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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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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 a journal devoted to the study of his work. The Society is open to all who have an interest in Wilkie Collins and his work.

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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editions; a two-volume edition of his letters is forthcoming, as is a scholarly edition of his first but hitherto unpublished novel, *Iolani*.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 hurryings" (*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 clasping 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 *Armadale* 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 Brontes. 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 *Armadale* 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 *Armadale* 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 *Armadale* 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 *Armadale* is not only forgiven, but becomes a moral focus capable of ennobling virtue.

Lydia Gwilt's redemption in *Armadale* 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 *Armadale*, 807). The narrative approval accorded to this character inevitably drew down the wrath of the orthodox. But in *Armadale* 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 *Armadale* 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 *Armadale*, 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 Freiherv 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 6 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" agrees 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.

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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.

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