Cornhill*.

2. To Tunbridge Wells to see his mother.

*** TO FREDERICK ENOCH, 14 MARCH 1866¹**

MS: University of Pennsylvania (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Van Pelt-Detrich Library Center).

9. Melcombe Place | March 14th

My dear Sir,

I was in a hurry this afternoon or I should have tried to get through the closed door.

I enclose the Illustration (one of the very best, I think, that has appeared) with the lettering.²

Many thanks for the book-proofs. I have very few alterations to make. You shall have the first volume for the printers in a few days.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

P.S. | If “*Armada*” is not republished in three volumes, please let me know. If I don’t hear from you, I will assume that the book will appear in the usual form of three volumes.³

1. Year dating based on the reference to the volume publication of *Armada*.

2. Probably the plate for the April number of the *Cornhill*.

3. In fact published in two volumes, in June 1866.

TO UNKNOWN RECIPIENT,¹ 18 NOVEMBER 1869

MS: Unknown. Published: *Baltimore Sun* (29 November 1873) p. 4, our copy text, and *Richmond Daily Dispatch* (1 December 1873) p. 4.

No. 90, Gloucester Place | Portman Square, W. London
November 18, 1869

Dear Sir,

My life, like the lives of other literary men, is all in my books. I was born in 1824. I was the oldest of the two sons of William Collins, Royal Academician, the celebrated English painter of the coast scenery and cottage life of his native country. I was christened by the name of his dearest friend, the late Sir David Wilkie, another famous painter of the British School. Wilkie was my godfather.

I was educated at a private school of excellent repute, and learned Latin and Greek as well as most of the boys. The only part of my “education” which has, as I believe, done me any good in later life was given to me by my father, who took me to Italy with him for two years when I was a boy of twelve years of age. Here I learned to observe for myself, and became, as far as a boy could be, associated with all sorts of clever people, whom my father’s reputation as a painter collected about him. I never went to college, though my father was willing to send me there. The life was not the sort of life for me, after Italy and the artists. I was tried for a few years in a merchant’s office, and did my work and hated it. I was taken from commerce and entered as a student at the bar. I am a barrister of Lincoln’s Inn, but I never practiced my profession, and never studied it. I was good for nothing, in short, but writing books, and I ended in writing them. How this “analytical power” which you and other critics find in my novels comes to me I know no more than you do. The only “rule” I have in writing a work of fiction is at anybody’s service. Begin at the beginning, know what the end is before you write a line, and keep the story always going on. With this, and with enormous pains and care, you have the sum total of what I

consciously know of my own art as a writer. These few particulars are entirely at your service.

Faithfully yours, | Wilkie Collins

1. This letter was published to presage WC's appearance at the Music Hall, Baltimore, on 11 December 1873 during his tour in America. The *Baltimore Sun* introduced it as a letter written to 'a gentleman of Virginia, now of Baltimore'.

*** TO HENRY BLACKETT,¹ 1860s**

MS: University of Pennsylvania (Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Ms. Coll 585, Ward Coll. 41), incomplete.²

to a periodical publication.

Trusting that I may have some future opportunity of showing that I have not forgotten your proposal,

I remain, dear Sir, | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

Henry Blackett Esqre

1. Henry Blackett (1826-71), of the publishers Hurst & Blackett who issued *The Queen of Hearts* in 1859. See to him of 31 May 1860.

2. The second leaf only of a sheet of folding notepaper.

*** TO BENJAMIN WEBSTER,¹ 2 SEPTEMBER 1870**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Dreer Collection, Eng. Prose, vol. II, p. 5).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.

Friday, September 2nd 1870

My dear Webster,

I have made a four-Act drama, on the subject of my last novel – “Man and Wife”.

Would you like to look at it, before I open negotiations in other quarters? If yes, one line here, on, or before, Monday next – to tell me so – in case I leave town after that date.

Yours ever | Wilkie Collins

1. In the event, *Man and Wife* did not appear at Webster's Royal Adelphi Theatre; the first London production was in February 1873, under the direction of the Bancrofts at the Prince of Wales.

*** TO HUGH MCCULLOCH,¹ 1 APRIL 1871**

MS: Lilly Library, Indiana University (McCulloch MSs).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | April 1st 1871

My dear Sir,

I have only just returned to London – or I should have thanked you sooner for your kind letter (forwarded here from a residence which I no longer occupy).

The main object of my return to town is to keep certain dinner engagements – and one of them falls due, most unluckily, on the 3rd of this

month. I should otherwise have gladly availed myself of the honour of dining with Mrs McCulloch and yourself. As it is I can only beg you to accept my thanks and my apologies, and assure you that I sincerely regret losing the opportunity of improving our acquaintance which you have so kindly offered to me.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Hugh McCulloch (1808-1895; *ANB*), American financier; identification by the Lilly Library. From 1870 to 1873 McCulloch running the London branch of the business.

TO JOHN BONNER,¹ 10 JUNE 1871

MS: University of Pennsylvania (Rare Book and Manuscript Library)

90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square. W. | London | 10th June 1871

My dear Sir,

I should have written to you at an earlier date on the subject of my dramatic version of “The Woman in White” – if the arrangements for the production of the work in England had been complete. They are not yet settled – but I defer communicating with you no longer.

If the play is produced in England, during the present year, it will probably be performed in September next. If it is to be first represented in London, I will as soon as I am certain of the fact send you an early copy, giving you time to treat for its production in the United States.

If, on the other hand, the play is first produced at an English provincial town, I have a question to ask you relating to the possibility of also producing it in America, with an English actor in the chief character.

The actor who is to play “Fosco” here—and who is now reading the part with me – has been invited to appear in America – and has some idea of accepting the invitation, provided he can play “Fosco” in your principal cities. Could he (for example) appear in the part in Liverpool (say) in August next – and then cross to New York and appear there, (say) in September – leaving the representation of the piece in London to be accomplished on his return to England after a series of performances in the United States? Is it possible, under these circumstances, to secure the copyright of my drama, in America? Or can the actor to whom I allude (whose name I am not yet at liberty to mention)² only play “Fosco” (in my drama) in the United States, on condition of the piece being first produced in the United States, and not, in the first instance, represented in England at all? The object of the proposed preliminary performances in Liverpool, would be to enable me to see a rehearsal and to give the necessary hints as to the acting and the stage business generally.

As to the play, there is not the least fear of any existing version copied from the novel coming into competition with it. It is an original work – with entirely new situations and new developments of character. The question of the conditions under which it can be profitably produced in the United States – with the English actor in the chief character – is the important question to settle. Will you kindly let me hear what your experience suggests on this point – before I do anything definitely with the drama in England?

I hear from my brother that “No Name” is to be shortly produced at the Fifth Avenue Theatre.³ This I am afraid, is a production of the piece at the worst theatrical season of the year. A success in the American summer is, as I am informed, not to be hoped for. The best actors take their holiday – and the public are at the watering places. Even here, the summer is the very worst possible season for the production of a new play.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Although the recipient is not formally identified, it is clearly to WC’s agent for dramatic works in the USA – see to Bonner of 21 January 1871.

2. George Vining, who in the event only played the part for a short time.

3. The play had been originally written by WC, but was later adapted by Augustin Daly and Wybert Reeve and opened on 7 June 1871.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 15 DECEMBER 1871**

MS: Parrish (5/11/AM14749).

London | December 15th 1871 /

“There in the middle of the broad bright high road – 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,”

From | “The Woman In White” | by | Wilkie Collins

*** TO HARPER & BROTHERS, 13 JANUARY 1872**

MS: Maine Historical Society (Lot M. Morrill Collection 284).

Private

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | London

Saturday 13th January 1872

Dear Sirs,

You will already have heard from my amanuensis that it has been impossible for me to defer the publication day of “Poor Miss Finch” beyond the 25th of this month.¹ No publisher in London would consent to issue the book simultaneously with the periodical conclusion of the story.

The insanely-absurd system of the three volume English novel at the fancy price of a guinea and a half is entirely answerable for this.² One great monopolist (Mr Mudie) virtually purchases the whole edition of a 3 volume novel, at a price agreed on between the publisher and himself.³ Every circulating library in the Great Britain of any importance is under Mr Mudie’s direction – and the idea of forcing his hand by publishing a popular story before its periodical completion, and so exposing him to the demands of impatient periodical readers eager for the end, is the idea at the bottom of the present system of novel-publishing in England, when novels appear first in periodicals. Note: My friend Charles Reade’s last novel was published in England in book-form six weeks before the last periodical part was published in Cassell’s Magazine.⁴ Add to this, that Mr Mudie has been known to cut out the pages of the story from the periodical – bind them together – and issue

them to his subscribers as a book – and you will understand the degrading position in which the publishers and writers are placed under the present system – and will I hope, see at the same time how impossible it is for me to meet your views, in the matter of the English publication of “Poor Miss Finch.”⁵

It is also to be observed – in my case, where there is a considerable public demand on Mr Mudie for the book – that he limits that demand. Hundreds of his subscribers never get my book – and write to me in despair to know what they are to do. Mr Mudie’s interest, as a commercial man, is to take as few copies of “Miss Finch” as the public demand will let him take. He can get bad novels, by obscure writers, cheaper than he can get my novel – and he can send them as stop-gaps to his subscribers who want my book. His customers are quite helpless. They have no other library to go to – and no other system of supply yet set in motion.

I must beg you to consider this letter strictly confidential—for my English publisher’s sake. He has bought an edition of “Miss Finch” of me – and the sale of that edition virtually rests with Mr Mudie alone. I am myself so disgusted with these degrading conditions of publication, that I am seriously contemplating turning to dramatic writing for the future instead of novel-writing. The publishers here who have money, have no enterprise. The publishers with enterprise have no money. The small booksellers are being ruined. The public is as badly supplied as possible. And all for want of the courage, among English publishers, to issue a book, as you do, at a price which the reader can pay. I have myself formed a plan for a new system of publishing novels which I have stated to our principal publishers. They admit that it is founded on sound commercial principles – but the novelty of it terrifies them, and they object to the risk – in other words they object to that bold speculation on the public taste which is the essence of a publishers business!

I make no apology for troubling you with this long letter (written in haste). It is only right that you should thoroughly understand my position, and the impossibility of my individually abolishing a corrupt system, by which I am myself a serious loser.

Sincerely regretting my inability to meet your views, I remain, Dear Sirs

vy truly yours, | Wilkie Collins
Messrs Harper & Brothers

1. See Carrie Graves to Harper & Brothers of 9 January 1872.

2. WC uses the same phrase ‘insanely-absurd system’ two months later in to Bentley, 22 March 1872.

3. The animosity of WC towards George Mudie, the owner of the largest circulating library, is well documented in his letters. See, for example, to Charles Ward of 14 August 1860, to William Tinsley of 11 July 1868, and to George Smith of 23 October 1871.

4. The note is added in WC’s top margin, with saltire insertion marks indicating its position.

5. W.H. Smith, a rival circulating library, was to do just that with *Poor Miss Finch*; see to Harper & Brothers of 28 May 1872.

*** TO CHARLES A. KING,¹ 2 MARCH 1872**

MS: Folger (Yc2885/4).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | London | March 2nd 1872
Dear Sir,

I have only today returned to London – and found your letter waiting for me.

Messrs Smith & Elder 15, Waterloo Place London are the publishers of the cheap editions of my books. The Illustrated Edition (bound in cloth) only contains a Frontispiece to each volume, and sells at five shillings (and in one or two cases) at six shillings the volume.

The cheaper edition, “in boards” with a coloured illustration outside, sells at two shillings the volume. The type is the same in both cases.

To my mind, the best edition of my books is the edition published (without illustrations) by Tauchnitz (of Leipzig) for continental circulation. This edition is not allowed to pass the English Custom House – as it would interfere with the sale of the English editions. The price varies with the size of the books – average three shillings ~~a volume~~ for each work – contained in two volumes. Some volumes of the “Tauchnitz Collection” no doubt find their way to the United States.

Lastly, my American publishers – Messrs Harper of New York – inform me that they “contemplate” issuing a new, American edition of my novels.

This ends my stores of information. With thanks for your kind letter,

Believe me | yours faithfully | Wilkie Collins

Charles A. King Esqre

1. Unidentified American correspondent.

*** TO HARPER & BROTHERS, 20 JULY 1872**

MS: Parrish (5/2/AM21741), envelope only.¹

Messrs Harper & Brothers | Franklin Square | New York | United States |
America
Wilkie Collins

1. Postmarked: ‘LONDON-W | XA | JY 20 | 72’ and ‘NEW YORK | JUL | 30 | PAID ALL’. The letter itself presumably concerned the serialization of *The New Magdalen* in *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* – see to Hunter, Rose of 27 July 1872.

TO WYBERT REEVE, [FEBRUARY] 1873¹

MS: Unknown. Extract: Wybert Reeve, *From Life* (London: George Robertson, 1891) p. 113.²

Both Miss Cavendish and I would be glad to obtain your valuable assistance to direct the performances, and to play the principal part.

1. Dating is assumed to be slightly before 3 March 1873 when WC wrote to Palgrave Simpson asking about Clayton playing Julian Gray.
2. Reeve prefaces the extract with ‘On finishing the dramatization of the New Magdalen, he writes me:–’ and after it writes ‘My having decided on visiting America, and other business matters prevented this arrangement.’

TO WYBERT REEVE, JUNE 1873

MS: Unknown. Extract: Wybert Reeve, *From Life* (London: George Robertson, 1891) p.108.

MY DEAR REEVE, – First let me heartily congratulate you on the great increase of reputation which your performance of Fosco has so worthily won. I and my play are both deeply indebted to your artistic sympathy, and your admirable business management – to say nothing of the great increase of sale in the book in each town you play, &c.

1. Reeve prefaces the letter: ‘Mr. Vining failing of success in the provinces in a few weeks, and not having behaved well in the transaction with me, Mr. Collins destroyed the agreement between them, took all future right in the piece from him, and placed it in my hands, for all future performances. Nothing could be more generous than his acknowledgments to me. In June 1873, he writes:’.

*** TO JOSEPH J. CASEY,¹ 12 JULY 1873**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Gratz Collection 10/28).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square.W. | London | 12th July 1873
Dear Sir,

Pray accept my thanks for your kind letter, and pray believe that I am gratefully sensible of the honour which the offered welcome of your Association confers on me. I feel the sincerest respect for the Public School Teachers of America. No other public duties, in any country, can compare in importance, with the duties which the Teacher performs. The future of the nation is in his hands.

But – while I feel sincerely ~~the~~ proud of the recognition of my labours as a literary man which the greeting of your Association confers on me – there are reasons, I regret to say, that compel me to refrain from availing myself of the invitation which your letter conveys.

I have (as you are perhaps aware) public engagements to fulfil on my arrival in the United States. My health is not good – and I am medically advised that I can only hope to sustain the inevitable fatigue of the readings which I propose to give, by reserving all my energies for that one occupation, and by laying it down as a rule to abstain from appearing at public meetings.

Under these circumstances, I hope I may count on your indulgence, and on the indulgence of the Association, to accept my excuses.

With the renewed expression of my thanks,

I have the honour to be | Your faithful servant | Wilkie Collins
To | Joseph J. Casey Esqre
President of | The Public School Teachers’ Association

1. Then President of the Public School Teachers' Association of New York, and later principal of New York Public School No. 83 for boys in 110th Street, off 3rd Avenue.

*** To JOHN WATKINS, 15 JULY 1873**

MS: University of Rochester, USA.

Eastbourne | Tuesday 15th July

My dear Sir,

I am staying here for a few days – and your letter has followed me.

By this post I write to hurry the binder. In a few days you will I hope have the books.¹

I am concerned to hear that you are still suffering. I had hoped that you would be able to try change of air and scene.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

(In great haste | to catch the post)

John Watkins Esqr

1. See to Watkins of 5 May 1873 and 26 August 1873, and to Bentley of 29 May 1873.

To WYBERT REEVE, JUNE TO OCTOBER 1873

MS: Unknown. Extract: Wybert Reeve, *From Life* (London: George Robertson, 1891) p. 108.¹

I cannot reconcile myself to the idea.² You, who have assumed the responsibility, surely ought to be the first gainer. I thank you most heartily, but pray forgive me if I ask you, for my sake, to say no more about it.

1. This piece follows the extract from June 1873. Reeve prefaces it with 'Later on, I wished to make a difference in our arrangements, more to his advantage. He replies:'. Reeve left for the USA on 15 November 1873 where he joined WC.

2. Of changing the financial arrangements over the provincial tour of *The Woman in White*, which Reeve produced and in which he played Fosco.

*** To JERE ABBOTT,¹ 17 DECEMBER 1873**

MS: Lilly Library, Indiana University (English Literature Mss).

St James's Hotel | Wednesday December 17th 1873

My dear Sir,

Am I right in supposing that the hour you fixed on when you kindly invited me to dinner today was six?

If I am right, pray don't trouble yourself to answer this. Silence shall mean – "Chesnut Street 6 o'Clock".²

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

To | Jere Abbott Esqr

1. Perhaps of the Boston trading company, Jere Abbott & Co.

2. Close to Boston Common.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 13 FEBRUARY 1875**

MS: Parrish (5/11/AM16824).¹

Very truly yours | Wilkie Collins
July 13th 1875

1. On a square of laid paper – probably a simple autograph.

*** TO J. TILFOR,¹ 2 JULY 1875**

MS: Paul Long (in a family album entitled ‘Autographed Letters of Charles Dickens’ Friends’).

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 2nd July 1875

Dear Sir,

If you still have Warrens “Diary of a Late Physician” and “Ten Thousand a Year” (advertised in your last Catalogue) please send them here when your messenger is coming my way.²

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

To | Mr J. Tilfor

1. WC wrote to the same book-dealer on 30 November 1874.

2. Samuel Warren (1807-1877); his novels *Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician* and *Ten Thousand a Year* were published in 1832-8 and 1840-1 respectively.

*** TO JANE WARD, 27 AUGUST 1877**

MS: Berg.

90, Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W. | 27th Aug^t 1877

My dear Jane,

I have not only not written the play of “The Dead Secret” – but I don’t even know who has written it. Under these circumstances I am afraid I can hardly ask ~~the~~ for orders. Mrs Bateman was polite enough to ask my permission to take the piece from the novel.¹ But the barbarous English laws, allow anybody to make plays from novels without my permission being in the least necessary.

I will try hard to call and say goodbye. At present I am so busy I hardly know which way to turn.

Yours affly | W.C.

1. Sidney Frances Bateman née Cowell (1823-1881), the widow of actor and theatre manager Hezekiah Linthicum Bateman (1812-1875), and herself manager of the Lyceum from his death until 1878. *The Dead Secret* by E. W. Bramwell was to open at the Lyceum on 29 August 1877 and was advertised as ‘A NEW PLAY Adapted by the Author’s express permission from the Popular Novel of WILKIE COLLINS’.

*** TO AUGUSTIN DALY, 28 SEPTEMBER 1877**

MS: Folger (Yc2885/1).

Brussels | Sept 28th 1877

Dear Mr Daly,

Another letter! You will naturally say “this is a persecution”! But I have no other alternative than to write again. There is a report in “Galignani’s Newspaper” that you are giving up the management of the Fifth Avenue Theatre.¹ If this report should by any chance be founded on the truth, I hasten to make my excuses for troubling you about my dramatic affairs at a time when you have far more important subjects to think of.² I can only add that I sincerely regret losing the opportunity of renewing my dramatic relations with you.

I have written to Mr French Junior³ – always, of course, supposing the report to be true – requesting him to relieve you of the trouble of taking care of the copy of “The Moonstone” piece which I have innocently sent to you at so unpropitious a time.⁴

Believe me | Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. ‘Rumors were in circulation during last week, and again on Monday, to the effect that Mr. Augustin Daly, the manager of the Fifth-Avenue Theatre had failed and was about to enter into bankruptcy’ (*New York Times*, 12 September 1877, p. 1): the rumours were well founded. *Galignani’s Messenger*, published in Paris in English, was widely relied upon by English visitors to the Continent.

2. Referring to WC’s letter to Daly of 22 September 1877.

3. Thomas Henry French, son of the theatrical publisher – see to him of 24 June 1876.

4. See to Daly of 22 September 1877.

*** TO WILLIAMS & NORGATE, 19 DECEMBER 1877**

MS: Lewis Collection.¹ Published: Lewis website.

90. Gloucester Place | Portman Square | W. | 19th Dec 1877

Dear Sirs

Will you kindly send to me – in the enclosed envelope – the necessary form, authorising you to receive for me through the Customs House six copies of the Tauchnitz edition in one volume of a new work of mine immediately to be published at Leipzig.²

I will return the form to you, signed – taking a copy previously, so that I need not trouble you on the next occasion³

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

Messrs Williams & Norgate

1. Pasted into an album with an ownership slip: ‘To Muriel White with love and best wishes Mildred B Shaw’.

2. *My Lady’s Money and Percy and the Prophet* was published by Tauchnitz on 3 January 1878; copies are recorded from December 1877 (Todd & Bowden, p. 280)

3. For an example of the form used by the publishers acting as agents to Tauchnitz, see the first extant letter to them of 24 December 1859.

*** TO AUGUSTIN DALY, 11 OCTOBER 1878**

MS: Folger (Yc2885/2)

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

Friday 11th Oct: 1878

My dear Mr Daly

I have just got back to London for a few days. If you have nothing better to do between 4 and 4.30 on Monday afternoon next (the 14th) I shall be delighted to see you. Don't trouble to write again, if this date will do. Silence shall mean Yes.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

Augustin Daly Esqre

*** TO HENRY HERMAN, 7 FEBRUARY 1879**

MS: University of Chicago.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

London. 7th Feby 1879

My dear Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date.²

I must ask for time, on my side, to consider the proposal which you are so kind as to make to me.

Under these circumstances therefore I readily accede to your suggestion that I should "give you the refusal of the piece for six weeks," reckoning from the date of this letter.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

H. Herman Esqre

1. Tipped into a copy of James T. Field, *Yesterdays with Authors* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1882), with the bookplate of Frank O. Lowden.

2. WC had written to Herman on 4 February 1879.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT,¹ 23 APRIL 1879**

MS: Lewis.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

23rd April 1879

1. Apparently sent as an autograph or with an enclosure. It has been attached, probably at a later date, to a small coloured print of Macclesfield Bridge, Regent's Park.

TO RUDOLF LEHMANN,¹ 10 DECEMBER 1879

MS: Unknown. Extract: *Daily Telegraph* (24 September 1889) p. 3b.²

... I must ask you to kindly consent to a delay of a few weeks until I and the printers (who are now close at my heels) have parted company for the time. In January next the hard work will, I hope, be over, and I shall have regained

some of the “colour” which has latterly suffered in the service of pen, ink, and paper.

1. The artist Rudolf Lehmann (1819-1905), older brother of Frederick Lehmann, who commissioned Rudolf to paint a portrait of WC in oils for Nina’s fiftieth birthday in 1880. See to him of 16 April 1880. An image is found at the Lewis website.

2. The extract is found in a piece following WC’s obituary, and headed ‘FROM ONE WHO KNEW HIM’. It is introduced: ‘Just ten years ago Mr. Wilkie Collins was giving sittings to an artist for the first portrait taken of the novelist, and being still a sufferer from rheumatic gout, as he had been for some years previously, the sittings were necessarily few and far between. He was also much engaged in literary work, and was, therefore, often unable to keep his appointments. In a letter, dated Dec. 10, 1879, he writes to the artist, ...’.

*** TO CHARLES E. FERGUSON,¹ 6 APRIL 1880**

MS: Lilly Library, Indiana University (Ferguson Mss).

Ramsgate | England | 6th April 1880

Dear Sir,

I am staying at this place for a few days only – and your letter has followed me.

With the view of protecting myself from unauthorised representations of the dramatic works which you mention, I have declined to allow them to be published – and I can only therefore reply to your question that they are not to be obtained.

Regretting that you should be disappointed.

I remain | Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

To | Charles E Ferguson Esqr

1. Charles Eugene Ferguson (1856-1945) was a physician from Indianapolis, Indiana, whose papers are held at the Lilly Library. His interest in WC’s plays is not known though he did write to many literary figures about their work.

*** TO WILLIAM A. SEAVER, 20 APRIL 1880**

MS: Parrish (5/8/AM16030).

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

London | 20th April 1880

My dear Seaver

Mr Chatto has just told me that you are going to cross the Pond – under the protection of Cunard – and appear like a comet on the British horizon. This contains a modest request that you will flash the light of your presence on this house at the earliest possible opportunity. Mark the address (in case you have forgotten it) – and may the heavy “joints” of the good Cunard’s cabin dinner table sit more lightly on your stomach than they did on mine!

Ever yours | Wilkie Collins

If I remember correctly, I think you like your champagne dry?

TO RUDOLF LEHMANN, [APRIL-JUNE] 1880

MS: Unknown. Extract: *Daily Telegraph* (24 September 1889) p. 3b.¹

... my friend (and medical advisor) tells me that I want a change of air, and I feel that he is right ... If I “fall below par” (as they say in the Share Market), then comes the gout.

1. See to Lehmann of 10 December 1879. The extract is introduced: ‘In another note, written later on, after he had given a sitting or two, he says ...’.

*** TO HENRY PHILLIPS JR,¹ 7 JUNE 1881**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Gratz Collection 11/15).

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

7th June 1881

Dear Sir,

Pray excuse this late acknowledgment of your interesting translation of Chamisso’s “Faust.”² I am slowly recovering from severe illness – and I am (literally) only able to write “a few lines”.

With many thanks for the addition which you have kindly made to my library,

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
Doctor Henry Phillips Jr | &c &c &c

1. Henry Phillips Jr (1838-1895) of Philadelphia, author on archeological and numismatic subjects and translator from German, Spanish and Italian.

2. Adelbert von Chamisso (1781-1838) originally published his interpretation of the Faust legend in 1804. A presentation copy of Phillips’s translation, *Faust: A Dramatic Sketch* (Philadelphia: 1874), of which only one hundred copies were printed for private circulation, was found in WC’s library (Baker, p. 88).

*** TO ROSA KENNEY, 6 MAY 1882**

MS: Berg (tipped into copy of F.G. Kitton, *Charles Dickens by Pen and Pencil*, 2 vols; London: 1890-2, vol. 1, fol. p. 64).

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

6th May 1882

Dear Miss Kenney,

Pray excuse this late answer to your kind note. I am in better health now – and, this time, I hope nothing will prevent me from making one among your audience on the 15th.¹

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
Miss Rosa Kenney

1. See to her of 17 May.

*** TO JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL,¹ 27 JUNE 1882**

MS: Boston Athenaeum.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

27 June 1882

My dear Sir,

I have been suffering from a malady which is always lying in wait for me – the gout – and I can only hope to be well enough to have the pleasure of shaking hands with you towards the close of this week.

If you can favour me with a visit on Friday next at five o'clock, I shall be delighted to see you. If this appointment is not convenient, pray choose your own day and hour, after Monday next.

Between Saturday and Monday, I may be trying a little change of air.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

If Friday will suit you don't trouble to write again.

Mr J. R. Lowell

1. James Russell Lowell (1819-91) American Ambassador to London 1880-1885, and previously editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. WC was to meet him again at the dinner on 25 July 1888 at the Society of Authors – see to Little of 25 June 1888.

*** TO CHATTO & WINDUS,¹ 18 DECEMBER 1882**

MS: Folger (Yc2885/3).

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

Decr 18th 1882

Heart and Science

Weekly Part 28. (Forwarded by mail of December 16th).

If the enclosed alteration and enlargement of the concluding paragraph of the story, reaches you in time, please adopt it. Out of four different changes in the last chapter, this is the only one which has not been embodied in the proof already despatched!² W.C.

1. See the similar notes to the firm of, e.g., 21 and 27 November 1882.

2. Referring to the final chapter of the novel, numbered 62 in the various weekly newspaper serializations and 63 in the monthly serial in *Belgravia* and subsequent volume editions.

*** TO HENRY HERMAN, 5 MARCH 1883**

MS: University of Chicago.¹

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

5th March 1883

Dear Mr Herman,

I am only now recovering from another attack of gout in the eye – and I have no choice but to thank you and Mr Flaxman,² and to make my excuses.

Even if I had been well enough to attend the meeting, my “revolutionary views” in the matter of reform as applied to the affairs of

dramatic authors should have put me in the corner as the naughty boy of the party. I want all authors of really original plays to be rewarded as the French authors are, by a percentage on the gross receipts of each performance. I want authors who adapt other men's ideas, with their permission to pay half that percentage to the other men. And lastly I want a rogue who steals from a novel or a play, to be on that account ineligible by any society of dramatic authors. If any manager receives his stolen goods – that manager (for this first offence) to be forbidden for a year to play any work produced by a member of the Society. In France, these ideas have passed into established institutions. What would England say to them?

Before I close my letter let me heartily congratulate you and your collaborateur on a success which has set a most valuable example, at a time when it is most sorely needed.³ With the “run” that is still before you, I may hope that my wretched health will yet allow me to see the piece.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

H. Herman Esqre

P.S. I have, of course, written to Mr Flaxman.⁴

1. Tipped in at p. 138 to a copy of James T. Field *Yesterdays with Authors* (Boston: Ticknor & Fields, 1882), with the bookplate of Frank O. Lowden

2. Arthur J. Flaxman (b. 1845), dramatist, barrister and campaigner for dramatic copyright (see Folger Library Yc4722, and UK census for 1871, 1891, 1901, plus birth index 1845).

3. Possibly *The Silver King* by Herman and Henry Arthur Jones which opened on 16 November 1882 at the Princess's Theatre, Oxford St, London (Nicoll, II p. 419).

4. The letter remains unidentified.

*** TO CHARLES KENT, 6 DECEMBER 1883**

MS: Parrish (5/4), envelope only.¹

Charles Kent Esqre | 1. Campden Grove | Kensington W.
Wilkie Collins

1. Foolscap envelope sealed with red sealing wax carrying WC's initials, and bearing a postmark in red on the verso: 'LONDON-W | A1 | DE 6 | 83'.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 8 DECEMBER 1884**

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay (December 2006), by Signature House, Bridgeport, West Virginia, item 230052489359.¹

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
8th December 1884

1. Apparently a simple dated autograph, on a cream card with rounded corners.

*** TO THE REV. CHARLES TOWNSEND,¹ 5 JANUARY 1886**

MS: Lilly Library, Indiana University (English Literature Mss), with envelope.²

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W. | London
5 January 1886

Dear Sir,

I should be miserable indeed, if I did not feel gratified and encouraged on reading your friendly letter. Pray accept the few lines enclosed, and believe me,

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
The Revd Charles Townsend | &c &c &c

Count Fosco on John Bull.

“He is the quickest old gentleman at finding out the faults that are his neighbours’, and the slowest old gentleman at finding out the faults that are his own, who exists on the face of creation.”²

From “The Woman in White” | By Wilkie Collins | 5 January 1886

-
1. Otherwise unidentified American fan – see the address on the accompanying envelope.
 2. Directed to ‘The Reverend Charles Townsend | Pastor’s Study | Lansingburgh | New York | U.S.A.’, and postmarked ‘London W | JA 5 | 86’.
 3. From Marian Halcombe’s Diary entry for 17 June, Second Epoch III.

*** TO PERCY WILLIAM BUNTING,¹ 4 JULY 1887**

MS: University of Chicago.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

Monday 4 July 1887

Dear Sir,

I only received your letter yesterday evening, owing to a mistake on the part of the letter-carrier, who delivered it at the wrong house.

If you can favour me by calling here on Wednesday next between three and four o’clock, I shall be very glad to see you.

If this appointment suits you, pray do not trouble to write again. If not, in that case, I beg that you will choose your own later afternoon at the same time.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
Percy William Bunting Esqre

-
1. Sir Percy William Bunting (1836-1911), social reformer, editor of the *Contemporary Review* from 1882 until his death.

*** TO PERCY WILLIAM BUNTING, 4 SEPTEMBER 1887**

MS: University of Chicago.

Margate 4 Sept 1887

Dear Mr Bunting,

Your kind letter and Mr Cabel’s stories have just found their way to me.¹ After recovering slowly here (onshore) I have tried cruising at sea next, and making a more rapid progress towards recovery. We have sent ashore for letters – and I am now able to thank you at last.

I have only had time (before sending this to the post) to read two of Mr Cabel's stories. Very much better, to my mind, than any modern American fiction that I have read – excepting only Bret Harte. Excellent observation of character – as far as character can be observed within narrow limits – and descriptions which have the merit of making the reader see what the writer sees – these, so far as I may judge at present, are Mr Cabel's merits. The only noticeable defect that I can see is that the conscientious hard work does not conceal itself as it ought. If "Old Creole Days"² is a first work, the author has probably learnt this last secret of his art.

Pray don't suppose that I forget my promise to write for the Review. I hope to report myself again when I am able to conquer arrears of work that have accumulated during my illness.

Believe me | vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
Percy Wm Bunting Esqre

1. George Washington Cable (1844-1925: *ANB*) – WC misspells the name consistently – the Louisiana author, was invited in 1887 by Bunting to write for the *Contemporary Review*. He replied on 23 June 1887 that he had been travelling in the southern states and was planning to write an account which he would send to Bunting. The letter is also held at the University of Chicago. Cable's 'The Negro question in the United States' appeared in the March 1888 issue of the *Contemporary*, pp. 443-68.

2. Cable's collection of short stories *Old Creole Days* was published in 1879 and presumably sent to WC as an example of the author's work.

*** TO PERCY WILLIAM BUNTING, 6 DECEMBER 1887**

MS: University of Chicago.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

6th Decr 1887

My dear Mr Bunting,

I was indeed sorry to have missed you when you kindly called today. A headache of the sort called "splitting" had driven me out to get the nearest approach to fresh air that London can offer. The truth is that I have been working a little too hard – and I am going away tomorrow to get some days of idleness, and to breathe the country freshness or dampness whichever it may be.

I need hardly tell you – but I will tell you – that I well remember that I am to be one of your contributors. The obstacle in my way is – as I think I mentioned when I last had the pleasure of seeing you – a new serial story. It begins in February next – and I am not yet as far in advance as I ought to be. In other words, I must still trust to your indulgence – and deserve it, if I can, by accepting no other proposals for an article, until I can redeem my pledge to you.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

*** TO CHARLES KENT, 17 DECEMBER 1881-7**

MS: Parrish (5/4).¹

Mr WILKIE COLLINS | 90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square. W.
17 Dec^r

With my love | WC
To Mr Charles Kent. | 1. Campden Grove

1. On a small printed visiting card, which provides the conjectural dating limits.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 8 JUNE 1888**

MS: Parrish (5/11/AM18505).¹

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins
8th June 1888

1. On an oblong card with rounded corners – presumably a simple autograph.

*** TO THE REV. GEORGE BAINTON,¹ 13 JUNE 1888**

MS: Historical Society of Pennsylvania (Gratz Collection 10/28).

82. Wimpole Street | London, W.
~~90, GLOUCESTER PLACE. | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.~~
13th June 1888

Dear Mr Bainton,

I am about to trespass on your kindness for a little information of which I stand in need, under these circumstances.

My new novel, called “The Legacy of Cain” is published serially in weekly newspapers here, in the Colonies, and in the United States.²

One of the characters is a Minister of the Wesleyan Methodist “persuasion.”³ He is a married man, whose wife has borne him no children, during the first seven years of their married life. He adopts an infant, from merciful and Christian motives, who is the daughter of a woman, hanged for the murder of her husband.

If the helpless orphan is to be happy in after-life, the infamy of her parentage, by the mother’s side, must be strictly concealed. She must be taken for his child. He is within two days of being transferred to a new “circuit”, in a distant place, when he adopts the child, and his wife willingly assists in helping the pious fraud. All the necessary precautions are taken – no suspicions are excited among the new congregation – and the child’s future is so far safe.

There is the situation in the serial story.

But one of my readers, a lay member of the Wesleyans and a “circuit steward”, writes to tell me that a Wesleyan Minister must attend the “district meeting” – must give in on a paper schedule the names of his children, the place of their birth &c, &c, – and receives from the “circuit steward” six guineas annually for each of his children. This curious domestic inquisition would make it simply impossible for the Minister in my story to keep the adoption of the child, and the parentage of the child, a secret without being guilty of conduct quite unworthy of his position and his character.

I see no way out of this difficulty, but to alter the religious denomination to which my “Minister” belongs, before the story is republished in book-form.

You will now anticipate the inquiry which follows: Is there any such rule, as the Wesleyan rule, in the Nonconformist church system? or ought I to call it the Congregational church system? or the Independent church system?⁴ Pray forgive, and enlighten, my ignorance.

If a Minister, in your position, is not obliged to supply a list of his children to the constituted authorities, and is left to bring them up on his own sole responsibility, then another question follows: Under which circumstances can a Nonconformist minister leave the town in which he performs his clerical duties, and remove to another place and minister to a new congregation?

I ought perhaps to add that the Minister in the novel is supposed to have married a lady with a fortune of her own. Also that her state of health might make it necessary for him to take her to the seaside for change of air after he had left the scene of his duties, and before he removed to a new sphere of action. This latter event is not necessary to the conduct of the story, unless it might be required in the interests of probability.

Pray excuse this long letter – and, if I am giving you any trouble, and ignorantly making an undue demand on your time, do more than forgive me – take no notice of me, and you will be appreciated and understood by

Yours very truly | Wilkie Collins
The Revd George Bainton

1. See to him of 15 June 1888.

2. *The Legacy of Cain* was syndicated by Tillotson both in Britain and overseas, but neither the colonial nor American venues have been traced.

3. Reverend Abel Gracedieu.

4. Gracedieu becomes a Congregational Minister in the book edition.

*** TO JAMES STANLEY LITTLE,¹ 18 JULY 1888**

MS: Lewis Collection.² Published: Lewis website.

82. Wimpole Street. W. | 19th July 1888

Dear Sir,

I beg to enclose a postal order for 10/6 for a ticket for the Dinner to American Men and Women of Letters on the 25th of this month.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins
Jas Stanley Little Esq Secy

1. Secretary of the Society of Authors – see to him of 25 June 1888.

2. Mounted and framed, alongside a print of the full-length photographic portrait of WC taken by Herbert Watkins in May 1861.

*** TO WILLIAM F. GILL,¹ UNKNOWN DATE**

MS: Unknown. On sale: eBay, June 2007.

Wilkie Collins²

1. William F. Gill, Boston publisher who issued several of WC's books.
2. All that remains is the signature excised from the envelope. On the reverse in another hand is this note: 'Mr Collins is in England. I have cut the autograph from an envelope upon which it was written. It may serve your purpose. | Yours truly | Wm F Gill'.

*** TO HENRY GRAY,¹ UNKNOWN DATE²**

MS: Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

technically speaking, in a false position.

Affcly yours | Wilkie Collins

Henry Gray Esq

1. Henry Gray (1823-1898), the sixth child of WC's mother's sister Catherine Esther Geddes (1796-1882). See Donald Whitton, *The Grays of Salisbury* (San Francisco: 1976), p. 15.
2. A scrap torn from a letter for the signature. It is accompanied by a MS note 'Autograph of Wilkie Collins (author of the "Woman in White" &c) given to me by his cousin H. Gray Esqr – May 10, 1890. E. Henson. London'. Henson remains unidentified.

*** TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE**

MS: Unknown. On sale: Christie's, 5 June 2007.¹

and believe me | very truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. Undated fragment torn from the foot of a letter for the signature; the hands suggests WC's later decades.

(B) Corrigenda

INTRODUCTION

I. p.xxvi

J. Sterling Coyne *should read* J. Stirling Coyne.

TO NEWTON CROSLAND, [LATE 1851]

I p. 56.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, -1855

I p. 133.

These two texts are in fact found on recto and verso of one and the same manuscript fragment. The later entry should therefore be removed, with the text incorporated into the earlier one.

TO J. STERLING COYNE, 6 MAY 1859

I. p.177.

Name should read Stirling Coyne in both the recipient and addressee lines, as well as note 1.

TO J. STERLING COYNE, 18 FEBRUARY 1860

I. p.190.

Name should read Stirling Coyne in both the recipient and addressee lines.

TO J. STERLING COYNE, 23 MAY 1862

I. p.263.

Name should read Stirling Coyne in both the recipient and addressee lines.

TO ANNE THACKERAY,¹ 22 NOVEMBER 1864

I p. 300: The entire entry should read:

MS: Lewis Collection. Published: Lewis website.

12. Harley Street. W | Nov^r 22nd 1864

Dear Miss Thackeray,

I wish I could help you to find Mary out.² But so far as I know that excellent girl has (in the language of Mr Carlyle) “vanished into infinite space”.³ If my mother (to whom I shall be writing in a day or two) can help in finding the lost trace, I will let you know immediately.⁴ I am always delighted to be of any service to you that I can – however little.

It is very kind of you to help in making Nice agreeable to Charley and Katie. I have been recommending them to go to Rome if the Nice climate won't do.

Vy truly yours | Wilkie Collins

1. See to her of 3 November 1864.

2. Perhaps the Collins family servant referred to in, e.g., the letter to HC of 10 August 1860.

3. While, echoing Hamlet, Carlyle employs the phrase ‘into infinite space’ with some frequency, we have not been able to locate in his writings the precise phrase cited here by

WC. Perhaps the closest call occurs in the opening chapter of *The French Revolution* (1837): ‘all Dubarrydom rushes off, with tumult, into infinite Space; and ye, as subterranean Apparitions are wont, vanish utterly, – and leaving only a smell of sulphur!’

4. The topic is not mentioned in the next known letter to HC, dated 18 December 1864.

5. CAC and his wife Katie were travelling in Europe. Exactly how Miss Thackeray helped them in Nice is not clear, though CAC wrote to HC on 14 November from Hotel Chauvain, Nice mentioning a letter she had earlier directed to him in Cannes from Miss Thackeray who is ‘back again in London . . . and much with Mrs Leech who they say is suffering terribly’ (Morgan MA3153). The couple remained in Nice until after 29 November, before travelling to Mentone in France.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, 1861-5

II p. 23: Date should read [December 1861], with note 1 revised as follows:

1. Undated fragment on both sides of a single sheet of plain paper with no watermark, with text excised at the foot of the recto. The conjectural dating derives from the reference to the American Civil War and what appears to be the international diplomatic incident of early November 1861, known as the Trent Affair or the Mason and Slidell Affair. This was first reported in the *Times* of 28 November 1861, p. 9b and the piece WC refers to may be that in the *Times* of 12 December 1861, p. 9c.

TO J. STERLING COYNE, [MAY 1859-JUNE 1868]

II. p. 117.

Name should read Stirling Coyne in both the recipient and addressee lines, as well as note 1.

TO EMIL LEHMANN, 7 AUGUST 1870

II p. 204. Source line should read:

MS: Parrish (4/12/AM85-86).

TO GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA, 23 FEBRUARY 1871

II p. 238. Source line should read:

MS: G.A. Sala Correspondence, Princeton University Library (C0804/3/268).

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, [7] AUGUST 1871

II p. 267-8.

The lost first part of the MS has now been located, and the entire entry should now read:

TO JOHN BONNER, 5-7 AUGUST 1871

MS: University of Pennsylvania Library (Rare Book and Manuscript Library) [part dated 5 August], and Parrish (Box 4/12) [part dated 7 August].

90, Gloucester Place, Portman Square. W. | 3rd 5th August 1871

My dear Sir,

A line to thank you for your kind letter of July 14th.¹

The dramatic “Woman in White” is to be produced on the London stage, at the Olympic Theatre, on the 2nd of October next. “Fosco” is to be played by Mr. George Vining.

I have not yet seen Mr Palmer.²

The question now is – How to prevent my play from being pirated in the United States – if it succeeds in London. If Mr Palmer and I come to terms, he will probably be able to answer my question. If we do not, my idea is that I ought to send you a copy of the piece before it is produced here, and that some American writer on whom we can rely, should “write in” a few lines here and there, and then copyright the play in America as the joint production of my pen and his. Will this be enough of itself to protect the play from being performed without my leave in the United States? Or must the work be actually produced in an American Theatre? In the latter case, would it be possible to perform it in some small town – then to stop the run – and keep it waiting until Mr Vining could visit America and play Fosco in your large cities? In plain words – will one of two public performances (in a small place) of a play stated to be the joint production of an American and an Englishman, secure the dramatic copyright of the piece for future performances in America? If the answer is No, and if American managers refuse to produce the play simultaneously with its production in London, I do not see how I can protect myself from piracy.

Excuse my again troubling you on this question. But I want nothing now to complete my disastrous dramatic campaign in your country, but to have a success here with “The Woman in White”, and then to have the play produced successfully also in America, without my making a farthing by it!

If you are in any doubt on the points I have put, would it not be desirable to apply to my friend Mr W. D. Booth at Wall Street,³ who possesses great experience on the copyright question?

The piece is printed – and I can send you one or more copies, if you think it desirable.

“Fosco” would certainly have a better chance on your stage, if the character was played by an actor who has read it over with me. I know “Fosco” intimately – in every inflection of his voice, and every gesture of his hands. If I could have instructed the “Wragge” and the “Magdalen” at Mr Daly’s Theatre results might have been very different. My characters are living beings to me. I only know how to write them by knowing how to act them as well.

Excuse this new trial of your patience. I write while there is still time to do something for the dramatic “Woman in White.”

Yours truly Wilkie Collins

On consideration I have thought it wisest to send to you at once by registered book-post, a copy of the piece – which is of course for your use only – in case it may be wanted for the object in view. In the event of accidents by post, another copy goes to Mr Booth by this mail also.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

Tuesday 7th August | **90. Gloucester Place, | Portman Square. W.**

I have kept my letter till the above date, in case of having news to send you on the subject of Mr Palmer.

Mr Vining has seen Mr Palmer – and has told him what I have planned to do with the piece. Nothing has been settled – and I gather from Mr Vining that Mr Palmer (if he treated for the piece at all) would be only disposed to

treat for the production of it, simultaneously with the production in London. I have not myself seen him yet – but, if I do see him, I shall hold to my idea of keeping “Fosco” off the New York stage until Mr Vining can play the part there – if the thing can be done.

After the experience of “No Name”,⁴ I am more and more convinced that there would be a very poor chance of success with a “Fosco”, who had not rehearsed the character with me. It is a character outside all theatrical conventions. If you had a great genius on the American Stage, I could trust the great genius to play it without my assistance. As things are I have not seen here, and have not heard of, an American actor who would be likely to make a great success in the part. The play is all Fosco. If he does not take the audience by storm, failure is certain. Mr Vining is privately rehearsing with me – every line in the dialogue is matter of consultation between us. If this hard work is repaid by a great triumph here – Mr Vining is almost certain to repeat the success with you. If he fails – there is an end of the play, on both sides of the Atlantic.

I am therefore all for waiting, until the first night at the Olympic enlightens us – provided we can copyright the play in the U.S. If we can not copyright it, it must take its chance – and I can only thank you for the kind interest which you have shown in the matter.

On reflection, I have written by this mail to Mr Booth to get his opinion at all hazards, on the purely legal aspect of the question.⁵ It will save you trouble in putting the points to him, if you find it desirable to consult together on the subject.

I must again apologize for this inordinately long letter. It is the result of my anxiety to place you in complete possession of my view – and to spare you more letter writing.

WC

1. Given the time for transatlantic travel, probably a reply from Bonner to WC’s letter of 10 June 1871.

2. Probably Albert Marshman Palmer (1838-1905), manager of the Union Square Theater, New York.

3. William D. Booth, WC’s legal representative in New York.

4. Augustin Daly had staged *No Name* at his Fifth Avenue Theater in New York from 7 June that year.

5. The letter to Booth has not been traced.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, [JANUARY 1872]

II p. 319.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

IV p. 384 (fragment beginning ‘of binding’).

These two texts are in fact found on recto and verso of one and the same manuscript fragment. The later entry should therefore be removed, with the text incorporated into the earlier one.

*** TO CHARLES KENT, 12 JUNE 1872**

II p. 350. Date should read 18 June 1872, with note 1 revised as follows:

1. The faint postmark reads 'LONDON-W | 2 | JU 18 | 72'. Found with letter to Kent, 28 June 1871, Parrish.

TO WILLIAMS & NORGATE, 23 MAY 1873

II pp. 402-3. On the verso of the manuscript is found the following fragment of text:

to pass the book through the Custom House.

Faithfully yours | Wilkie Collins

TO FREDERICK LEHMANN, 2 JANUARY 1874

The MS has now been located and the version in The Public Face, taken from printed sources, should be replaced with the following:

MS: The Poetry Collection, University of Buffalo. Published: Lehmann, pp. 65–8; Extract: Robinson, pp. 269–71; Davis, p. 279; Hyder, p. 55. Published (incomplete): Baker & Clarke, II, pp. 372–3.

Buffalo. N.Y. | 2nd January 1874

Strange to say, my dear Fred, I have actually got some leisure time at this place. A disengaged half-hour is before me – and I occupy it in writing a sort of duplicate letter for the Padrona and for you.

I hear you have called like a good fellow, at Gloucester Place, and have heard something of me there, from time to time. No matter where I go my reception in America is always the same. The prominent people in each place visit me, drive me out, dine me, and do all that they can to make me feel myself among friends. The enthusiasm and the kindness are really and truly beyond description. I should be the most ungrateful man living if I had any other than the highest opinion of the American people. I find them to be the most enthusiastic, the most cordial, and the most sincere people I have ever met with in my life. When an American says, "Come and see me," he means it. This is wonderful to an Englishman.

Before I had been a week in the country I noted three national peculiarities which had never been mentioned to me by visitors to the "States." I. No American hums or whistles a tune – either at home or in the street. II. Not one American in 500 has a dog. III. Not one American in a 1000 carries a walking stick. I, who hum perpetually – who love dogs – who cannot live without a walking stick – am greatly distressed at finding my dear Americans deficient in the three social virtues just enumerated.

My readings have succeeded by surprising the audiences. The story surprises them in the first place – being something the like of which they have not heard before. And my way of reading surprises them in the second place – because I don't flourish a paper-knife, and stamp about the platform, and thump the reading desk. I persist in keeping myself in the background and the story in front. The audience begins at each reading with silent astonishment and ends with a great burst of applause.

As to the money, if I could read often enough, I should bring back a little fortune – in spite of the panic. The hard times have been against me of course – but while others have suffered badly, I have always drawn audiences. Here, for example, they give me a fee for a reading on Tuesday evening next – it amounts to between £70 and £80 (English). If I could read five times a week at this rate (which is my customary rate) here is £350 a week – which is not bad pay for an hour and three-quarters' reading each night. But I cannot read five times a week without knocking myself up – and this I won't do. And then I have been mismanaged and cheated by my agents – have had to change them and start afresh with a new man. The result has been loss of time, and loss of money. But I am investing in spite of it – and (barring accidents) I am in a fair way to make far more than I have made yet, before the last fortnight in March – when I propose to sail for home. I am going “out West” from this – and I may get as far as the Mormons. My new agent – a first rate-man – is ahead making engagements, and I am here (thanks to the kindness of Sebastian Schlesinger) with my godson Frank as secretary and companion. I find him a perfect treasure – I don't know what I should do without him.

As for the said Sebastian S. he is the brightest nicest kindest little fellow I have met with for many a long day. He would'nt hear of my dining at the Hotel while I was in Boston this last time. Whenever I had no engagement (and I kept out of engagements, having work to do) I dined at his house – and dined superbly. Mrs. S. had just lain in of a daughter – so I have still to be presented to her – and our dinners were of the bachelor sort. It is not one of the least of Sebastian's virtues that he speaks with the greatest affection of you. He also makes the best cocktail in America. Vive Sebastian! Barthold S. was also as kind as could be. I dined with him too in New York. So you see your letters have not been thrown away.

The nigger-waiters (I like them better than the American waiters) are ringing the dinner bell. I must go and feed off a variety of badly cooked meats and vegetables ranged round me in (say) forty soap dishes. Otherwise I am comfortable here. I have got the Russian Grand Duke's bedroom – and a parlour in which I can shake hands with my visitors – and a box at the theatre – and the freedom of the Club.

Write soon, my dear boy, and tell me about yourself and the Padrona – to whom I send my best love and sincerest good wishes. She is happily settled, I hope, in the new house. I want to hear all about the new house – and about the boys – God forgive me! I am writing of Rudy as if he was a boy. Don't tell him! The fact is I am getting to be an old man – I shall be fifty if I live till the eighth of this month – and I shall celebrate my birthday by giving a reading at “Cleveland”. I wish I could transport myself to London!

Yours my dear Fred always affly Wilkie Collins

Providence (the city, not the deity) paid me 400 dollars – in spite of the panic! P.S. My address is care of Naylor & Co, Boston, Mass: (Do you know that Firm?) Frank sends his respects.

TO CHARLES KENT, 3 FEBRUARY 1881

III, pp. 286-7: The MS has now been located. The source line, transcription, and associated notes should now read:

MS: Berg (in made-up souvenir volume, *The Frozen Deep by Wilkie Collins, Performed at the Gallery of Illustration, 8 August 1857*), with envelope.¹ Published: *Dickensian*, 5:6 (June 1909), p. 161.

90, GLOUCESTER PLACE, | PORTMAN SQUARE. W.

3rd February 1881

My dear Mr Kent,

It is not easy to resist the temptation to say Yes, to any request of yours – but, for consistency’s sake, I must refrain from accepting the proposal of the amateur company. I can certainly not “count on my two fingers” the number of applications to perform “The Frozen Deep” which have reached me² – and which have been refused for one sufficient reason. No amateur company that I ever saw or heard of can perform the piece. I shall be reminded of the amateur company which did perform it. Let me see a new amateur company with two such born actors in it as Charles Dickens and Mark Lemon, and they shall have the piece directly – and what is more those two “leading men” ~~they~~ shall be offered Fifty pounds a week, each (supposing them to be amateurs of moderate income) to appear on the public stage, in two new parts of my writing.

Forgive a late reply to your kind letter. The printers are close behind me

Yours always truly | WC

Many thanks for the information about the British Museum. The piece shall be sent there, of course.³

1. Directed to ‘Charles Kent Esqre | 1 Campden Grove | W.’, postmarked as dated.

2. See, for example, to J. [Dennis] Powell of 18 January and 13 March 1875.

3. Reference unidentified.

TO CHARLES H. WILLIS, 8 AUGUST 1881

III p. 302: The family name should be corrected to Willes in both the recipient and addressee lines, with note 2 revised to read:

2. Postmarked as dated; originally directed to ‘Charles H. Willes Esqre | Camden Fort | Crosshaven | Co Cork | Ireland’, though the second two lines of the address have been struck through and the letter redirected twice, in different hands, first to ‘Clonakilty’ and then to ‘Carlisle Fort | Whitegate’.

TO J. E. SMITH, 3 MAY 1882

III p. 338: The middle initial should be corrected from E. to C. The following recipient line should be added at the foot of the letter:

To | J.C. Smith

This is probably the provincial actor J.C. Smith.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, [1861-83]

III p. 453.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

IV p. 383 (fragment beginning ‘and believe me’).

These two texts are in fact found on recto and verso of one and the same manuscript fragment. The later entry should therefore be removed, with the text incorporated into the earlier one.

TO JANE WARD, 22 JULY 1884

IV p. 51: The following postscript should be added at the foot of the letter, before the addressee line:

P.S. | Will you kindly let me know what William’s address is – so that I can send to my co-trustee a copy of this letter.

TO CHARLES J. DAVIS, 11 JUNE 1885

IV p. 98: The family name should be corrected to Davies in both the recipient and addressee lines.

TO WILLIAM WINTER, 11 FEBRUARY 1886

IV p. 145: Source line should read:

MS: Parrish (5/9/AM79-25).

TO THE REV. GEORGE BAINTON, 23 SEPTEMBER 1887

IV p. 266: Source line should read:

MS: Parrish (4/13/AM82-73). Extract: George Bainton, *The Art of Authorship* (London: J. Clarke & Co., 1890), pp. 89-91.

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

IV p. 384 (fragment beginning ‘at all satisfy me.’).

TO UNIDENTIFIED RECIPIENT, UNKNOWN DATE

IV p. 384 (fragment beginning ‘Pray forgive a very hasty letter,’).

These two texts are in fact found on recto and verso of one and the same manuscript fragment. The later entry should therefore be removed, with the text incorporated into the earlier one. Together the two suggest that the letter might be to a member of staff at Harper and Brothers, New York, perhaps William Seaver; if so, the letter might date from around 1880.

INDEX

IV. p. 407: Coyne, J. Sterling should read Coyne, J. Stirling

IV. p. 414: Willis, Charles H. should read Willes, Charles H.

~~Reviews~~

(1) William Baker. *A Wilkie Collins Chronology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. pp. xiii + 236. ISBN 1-40399-481-1; (2) *Lives of Victorian Literary Figures, Part V: Vol. 2 Wilkie Collins*. Ed. William Baker & Andrew Gasson. London: Pickering & Chatto, 2007. pp. xli + 285. ISBN 1-85196-819-0 (3 Vol. Set).

A Wilkie Collins Chronology by William Baker is part of the Palgrave “Author Chronologies” series, with another leading Collins scholar, Norman Page, as General Editor. Among others in the series are volumes on Joyce, Wilde, Hardy, and Lawrence, so Collins’s inclusion is clear evidence – if any were needed – of what Baker calls “the remarkable critical and scholarly revival” of the last few years (ix). As Baker points out, the uncovering of previously murky details of Collins’s life by biographers like William Clarke and Catherine Peters, plus the recent publication of the complete correspondence in *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins*, for which Baker was also an editor, have made the volume possible in a way that it wouldn’t have been twenty years ago. In drawing heavily on Collins’s letters, as well other primary sources and recent biographical materials, *A Wilkie Collins Chronology* does offer a new perspective. Inevitably, the volume has less information on Collins’s early life than on his later years, but the same would be true of any author before he or she became famous. The volume has most detail on the 1850s and 1860s, the start of Collins’s professional writing life and the period in which he established a range of social networks, most notably Dickens’s “Tavistock House set” and the theatrical community of London’s West End. Evoking – often in very precise detail – the wide range of Collins’s social activities – reading, theatre-going, lots of dinners, this study reveals Wilkie’s skills as a networker. He took part in amateur theatricals, performing before the Queen on 16 May 1851. He attended social events at the houses of millionaire Sir Francis Goldsmid or Angela Burdett Coutts, rumoured to be the richest woman in Britain. As an adult he lived in a succession of comfortable houses replete with servants in respectable West End locations: with his mother principally at Blandford Square, Hanover Terrace, and Harley Place, and on his own account at New Cavendish Street, Harley Street, Melcombe Place, Gloucester Place, and finally Wimpole Street. As the *Chronology* reveals, it was a fine life, with plenty of champagne and caviar. Included at the end of the volume is an index to the key people mentioned; useful as this is, it might also have been helpful to include a “Who’s Who” section as elsewhere in the series.

The *Chronology* is particularly good at demonstrating the interconnectedness of Collins’s and Dickens’s activities, giving information about fictional, theatrical and journalistic output, collaboration and publication, as well as finances, health and travelling, though interestingly little about relationships with the opposite sex. Yet whilst Dickens seems to dominate Collins until the mid-1860s – at least according to the information here – Baker also includes valuable material on other immediate family members (Harriet Collins, Charles Allston Collins), friends (William Holman Hunt, Edward Pigott, Ned and Charles Ward, Charles Reade), and other literary connections such as agents and publishers. Such a broad scope evinces the close and lively artistic community in which Collins lived, but Baker also includes details of the losses, tensions and creative anxieties which plagued him. “I laugh like a fiend over my own maladies”, Collins writes in 1862 (120). In following all the ups and downs of Collins’s health and reminding us of the central place this issue played in his life, the portrait of which emerges is affectionate and engaging, yet also grim in

its way. The book's layout, organisation and stark, highly-concentrated blasts in Collins's own words thus convey a sense of the struggle involved in writing against the clock and the costs involved. When Collins's value in the marketplace starts to dip in the 1880s and his rate of work goes up as his body slowly falls apart, you can almost feel him struggling to keep things together.

Along with Andrew Gasson, William Baker is also the editor of the volume on Collins in Pickering and Chatto's *Lives of Victorian Literary Figures*. This is part of a three-volume set, reproducing in facsimile selections of contemporary writings and reminiscences about three of the period's popular novelists (the other volumes are devoted to Thackeray and Braddon). The intention, as general editor Ralph Pite points out, is to go back and listen to what contemporaries said about these individuals rather than relying on later commentators, allowing us to see "the many different voices which modeled and claimed these famous and at times notorious figures" (xvii). In 1889, there was no "official life" for Collins – nor indeed for Braddon or Thackeray. Thus the selections of journalism, reminiscences, memoirs of friends (and enemies) become part of the "process by which reputation is formed" (xvii), as well as showing these literary figures from different perspectives. At the same time the selections don't offer an authoritative contemporary assessment and it is unsafe to assume that they represent a fully-rounded picture. However, to the extent that the Victorian era was, as Pite suggests, about establishing yourself as respectable – especially in the public eye – they are revealing and a useful supplement to later biographical accounts. By virtue of being "Victorian" the selections on Collins are tactful and reticent. Evidently, writing about famous authors with "double lives" was a challenge for anyone with beans to spill.

Of the twenty-five items devoted to Collins all but four were published after his death. The few obituaries which are included remind us that Collins did not inspire national reverence in same way that Dickens did, and the editors provide a revealing extract from the *Pall Mall Gazette* which describe some undignified scenes at Collins's funeral prompted by his legions of female fans. With the remaining extracts there are some drawbacks: coverage is patchy and could be more generous and adventurous – some more negative comments might give a rounder picture – and the extracts are not grouped in any way except chronologically. Some cuts could have been made; the recollections of Nathaniel Beard contain twelve pages devoted to Frances Kemble, whose connection to Collins is not made clear. Elsewhere, Harry Quilter's gushing tribute to Collins from the *Universal Review* of 1889 seems of limited interest, apart from the fact of its being gushing – which perhaps says something about the relationships the older, lonelier Collins established with certain type of younger literary man on the make. That other literary-hanger on, Hall Caine, is also featured here. Certain episodes – Collins's writing methods – are dealt with several times – whereas other aspects – Collins's relationship with his family and also with Dickens – receive scant treatment. Given the closeness – evident in *Wilkie Collins: A Chronology* – between these two figures in their literary careers and the jealousy it provoked among Dickens's other (less talented) acolytes it might have been helpful to give some emphasis to the question of how this relationship was interpreted by those who claimed to have observed it.

Nevertheless, the extracts given can also be suggestive and the editors are careful to contextualize each personality. All the writers are introduced by a brief but effective biographical sketch and outline of their connection with Collins. They include James Payn, Edmund Yates, Algernon Swinburne and Wybert Reeve. Perhaps the most enlightening item is one of the least well-known – a reminiscence from Lucy Walford in her *Memories of Victorian London* which manages to capture

something of what Collins was like to sit next to at dinner. Also revealing are the theatrical recollections which give us an insight into Collins's (not always successful) attempts to become a force in Victorian theatreland. Then there are pieces which attempt – rather in vain – to correct the idea, summarized by William Winter in 1909, that “Wilkie Collins was a man of weak character, self-indulgent, and subservient to the opium habit” (226). Winter himself worried that this view of Collins would distort an assessment of the novelist's genius. Another interesting point to come out of these *fin de siècle* assessments is that most of the important discussions about Collins – his work-rate, the “value” of the later works, his gourmandizing – were identified early on, even though later twentieth century scholars would adjust their relative weights.

As with *Wilkie Collins: A Chronology*, the editors make no claim to have produced a definitive account of Collins's posthumous reputation and it would be unreasonable to expect twenty-five extracts to sum up all aspects of Collins and his career. Their aim is something different. In presenting, in an accessible way, copies of material otherwise hard to come by, this volume will help generate a wider discussion of Collins's place in the Victorian literary field. The editors have also provided a succinct – if somewhat sketchy – introduction to their subject's twentieth century reputation. As a set the volumes are rather expensive, but should prove a useful addition to library bookshelves.

Andrew Maunder
University of Hertfordshire

Andrew Mangham, ed. *Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007. pp. xii + 295. ISBN 1-84718-109-0.

Developed from papers given at a Collins conference at the University of Sheffield in 2005, this wide-ranging collection contains sixteen essays divided into five sections: “Collins in Context,” “Collins and Art,” “Collins and Medicine,” “Collins and the Law,” and “Collins, Theatre, and Film.” The volume also includes an Introduction by Andrew Mangham and an Afterward by Janice M. Allan. Providing a rationale for the collection, Mangham explains the book's aim: to show that interdisciplinary and intertextual approaches most effectively illuminate Collins's writings (1). While this is certainly not a new idea and has become, in fact, a given in Collins scholarship, the principle is well supported by the essays gathered here. Like many conference collections, the quality of the essays is uneven, and some could be more fully researched and more effectively edited. Nonetheless, the volume is a welcome contribution to Collins studies. Although Mangham's claim that critics “still appear preoccupied with the small sample of work Collins produced in the 1860s” (4) seems rather outdated, several of the essays included here usefully focus on lesser-known works and provide unusual pairings of Collins with other writers and visual artists.

Anne-Marie Beller opens Part I (“Collins in Context”) with “‘Too absurdly Repulsive’: Generic Indeterminacy and the Failure of *The Fallen Leaves*.” Examining the “structural and formal elements” of Collins's 1879 novel, Beller attributes the “almost universal disparagement and neglect” of this work to its subversion and “hybridization” of generic categories (10, 12). She argues that the novel “often appears disjointed” but reveals Collins's desire to disrupt aesthetic categories while also “destabilizing gender boundaries” (18). Beller's association of particular female figures with particular genres is especially interesting and reveals the generic self-consciousness of the novel. Holly Furneaux's “A Distaste for

Matrimonial Sauce: The Celebration of Bachelorhood in the Journalism and Fiction of Collins and Dickens,” the second in this section, challenges those who foreground Dickens’s control and censorship of Collins’s writing in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. In Furneaux’s view, Dickens tactically interspersed Collins’s celebrations of “the unmarried man” with his own serials and, “far from repressing” Collins’s material, “prominently positioned” his subordinate’s “often controversial paeans to the joys of unmarried life,” the two sharing an interest in figures “who failed, or refused, to become accommodated within a rigid family model” (22-23). Furneaux usefully reminds us of the unconventionality that originally drew Dickens to Collins; yet in foregrounding their “mutual sexual radicalism” and the challenge it poses to “the normative family” (31-32), she downplays the conservative bent of both writers—their emphasis on the self-destructive psychopathology of angry spinsters (Miss Wade and Limping Lucy, for example) and the hurtful narcissism of confirmed bachelors (such as Ralph Nickleby and Frederick Fairlie). Turning from the collaborative to the cultural context of Collins’s writing, Tatiana Kontou considers the sensation heroine in relation to the female medium in “Parallel Worlds: Collins’s Sensationalism and Spiritual Practice,” showing how both sensation fiction and spiritualism place “acute emphasis on the politics of sex and gender” and use “theatrical or melodramatic narrative tropes” (38). Focusing on *No Name* and its “domestic actress,” Magdalen Vanstone, Kontou reveals the “false passivity” and the “alternate selves” that Collins’s heroine shares with the Victorian medium, both of whom “challenge the concept of ‘unnatural’ behavior” as well as the “notion of a single, concrete identity” (41). In approaching “Magdalen’s theatrics in terms of failed séances” (46) and noting how the heroine “ventriloquises *herself*” when playing Miss Garth (49), Kontou’s reading is especially compelling.

The essays in each of the remaining sections prove more closely interrelated than those on “Collins in Context” prove to be. Part II (“Collins and Art”) includes Clare Douglass’s “Text and Image Together: The Influence of Illustration and the Victorian Market in the Novels of Wilkie Collins,” and Aoife Leahy’s “The Face of the Adversary in the Novels of Wilkie Collins.” The first “reclaim[s] the image as a central part of the reading experience,” looking at illustrations for “Mr. Wray’s Cash-Box,” *No Name* and *Armada*, and examines their power to complement and subvert the text—in the case of *Armada*, “cementing [our] connection with Midwinter,” who “gaz[es] forward beyond the confines of the page” (70). In the second, Leahy uses Paton’s painting, *The Adversary*, and its demonizing of Raphael’s Apollo to help explain Collins’s own equation of Raphael’s ideal of beauty with “deceit and evil” (80-81), Godfrey Ablewhite supplying a case in point. Unfortunately, the reproductions found alongside these thoughtful discussions are rather poor in quality.

Five essays comprise the third section on “Collins and Medicine”: Andrew Mangham’s “Mental States: Political and Psychological Conflict in *Antonina*”; Jessica Cox’s “Reading Faces: Physiognomy and the Depiction of the Heroine in the Fiction of Wilkie Collins”; Amanda Mordavsky Caleb’s “Questioning Moral Inheritance in *The Legacy of Cain*”; William Hughes’s “Habituation and Incarceration: Mental Physiology and Asylum Abuse in *The Woman in White* and *Dracula*”; and Greta Depledge’s “*Heart and Science* and Vivisection’s Threat to Women.” While Depledge links Collins’s representation of medical treatment and vivisection in *Heart and Science* to gender politics and the oppression of women, working-class women in particular, Hughes distinguishes Collins’s relatively “neutral” handling of the asylum and its moral management of the mentally ill in *The Woman in White* from that of Bram Stoker, who more clearly indicts the “presiding physician” in *Dracula* (145-46). The two novels are linked by “the uneasy interface

between curative therapy and manipulative abuse,” Hughes argues, yet Collins holds “those outside of the medical profession” responsible for the wrong done to the institutionalized Laura Fairlie (145). For Mangham in his approach to *Antonina*, the political significance of mental illness lies in the parallel between imperial fall and insanity as Collins represents them—by means of the mental breakdowns of Goisvintha and Ulpius—with madness “a complex vehicle for expressing the author’s ambivalent attitude toward the political instabilities of the 1840s” (98). Whereas Mangham seeks to distinguish his approach from the “gender-preoccupied argument” of Tamar Heller (98), meeting with partial success, Cox explores the ways in which Collins sometimes frustrates gendered expectations in drawing on the pseudo-science of physiognomy. For Cox, Collins questions Lavater’s misogynistic theories in *The Legacy of Cain*; for Caleb, he uses the novel to challenge theories of inherited madness and criminality, “suggesting that individuals have the ability to defy their parental inheritance through individual moral strength” (123).

In Part IV, contributors approach “Collins and the Law” from three directions. In “The Scotch Verdict and Irregular Marriages: How Scottish law Disrupts the Normative in *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife*,” Anne Longmuir contrasts the “irrationality” and “savagery” of Scottish law with the order and reason or its English counterpart, calling attention to “Collins’s interest in the heterogeneous nature of the British state” (166-67). Her analysis of legal uncertainties in the two novels and the ways in which these destabilize identity is original and insightful, although it makes English law sound overly coherent and too highly valued in Collins’s eyes. While Longmuir discusses the ambiguous and tentative quality of marital status under Scottish law, Lynn Parker examines the seemingly “irrevocable” (198) nature of sibling bonds in “The Dangerous Brother: Family Transgression in *The Haunted Hotel*.” As Parker observes, the indissoluble strength of these ties is illustrated by the selective hauntings of Collins’s ghost story. Yet the novella also challenges these privileged bonds by revealing “the potential for familial exploitation” and the possibility of “incest predicated upon sisterly self-sacrifice” (202), complicating the division between sibling and marital relations, as did the debate over the Deceased Wife’s Sister Bill. In “Collins on International Copyright: From ‘A National Wrong’ (1870) to ‘Considerations’ (1880),” Graham Law compares two essays on the issue of international copyright, placing them in their immediate contexts, foregrounding the “sophistry” of Collins’s stance, illuminating “the private motives” behind his arguments, and cleverly identifying the first article as itself a “piratical” publication (188, 185).

The final section, on “Collins, Theatre, and Film,” includes Richard Pearson’s “‘Twin-Sisters’ and ‘Theatrical Thieves’: Wilkie Collins and the Dramatic Adaptation of *The Moonstone*,” Janice Norwood’s “Sensation Drama? Collins’s Stage Adaptation of *The Woman in White*,” and Stefani Brusberg-Kiermeier’s “Detecting Buried Secrets: Recent Film Versions of *The Woman in White* and *The Moonstone*.” Making a case for Collins’s plays, too often dismissed by critics, Pearson foregrounds their success on the stage, despite “Collins’s anxieties about dramatic authorship” and its illegitimacy (211), describes his dramas as “twin-sisters” to the novels, without which “we see only part of the scene” (209), and focuses on the dramatic version of *The Moonstone*, its notable deviations from the novel, and its potential to “sully” Collins’s literary identity (220). Norwood provides a history of stage adaptations of *The Woman in White* and considers Collins’s own in relation to the genre of “sensation drama,” prominent elements of which he “deliberately avoided,” instead pointing toward “the more psychological dramas” of the late 1800s (226, 229). Considering recent film versions rather than nineteenth-

century adaptations, Brusberg-Kiermeier uses the work of Victor Shklovsky to show how these films heighten sensation among viewers, enabling them to experience Collins's novels "in a defamiliarised way" (238).

In her *Afterward*, Janice M. Allan emphasizes the liminal in Collins's writing and the challenge it poses to boundaries of various types. Crossing disciplinary lines as well as those of literary genres and periods, the essays here address and often value Collins's complexities of meaning as well as his ability to destabilize meaning itself, aptly seen by Allan as "a source of exciting possibilities" for readers and critics (258) and a powerful source of attraction in Collins's work.

Lillian Nayder
Bates College

Andrew Mangham. *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture*. Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York/: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. pp. x + 247. ISBN 0-230-5421-1.

Based on a doctoral thesis at the University of Sheffield supervised by Sally Shuttleworth, with Jenny Bourne Taylor as external examiner, *Violent Women and Sensation Fiction* is the first monograph by Andrew Mangham, who has recently taken up a tenured position at Reading University. The result is in many ways a worthy successor to Taylor's *In the Secret Theatre of Home* (1988) and Shuttleworth's *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology* (1996). In his book, Mangham treats the idea of the violent woman as it is encountered not only in works of fiction of the mid-Victorian period, but also in contemporary accounts of cases in the criminal courts and in the prevailing medical discourses of mind and body. In attempting to draw all three strands together into a single "complex web" (210), Mangham is above all concerned to investigate the challenges that this pattern of representation created for a domestic ideology centring on Patmore's image of the "angel in the house".

The violent women in question are found in a range of around thirty sensational works, principally from the 1860s and by Wilkie Collins, Ellen Wood, and Mary Braddon. They begin with but are by no means restricted to the "usual suspects", Lydia Gwilt in *Armada*, Isabel Vane from *East Lynne*, and Lady Audley herself. As recorded in his bibliography, Mangham makes significant use of more than a dozen criminal trials. These of course include notorious examples like the Madeline Smith case of 1857 (the poisoning by arsenic of a lover in Glasgow), and the Constance Kent case of 1860 (the bloody murder of her little brother in Road, Somerset), which coincided with the sensation boom and have often been considered in relation to it in recent criticism; but also dealt with in some detail are earlier and lesser known examples, such as the Maria Manning case of 1849 (the battery and fatal shooting of a soldier in London's East End) and the Mary Ann Brough case of 1854 (the cut-throat massacre of six of her own children in Esher, Surrey). Mangham also cites around fifty medical sources, including journal articles as well as single volumes, almost all written by male professionals for a specialist male readership. The most prominent are the works of Jean Esquirol in the 1830s, Forbes Winslow in the 1840s and 50s, and Henry Maudsley in the 1860s and 70s, all of which engage to a greater or lesser extent with the complex question of the relations between the female body, mental disorder, and legal responsibility.

The book thus opens with two chapters where the primary focus is on court records and clinical theories; literary echoes and parallels are duly noted here but are assigned a subsidiary role. The first deals with general legal and medical profiles of

three phases of female violence, from childhood and adolescence, through maternity and motherhood, to aging and senescence. The second describes the main preoccupations during the lengthy press coverage of the Road Murder case, before analyzing how those representations of female aberrance are refracted consciously and unconsciously in three specific literary works: Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863), Wood's *St Martin's Eve* (1866), and Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868). The remaining three chapters dwell in turn on the dangerous feminine in a range of works by that trio of writers, in each case drawing attention explicitly to parallel problematics in medical and legal writings. It is perhaps only because her work has received the least sustained critical attention that the chapter on domestic disruption in Wood's novels seems to cover most new ground (the section on "evil heritages" in *The Shadow of Ashlydat* is especially acute); there is also much that is highly original in the treatment of sexual violence in Braddon, and of mental disease in Collins. Altogether, Mangham's meticulously researched, neatly organized and carefully argued thesis represents the most stimulating contribution to sensation fiction studies to have appeared for quite some time.

Yet Mangham's study does have its weak points. Often the delight in metaphorical correspondence prevents sustained attention to a particular train of thought, so that, for example, the distinct medical discourses of Esquirol, Winslow and Maudsley all seem to merge into a single symphonic refrain, making it difficult to detect dialectic or development. Sometimes the close textual analysis of literary symbolism seems to derive less from mid-Victorian psychological preoccupations than from classical Freudianism. This is especially true in the Braddon chapter, where the lush metaphorical pastures of her prose provide a rich harvest if you wish to gather sexual signs in the shape of orifices or protuberances. For me, though, the biggest problem concerns the casually ahistorical employment of the third term in Mangham's triadic sub-title, "popular culture". It is simply not the case, as claimed in the Introduction, that Braddon, Wood and Collins "were the best-selling writers of their period" (3). As Collins himself noted perceptively in "The Unknown Public", the family magazines in which their work was typically serialized, such as *All the Year Round* and *Temple Bar*, reached a bourgeois readership measured only in the tens of thousands, whereas penny-fiction-journals like the *Family Herald* and *London Journal* addressed a proletarian audience measure in the hundreds of thousands. Mangham's book has nothing to say about the representations of women in the serial stories found in the columns of periodicals such as these. (The most luridly melodramatic tales that Mangham discusses, Braddon's first novel *Three Times Dead* (1860) and Mary Fortune's "The White Maniac" (1867), were in fact addressed to a proletarian audience, respectively in weekly penny parts and in the Melbourne *Australian Journal*, a cheap fiction weekly, but Mangham shows no awareness of this and indeed cites the stories in modern editions based on later versions.) In the same way, if this volume were truly concerned with popular culture, the author would have needed to consult reporting of violent crimes by women, not only in a prestigious journal of record like *The Times*, but also in cheap papers like the *Illustrated Police News*. In sum, while the author is outstanding at drawing parallels, he is less successful in tracing series; he enjoys plumbing psychological and ideological depth but tends to avoid charting historical continuity or change. All the same, the fact that I am inclined to make such unreasonable demands of promising young scholar should be taken as a sign of the high expectations aroused by this stimulating book. I look forward to Mangham's subsequent work.

Graham Law
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WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL



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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL NEW SERIES

AUTHOR INDEX

Pages

Author	Title	Category	Year	Vol.	From	To
Allbright, Richard S	"A twisted piece of paper...half-burned on the hearthrug": Depictions of Writing in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> .	Article	2001	NS IV	35	49
Atlas, Allan W	Collins, Count Fosco, and the Concertina	Article	1999	NS II	56	60
Baker, William	<i>Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide</i> by Andrew Gasson	Review	1998	NS I	62	64
Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (1)	Article	2005	NS VIII	48	55
Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)	Article	2006	NS IX	59	70
Baker, William Gasson, Andrew Law, Graham Lewis, Paul	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (3)	Article	2007	NS X	34	69
Carnell, Jennifer	<i>Ionani; or Tahiti as it was</i> . Ed. Ira B Nadel	Review	1999	NS II	74	75
Cole, Natalie B	"A Bed Abroad": Travel Lodgings and the "Apartment House Plot" in <i>Little Dorrit</i> and <i>The Haunted Hotel</i>	Article	2007	NS X	3	12
Collins, Richard	The Ruins of Copán in <i>The Woman in White</i> : Wilkie Collins and John Stephens's <i>Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan</i>	Article	1999	NS II	5	17
Cooke, Simon	Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture	Article	1998	NS I	5	19
Cooke, Simon	Reading Landscape: Wilkie Collins, the Pathetic Fallacy, and the Semiotics of the Victorian Wasteland	Article	1999	NS II	18	31
Costantini, Mariaconcetta	A Land of Angels with Stilettoes: Travel Experiences and Literary Representations of Italy in Wilkie Collins	Article	2007	NS X	13	33
Cothran, Casey A	<i>Black and White</i> : British and American Versions	Article	2002	NS V	24	35
Cox, Jessica	, Wilkie Collins	Article	2005	NS VIII	3	18
Dillon, Steve	<i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens</i> . Ed Paul Schlicke. <i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope</i> . Ed R.C.Terry	Review	1999	NS II	78	80
Dillon, Steve	Resurfacing Collins's "Basil"	Article	2000	NS III	5	16

Dillon, Steve	<i>The Fiction of Geopolitics</i> , by Christopher GoGwilt	Review	2001	NS IV	52	54
Dillon, Steve	<i>Wilkie Collins's Library</i> by William Baker	Review	2002	NS V	63	64
Edwards, P D	Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates: A Postscript	Article	1998	NS I	47	49
Farmer, Steve Law, Graham	Belt-and-Braces' Serialization: The Case of <i>Heart and Science</i>	Article	1999	NS II	61	71
Hanes, Susan R	The Persistent Phantom: Wilkie Collins and Dorothy L. Sayers	Article	2000	NS III	59	66
Hughes, Clair	<i>Wilkie Collins</i> by Lillian Nayder	Review	1998	NS I	59	61
Hughes, Clair	Lady Audley: The Woman in Colour	Article	2002	NS V	36	48
Kale, K A	Yes and No: Problems of Closure in Collins's <i>I Say No</i>	Article	1998	NS I	44	46
Kale, K A	Could Lydia Gwilt have been happy? A new reading of <i>Armada</i> as Marital Tragedy	Article	1999	NS II	32	39
Kapetanios, Natalie	Hunger for Closure in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> and <i>Armada</i> .	Article	2001	NS IV	18	34
Knight, Mark	Rethinking Bibliolatry: Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism	Article	2000	NS III	47	58
Knight, Mark	<i>Unequal Partners</i> by Lillian Nayder	Review	2002	NS V	57	58
Knight, Mark	<i>Wilkie Collins (Authors in Context)</i> by Lyn Pykett	Review	2005	NS VIII	56	57
Knight, Mark	<i>Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel</i> by Tamara S Wagner	Review	2006	NS IX	71	72
Law, Graham	Last Things: Materials Relating to Collins in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill	Article	1998	NS I	50	58
Law, Graham	"Poor Fergus": On Wilkie Collins and Hugh Conway	Article	2000	NS III	67	72
Law, Graham	<i>Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science</i> , by Ronald R Thomas	Review	2001	NS IV	62	64
Law, Graham	Collins and Chattos: The Reading Papers	Article	2002	NS V	49	56
Law, Graham	<i>Blind Love</i> by Wilkie Collins ed. Maria K Bachman and Don Richard Cox	Review	2003	NS VI	62	64
Law, Graham	<i>Victorian Publishing</i> by Alexis Weedon; <i>The Making of the Victorian Novelist</i> by Bradley Deane	Review	2004	NS VII	61	64
Law, Graham	<i>The White Phantom</i> by Mary Elizabeth Braddon ed. Jennifer Carnell	Review	2005	NS VIII	62	64
Law, Graham	A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins	Article	2006	NS IX	43	52
Law, Graham	<i>Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture</i> by Andrew Mangham.	Review	2007	NS X	75	76
Leahy, Aoife	Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in <i>Hide and Seek</i>	Article	2005	NS VIII	19	30

Lewis, Paul	My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins	Article	2002	NS V	3	23
Lewis, Paul	My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the Letters from Collins	Article	2006	NS IX	3	42
Liggins, Emma	Of the Violence of the Working Woman: Collins and Discourses on Criminality, 1860-1880	Article	2000	NS III	32	46
Liggins, Emma	Her Resolution to Die: "Wayward Women" and Constructions of Suicide in Wilkie Collins's Crime Fiction	Article	2001	NS IV	5	17
Louttit, Chris	From "A Journey in Search of Nothing" to "The Lazy Tour": Collins, Dickens, and the "Tyro Do Nothing"	Article	2006	NS IX	53	58
Lund, Michael	<i>Serilaising Fiction in the Victorian Press</i> , by Graham Law	Review	2001	NS IV	55	57
Mangham, Andrew	Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon	Article	2003	NS VI	35	52
Maunder, Andrew	Ellen Wood was a Writer: Rediscovering Collins's Rival	Article	2000	NS III	17	31
Maunder, Andrew	<i>The Woman in White</i> by Wilkie Collins Ed. Maria K Bachman & Don Richard Cox	Review	2006	NS IX	74	76
Maunder, Andrew	<i>A Wilkie Collins Chronology</i> , by William Baker	Review	2007	NS X	70	72
Nayder, Lillian	<i>The Public Face of Wilkie Collins</i> ed William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, Paul Lewis	Review	2005	NS VIII	58	62
Nayder, Lillian	<i>Wilkie Collins's The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case, and Wrongful Convictions</i> by Rob Warden	Review	2006	NS IX	72	74
Nayder, Lillian	<i>Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays</i> ed. Andrew Maunder.	Review	2007	NS X	72	75
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	1998	NS I	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	1999	NS II	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2000	NS III	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2001	NS IV	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2002	NS V	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2003	NS VI	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2004	NS VII	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2005	NS VIII	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2006	NS IX	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editor's' Note	Editorial	2007	NS X	2	2
Onslow, Barbara	<i>Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction</i> by Phyllis Weliver	Review	2002	NS V	59	62
Oulton, Carolyn	Wilkie Collins - An Interpretation of Christian Belief	Article	1998	NS I	29	43
Oulton, Carolyn	"Never be divided again": <i>Armadale</i> and the Threat to Romantic Friendship	Article	2004	NS VII	31	40
Peters, Catherine	Frances Dickinson: Friend of Wilkie Collins	Article	1998	NS I	20	28

Peters, Catherine	<i>Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination</i> , by Alexander Grinstein	Review	2003	NS VI	53	56
Pinnington, Adrian J	<i>The Moonstone</i> . Ed. Steve Farmer	Review	1999	NS II	76	77
Pulham, Patricia	Textual/Sexual Masquerades: Reading the Body in <i>The Law and the Lady</i>	Article	2003	NS VI	19	34
Pykett, Lyn	<i>The Letters of Wilkie Collins</i> . Ed. William Baker & William M. Clarke	Review	1999	NS II	72	73
Pykett, Lyn	<i>The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine</i> , by Deborah Wynne	Review	2001	NS IV	50	51
Pykett, Lyn	<i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> , ed William Baker and Kenneth Womack; <i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B Thesing; <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Deidre David	Review	2003	NS VI	56	59
Richardson, Angela	"Dearest Harriet": On Harriet Collins's Italian Journal, 1836-1837	Article	2004	NS VII	41	58
St. John Scott, G	Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of <i>The Woman in White</i>	Article	2004	NS VII	21	30
Stoddard Holmes, Martha	<i>The Private Road</i> , by Marlene Trump	Review	2001	NS IV	58	61
Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: on Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"	Article	2004	NS VII	3	20
Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Madame Rachel's Enamel: Fatal Secrets of Victorian Sensational Mirrors	Article			3	18
Taylor, Jenny Bourne	<i>Realities Dark Light</i> ed Maria K Bachmann and Don Richard Cox	Review	2004	NS VII	59	61
Vance, Norman	<i>Literature and religion in Mid-Victorian England</i> , by Carolyn Oulton	Review	2003	NS VI	60	62
Wagner, Tamara S	Collins and the Custody Novel: Parental Abduction and Family Business	Article	2005	NS VIII	31	47
Weaver, Phyllis	Music and Female Power in Sensation Fiction	Article	1999	NS II	40	55

THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL NEW SERIES

CATEGORY INDEX BY AUTHOR

Pages

Author	Title	Category	Year	Vol.	From	To
Articles						
Allbright, Richard S	"A twisted piece of paper...half-burned on the hearthrug": Depictions of Writing in "Lady Audley's Secret"	Article	2001	NS IV	35	49
Atlas, Allan W	Collins, Count Fosco, and the Concertina	Article	1999	NS II	56	60
Baker, William	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (1)	Article	2005	NS VIII	48	55
Gasson, Andrew						
Law, Graham						
Lewis, Paul						
Baker, William	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (2)	Article	2006	NS IX	59	70
Gasson, Andrew						
Law, Graham						
Lewis, Paul						
Baker, William	The Collected Letters of Wilkie Collins: Addenda and Corrigenda (3)	Article	2007	NS X	34	69
Gasson, Andrew						
Law, Graham						
Lewis, Paul						
Cole, Natalie B	"A Bed Abroad": Travel Lodgings and the "Apartment House Plot" in <i>Little Dorrit</i> and <i>The Haunted Hotel</i>	Article	2007	NS X	3	12
Collins, Richard	The Ruins of Copán in <i>The Woman in White</i> : Wilkie Collins and John Stephens's <i>Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan</i>	Article	1999	NS II	5	17
Cooke, Simon	Action and Attitude: Wilkie Collins and the Language of Melodramatic Gesture	Article	1998	NS I	5	19
Cooke, Simon	Reading Landscape: Wilkie Collins, the Pathetic Fallacy, and the Semiotics of the Victorian Wasteland	Article	1999	NS II	18	31
Costantini, Mariaconcetta	A Land of Angels with Stilettos: Travel Experiences and Literary Rrpresentations of Italy in Wilkie Collins	Article	2007	NS X	13	33
Cothran, Casey A	"Black and White": British and American Versions	Article	2002	NS V	24	35
Cox, Jessica	Gendered Visions: The Figure of the Prostitute in <i>The New Magdalen</i> and <i>The Fallen Leaves</i>	Article	2005	NS VIII	3	18
Dillon, Steve	Resurfacing Collins's <i>Basil</i>	Article	2000	NS III	5	16
Edwards, P D	Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates: A Postscript	Article	1998	NS I	47	49
Farmer, Steve	Belt-and-Braces' Serialization: The Case of <i>Heart and Science</i> .	Article	1999	NS II	61	71
Law, Graham						
Hanes, Susan R	The Persistent Phantom: Wilkie Collins and Dorothy L. Sayers	Article	2000	NS III	59	66
Hughes, Clair	Lady Audley: The Woman in Colour	Article	2002	NS V	36	48

Kale, K A	Yes and No: Problems of Closure in Collins's <i>I Say No</i>	Article	1998	NS I	44	46
Kale, K A	Could Lydia Gwilt have been happy? A new reading of <i>Armada</i> as Marital Tragedy	Article	1999	NS II	32	39
Kapetanios, Natalie	Hunger for Closure in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> and <i>Armada</i> .	Article	2001	NS IV	18	34
Knight, Mark	Rethinking Bibliolatry: Wilkie Collins, William Booth and the Culture of Evangelicalism	Article	2000	NS III	47	58
Law, Graham	Last Things: Materials Relating to Collins in the Watt Collection at Chapel Hill	Article	1998	NS I	50	58
Law, Graham	"Poor Fergus": On Wilkie Collins and "Hugh Conway"	Article	2000	NS III	67	72
Law, Graham	Collins and Chattos: The Reading Papers	Article	2002	NS V	49	56
Law, Graham	A Tale of Two Authors: The Shorter Fiction of Gaskell and Collins	Article	2006	NS IX	43	52
Leahy, Aoife	Ruskin and the Evil of the Raphaelesque in <i>Hide and Seek</i>	Article	2005	NS VIII	19	30
Lewis, Paul	My Dear Wilkie: The Letters from Dickens to Collins	Article	2002	NS V	3	23
Lewis, Paul	My Dear Dickens: Reconstructing the Letters from Collins	Article	2006	NS IX	3	42
Liggins, Emma	Of the Violence of the Working Woman: Collins and Discourses on Criminality, 1860-1880	Article	2000	NS III	32	46
Liggins, Emma	Her Resolution to Die: "Wayward Women" and Constructions of Suicide in Wilkie Collins's Crime Fiction	Article	2001	NS IV	5	17
Louttit, Chris	From "A Journey in Search of Nothing" to "The Lazy Tour": Collins, Dickens, and the "Tyro Do Nothing"	Article	2006	NS IX	53	58
Mangham, Andrew	Hysterical Fictions: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Medical Constructions of Hysteria and the Fiction of Mary Elizabeth Braddon	Article	2003	NS VI	35	52
Maunder, Andrew	Ellen Wood was a Writer: Rediscovering Collins's Rival	Article	2000	NS III	17	31
Oulton, Carolyn	Wilkie Collins - An Interpretation of Christian Belief	Article	1998	NS I	29	43
Oulton, Carolyn	"Never be divided again": <i>Armada</i> and the Threat to Romantic Friendship	Article	2004	NS VII	31	40
Peters, Catherine	Frances Dickinson: Friend of Wilkie Collins	Article	1998	NS I	20	28
Pulham, Patricia	Textual/Sexual Masquerades: Reading the Body in <i>The Law and the Lady</i>	Article	2003	NS VI	19	34
Richardson, Angela	"Dearest Harriet": On Harriet Collins's Italian Journal, 1836-1837	Article	2004	NS VII	41	58

St. John Scott, G	Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of <i>The Woman in White</i>	Article	2004	NS VII	21	30
Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: on Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"	Article	2004	NS VII	3	20
Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence	Madame Rachel's Enamel: Fatal Secrets of Victorian Sensational Mirrors	Article			3	18
Wagner, Tamara S	Collins and the Custody Novel: Parental Abduction and Family Business	Article	2005	NS VIII	31	47
Weaver, Phyllis	Music and Female Power in Sensation Fiction	Article	1999	NS II	40	55
Reviews						
Baker, William	<i>Andrew Gasson, Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide</i>	Review	1998	NS I	62	64
Carnell, Jennifer	<i>Ionani; or Tahiti as it was</i> . Ed. Ira B Nadel	Review	1999	NS II	74	75
Dillon, Steve	<i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens</i> . Ed Paul Schlicke. <i>Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope</i> . Ed R.C.Terry	Review	1999	NS II	78	80
Dillon, Steve	<i>The Fiction of Geopolitics</i> , by Christopher GoGwilt	Review	2001	NS IV	52	54
Dillon, Steve	<i>Wilkie Collins's Library</i> by William Baker	Review	2002	NS V	63	64
Hughes, Clair	<i>Wilkie Collins</i> by Lillian Nayder	Review	1998	NS I	59	61
Knight, Mark	<i>Unequal Partners</i> by Lillian Nayder	Review	2002	NS V	57	58
Knight, Mark	<i>Wilkie Collins (Authors in Context)</i> by Lyn Pykett	Review	2005	NS VIII	56	57
Knight, Mark	<i>Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel</i> by Tamara S Wagner	Review	2006	NS IX	71	72
Law, Graham	<i>Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science</i> , by Ronald R Thomas	Review	2001	NS IV	62	64
Law, Graham	<i>Blind Love</i> by Wilkie Collins ed. Maria K Bachman and Don Richard Cox	Review	2003	NS VI	62	64
Law, Graham	<i>Victorian Publishing</i> by Alexis Weedon; <i>The Making of the Victorian Novelist</i> by Bradley Deane	Review	2004	NS VII	61	64
Law, Graham	<i>The White Phantom</i> by Mary Elizabeth Braddon ed. Jennifer Carnell	Review	2005	NS VIII	62	64
Law, Graham	<i>Violent Women and Sensation Fiction: Crime, Medicine and Victorian Popular Culture</i> by Andrew Mangham.	Review	2007	NS X	75	76
Lund, Michael	<i>Serilaising Fiction in the Victorian Press</i> , by Graham Law	Review	2001	NS IV	55	57
Maunder, Andrew	<i>The Woman in White</i> by Wilkie Collins Ed. Maria K Bachman & Don Richard Cox	Review	2006	NS IX	74	76

Maunder, Andrew	<i>A Wilkie Collins Chronology</i> , by William Baker	Review	2007	NS X	70	72
Nayder, Lillian	<i>The Public Face of Wilkie Collins</i> ed William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law, Paul Lewis	Review	2005	NS VIII	58	62
Nayder, Lillian	<i>Wilkie Collins's The Dead Alive: The Novel, the Case, and Wrongful Convictions</i> by Rob Warden	Review	2006	NS IX	72	74
Nayder, Lillian	<i>Wilkie Collins: Interdisciplinary Essays</i> ed. Andrew Maunder.	Review	2007	NS X	72	75
Onslow, Barbara	<i>Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction</i> by Phyllis Weliver	Review	2002	NS V	59	62
Peters, Catherine	<i>Wilkie Collins: Man of Mystery and Imagination</i> , by Alexander Grinstein	Review	2003	NS VI	53	56
Pinnington, Adrian J	<i>The Moonstone</i> . Ed. Steve Farmer	Review	1999	NS II	76	77
Pykett, Lyn	<i>The Letters of Wilkie Collins</i> . Ed. William Baker & William M. Clarke	Review	1999	NS II	72	73
Pykett, Lyn	<i>The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine</i> , by Deborah Wynne	Review	2001	NS IV	50	51
Pykett, Lyn	<i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> , ed William Baker and Kenneth Womack; <i>A Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Patrick Brantlinger and William B Thesing; <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel</i> ed. Deidre David	Review	2003	NS VI	56	59
Stoddard Holmes, Martha	<i>The Private Road</i> , by Marlene Trump	Review	2001	NS IV	58	61
Taylor, Jenny Bourne	<i>Reality's Dark Light</i> ed Maria K Bachmann and Don Richard Cox	Review	2004	NS VII	59	61
Vance, Norman	<i>Literature and religion in Mid-Victorian England</i> , by Carolyn Oulton	Review	2003	NS VI	60	62

Editorial

Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	1998	NS I	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	1999	NS II	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2000	NS III	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2001	NS IV	4	4
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2002	NS V	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2003	NS VI	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2004	NS VII	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2005	NS VIII	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editors' Note	Editorial	2006	NS IX	2	2
Nayder, Lillian, Law, Graham	Editor's' Note	Editorial	2007	NS X	2	2

TECHNICAL NOTE

The New Series of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* was typeset and printed from digital files. The copy here is made from those files except for the covers and editors' notes which have been scanned and turned into searchable PDFs. Landscape pages which were printed vertically have been re-oriented.

These PDFs are a faithful reproduction of the original paper publications and are of course searchable. Indexes and an Introduction have been prepared and added.

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The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal*, (first series), vols. I-VIII, 1981-1991 is also available online.

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