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Editors' Note

In this issue of the *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* we bring you four articles spanning the length and breadth of Collins's career. Laurence Vielmas gives a detailed reading of two novels from the last decade of the author's life, unravelling their relations to the new mode of scientific Gothic and its work in the reconstruction of gender roles in the later nineteenth century. Angela Richardson, on the other hand, goes back to the author's early teens, and offers a new reading of Harriet Collins's manuscript *Italian Journal of 1836-37*, making the case for the mother to be treated as a writer in her own right. In between, Graham Stott and Carloyn Oulton return to two of the major sensation novels of the 1860s, focusing in turn on the dynamics of weekly serial publication and the conventions of romantic friendship.

In addition, in the Reviews section, we have a notice of *Reality's Dark Light*, edited by Bachman and Cox, the first collection of scholarly essays on the author to appear since *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront* (1995). This is followed by a review of specialist studies by Weedon and Deane on the Victorian fiction industry with particular reference to the rise of the mass market, both of which give a prominent place to the author of "The Unknown Public."

We hope you will enjoy the issue and agree that it testifies to the thriving state of Collins's studies. The spring of 2005 will see a special one-day conference dedicated to the life and work of Wilkie Collins, organized by the School of English at the University of Sheffield, and we hope to be able to be able to reprint papers from that event in our next issue.

Lillian Nayder
Graham Law

Mad Scientists and Chemical Ghosts: On Collins's "materialist supernaturalism"

Laurence Talairach-Vielmas
University of Toulouse-Le Mirail

“. . . Knowledge is its own justification and its own reward. The roaring mob follows us with its cry of Cruelty. We pity their ignorance. Knowledge sanctifies cruelty. The old anatomist stole dead bodies for Knowledge. In that sacred cause, if I could steal a living man without being found out, I would tie him on my table, and grasp my grand discovery in days, instead of months. . . .”

(Nathan Benjulia in Collins, *Heart and Science*, 179)

The novels of Wilkie Collins are constantly haunted by Gothic motifs, though suitably adapted to the taste for sensationalism in mid-Victorian Britain. His use of Gothic trappings, however, does change significantly between the 1850s and the 1880s. Though literal ghosts never really walk in Collins's earlier novels, appearing more as figures of self-effacement or denial of identity, nevertheless there appear in his later works new spectres which wear far fewer metaphorical shrouds. In the seminal sensation novels of the early 1860s, the literary motif of the ghost often coalesced with images of live burial, echoing late eighteenth-century tales of horror or Poe's reworkings of the theme of immurement. In fact, sensationalism's quest for probability frequently replaced premature burial with wrongful incarceration, often due to dubious medical theory and practice.¹ In Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-60) or

¹ When literal cases of live burial are evoked in sensation fiction, though, they tend to remain confined to the recesses of the text – to the world of dreams and imagination, clearly differentiated from reality. For instance, in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* as serialized in the *Sixpenny Magazine*, the amateur detective Robert Audley sees the grave of Lucy Talboys (*alias* the bigamous Lady Audley) open and the eponymous heroine gaily trip out of her grave (*Sixpenny Magazine* 3, 1862, 65). There the theme of the "living dead" serves to dramatize the detective's suspicions concerning his aunt's identity, in a dream in which the female criminal is reborn out of putrefying matter.

Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), for example, the lunatic asylum acts as a new locus of confinement, transforming the haunted castle into a medically-supervised institution inhabited by nameless ghostly women who are neither dead nor alive. In *Lady Audley's Secret*, the guilty heroine, who has staged her own death in order to marry again into high society, is finally punished by being immured in a Belgian sanatorium, where she can no longer endanger the social fabric of Victorian England. In *The Woman in White*, in order to preserve the guilty secret of Sir Percival Glyde, the ghostly Anne Catherick dies and is interred under the name of her half-sister Laura Glyde, who herself is drugged and metaphorically buried alive in a lunatic asylum, the switch of identities being written into the lettering on a tombstone or on the label on a shirt. In both cases, the female ghost, which functions initially as a subversive image, is contained by the motif of live burial. At the same time, as is often the case in sensation fiction, forged letters and registers – as well as biased medical verdicts and warped legal evidence – construct and erase identity, fashioning individuals according to the terms of artificial codes, and turning life and death into figures of speech. Thus, live burials in Braddon and Collins engage with the problematics of perception and misinterpretation: their female ghosts raise questions about the discourses that underpin a society obsessed with taming and managing the slippery and spectral female self and which subjects women to a sometimes murderous patriarchal yoke.

The fact that such metaphorical ghosts are almost invariably female highlights sensationalism's use of Gothic thematics for feminist purposes. As Tamar Heller has argued, in his most popular novels Collins reworks the Radcliffean mode of female Gothic to express a critique of patriarchal power and authority, whether in the familial, literary, or political sphere. Fragments of buried writing and submerged feminist and reformist protests repeatedly surface in his narratives, thereby challenging Victorian gender ideology – if only for brief moments. Indeed, in the 1860s the female spectres created by Collins, Braddon or even Ellen Wood, all serve to some extent to endanger the marital institution, the touchstone of Victorian ideology. But Collins's female ghosts change faces in the 1880s. In a far more literal way than in *The Woman in White*, the later novels concern themselves with the management of the female self, entrapping real women's bodies within a medical discourse designed to institutionalize and enforce prescribed female roles.

In the novels written in the last decade of his life, Collins increasingly portrays a society where science defines and secures gender identity through the lens of "materialist supernaturalism," to borrow the phrase of Jenny Bourne Taylor (*In the Secret Theatre*, 6). Rather in the vein of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this new mode of Gothic not only rewrites mystery in the name of verisimilitude but also uses science to legitimize knowledge and

thus impress the mark of Victorian ideology on its melodramatic plots of enforced confinement and male control. In all his novels, Collins's Gothic villains, whether physicians, chemists, physiologists or simply quacks, reflect a secularized culture. In this way, Collins undoubtedly paves the way for the conflation of fantasy and science in the novels of the *fin de siècle*. With the development of mental physiology, the irrational workings of the mind come to permeate late Victorian tales of mystery, so that obscure enigmas are now not assigned to the supernatural but given Social Darwinian interpretations. *Dracula's* obsession with atavistic regression, or Stevenson's reworking of the Gothic theme of the double in chemical terms in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, are both illustrations of the incursion of science into late-Victorian horror narratives. Yet, in his own career, Collins began to drop opium-induced trances for more modern sensational devices, pushing further the limits of verisimilitude in line with advances in physiology. Somnambulism and mesmerism were thus to give way to suspended animation in the creation of the sensational plot twist. Probing in a new way the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, between life and death, Collins colours many of his late novels with death-in-life states which effectively replace his earlier ghostly figures.

Therefore, this article attempts to investigate how, in two novels of the 1880s, deathlike states push Collins's "materialist supernaturalism" to extremes, changing his discursive mode into an exhibition of medicalized and mechanized female figures. In *Jezebel's Daughter* (1880) and *Heart and Science* (1883), Collins's physicians bear no resemblance to the benevolent outcast fascinated by mental physiology or the tricky practitioner playing with laudanum, as found in *The Moonstone* (1868). The devious practices of Count Fosco, the charming villain of *The Woman in White*, pale in comparison with the perverse medical experiments encountered in the late novels. While undertones of the old anatomist visiting the graveyard at night to disinter his study materials are part and parcel of *Jezebel's Daughter*, in which a living-dead female character barely escapes from live burial, *Heart and Science* expresses Collins's virulent opposition to vivisection and features a mad scientist who tests his theories on a paraleptic young girl.

* * * * *

Published a few years before *Heart and Science*, *Jezebel's Daughter*, despite its modern aspects, bears more traces of old-fashioned Gothic, and illustrates Collins's journey from Radcliffian plots to more modern Gothic. In fact, the novel originated from a play, *The Red Vial*, which was written and performed in 1858 but which Collins never published. Both the play and the

novel are grounded in highly melodramatic black-and-white characterization, staging innocent characters victimized by scheming villains. Yet Collins notably reworks previous patterns of entrapment, since the plot literally depends on the literary motif of live burial. In working in this way, however, Collins did not make any breach of verisimilitude. As Jan Bondeson has explained (93), as far back as the 1790s tales teeming with dead people awakening in their coffins made claims to be telling the truth, and even in the late Victorian period fears of burial alive were still part and parcel of everyday reality.² Despite medical advances, the signs of death remained far from certain, so that tales of the living dead did not only partake of the fantastic. Far from being the epitome of rationality, medicine's shifting and potentially unreliable verdict on death could therefore be used as a plot device likely to generate mystery. As a stock Gothic motif, the figure of the living dead in *Jezebel's Daughter* thus radically revamps Collins's earlier sensational ghosts to take us into the world of the deadhouse. As a matter of fact, Collins claims in the preface to the novel that he has drawn on both contemporary documents and first-hand experience in order to "build his fiction upon a foundation of fact." As Bondeson shows, even in the nineteenth century the exhumation of coffins sometimes led to hair-raising discoveries: bodies turned face downwards, contorted faces, torn fingernails and broken foreheads, or missing fingers that the buried alive had gnawed out of despair.

Collins's narrative, indeed, calls to mind the activism against premature-burial which, Bondeson argues, was launched in the mid-eighteenth century by Jacob Winslow and Jean-Jacques Bruhier. Both underlined the uncertainty of the traditional signs of death and claimed that putrefaction was the only reliable indicator. But, while Winslow advocated an exhaustive series of tests to prove death, ranging from tickling patients with a quill to rubbing their gums with garlic or pouring vinegar and pepper in the mouth, Bruhier was in favour of building waiting mortuaries supervised by watchmen where the corpses should be kept until the onset of putrefaction. In France in 1787, the physician François Thierry made proposals similar to Bruhier's to develop morgues for the recently deceased throughout the country, while in Austria in 1788 Johann Peter Frank supported the building of communal deadhouses in every town. In the 1790s, Christopher Wilhelm Hufeland was the first to draw plans for a Weimar deadhouse (*Leichenhaus*). Waiting mortuaries were then

² As a matter of fact, in a letter addressed to B.W. Ball and dated June 26, 1865 (Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin), Collins comments on a report in *Times* (June 14, 1865), concerning a case where a twelve-year-old boy named Baty had regained consciousness half an hour before his *post mortem* examination was scheduled, totally unaware that he had narrowly escaped live burial. I am grateful to Graham Law for drawing my attention to this letter.

established in many cities throughout the German states (Bondeson, 53; 55; 60; 88-92). In *Jezebel's Daughter*, Collins works out the *dénouement* of his double plot in one of these deadhouses, turning the corpse into a failure of physiological theory and the ghost into a medical misreading.

Physiology is a vital backdrop to *Jezebel's Daughter*, which features a number of scientists who pursue the Gothic quest for Faustian knowledge. On the one hand, in Frankfurt, Dr Fontaine becomes the devoted disciple of Paracelsus, a Hungarian experimental chemist. Researching fatal drugs and their antidotes, Paracelsus and Fontaine work on two “resuscitated poisons” (118), which can be employed alike to kill or cure, depending on the dose administered.³ The two poisons thus become key motifs in the Gothic narrative as powerful symbols of disruption: as poisons, they overstep physical boundaries by penetrating the human body; as ambivalent medicine they transgress physiological boundaries by entailing life or death; and as criminal weapons they upset moral borderlines.

However, despite their experimentation on animals (119), the chemists are not constructed as plotting villains. While Paracelsus kills himself and bequeaths his research to Fontaine, the latter wants his research to fall into oblivion after his death, since only one antidote has been discovered in the course of the treatment of a patient (Hans Grimm, later known as Jack Straw) who has been accidentally poisoned. Symbolically speaking, the poison acts as a shameful material that needs to be buried and forgotten, while chemical experimentation is associated with a degenerate throwback suffering from mental alienation. The insanity of Grimm/Straw constructs him as an embodiment of regressive knowledge. His physical features – his yellow pallor and prematurely grey hair induced by the poison experiment – are so many signs of a grim past, turning his body into a ghostly living parchment, a record of base and disgraceful criminal deeds.

On the other hand, Collins's double plot also introduces Mr. Wagner who, though not a physician, is one of the governors of Bethlehem Hospital in London, an asylum for the insane. His experiments on his first subject (Jack Straw) are concealed from his wife but revealed in his private diary after his death. Once again, Fontaine's patient is metaphorically embedded and buried – this time in Wagner's diary. But as a devoted wife, Mrs. Wagner decides to continue her husband's experiments on his chosen patient, visiting the hospital and taking the lunatic away with her.

³ The ambivalent poison indifferently likely to kill or cure is a recurrent plot device in Collins's fiction. His frequent use of arsenic (most notably in *The Law and the Lady*) which was used both as a cosmetic or tonic and as a deadly poison illustrates Collins's fascination with double-edged chemical products.

It emerges that the double plot hinges upon two versions of a buried manuscript disinterred by the two scientists' wives, with the role of Jack Straw being pivotal in both cases. The narrative indeed displaces potential scientific villainy onto two women, who are widowed on the same day at the opening of the novel, each continuing to pursue her husband's experiments. Mrs. Wagner, a strong-willed and attractive woman, devotes her life to helping unfortunate women and the insane; Mrs. Fontaine, in contrast, is no philanthropist – she lacks any sense of Christian charity towards the weak. She is a black-haired, vain and mesmerizing beauty, a mercenary villainess eager for power and thirsty for wealth – the Jezebel of the title. Obviously, comparing herself to Anna Maria Zwanziger, a poisoner sentenced to death in 1811, Mrs. Fontaine belongs to a line of demon female poisoners, from the clichéd criminal types of Gothic fiction to 'real' Victorian criminals like Madeleine Smith who inspired Collins's earlier sensational plots from *Armada* (1864) to *The Law and the Lady* (1875). Having stolen her husband's poisons and antidotes, Mrs. Fontaine first poisons Mr. Keller then cures him to secure his indebtedness and make him bend to the idea of a marriage between her daughter and his son. While Fritz (Keller's son), Mrs. Wagner and Jack Straw join Keller in Frankfurt, Mrs. Fontaine, driven by her debts, then steals money from the company safe and forges the registers. Mrs. Wagner, who conscientiously writes her accounts in duplicate, confronts Mrs. Fontaine, promising to conceal the theft on condition that Fontaine restores the money, but Fontaine eventually attempts to poison her as well.

Interestingly, as both a spectral threat and a reformed example, Jack Straw, the insane character, becomes a carrier of the novel's moralistic charge, symbolizing the guilty past returning into the present both in orthodox and political ways. Moreover, Straw's constant struggle between good (controlled) behaviour and bad (unrestrained) behaviour echoes the competition between the female doubles. Mrs. Fontaine's uninhibited and unsatiable vanity is constantly framed by puritan terminology, and the novel's quest for "retribution" (222) aims at eliminating the female "demon in human form" (129), so as to leave but a single, good female character. In this way, the interplay between the reformed lunatic and the female doubles transforms Fontaine into an embodiment of Straw's raving mania and his buried fears, while Wagner comes to represent his moral management and his sense of responsibility.

Hence, the motif of the asylum plays a significant part in the narrative – though not so much as an image of confinement. Unlike in *The Woman in White*, for instance, where working-class and female characters are subject to forced entrapment and medical control, here the representation of the world of Bedlam – despite the whips and chains denounced by Wagner – does

not appear to encode much in the way of social protest. Rather, the lunatic imparts an allegorical dimension to the text right from the start. Jack Straw's nickname points to his capacity to weave straw to make "hats, baskets and table-mats" (12), an activity he practices to control the frenzy of his hands. His name thus evinces his reformed character: his mechanical weaving illustrates the process of self-control and self-discipline he constantly undergoes, as when he wrings the chains to restrain himself from drifting into madness.⁴ When Wagner takes him with her, she again furthers his education by teaching him to control himself. Significantly, Wagner's training methods recall the nineteenth-century lunacy reform movement, which favoured the teaching of self-regulation and denounced restraint and confinement (Leavy, 93).

At the same time, lacking a name or a past, without even a mother tongue, Jack Straw is fashioned after the Wandering Jew or Maturin's Melmoth. He is found first in Frankfurt under the name of Hans Grimm and reappears in London in the Bethlehem Insane Hospital as Jack Straw. Through this movement between two capital cities of Europe, Jack Straw weaves together the two parts of the novel, the two widows, and the two plots. Twice embedded in scientific diaries, a living parchment testifying to a criminal past, Straw is thus a textual weaver, to play upon the etymology of the word "text" (*texere*: to weave). The reformed lunatic then encapsulates the process of duplication at issue in the novel and becomes the epitome of duality. Straw not only weaves together two countries, two cities, two names, two widows; further, he weaves together the past (as Dr Fontaine's poisoned employee) and the present (as Wagner's experimental patient), reality and fantasy, and eventually even life and death. This slippery figure, whose identity shifts, whose age is uncertain, whose mind is unstable, whose consciousness is double, and who hovers between life and death just as mysteriously as he travels from one country to another, thus becomes central to the Gothic framework.

Sensational detectives of the 1860s like Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White* or Robert Audley in *Lady Audley's Secret* may have tended towards monomania, while half-witted characters like Anne Catherick may have caught glimpses of the hidden truth. But in *Jezebel's Daughter* a raving maniac (a forerunner of Seward's zoophagus insane patient in *Dracula*)

⁴ The superintendent at Bedlam interprets Straw's intricate plaiting as "purely mechanical" (17), hence as a reflex action that does not indicate any sign of intelligence. In William Carpenter's terminology (515), Jack Straw's self-management resembles "unconscious cerebration," that is, the automatic and unconscious actions people perform daily, either during sleep or when attention is "wholly engrossed by some entirely different train of thought" (Carpenter, 516). Straw's plaiting thus exemplifies the extent to which the patient has internalized the codes of propriety to which Victorian individuals were expected to conform.

suddenly leads the investigation and controls the shifting boundary between life and death. A figure of ambivalence, neither sane nor insane, who naively exposes the motives of those around him, Jack Straw becomes the “keeper of the keys” and has the power to gain and grant access to all hidden places. Most significantly, he has access both to Wagner’s desk where she keeps her accounts and to Fontaine’s Pink Cupboard where she conceals her poisons. Positioned in between his current benevolent mistress and the criminal wife of his former employer, Jack Straw acts as a haunting presence reminiscent of the puritan conscience: Mrs. Fontaine’s guilty knowledge is in the hands of a slow-witted character who can unlock the secrets of the past.

When Jezebel eventually poisons Mrs. Wagner, the latter’s cold body, the heartbeat weak to vanishing point (179), is brought to the deadhouse to remain there for three nights, since the doctor refuses to give “his written authority for the burial” (190).⁵ In fact, Straw has secretly administered to Wagner the antidote to “Alexander’s Wine,” which, paradoxically, first gives the appearance of death before bringing on revival. The physiological trick which provides the climactic twist of plot involves a female body bound to a set of strings in the deadhouse. Wagner is put in one of the cells designed to store corpses temporarily, with brass thimbles placed on her fingers, each connected to a bell:

Doctor Dormann pointed through the parted curtains to the lofty cell, ventilated from the top, and warmed (like the Watchman’s Chamber) by an apparatus under the flooring. In the middle of the cell was a stand, placed there to support the coffin. Above the stand a horizontal bar projected, which was fixed over the doorway. It was finished with a pulley, through which passed a long thin string hanging loosely downward at one end, and attached at the other to a small alarm-bell, placed over the door on the outer side – that is to say, on the side of the Watchman’s Chamber.

(Collins, *Jezebel’s Daughter*, 197)

As Collins hints in his dedicatory preface, the waiting mortuary found at the end of *Jezebel’s Daughter* is in fact based upon the one opened in Frankfurt in 1828, designed by the architect Johann Michael Voit, rebuilt and enlarged in 1848, and still in use in the 1880s. It was originally composed of separate wards for male and female bodies, each of twenty-three beds, and was then reformed to provide individual funeral cells. The corpses had their hands and feet connected to a system of strings leading to an alarm bell. Ventilation and

⁵ Here Collins is perhaps conscious that, in Britain, certificates stating the cause of death became compulsory only after 1874, in response to the growing number of accidental and suicidal poisonings. As Parssinen suggests, though the 1868 Poisons and Pharmacy Act sought to regulate the sale of certain poisons, the law was frequently ignored by drug-sellers and poisonous patent medicines largely evaded the legislation.

heating were provided, as well as the medical equipment needed in case of resuscitation (Bondeson, 100; 105).

The deadhouse is a further example – remember the sanatorium at the end of *Armadale* – of Collins’s use of institutions as plot devices to signal society’s ultimate control over the individual. The place Collins chooses for shattering physiological certainties, and collapsing the boundaries of life and death, is a place orchestrated by discipline. According to Bondeson, smoking, cursing or drinking alcohol were forbidden in such institutions and no visitors were permitted (Bondeson, 101). With their strict regulation of class and gender, and their obsession with physical and moral hygiene, the deadhouses epitomized Victorian normative institutions. As such, the deadhouse comes to symbolize a desperate attempt at framing and supervising, observing and regulating, in the face of the uncertainties of medical knowledge. It is thus no coincidence that Collins sets his *dénouement* there, even if he anarchically tenants it with an irresponsible temporary warden who forces Jack Straw to get drunk with him. In this place Mrs. Wagner’s resurrection is not merely physiological but resonates also with moral significance, since her wicked double is entrapped in the deadhouse and forced to await her revival. Mrs. Fontaine (who has secretly followed the funeral procession) finds herself locked up among the putrifying bodies and is mistaken by the guard for a ghost (206), so that the deadhouse thus forms a modern version of the ruined Gothic castle which mirrors her own rotten, regressive criminal nature.⁶ As when she had used her miraculous cleanser, the “macula extincor,” to forge the account book or to erase her husband’s formula on the poison bottle, Fontaine has only managed to blot out the signifiers of Wagner’s life. Being morally stained, the ghostlike woman cannot truly efface her double and is in her turn blotted out by the trope of death. Collins’s scientific narrative therefore plays upon the signs of putrefaction, fusing together the eradication of the supernatural with a staging of feminine immorality. In the end, Wagner revives only after Fontaine – ironically but necessarily – has drunk the deadly poison with which she intended to kill Jack Straw.

In *Jezebel’s Daughter*, the deadhouse therefore serves to render the motif of the living dead literal, modern, and secular, more powerfully to moralize and normalize the tale of female villainy. Fontaine’s private diary recording her murder attempts is finally read as a reflection of her morbid mind, and the medicalized reading of the female character eventually robs the wicked double of her Gothic dimension, reducing the demonic to the deranged. With Wagner safely restored to health, and the Faustian quest for mastery of the

⁶ As Victor Sage has suggested in his *Horror Fiction in the Protestant Tradition* (46), salvation thus can only be achieved through the corruption of the body.

mechanisms of life and death successfully unravelled, *Jezebel's Daughter* ostensibly closes on a note of harmony and reconciliation – the better to enforce prevailing Victorian ideology and obliterate the female Other. Yet, like a feminized version of the Gothic buried manuscript, Fontaine's diary remains a disturbing presence in the closing pages. This is all the more so because of its confessional tone, which leads the narrator to conclude incongruously with a final prayer for the redemption of the her soul: "Lord, have mercy on her – miserable sinner!" (225). In thus recasting her villainy in medical and theological terms, the narrative eventually betrays its own fears of failure to keep the ghastly figure of female evil under control.

* * * * *

In contrast to *Jezebel's Daughter*, *Heart and Science* is strikingly modern in its medical experimentation and its attacks on vivisection. Frequently deemed as a novel "with a purpose," *Heart and Science* seems to have been written, as Collins argues in his Preface, to help "the cause of the harmless and affectionate beings of God's creation" (2). The propagandist purposes of the novel were indeed evident at the time of its publication and sharply underlined by the reviewers. Thus the *Academy* saw the novel as an "anti-vivisection manifesto," while the *Spectator* pointed to the novel as "a contribution to the literature of the Anti-vivisection movement" (cited in Page, 213, 217). Moreover, the Cruelty to Animal Act was passed only in 1881, and Collins actively communicated with Frances Power Cobbe, one of the leaders of the movement, who not only opposed vivisection but was also in favour of female suffrage and fought for the rights of women.

Notwithstanding its modern aspects, *Heart and Science* nonetheless weaves together two plot strands both clearly of Gothic origin and each with its own heavy villain. First and foremost, the novel recounts the story of the orphan Carmina, a wealthy heiress who becomes subject to the legal authority of her aunt, Mrs. Gallilee, on her father's death. Secretly engaged to her guardian's son, the surgeon Ovid Vere, Carmina is forced into seclusion by her mercenary and debt-ridden aunt who seeks to prevent her niece's marriage in order to inherit her fortune. Here Collins's narrative obviously echoes the old Radcliffean Gothic romance of female victimization, as the pure and innocent Carmina becomes increasingly nervous and hysterical. Before long the sensitive feminized hero Ovid is sent to Canada in order to strengthen his nervous system (and his manhood), while Carmina's fiercely loyal chaperon must go back to Italy to nurse her dying husband. Thus the helpless and friendless heroine is left the prisoner of her aunt, whose increasingly overt cruelty she must silently and patiently endure.

Like Collins's first and greatest narrative success, *Heart and Science* is

thus also “the story of what a woman’s patience can endure” (*Woman in White*, xvii). Carmina is another Laura Fairlie, with hair “so light a brown that it just escaped being flaxen” and a general “want of complexion in the face and of flesh in the figure” (*Heart and Science*, 13). Both defined in terms of lack, her face and figure signal her weakness and propensity for consumption or neurasthenia. But if the characterization of Carmina hints at Victorian representations of idealized wasting women, she does not quite fit the Griselda stereotype. Signs of rebellion do appear in the submissive girl, although they are largely restricted to her written confessions to her old chaperon now back in Italy. Carmina, indeed, resents her powerless position, both as a ward subjected to her aunt’s authority and as a woman denied a voice of her own. Though decorum demands that she should never bang doors, she chokes and suffocates as she is denied any form of personal privacy, and her anger towards her aunt once drives her to the verge of hysteria (155). Right at the start, her arrival in London (which she wished to keep secret) is revealed to her aunt through a series of unfortunate coincidences. Spies constantly intrude upon her private interviews with Ovid, who himself betrays their secret engagement to his mother, thus triggering Carmina’s torments. Gradually, Carmina sinks into a form of morbid sensitivity which the local doctor’s tonic cannot touch. Little by little her nervous system begins to exhibit hysterical symptoms, while her body comes to shake and shiver at the slightest sound.

Carmina’s weak will and her constant subjection to the authority of others hence create the first strand of Collins’s modernized Gothic plot, as the image of the fragile and passive heroine becomes enmeshed within the language of physiology. As Jane Wood points out (45), beneath the cultural given of woman’s patience and endurance lay widespread confusion as to the actual meaning of the female will. Simultaneously signifying both wilfulness and volition, will was a key term to naturalize and enforce woman’s powerless position. Caught within this physiological discourse, the supposed weakness of the female will inevitably placed women alongside animals and half-wits on the evolutionary scale. In *Heart and Science*, Carmina’s weakness and powerlessness thus acquire new tones when seen through the filtering lens of medical science. The nature of woman’s will indeed forms a major theme of the narrative, which places the heroine in the company of a series of strong-willed women who nevertheless exhibit similar signs of hysteria. These are: Carmina’s tigerish Italian duenna Teresa who is tempted to use her husband’s canister to poison Carmina’s guardian and even attempts to strangle her; the aunt herself who rules over the whole household with a rod of iron, but suddenly loses self-control and has to be removed to a lunatic asylum; the secretive and ill-tempered governess Miss Minerva whose “firmness of will” can only be dissected by “Inquisitive Science,” and who has an “irritable temper, serving perhaps as a safety-valve to an underlying explosive force”

(22); and even the disobedient slow-witted child Zoe who knows neither discipline nor order, and who later secretly communicates to Ovid the alarming news of Carmina's decline. Confined in a house inhabited in the main by self-assertive and unrestrained females – only the naive Mr. Gallilee and the well-disciplined Maria stand out – Carmina's passivity highlights a double bind familiar throughout the Victorian period: weak-willed women justify male control, but strong-willed women render it even more necessary. Thus, as so many reflections of what Carmina might become if unchecked, the savage Italian duenna, the furious Mrs. Gallilee, the irritable Minerva, and the disruptive Zoe all point out the necessity of Carmina's experience of discipline, which the victim compares to that of a penitent confined to a "reformatory institution," with her aunt playing the role of matron (189).

Carmina's quest for love and marriage is throughout framed by medical discourse. She is introduced to the reader in pathological terms, as we are informed from the very beginning that she is destined to become the "patient" of her surgeon lover (6). Yet the notion of woman's mind as an open field for scientific investigation is most literally fulfilled in the second Gothic strand of Collins's plot. The role of Mrs. Gallilee is echoed in that of a second villain, who pursues his own male Gothic Faustian quest. Dr Benjulia is a physiologist who researches the mysteries of the brain and experiments on animals to perfect his knowledge of cerebral diseases, though popular opinion believes him to be in search of the secret of the Philosopher's Stone (67). Not unlike Paracelsus in *Jezebel's Daughter*, the physician is a six-foot-six giant with gaunt features and "protuberant cheekbones," which earn him the nickname of "the living skeleton" (63). His thin, dark gray eyes, gipsy-brown complexion, and straight black hair hanging over his face make him resemble an American Indian (63). These suggestions of atavistic physiology and miscegenation link him to typical nineteenth-century portraits of the criminal. Naturally, his degenerative features construct him as a transgressive figure and herald his activities as a vivisectionist. His physical traits betray the scientist who oversteps boundaries and enters forbidden territory. Liminal images permeate his character, whether in his appearance as one of the living dead or in the presentation of his secret laboratory. The latter is a modern version of the castle in the Apennines. Hidden away "in a desolate field – in some lost suburban neighbourhood that nobody can discover" (66), the laboratory is hidden from view, its single skylight protected by a blind, and always locked, the key kept on Benjulia's person day and night. This mysterious place hosts most monstrous secrets: associated with dissection, Benjulia's laboratory explores bodies turned inside out, changing the seamless image of medical science into a monstrous fragmented sight where the private secrets of the body give way to the professional's knife.

Most significantly, Benjulia's devilish quest for a knowledge which "sanctifies cruelty" (179) is repeatedly associated with perverse sexual desire. The physician's patients are all sensitive subjects, female hysterics whose disorders he seeks to regulate. His medical experimentation on the half-witted Zoe's Cervical Plexus, tickling and paralyzing her to force her submit to his will (65), ranges this female patient with his other animals. But his fascination with "brains and nerves" (67) barely cloaks a desire to pry into woman's mysteries, to cut open women's brains in order to see the inside of the female psyche. Woman's minds and woman's wombs are all one to the neurophysiologist eager to excite his female subjects and penetrate the workings of the female imagination. In one particularly revealing scene, Benjulia cruelly abuses his cook "just as he pursued his own ends with a vivisected animal." In order to observe the "inferior" creature's reaction to a macabre jest after she has spoiled his dinner due to her reading of Richardson's *Pamela*, the master first encourages the servant to believe that he is making love to her and will propose marriage, only to abruptly dismiss her (208-10). His hope is that the "violent moral shock" (212) will turn her brain and provide him with an opportunity for medical experiment, thus testifying to the perversity of his lust for knowledge.

In such a context of scientific supervision, the heroine can only submit her over-wrought nervous system to the professional. Through the Faustian figure of Benjulia, Collins's narrative fuses romance and reality. When Carmina's aunt violates her privacy by reading her letter to Ovid, the narrative reaches a climax in the sensational somaticization of Carmina's anxieties: the two plots come together when Carmina's romantic sensitivity is transformed into brain disease, making the two villains merge. As we have seen, throughout the novel science is the locus of villainy. Carmina's heartless mental torturer Mrs. Gallilee dabbles in science too. Physics and biology are the favourite subjects of a character who studies the theory of creation and the mechanisms of life. Gallilee knows everything about "Geographical Botany" and "cropolites . . . the fossilized ingestions of extinct reptiles," and is aware that "the albuminoid substance of frog's eggs is insufficient (viewed as nourishment) to transform a tadpole into a frog" (83-5). She listens to lectures on "Diathermancy of Ebonite" (54) or the "Interspatial Regions" (102) and discusses her views on Matter with eminent professors. Collins here painstakingly intersperses fragments of scientific discourse, the better to justify the character's claims to scientific culture.⁷ Gallilee's thirst for knowledge is

⁷ In his preface, Collins claims that the passage on "Diathermancy of Ebonite" stems from "proceedings at a conversazione in honour of Professor Helmholtz (reported in the *Times* (April 12, 1881), at which 'radiant energy' was indeed converted into 'sonorous vibrations,'" adding that the discussion on matter derives from *Chambers's Encyclopaedia*.

not only a sign of her transgression of Victorian gender spheres but also a symptom of her depraved character. Her success in “dissecting the nervous system of a bee” (35) and her passion for dissecting flowers (84), turn her into a female counterpart of Benjulia, the “dissector of living creatures” (176).

Yet Gallilee and Benjulia function as complementary rather than identical images of the scientist. Their respective scientific passions draw upon nineteenth-century debates on neurology. As Alison Winter notes, physiology and physics were the most significant disciplines involved in brain research, at a time when neurology sought to explain mental states as physical mechanisms and physiological processes (Winter, 7). As exemplified by William Carpenter’s *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1853) or Henry Maudsley’s *The Physiology and Pathology of Mind* (1868), it was believed that the brain was made up of two main portions, mind and matter, the first harbouring consciousness and morality or “volition” whilst the latter corresponded to the site of instincts, impulses and organic processes. As a result, mental physiology’s interest in volition and consciousness – and thus in moral responsibility – had immense political, social and cultural implications which Collins’s novel explores. By conflating the professional male scientist and the amateur scientific lady, to whom the powerless heroine is simultaneously subjected, the narrative can foreground the ideological aspects of scientific knowledge and practice. Thus, whether matter is physically or physiologically orientated, Gallilee and Benjulia merge symbolically *and* literally when Carmina falls ill and the two scientists’ quests intersect.

Benjulia is in fact at the last stages of his research when the plot of female victimization reaches its climax. As already suggested, the heroine seeks to escape her aunt’s cruelty and join Ovid in Quebec. But her letter is intercepted and Mrs. Gallilee glides into Carmina’s room “like a ghost” (248) to confront the nervously weakened heroine. At the same time, the lady scientist falsely accuses her ward of being the illegitimate child of an adulteress. The combined shock of the discovery and the accusation turn Carmina’s nervous anxiety to “partial catalepsy” (255): “A ghastly stare, through half-closed eyes, showed death in life, blankly returning her look” (250). Rigid and dumb, insensible to touch (251), and sometimes drifting into “partial unconsciousness” (280), Carmina hovers between the animate and the inanimate. As a modernized ghost-like figure, she resembles her Radcliffean foresters’ climactic passionate convulsions, in a medical representation of the *Scheintod* or death trance. Framed by medical discourse, her “death-struck look” (269) and “simulated paralysis” (313) reflect the deathlike spells then seen as characteristic of certain hysterical disorders – for example, the “lucid hysterical lethargy” distinguished by the French neurologist G. Gilles de la Tourette. In such cases the patient’s pulse rate fell, the heartbeat became

inaudible, and the patient grew pale, still and cold, often remaining in that state for several days and facing the risk of live burial (Bondeson, 251).

Here, Carmina's hysterical paraplexy cloaks her rebellion, in a manner radically different from that encountered in the other female characters of the narrative. She becomes frozen into silence and apparent death precisely as she is on the point of asserting her social independence and sexual autonomy. Her disease, therefore, figures simultaneously as an expression of her rebellion and as a denial of feminine power, since it deprives the woman of a voice just as she attempts to articulate her anger. With her endurance tried to its limits and her most private desires exposed to public gaze, Carmina somatically encodes her powerless position by morphing her mind into a tomb and staging her own suspension of will. As a result, Carmina's hypersensitivity, her visionary excitability – as for example when irrationally and superstitiously fearful of her aunt or Benjulia – reconstruct her as a case of double consciousness that demands a medicalized reading. Carmina then becomes the ideal case study for Benjulia, who allows the incompetent practitioner Mr. Null to deal with the patient so that he will be able to witness the evolution of the disease from bad to worse:

The shock that had struck Carmina had produced complicated hysterical disturbance, which was now beginning to simulate paralysis. Benjulia's profound and practised observation detected a trifling inequality in the size of the pupils of the eyes, and a slightly unequal action on either side of the face – delicately presented in the eyelids, the nostrils, and the lips. Here was no common affection of the brain, which even Mr Null could understand! Here, at last, was Benjulia's reward for sacrificing the precious hours which might otherwise have been employed in the laboratory! From that day, Carmina was destined to receive unknown honour: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in his note-book of experiments.

(Collins, *Heart and Science*, 290)

As we might expect, Carmina is saved by her lover whose devotion to his own medical practice has allowed him to inherit a revolutionary manuscript that contains the prescription for curing diseases of the brain. Rejecting vivisection, this work concerns the cases of two women “hysterically affected by a serious moral shock” (326), one resulting in fatality where the *post-mortem* examination results in a breakthrough in the treatment of brain disease. The man Ovid attempted to cure activates the buried Gothic mysteries of the narrative. But this time Collins's revision of his former outcast character Ezra Jennings in *The Moonstone* does not unveil a Gothic plot of silence and social marginalization. Nor does it signal self-effacement. The alienated scientist, who asks to be buried with only his initials and date of death on his grave, provides Ovid with the prescription for curing unruly and potentially dangerous women and thus allows him to tame Carmina's hysterical rebellion. The story

of this stranger, embedded in one of Ovid's letters to Carmina, tells of his unfortunate marriage to a disreputable woman who eventually killed herself "in a fit of drunken frenzy" (140). Desperately in love with this figure of feminine transgression, the man became mad and was confined to an asylum. Yet the manuscript does not contain his passionate love story. The supposedly irrational ravings of the asylum patient turn out to contain the clue to healing female hysteria, and thus become the key to institutionalizing male authority and securing female obedience. This manuscript – one of a series of written medical texts that orchestrate Carmina's fate as a wife – thus echoes Ovid's own manuscript described in the opening chapter of the novel, which directed his steps to Lincoln's Inn Fields and thus activated Carmina's romance.

In contrast to Benjulia's perverse dissection, Ovid then prescribes chemically to Carmina to help re-collect the fragmented pieces of her brain, and to check if she remembers "trifles" from her life before the shock. But when asked what the "ill-written" and messy manuscript is, Ovid answers that it is "something easy to feel and hard to express" (335). The elusiveness of his answer serves to shape the Gothic text into a patriarchal construct. As a symbol of male power over feminine rebellion, the theory on brain diseases silently enforces Victorian gender politics. The novel's buried secret dissimulates the mystery of male domination, not so much by entrapping the female body and subjecting it to the patriarchal blade, but by letting subjection circulate on its own *within* the female body. Ovid's prescription hence testifies to the naturalized management of feminine unruliness in a wider way than mere dissection. This might perhaps explain the chemists' refusal to make up the miraculous medicine Ovid prescribes. The allusions to adulteration (the nineteenth-century practice by apothecary chemists of altering drugs with additives and thereby changing the prescriptions written by physicians – see Altick, 561-8) are not merely casual references to current Victorian practice. The debate over the role of chemistry and drug-dosing ultimately transforms Ovid into a scientist as dangerous as Benjulia, making "the necessary additions or changes from his own private store" (328). Indeed, Ovid's use of drugs disturbingly recalls earlier references linking chemistry to "the atrocities of the Savage science" (114) and Benjulia's "horrid cutting and carving" (178). Chemistry's link with vivisection (in experiments designed to test the efficiency of "the curative action of poisons" (177), as Benjulia's brother Lemuel explains) underlines how mental physiology, grounded on the premise that man is an animal (176), systematically fashions patients into so many victims of experimentation. Carmina, as one of them, is thus exhibited alongside animals and half-witted creatures as Ovid's wife, in a subversive blurring of villains and heroes. If Benjulia poisons himself and burns in his laboratory with all his medical writings, the "happy ending" which unites Ovid and Carmina also resonates with jarring notes.

Thus, in both *Heart and Science* and *Jezebel's Daughter*, Collins's feminization of the Faustian quest for knowledge ironically results in the portrayal of a villainous woman vainly attempting to underpin a system of scientific knowledge which itself reinforces the subjection of women. From a Foucauldian standpoint, therefore, Collins's female Fausts turn science into a filtering lens through which to view Victorian ideology. As Collins gradually shifts onto more modern Gothic plots, his spectral women, who fall victim to nineteenth-century science, mechanically stage their own powerlessness and hardly voice their own discontent. Collins's "materialist supernaturalism" eventually exhibits increasing examples of the management of the female self, and his figures of suspended animation seem, indeed, to have become puppets of a murderous ideology which is eventually and inevitably victorious. If the spirit of subversion still hovers underneath his plots in the shape of his transgressive anti-heroines, it is always, and quickly, likely to be exorcised by male professionalism.

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Parts, Narratives, and Numbers: The Structure of *The Woman in White*

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Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* was first published in 1859-60 in serial form, appearing in forty weekly numbers of *All the Year Round* (*AYR*). It was republished in three volumes in 1860 and as a single volume in 1861, with the author using these editions both to correct errors in the chronology of the story and to modify the novel's structure. For the most part the structural changes were minor (Baker, 199), providing smoother transitions between what had been distinct instalments, or introducing sub-divisions into a "narrative" where there had been none. Two, however, were more significant. The three Parts of the *AYR* text were replaced by three Epochs (corresponding to the volumes of the triple-decker), and the letter of Mrs. Catherick explaining Sir Percival's secret was given the status of an independent narrative. It is not too difficult to find justification for these changes. Mrs. Catherick's letter, it can be argued, should have independent status because her story adds to our understanding of Sir Percival's motives and actions, and she contributes it herself in writing. As for the three Epochs, they correspond to the three divisions of a traditional plot: exposition (up to Laura's marriage), complication (the success of the conspiracy), and resolution (Laura being accepted for herself by the Limmeridge household). At the same time, they validate the novel's publication in more or less equal volumes.¹ Nevertheless, I believe that these changes distort Collins's original intentions for his "gloriously intricate" work (Robinson, 138), at least to the extent that they are

¹ Using word counts based on the Project Gutenberg text, these represent respectively 29%, 35% and 36% of the total. (Citations from the novel are from the Sucksmith edition, and I follow Sucksmith's numbering of the instalments, rather than using the number of the *AYR* issue.) Collins had in fact anticipated a shorter third volume: in a letter of 13 April 1860 to Sampson Low (in private hands), he predicted that Volume III would be not more than 70-75 *AYR* pages, as against 71 for Volume I and 83 for Volume II. (The hitherto unpublished correspondence of Wilkie Collins will appear in four volumes from Pickering & Chatto in 2005 as *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins: The Collected Letters*, eds. William Baker, Andrew Gasson, Graham Law and Paul Lewis. I am grateful to the editors for their help in tracking down relevant letters.)

revealed in the *AYR* text, and in what follows I consider Collins's use of numbers, narratives and parts in the serialisation.

I. Numbers

It must be granted that Collins disliked writing for serial publication, but this is hardly surprising, as it is difficult to think of a novelist who did not. As Bulwer Lytton suggested, there were perhaps two classes of reader in Victorian England – “the one who like the serial form the other who prefer waiting till the whole is completed” (qtd. in Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, 109) – but one would be hard-pressed to find equivalent camps amongst novelists. Serialisation could be profitable and could create a reputation amongst a public numbered in millions (Collins, “The Unknown Public,” 222), and it therefore had to be engaged in. But even for masters of the art it was often a painful experience, sometimes literally so: one might remember Dickens's complaint of “Neuralgic pains” when working on *Great Expectations* (Storey 9:424). The work required unremitting effort under what Sutherland has called “furnace-like conditions” (*Victorian Novelists*, 172), with the author having to write “with the press clattering close beside [him], all the time” (Collins, letter to Gregory, 24 May 1860, Parrish Collection, Princeton University Library).

Despite this, as we have noted, Collins's changes for the three- or single-volume version of *The Woman in White* were in the main only minor ones. Days spent working on the book proofs were merely “varnishing days,” he would explain (letter to E.M. Ward, 3 August 1860, Harry Ransom Research Center, University of Texas at Austin). We might perhaps be surprised if it were otherwise. Collins was an author concerned to revise his works (“The pages of his autograph manuscripts are black with additions, corrections, and deletions,” Sue Lonoff notes, 20), but, according to the author's own account, preparation for book publication would already be the sixth round of revision (Baker & Clarke, 2:547). By the time a work had reached this point one might reasonably expect stability in the text, especially since the scheduled dates of book publication was normally known before serialisation began. Besides, there were general reasons why Collins would have had little time at this stage for major revisions. The book form of a serial was conventionally published shortly *before* the final instalment appeared, and this was a practice that allowed little opportunity for a drastic rewrite. In the case of *The Woman in White*, however, Sutherland's comparison of the dates of composition recorded in the manuscript, and the dates of publication (*Victorian Fiction*, 44), suggests that “after the first third of the novel Collins was obliged to work against the calendar and even the clock,” and this would have made substantial revision for the volume edition particularly difficult. Nevertheless, publication in book form – if not in 1860 with the triple-decker, at least in 1861 with the single-

volume edition – would have allowed scope for more substantial revision of the structure of the serial version if that had been felt necessary. Apparently it was not.

Although Collins would try to smooth the transitions between what had been weekly instalments, the nature of the changes that were made suggests a general satisfaction with the structure imposed by serialisation. When he added subdivisions to narratives he followed the breaks already provided by the *AYR* instalments. Walter Hartright's resumed narrative in Part Two (up to the letter from Mrs. Catherick) has ten chapters; though it gains an eleventh in 1860, the new chapter (7) corresponds to *AYR* instalment 31 – which had formed part of Chapter 6 in the serial text. The new chapter thus strengthens the integrity of the *AYR* number rather than destroying it. Again, when Collins adds chapters to Marian Halcombe's narrative in Epoch Two (her journal for the period at Blackwater Park), they correspond to the *AYR* numbers, with just one exception: Marian's entry for 18 June forms a single chapter in 1860, where it had occupied two issues of the weekly. However, as Collins's original plan had been for this to form a single number (Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction*, 45), the revision again supports rather than undermines the intended instalment plan.

This is not the only evidence that Collins was comfortable with the serial structure. In *AYR*, when Hartright and Gilmore formally divide their narratives into chapters, and Marian Halcombe dates her journal, Collins had usually ended such sub-divisions and an instalment together. Though there were exceptions to this practice – Chapters 2 and 6 of Hartright's second narrative do not fit this pattern, and (as we have seen) neither do all of Marian's journal entries – it is clear that Collins was usually able to subordinate the demands of serialisation to his sense of how the story should unfold. It was not, of course, always the case that narrative and instalment ended together. Mr. Fairlie's narrative ends mid-way through Number 23, to be followed immediately by the Narrative of the Housekeeper (Mrs. Michelson). Her narrative ends in Number 26, to be followed by that of Hester Pinhorne. Mrs. Catherick's letter – a structural unit, though not formally a narrative in *AYR* – begins in the middle of Number 35 and ends halfway through Number 36.² But generally narratives and their subdivisions do fit comfortably within the

² Count Fosco's narrative (which begins in Number 40) is long enough to have formed an instalment in its own right, but it is followed immediately with the resumption of Hartright's narrative. Presumably this was the "one double number" that Collins had to write to avoid going into a new volume (letter to Charles Ward, 5 July 1860, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York).

instalment structure. Collins, we can conclude, won his “battle against the infernal periodical system” (Baker & Clarke, 1:184) by adapting it to his purposes.³ As Baker puts it (208), Collins conquered the system’s limitations and mastered its restraining influences.

II. Narratives

The decision to have the novel narrated in different voices was by no means a casual one. A year before beginning work on the novel, Collins had explained to Francis Underwood at *The Atlantic Monthly* that he had “hit on . . . an entirely new form of narrative” (12 August 1858, Houghton Library, Harvard).⁴ The idea was, as Hartright explains in the “Preamble” to the novel, “to trace the course of one complete series of events,” by having each stage of the story narrated by those “more closely connected than others with the incidents to be recorded.” This was supposed to follow the example of judicial proceedings in which “the story of an offence against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness—with the same object . . . to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect” (1).

This explanation is, however, misleading, as many have observed. Fosco’s confession apart, the witnesses brought forward do not present the facts of the case in their “most direct and most intelligible aspect”: they are, in effect, witnesses for the defence, not the prosecution. What is presented as narrative progression is really, as Jenny Taylor notes, a process of “reappropriation and redefinition” (100), and *The Woman in White* is thus an artefact rather than a record of experience or discovery (Thoms, 99, 120). Indeed, one can go further. As Kendrick points out, “The technique of first-person testimony, which the ‘Preamble’ claims will make the events clear and positive, is the principal means by which they become blurred and ambiguous”

³ We can see how he did this if we once more consider Marian’s Blackwater Park journal. Though the average length of the numbers in question (12-21) was 5658 words, the length of an individual instalment could vary from the mean by $\pm 40\%$: -2183 for Number 17, +2312 for Number 21. (Number 17 was exceptionally short because, as Sutherland notes (45), it and Number 18 were originally written as a single instalment.) For comparison: in *A Tale of Two Cities*, which had preceded *The Woman in White* in *AYR*, Dickens varies the length on his numbers by half as much: +20% and, excluding the very short final chapter from consideration, -14%.

⁴ The idea itself perhaps dated from two years earlier. Three years before beginning to write Collins had been struck by the drama inherent in the succession of witnesses in a court trial; Sutherland (42) argues for the trial being that of William Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner. One literary source was undoubtedly Maurice Méjan, *Réceuil des causes célèbres* (1808), which Collins bought when on a trip to Paris in 1856 (Robinson, 98). More generally on legal narrative and sensation fiction, see Grossman, 161.

(33). This is particularly evident in the *AYR* text. There the narratives – with two exceptions – simply serve to demonstrate the success of the conspiracy. They present the evidence supporting the idea that Lady Glyde is dead, but do not help us understand how it can be that she is in fact alive. The exceptions are Hartright’s account of how he proved that there was a conspiracy, and (as part of his proof) Fosco’s bravura recapitulation of the crime. What should be noted here is that, with the exception of the Count’s confession, the evidence Hartright secures is not presented in independent narrative form. Though Fosco supplies him with a letter from Sir Percival announcing Laura’s departure for London after the date of her supposed death, and points to further evidence by describing the livery stable he used, the letter, the livery-stable record and the testimony of John Owen (the driver supplied by the stable), are not themselves recorded as independent narratives. Rather, like the information obtained in the lodging house near Gray’s Inn Road from Mrs. Clements that links Fosco and Anne, and puts the latter in London before Laura’s arrival, they are reported indirectly by Walter Hartright.

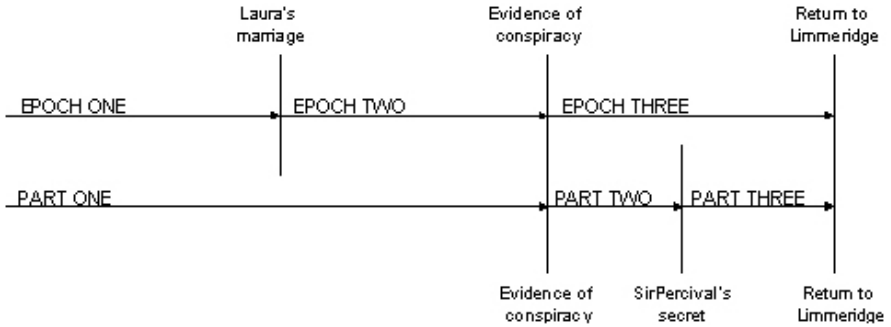
These omissions from the tally are surprising, given the quasi-judicial nature of the narrative structure, for such evidence would certainly have featured in a trial, whereas in all probability Fosco’s testimony would not. Prior to 1898, Emsley notes (195-6), those accused did not testify under oath in criminal trials: their testimony was considered too unreliable, too open to temptations of perjury. Proof of guilt had to be arrived at by other means. Presumably Collins knew this – he had been called to the Bar, though he had never practised – and Hartright’s omissions were deliberate. By denying independent narrative status to the stories told by Mrs. Clements and John Owen, and by not reproducing the livery stable record or Sir Percival’s letter, Hartright can disingenuously appear to present in the first part of the novel all the narratives that are pertinent to what has happened. They serve to define the challenge he faces. In contrast, Fosco’s narrative establishes his success, and allows us to congratulate ourselves for having understood what the conspiracy entailed.

We can thus conclude that in *AYR* Collins used the narratives to suit his own purposes. Although often a formulaic writer, he did not feel bound to use narratives in *The Woman in White* formulaically, and assign one to every character with something important to say. That is, he avoids introducing evidence in its chronological place if this would betray the conspiracy – or the motivation of the conspirators – too soon. By the same token, we can argue that Collins’s decision of 1860 to create an additional narrative by separating the unsolicited letter of Mrs. Catherick from Hartright’s second narrative goes against this principle and threatens the due process of suspense.

III. Parts

The third structural level in *AYR* is the Part. As noted above, in 1860 the novel was divided into three Epochs, which give the work a predictable structure of exposition, complication and resolution. The *AYR* parts have a different function. As Figure 1 shows, the first takes us to the discovery that Lady Glyde is not dead; the second to the revelation of Sir Percival's secret (and the identity of Anne); the third, to the reclaiming of Laura's rights.

Figure 1: Parts (*AYR*) and Epochs (1860)

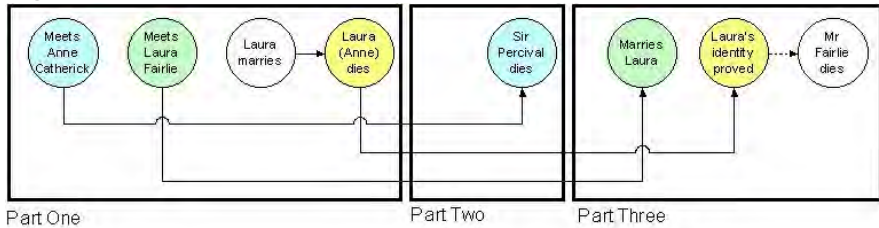


The differences between Epoch and Part structures are thus significant. The divisions of 1860 map the three stages of Laura's life: she is Laura Fairlie in the first Epoch, Laura, Lady Glyde in the second, and Mrs. Laura Hartright in the third. However, the simplicity of this structure should serve as a warning, for contrary to what Hartright implies in the Preamble, there is not one complete story in the novel, but three. There is the story of Anne Catherick, which bursts upon us in the second number, and is only fully understood with the disclosures that follow Sir Percival's death. There is the story of Walter Hartright, which begins in its own right with his falling in love with Laura Fairlie, and ends – against all probability, outside of the world of sentimental fiction – with his marriage to her. And, of course, there is the story of the conspiracy, the seeds of which are sown in Fosco's conversation with Percival on the night of June 20th, and which ends with Laura's recognition by the Limmeridge household a year later. It is this tripartite structure that is captured in the *AYR* parts.

The organising device for these interconnecting stories is death. Though Part One ends in the Limmeridge burial-ground with the certainty that there has been a conspiracy (certainty is only possible when Laura is known to be alive), it reaches the first of its two climaxes with Anne's death – at first, of course, presumed to be that of Laura. This is the event which is both the means to the conspiracy's success and, because it was premature, its fatal flaw. But if

Anne’s death is the crucial event of Part One, as Figure 2 demonstrates, the deaths of Sir Percival in Part Two, and Mr. Fairlie in Part Three are no less significant.

Figure 2: The *AYR* Part structure



Sir Percival’s death links all three stories. First, it frees Laura to marry again, and it means that Hartright does not end up (like Sir Percival’s father) living with a married woman whose “husband had ill-used her, and had afterwards gone off with some other person” (491). Second, the death leads to the discovery of the reason for Anne Catherick’s haunting resemblance to Laura. Although Mrs. Fairlie and Sir Percival seem unconcerned to find any other explanation for the similarity than a freak of nature, the readers’ curiosity on this point needs to be satisfied, and the answer brings a sense of closure to Anne’s story.⁵ And finally, Sir Percival’s death shifts Hartright’s attention to the Count. Within the conspiracy plot, Sir Percival’s secret had promised to be a lever whereby Hartright could force a confession from the Baronet. Though this becomes impossible when Sir Percival dies in the burning vestry, the time invested was not wasted (despite Hartright’s feeling that this was the case): the elimination of Sir Percival means that in Part Three Fosco has little alternative but to yield to Hartright’s pressure.

As for Mr. Fairlie’s death, it brings the love story of Walter and Laura to a satisfying fairy-tale conclusion, with them living at Limmeridge on “three thousand a year” (298). Hobsbawm, commenting on the tax assessments of 1865-66, considers an income of £6,000 “very substantial”: Fosco for once was serious when he described the income coming to Laura after her uncle’s death

⁵ Although a similarly haunting likeness is left unexplained in “The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices” (*Household Words*, 3-31 October 1857), the complementary nature of the characters of Laura and Anne requires that their relationship as half-sisters be established (Michie, 58-59). Leavy, 128, sees all three half-sisters – Laura, Anne, Marian – forming a psychic whole.

as a “fine fortune” (298), given that, as a drawing master at Limmeridge, Hartright only received the equivalent of £221 a year. Hartright’s devotion is rewarded when – as Pesca had foreseen (13) – he marries well. Part Three also sees Fosco’s death, but thought this moralistically disposes of the Count (and means that Hartright does not have to fight a duel at some future date), it does not significantly contribute to the story in the way that Mr. Fairlie’s does.

* * * * *

A final point needs to be made. Although we do not have evidence for the way that Collins planned *The Woman in White*, it is clear that he had a sense of the novel’s stages and their proportions. Collins planned ahead when writing his fiction, working backwards from the central idea to characterisation, creating incidents from character, and finally constructing a chronology (Yates, 150; Trollope, 257; cf. Baker & Clarke, 1:259). Such planning inevitably involved a sense of a novel’s length and the proportion of its parts. Thus he would write to Edward Pigott on 11 December 1859: “I have done one third of the story – more than four hundred pages of the novel-size!” (Pigott Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, California). This was when only the third instalment had been published.

It should be noted, therefore, that, based on word-counts, the conspiracy – from the conversation at Blackwater Park that first suggests the idea to the conclusion of Fosco’s narrative – occupies half of the novel (48%), and the story of Anne Catherick and the love story of Walter and Laura are of similar lengths (86% and 94% of the whole, respectively). More significantly, given my purposes here, Part One occupies two thirds of the novel (65%), Part Two, two thirds (67%) of the remaining third. Such proportions are unlikely to be coincidental, and certainly give the lie to Collins’s claim to have written “without paying the smallest attention to the serial division in parts or the book publication in volumes” (Baker & Clarke, 2:546). There might, it must be granted, have been little thought given to *volume* publication. Epoch One (the first volume) concludes without the reader having any compelling reason to turn to the next. The conspiracy has not yet begun; Anne and Walter are almost forgotten; and though one might be curious as to Laura’s future happiness as the wife of Sir Percival Glyde, I suspect that most readers could contain their curiosity. But we cannot claim a similar indifference to what is happening when each *part* comes to an end. Part One (and, as it happens, Epoch Two) ends with Hartright’s discovery in Number 26 that Laura is standing before him in the Limmeridge burial-ground – and though her appearance might be predictable, it is still a great *coup de théâtre* raising questions in the reader’s mind. Part Two also ends (in Number 37) with Collins deliberately stimulating

reader's curiosity – “Forward now! Forward on the way that winds through other scenes, and leads to brighter times” (515) – and that at a point where interest had been building for weeks. Number 36 had closed with Hartright speeding back to London, anxious to know why, in his absence, Marian and Laura had had to move; Number 35, with Mrs. Catherick's promise of an explanation as to whether Anne had really known Sir Percival's secret. Though Collins might well have been indifferent to “the book publication in volumes,” he clearly paid attention “to the serial division in parts.”

This is not to suggest prescriptively that *The Woman in White* should be defined by the AYR text. Although, as has been noted, the corrections Collins made in the chronology of the tale to rectify “technical errors” (“Preface to the Present Edition” [1861], xxxi), together with the other changes made “with a view to smoothing and consolidating the story” (“Preface” [1860], xxx) created problems of their own, they should be granted their place. Given the importance of chronology to the overall effect of the work, Collins must be allowed to revise his text to maintain the illusion of a coherent sequence of events. In Michael Hancher's terms, the *science* of interpretation must respect the revisions, for all that the *art* of interpretation would lead to other conclusions. Nevertheless, the complexity of the novel's structure is best captured in its first, serial publication, through its interrelated pattern of parts, narratives and numbers.

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“Never be divided again”: *Armadale* and the Threat to Romantic Friendship

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As Lillian Faderman has shown in *Surpassing the Love of Men*, romantic friendship enjoyed a high cultural status for much of the Victorian period. The approbation accorded to youthful displays of feeling depended, however, on the imposition of certain unspoken rules. For both men and women marriage was expected to supersede early friendship, and ingenuous vows of “eternal” affection were not supposed to be taken too literally. Intense friendships were encouraged in all-male educational institutions, the major public schools and Oxford and Cambridge Universities famously inculcating such values. But this did not prevent male writers from gleefully satirising the excesses of female romantic friendship. In Thackeray’s *Pendennis*, most memorably, Blanche Amory insists to Laura Bell on first meeting her:

“I already love you as a sister.”

“You are very kind,” said Miss Bell, smiling, “and it must be owned that it is a very sudden attachment.”

“All attachments are so. It is electricity – spontaneity. It is instantaneous. I knew I should love you from the moment I saw you. Do you not feel it yourself?”

“Not yet,” said Laura, “but I dare say I shall if I try.”

(Thackeray, *Pendennis*, 247)

In keeping with this tradition, *Armadale* contains a scathing satire of the hypocrisies of female romantic friendship. In contrast to Thackeray’s use of the urbane third-person narrator, however, the parodic commentary in *Armadale* proceeds from a criminally complicit female character. Unlike Blanche or her forerunner Becky Sharp, both of whom are seen as consummate actresses in their enactment of feminine sentiment, Lydia overtly mocks the conventions of female friendship, refusing to comply with Mrs. Oldershaw’s euphemistic treatment of what is essentially a criminal business alliance.

Another Becky Sharp, Lydia Gwilt makes use of her dramatic personal appearance and the limits imposed on enquiry by polite breeding to inveigle her way into respectable society. In their plots to marry wealthy men, both protagonists expose the tendentious imperatives concealed by the rhetoric of romantic friendship, Becky through her manipulation of Amelia, and Lydia more ostentatiously in her mockery of the insincere effusions of the inaptly named “Mother” Oldershaw. While Oldershaw addresses letters to “My darling Lydia,” Gwilt taunts her in return with such forms of address as “Mother Jezebel,” deliberately drawing attention to the status of their correspondence as ruthlessly practical rather than tenderly feminine. This parody of the traditions of friendship provides a counterpoint to the representation of the intense bond that develops between men in the second generation of Armadales, figures here referred to for the sake of clarity as Allan and Midwinter. Whereas Lydia Gwilt satirizes and undermines the status of female relations, suggesting an inherent distrust as she and Mother Oldershaw attempt to outwit each other, Collins offers a far more positive treatment of romantic friendship between the central male characters, celebrating their feelings.

This positive take on romantic friendship is enabled by the idealising conventions of the time in which *Armadale* was written. Eve Sedgwick notes the importance of intense male friendships in Victorian fiction, which are often made possible by “the shadowy presence of a mysterious imperative (physical debility, hereditary curse, secret unhappy prior marriage, or simply extreme disinclination) that bars at least one of the partners in each union forever from marriage” (Sedgwick, 174). Sedgwick interprets these homosocial pairings as indicating, although not necessarily acknowledging, an erotic element; such friendships are not fully differentiated from the accepted sexual experiments of educated men of the middle class, who “operated sexually in what seems to have been startlingly close to a cognitive vacuum” (173). In an incisive account of the intense bond between the two Armadales, Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox interpret the hysteria Midwinter is at such pains to control as signalling an unease about his own response to his friend. They point out that members of Allan’s family see the relationship as “perverse,” and suggest that, while the source of the anxiety is never named, Midwinter’s outbursts correspond to the assumed symptoms of “homosexual panic”: “throughout the novel, Midwinter hovers on the brink of hysteria as he struggles not only to conceal his mysterious heredity, but also to separate himself from the man he most desires” (Bachman & Cox, 328).

However, though Midwinter does indeed question the legitimacy of his friendship with Allan, his feelings of guilt can be directly traced to the early experiences which he himself submits to the Rev. Brock for judgement. First appearing as a confident toddler, Midwinter recounts his later sufferings at the

hands of a Calvinistic stepfather and his abrupt social descent when he runs away. It is this social taint, exacerbated in his mind by the psychological torment he has already endured, that Midwinter sees as rendering him an unfit companion for a gentleman. Social parity was deemed particularly crucial to the suitability of an intense friendship, in which each partner's influence on the other was potentially immense.

But further distinctions need to be drawn. The confused rhetoric of the middle-class gentleman who attempts, however unsuccessfully, to rationalise or reject his youthful sexual aberrations must be differentiated from the fully conscious but potentially guilty dynamic of mutual homoerotic desire; neither of these reflects the carefully structured outlines of intense male friendship. This is because, paradoxically, the extreme levels of feeling contained within romantic friendship could be expressed only through a tacit adherence to certain conventions. That such relationships were susceptible to erotic identification did not escape the notice of writers, some of whom went to great lengths to refute any such response in their heroes and heroines. In *David Copperfield*, for example, Dickens allows Agnes of all people to question Steerforth's influence, a warning which she stresses has no reference to the drunken night at the Covent Garden Theatre (ch. 19); meanwhile David seemingly fails to notice the sexual subtext in the comments that he himself reports to the reader. Such narratives tend to emphasize the viewpoint of the more intensely loving figure, often in the first person. David's love for Steerforth and Esther Summerson's devotion to Ada in *Bleak House* are both related by the characters themselves. But where a sexual or obsessive element in such loving becomes evident, the viewpoint tends to revert to the less invested or involved figure. In Le Fanu's "Carmilla", for instance, the longings of the loving vampire are mediated through the measured tones of her intended victim.

In treatments of the theme throughout the century, certain constraints and limitations are kept carefully in sight of the reader. Most obviously, the proponents are characterised by their youth and almost always by their single status – typically, a novel of romantic friendship will end with the marriage of at least one party. Moreover, a friendship formed outside the spectrum of family acquaintance is often viewed with suspicion. Romantic friendship is justified by its emphasis on self-sacrifice, and this may take the ultimate form of one friend dying for the other (a particularly useful expedient where a marriage plot collides with an exploration of exclusive male friendship). What few writers dared to convey was the timely death of a spouse for the sake of maintaining or resurrecting a same-sex friendship.

On the face of it, the relationship between the two young men in *Armada* conforms to a familiar pattern of male romantic friendship. There is

an immediately acknowledged attraction of one to the other, although the very frankness of this avowal militates against a sexualised interpretation. The early stages of the friendship are presided over by the clergyman Mr. Brock. Midwinter's rapture in his newfound friend is carefully explained (Allan is almost the first person to be kind to him), while Midwinter himself is set against a character who is suitably impulsive but lacks his passionate responsiveness. Allan is clearly responsive to women, while Lydia stresses Midwinter's appeal for her own sex. Nonetheless the course of the narrative points to the perceived dangers of this romantic friendship in the disruption of the social structures it entails, as the two Armadales are left to travel alone together and so develop their relationship far from the constraints of watchful family members.

The pairing of these characters suggests a familiar trope in Victorian fiction: Helena Michie's detailed discussion of this theme in *Sororophobia* shows that difference in such bondings is often constructed in sexual or moral terms, allowing a virtuous (often female) character to redeem a fallen counterpart or even rival. But while the redemptive and forgiving hero/heroine is a powerful focus of narrative idealism, texts likewise suggest a level of anxiety associated with the figure of the transgressor or stranger. Although Midwinter sees himself as having been redeemed by his love for Allan, a threatening precedent is set in the first generation of Armadales, in the mysterious appearance of Allan's father in the West Indies. In his deathbed letter, Midwinter's father recalls his own readiness to trust a stranger as showing a culpable lack of restraint: "My impulses governed me in everything; I knew no law but the law of my own caprice, and I took a fancy to the stranger the moment I set eyes on him" (Collins, *Armadales*, 32). The folly of giving in to such an impulse without further enquiry is revealed when the identity of the stranger becomes apparent and his machinations are uncovered, too late to prevent his vengeful marriage to Miss Blanchard under false pretences. This suspicious appearance of a stranger is ironically re-enacted in reverse in the second generation, as Allan first encounters Midwinter in a state of dangerous illness, and with no clues as to his identity. In this context Midwinter is perceived as potentially threatening by Allan's mother and by the Rev. Brock, who both depend on family relations or personal acquaintance in order to judge the suitability of a new acquaintance. Such precautions will later be undermined by Lydia, who gains access to Major Milroy's family, and so to Allan himself, by means of a false reference, before screening her anonymity behind a conventional appeal to "family troubles."

At the same time it is Midwinter's illness and his very friendlessness that appeal to Allan, whose constancy of purpose in ministering to his new friend is implicitly compared to his romantic vacillations between Lydia and

Neelie later in the novel. Significantly, Allan is described as showing resolution for the first time in his life in his championing of Midwinter, and it is his readiness to nurse him through a potentially infectious illness that gives a moral impetus to this impulsive adoption of a stranger despite cautions from his mother and his mother's adviser.

Throughout the novel, the straightforward attachment of the two is favourably compared both to the hypocrisy of female alliances and the inconsistency of Allan's own feelings for women. Barickman, MacDonald and Stark note that "[m]ale rivalry in *Armada* is brutal almost to absurdity. The entire novel is engendered by one initial male rivalry over a woman and money" (131). But this analysis, valid as it is in its emphasis on rivalry in the first generation of Armadales, does not account for the novel's theme of atonement in the men of the second generation, as one character repeatedly attempts to sacrifice his own interests to those of his friend. Ironically such self-abnegation is associated primarily with feminine behaviour among the Victorians, but it is also a means by which the depth and sincerity of male romantic friendship can be tested. Where Lydia despises Mrs. Oldershaw, who alternately threatens and pacifies her in the interests of a potentially lucrative association, Midwinter genuinely loves Allan and sacrifices his own feelings on a number of occasions. He is willing to leave Allan for what he sees as Allan's own good rather than be the cause of further suffering as the heir of his father's original crime in murdering Allan's father.

Midwinter himself is unashamedly passionate in his grateful response to Allan as the one person who has been kind to him, and is at times unable to contain his feelings within socially sanctioned limits. In talking to the Rev. Brock, he attempts to restrain his expressions of emotion, only to break out:

“. . . I do love him! It *will* come out of me – I can't keep it back. I love the very ground he treads on! I would give my life – yes, the life that is precious to me now, because his kindness has made it a happy one – I tell you I would give my life –”

(122)

This hysterical response suggests a lack of appropriate control, but Midwinter recovers himself almost immediately and the narrator repeatedly draws attention to his powers of self-restraint, as he suppresses the expression of his own feelings in deference to the expectations and convenience of those around him. As the friendship develops, the two assume convergent roles: Midwinter is first described in terms of feminine nervous sensibility, despite the constant references to his physical hardiness; Allan himself is described in terms of robust animal health, but he too will later be feminised through his vulnerability to nervous sensation on the wreck of *La Grâce de Dieu*. Such assumption of feminine roles is not uncommon in representations of romantic

friendship between men. Perhaps most famously, Tennyson imagines himself as a widow at various points in the course of *In Memoriam* while also according feminine attributes to Hallam. (Such role allocation may also relate to social status. Tennyson's admiration for his friend as a superior is reflected in his play on gender, but this does not preclude an invocation of the best qualities he perceives as belonging normally to women. Again, in *David Copperfield*, David's changing status is revealed through his rejection of a feminine role and the violent death of the friend who renamed him Daisy.) In *Armadale* the use of gender stereotypes contributes to the sense of reciprocal love between the two friends, as each is able to nurse or minister to the distress of the other. Furthermore, the attribution of feminine status to each in the face of ill health or nervous shock subtly appropriates for men the idea of tender female nursing, as women are excluded from these initial scenes, despite the popular associations of therapy with feminine care.

The scene aboard *La Grâce de Dieu* typifies this interchange of gender roles within same-sex friendship. It is Midwinter's persistent superstition and knowledge of past events that govern the reader's response to the discovery of the wreck. In keeping with his perceived nervous sensibility, Midwinter first shows signs of distress when he realises where he is. Fainting on the deck of the boat, he has to be revived by his friend (as he will later be revived twice in succession by his wife). But in an unlikely turn of events, the prophetic dream is accorded to Allan, who then suffers a nervous reaction from which Midwinter relieves him. The magnetic response of one to the other is suggested in this interchange of care:

Midwinter laid his hand gently on Allan's forehead. Light as the touch was, there were mysterious sympathies in the dreaming man that answered it. His groaning ceased, and his hands dropped slowly.

(164)

Midwinter's later refusal to accept a rational explanation of the dream, and his altercation with the doctor, align him once again with feminine intuition rather than masculine reason, but his defence of the seemingly irrational also suggests that friendship may be capable of insight where medical science is necessarily inadequate. Ultimately, the conventions of male romantic friendship are upheld through this mutually supportive relationship, despite its recurring associations with feminine weakness and the irrational. What is satirised in the novel is not the responsiveness between these two men, but rather the expected transfer of female loyalty from friend to future spouse, as the marriage plot is based on a mercenary conspiracy between criminal associates rather than friends.

In more traditional renderings of the theme, perhaps most notably in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*, female characters gradually withdraw their strongest feelings from each other and attach themselves to future husbands. As

Tess Cosslett observes, “very rarely is a female friendship set up as a substitute for or in competition with a male-female relationship” (Cosslett, 3). But no initial phase of solidarity is even contemplated by the female characters in *Armada*. Mrs. Oldershaw’s insistence on addressing Lydia as her “bosom friend,” together with her previous position as a false mother to her, draw attention to Collins’s parody of female friendship, by emphasising the expectation that when marriage supersedes the ties of family and friendship, such ties have at least been valued by young women up to this point. But Mrs. Oldershaw actually draws attention to the uses of romantic expression as a cover for mercenary exploitation. Having failed to intimidate Lydia with her threats of arrest for debt, she retracts them and appeals instead to traditions of female friendship as both deeply felt and fallible. With heavy irony, she emphasises their distance from each other even as she humorously appeals to their shared status as the objects of (implicitly male) satire:

“How cruel of you, if your debt had been ten times what it is, to suppose me capable (whatever I might say) of the odious inhumanity of arresting my bosom friend! Heavens! have I deserved to be taken at my word in this unmercifully exact way, after the years of tender intimacy that have united us? But I don’t complain; . . . Let us expect as little of each other as possible, my dear; we are both women, and we can’t help it. . . .”

(494-5)

Lydia refuses to respond to this letter in similar vein, but she herself will later exploit the tradition of perceived feminine inadequacy in order to manipulate Midwinter, protesting, “How I like your anxiety for your friend! Oh, if women could only form such friendships! Oh you happy, happy men!” (464).

Both in her correspondence with Mother Oldershaw and in her diary, Lydia unhesitatingly exposes the basis of female collaboration as self-serving, in direct opposition to the self-sacrificial nature of Midwinter’s deeply felt love for Allan. Again, this exposure deliberately undermines the tradition of romantic correspondence and diary writing, wherein women were traditionally held to express their feminine sensibility. Perfectly capable of exploiting social norms when they suit her purpose, Lydia also serves as an ironic commentator on, and judge of, the very conventions she uses to protect her position at Thorpe Ambrose.

If the male friendship explored is more sincere, Lydia’s machinations apparently expose it as equally vulnerable to intervention. The conventions of romantic friendship assume that it will at some point be susceptible to the greater demands of a love plot, and it is his love for Lydia that causes Midwinter’s temporary estrangement from Allan. Initially disposed to sacrifice his own feelings for her when he believes that his friend will marry her, Midwinter champions the woman against his friend when he learns that

enquiries have been set on foot in violation of her privacy. This conflict between romantic love and friendship creates the tension on which the plot revolves in the second half of the novel. It is notable that the parallel rivalry between Neelie and Lydia shows none of the heroism involved in Midwinter's renunciation. Lydia seeks revenge on Neelie for having destroyed her own material prospects, while Neelie is jealous of the woman whom she believes to have stolen her lover, just as she was earlier jealous of Midwinter as her lover's friend. And after her marriage to Midwinter, Lydia comes to feel resentful of her husband's continuing love for Allan. Indeed, his marriage itself has been interpreted as an act of sacrifice, albeit unconscious, on his friend's behalf. William Marshall suggests that Midwinter "thereby takes upon himself . . . the suffering and perhaps the destruction intended for his friend" (Marshall, 74).

There is, then, no simple progression from romantic friendship to marriage in *Armada*. Lydia marries Midwinter for love, only to convince herself within a matter of two months that he no longer loves her, and it is at this point that Allan reappears and asserts his claim to the attention of his friend. The resulting resentment on Lydia's part jeopardises the assumed resolution whereby she will be redeemed by her love for her husband, as she once again plots to take Allan's life. The continuation of a close male friendship within the marital domain is shown to be deeply problematic. Lydia complains, apparently with some justification, that her husband gives time to his friend that he cannot spare for her, although Allan appears oblivious to the deepening rift for which he is at least partly responsible. That Lydia is too hasty in her suspicions is confirmed by the narrator, who implies that Allan has in fact become secondary in Midwinter's affections since his marriage. Meeting Bashwood at the railway terminus in London, he is reminded of "the old grateful interest in his friend which *had once been* the foremost interest of his life." (Collins, *Armada*, 783 [my italics]). But with Lydia's subsequent abandonment of Midwinter and her entrapment of Allan in Dr Downward's sanatorium, the claims of male friendship are fully restored. Midwinter almost dies for Allan by changing rooms with him, so fulfilling the claim made to Mr. Brock that he would give his life for his friend. Midwinter is only saved by the intervention of Lydia, who writes to him in similar terms, that it is easy for her to die knowing that he will live. Re-enacting the scene on board *La Grâce de Dieu* in which Allan revived Midwinter from his faint, she now restores him to consciousness before herself entering the room containing fatally poisoned air. In this act of atonement and self-sacrifice she both validates her own superior love for Midwinter and at the same time relinquishes her claim to him, allowing his loyalty to remain with his friend rather than with his unsuitable wife. As Allan accompanies his friend to Lydia's funeral, the restoration of male ties is shown to be complete.

Reversing the pattern in which an unsuitable or inconvenient friend dies to facilitate the marriage plot, *Armadale* depicts the initial remorse of a woman who abandons her criminal purposes for love, only to resume her plotting when she comes to feel that her husband's attention is reserved for his friend. At this point, it is not the friend but the wife herself who is sacrificed to the exigencies of plot. In this uneasy resolution to the novel, male friendship is shown to be ultimately more durable than heterosexual involvement, as Lydia is redeemed by dying in place of her husband and Midwinter's heroism is brought out by an almost equally intense love for his friend. In case the reader has missed the point, the novel concludes with a conversation between the two friends on the morning of Allan's wedding day, in which Midwinter justifies his belief in the significance of the dream:

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

(Collins, *Armadale*, 815)

The conclusion of the novel is traditional insofar as it ends with a marriage between the eponymous hero and his innocent female counterpart. However, this union is made subordinate to romantic friendship, the focus of the final lines of the novel, in defiance of assumed cultural norms.

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“Dearest Harriet”:¹

On Harriet Collins’s Italian Journal

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Views of Harriet Collins

Most biographers of Wilkie Collins have introduced us to his mother, making varied claims about her personality and relationships. In this essay, based on a close reading of her Italian Journal of 1836-37, I reconsider and revise these views, bringing forward a more sympathetic reading of Harriet Collins than biographers have generally offered.

Among his biographical remarks on Wilkie Collins in 1931, S.M. Ellis introduces Harriet as both “a woman of humour” and “strong minded” (Ellis, 22, 5), observing that both Charles and Wilkie Collins lived with their mother until they were middle-aged, and inferring that both were very much under her influence. Later, in her notes for her unfinished biography of Wilkie Collins, Dorothy L. Sayers writes:

One would like to know more about Mrs. Collins, who was able to inspire such devoted affection in her husband, her sons and her friends. She seems to have been a woman of great humour and character, as well as of remarkable beauty.

(Sayers, 39)

These favourable views of Harriet Collins, however, were not echoed by those biographers who most immediately followed Sayers, publishing their studies in the 1950s. Kenneth Robinson (1951) agreed with Sayers that Harriet Collins “was in many ways a remarkable woman,” but the only details he gives about her are negative. Believing she had “decided views” and “eccentricities,” Robinson cites approvingly the view of Harriet’s daughter-in-law Kate Dickens, who thought she was “a Devil”; moreover, Robinson notes, Harriet

¹ In the eighty manuscript letters to Harriet Collins found in the Pierpont Morgan Library, this is how William Collins most characteristically addresses his wife, varying the salutation with “My dear love” and “My dear wife.”

. . . considered that Mrs E.M. Ward should have abandoned Art when she married, telling her that if she devoted her energies to the home, to tending and cooking for her husband and to making the children's clothes, there would be no time left for painting.

(Robinson, 62)

Nuel Pharr Davis (1956), on the other hand, introduces us to a subservient Harriet, a view based entirely on his detection of autobiographical elements in Wilkie Collins' novel *Hide and Seek* (Davis, 14, 21).

In *The Secret Life of Wilkie Collins* (1988), the first major biography for over thirty years, despite the revelations about the son's "morganatic" family by Martha Rudd, William M. Clarke cannot add much to our understanding of the mother. However, Clarke is rather more sympathetic to Harriet, alleging that she was neglected by William both at home due to his long visits to wealthy patrons, and on the Italian journey where she was exposed to danger. But it was not until 1991, when Catherine Peters's *The King of Inventors* was published, that a detailed account of Harriet Collins was produced. Peters's biography of Wilkie Collins is thorough and definitive. She was the first biographer to write the story of Harriet's life and she quotes extensively from Harriet's manuscript writings, including the hitherto unused Autobiography. However, many of the negative views of Harriet remain in Peters's account. Commenting that her sons' male friends enjoyed Harriet's company, Peters makes use of the anecdotes involving Henrietta Ward and Kate Dickens to show that Harriet treated women differently to men. Peters refers to Harriet as an "unintellectual woman" whose virtue consists of "common sense" (Peters, 24) and, like Davis, she feels that Harriet was a subservient wife:

William and Harriet Collins had both been brought up in households in which an easygoing, unassertive man had been dominated by his more forceful wife. They tried not to repeat the pattern. Though Harriet had more natural energy and enthusiasm than William, there was no question that he was the man of the house.

(Peters, 19)

In keeping with this view, Peters interprets Harriet's Italian journal as a record kept entirely for the benefit of her husband. Harriet, however, is more seriously considered as an independent woman and a writer by Lillian Nayder (1997), in the "Biographical Sketch" which opens her critical study of Collins, inviting us to consider her accomplishments afresh (Nayder, 6-9). Here, Harriet steps free of the anecdotes often repeated to her disadvantage and is considered for what she accomplished.



Harriet Collins in 1831, from a portrait by John Linnell.

Courtesy of Faith Clarke.

The most frustrating aspect of studying Harriet Collins, of course, remains the paucity of information that has come down to us. Although we are fortunate that her circle included artists and writers whose letters were kept and about whom memoirs were written, these figures are overwhelmingly male. We have no journals or memoirs from her friend and neighbour Mary Linnell, nor from the women she met on her travels: Mrs. Severn in Rome, Miss Mackenzie in Florence and Lady Russell in Naples. If only young Mary Rice, who accompanied the Collins family at the start of their travels, could have added her voice to those of Henrietta Ward and Kate Dickens, we might have added a different dimension to the anecdotes so often repeated. Sadly, we must view Harriet Collins without the testimony of her women friends and travel companions. Though many of her contemporaries recognized Harriet's sense of humour, we are told about it rather than shown it. There are many charming, teasing letters from Wilkie to his mother, but none of her replies. We learn that she gave as good as she got in banter with Millais but only his words have been recorded.

Harriet Collins's manuscripts

In 1835 Harriet Collins kept a tiny diary, now held at the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, which gave her room for just three lines a day on her life in Bayswater as the wife of an artist and the mother of two sons. It is here that we learn something of her friendship with Mary Linnell. The recorded visits are not just social calls to a nearby neighbour. Mary is heavily pregnant with twins in 1835 and gives birth on 12 March. Harriet visits her almost every evening during the spring and summer, presumably to support and nurse her friend and help with the nurture of the babies. A woman would need a most trusted friend at such a time and there are constant references to seeing "Mrs Linnell," as Harriet refers to her. We also learn of Harriet's interest in the artistic life of her husband, the difficulties of employing a servant, and the struggles of a housewife concerned with such things as mattresses. She also takes long daily walks into Kensington Gardens. When there are just three lines to write per day, only the most dramatic, irritating or important events are recorded. It is interesting to see that Harriet's friendship and walks are included as well as her difficulties with domestic life.

The 1836 diary, now also held at the National Art Library, is larger, but was not bought to mark the occasion of the journey to Italy. In fact, Harriet used an old (1834) edition of Kirton's Royal Remembrancer and Pocket Diary. In order to cope with an out-of-date diary, which she was commencing in September instead of January, Harriet corrected all the dates as she went along. She made use of all the space available, writing on the blank page prior to the

start of the diary and on the space at the top of each page. She created two extra entries, one recording the Easter ceremonies in Rome, and one for the last three months of 1837. These she carefully folded and stitched into the diary at their appropriate places. The Italian Journal contains a rapid flow of unpunctuated comments and descriptions often written in an abbreviated note form.

The autobiography, now held at the University of Texas,² was written in 1853 and then Harriet had time to shape her sentences well. It is delightful to read and rather like an alternative view of Jane Austen's Bennett family. In it we learn that Harriet and her band of pretty and lively sisters decorated their ball gowns with leaves when they could not afford ribbons and that they flirted with army officers. It also relates Harriet's conversion to an evangelical form of Protestantism which led her to renounce her desire to be an actress and to become a governess and teacher instead. The autobiography is a slightly fictionalised version of her early life and ends with her marriage.

Evidence from Harriet's Writings

As observed above, many of Wilkie Collins's biographers drew upon Henrietta Ward's *Memories of Ninety Years*, published only in 1924. Harriet gave a "lecture" to Henrietta Ward in 1851, when she was nineteen years old. Here is the memory, quoted in full:

I received a lecture from old Mrs Collins on my maternal duties, which I was foolish enough to take to heart for a time. She told me I was very wrong not to make my child's clothes and give all my time to domestic matters, and that if I did my duty to my husband and home there would be no time to paint.

(Ward, 52)

The young Henrietta piously replied to this prescription: "If you think so I will do it for a year" (Ward, 38). Catherine Peters embellishes this story in the retelling:

She terrified Henrietta Ward into becoming, briefly, a full-time wife and mother, until the young painter found that not only she, but her husband and children too were far happier when she went back to her career.

(Peters, 82)

What are we to make of Harriet's apparently stern treatment of this young woman? Henrietta, then a mother who had been married for two years, must still have been the baby of the group of friends visiting the widowed Harriet and her sons in 1851. Could she have taken to heart a remark that was not

² I am indebted to Catherine Peters who allowed access to her transcript of the manuscript.

meant to be serious? We must remember she was recollecting it more than seventy years later. Harriet could have been a formidable presence to such a young woman, as she was at that time an active amateur actress, a successful hostess, and the manager of her sons' finances. Or could it have been a bitter and jealous remark revealing something of Harriet's feelings about the things she gave up when she was newly married?

A close look at the Italian Journal provides more evidence for the former reading than the latter. First of all, Harriet did not herself expect to be cooking for her husband and children. On the last page of her Journal, she jotted down six phrases in English and Italian:

To lend – prestare
a coffee pot – una caffetiera
a looking glass – lo specchio
to fry – friggere
to broil – arrostitire sopra le brace
blood – il sangue

Several of these phrases would have helped her when instructing a cook in the preparation of meat to English tastes. No servant travelled with the Collins family, but there are occasional references to women servants or housekeepers. For example, on 7 December in Nice, she wrote: "Settled with Mrs Analle to have our dinner sent up at five very indifferent." Although we have no evidence about the servants Harriet employed back home in Porchester Terrace,³ later in her widowed life she kept a cook and a housemaid, as we learn from a letter to her from Wilkie Collins.⁴

As to sewing, Harriet says of herself in her Autobiography that her mother complained

that I was the most troublesome of all her children that I would not learn needlework, but when not wandering about the fields & Hedgerows I was devouring any idle books I could get, that never could do me the least good.

There are direct references to sewing in the Italian Journal – to "making a tippet," "trimm[ing] my bonnet" and so on – so clearly Harriet had learned to sew by the time she was a mother herself. On the fly leaf of the Journal she

³ William Collins never bought any of the homes in which he lived, always preferring to lease. Their house in Porchester Terrace was sublet in their absence on the Italian trip and managed by Harriet's brother-in-law William H. Carpenter, who, as an art dealer, also managed sales of William's work while he was away.

⁴ This is a delightful letter from the youthful Wilkie to his mother, dated 8 August 1844, in which he rails against Susan the housemaid for her ill-treatment of the family cat "Snooks" and her inability to pack a carpet bag (Baker & Clarke, 1:20-2).

noted addresses in Rome, with “tailor, Rome, black velvet coat” added. One sewing disaster is recorded in the Journal, when in October 1837 she tried to make a dressing gown for William which turned out far too large. There are also many references in the Italian Journal to Harriet having unspecified “work” to do, a common entry being “worked and read”. Present day readers of Victorian writings usually understand references to “work” in a woman’s hands to mean embroidery or mending. But Harriet had other work to do when she was travelling. She managed the domestic accounts and was responsible for the marketing, for paying the servants and for managing the chambermaids. She found time in the day to write in her journal and also kept up correspondence with her sister and Sir David Wilkie’s sisters. These facts, taken from the Italian Journal, indicate that the “work” she engaged in every day involved considerably more than simply sewing.

Of course, this evidence about Harriet’s own life could make her remark to Mrs. Ward seem hypocritical. But when Harriet’s reputation for wit and humour is kept in mind, her remark appears to have been self mocking. Her sons at least would know that she was a poor cook and mender, and all of her friends would know that her own sister Margaret was both a successful artist and a wife and mother. The more negative comment made about Harriet by Kate Dickens comes from *Dickens and Daughter*, recollections from Kate Dickens Perugini recorded by Gladys Storey when Kate was in her seventies, and occurs merely as an aside in the middle of a description of Wilkie Collins:

His father (William Collins, R.A.) was a very religious man, while his mother, who had a great influence over his life, was ‘a woman of great wit and humour – but a devil!’ said Mrs. Perugini. He felt her death keenly, for she had been an unselfish mother to her two sons, of whom she was very proud

(Storey, 214)

What does it mean to say someone is “a devil”? In this context, might the label have to do with her wit and humour? It seems clear Harriet did not object to being teased, so perhaps her own form of humour took the form of teasing others – a practice that would make Harriet appear unsympathetic to those who were troubled. Although we know relatively little of Kate and Charles’ union, Charles suffered from ill-health, dying of cancer in 1873, after only twelve years of married life, and there were no children. Kate’s father, Charles Dickens, implied that his son-in-law was sexually impotent and was wrong to have marred his daughter, and so it is also possible that Harriet appeared “devilish” to the Dickenses in her staunch defense or support of her younger son. Unfortunately, this is the only reference to Harriet in *Dickens and Daughter* and it is not glossed in any way.

Finally, on the question of whether or not Harriet was a subservient wife, there is evidence in the Italian Journal of an equal partnership. William and Harriet shared the organization of travel as well as the care and education of their sons. Almost every entry in the Italian Journal refers to William and the young Wilkie (there referred to as “Willy”) being out together. William is working throughout the trip, meeting artists, making sketches, seeing at first hand the works of the great masters, while Willy is learning from him how to be an artist. Charlie, who is only eight, remains with his mother, shopping, going on her daily walks in public parks as well as on special trips to the zoo in Paris or to birthday parties. Visits to the museums and galleries were events for the whole family and Harriet used her journal to record her impressions.

On the Medici Venus in the Uffizi, Harriet writes: “first grand point the celebrated Venus which entirely answered my much raised expectations next the Niobe very wonderful but more grand & sublime than beautiful.” She went again to see the Venus and criticized the restoration: “looked again at the Venus saw the arms & hands were modern & too long” (Manuscript Journal, 28, 30 December 1836). Such examples cast doubt on Catherine Peters’s claim that Harriet kept her journal for William’s benefit. These are Harriet’s own observations and show her interest in art. Indeed, judging from William’s letters to Harriet, she seems the dominant figure in the relationship, as a playfully complaining letter from William (at home) to an absent Harriet reveals:

. . . I have promised to take Willie to the Royal Zoological Gardens . . . – he complains too of being dull without Ma – . . . you don’t say half enough about your self and your health in your scraps of letters, I believe you have forgotten us altogether . . . I forgot whether I told you I had promised to go on the 1st Sept to Seaford with Mr Antrobus, it would serve you right to go the day before you return (if I could – you little hard hearted minx, it would —)

(13 August 1842, Pierpont Morgan Library).

It is, however, perfectly true that Harriet gave up her waged work upon marriage. We do not know how she felt about this. Her Autobiography does not reveal any particular sufferings as a governess, but it must have been a relief to have more control over her daily life than she did while occupying that position. There is a feeling of frustrated energy coming from her diaries which is not present in the Autobiography and which may suggest the constraints of married life. This later manuscript was written in her widowhood, when, as Peters, Nayder and Clarke point out, she was much more in her own lively element.

The Quality of Harriet's Writing

The Italian Journal cannot be said to be a literary masterpiece; it was jotted down rapidly and lacks the form and structure of the Autobiography. However, the combination of forthright views, practical detail and little asides is quite charming. William found his wife's writing style exasperating but endearing:

I received your note Mrs Pert and although it was sufficiently absurd yet as I gathered from its random contents that you are all well (devouring every day all the good things you can lay your hands upon at my expense) I could not but feel pleased and grateful

(to Harriet Collins, 13 August 1842, Pierpont Morgan Library)

The writing in the Italian Journal shows that Harriet was educated in the eighteenth century. She regularly uses the long "s" in words with double "s" and the abbreviations "Mornng, Eveng, Wm," employing the ampersand freely. Her Autobiography sets out her education: "as to education we took that very easy, by degrees we learnt to read, at least I know that I soon picked up that power for I was a perfect devourer of all the story books (& few they were) I could get hold of." As a girl, she read: "Gullivers travels, Gil blas, Don Quixotte, Lady Mary Wortley Montagus letters, Sternes sentimental journey and Humes history of England, this last was read at the express desire of my father & chiefly aloud to him." "One day," Harriet recounted, "finding some books poked behind others out of the way I dragged them forth, and oh the joy! What did they prove to be, no less than the mysteries of Udolpho, and the Italian." Her enthusiasm for Ann Radcliffe could be predicted from the way she thrilled to nature – and from the way she overused the word "sublime." Here is her account of the journey in the south of France:

the road improving in beauty every league the mountains clothed with vine & olive but the most wonderful and sublime scene we ever beheld was about a post from Toulon called Les Gorges a narrow pass between perpendicular grey rocks about 2 miles in extent

(Manuscript Journal, 21 October 1836)

Or again on October 25, 1836: "the night splendid and the scenery sublime crossing mountains all the way bordering on precipices."

The Italian Journal seems important not because of the quality of the writing but rather because it is a woman's account of the grand tour, packed with detail about Harriet's children and the people she met. Reading it is to look over her shoulder into a private world where, unfortunately for the researcher, she does not introduce the teeming characters and seldom provides first names or initials. Published and manuscript journals help identify those in her circle, however, as do the letters of some of those she met, which often

provide a sharp contrast to Harriet's writing. This is the case with the sculptor John Gibson, whom the Collinses met in Rome. William is invited to share his studio and he is often to be found in their apartments in the evenings, drinking tea. Reading Gibson's own writings of the period, one inhabits a Rome that seems virtually empty, with almost no people mentioned. There are lots of moments which interest a sculptor – when Gibson sees an Italian peasant drinking from a fountain and wonders whether to incorporate the peasant's weight distribution into his latest sculpture, for example – but nowhere does Gibson refer to a visiting RA and his charming family. Similarly, you would never know from reading Sir Henry Russell's account of his Italian journey that he had his wife and family with him. To his brother Charles he writes respectfully of William Collins:

I have seen a good deal of Collins and like him very much . . . He has made some beautiful oil sketches of beggars and peasants, men, women and children. He says that . . . the mistake of English artists at Rome has been that they have studied art when they ought to have studied nature

(letter to Charles Russell, 30 April 1837, Bodleian)

But from Sir Henry's account of his time in Rome and Naples, one would not know that William Collins was living with his wife and family. Yet Harriet's Italian Journal contains a number of references to excursions with the Russell family, and "the young Russells" were invited to Charlie's ninth birthday party. Even Thomas Unwins, a constant companion of the Collins family during their three months in Sorrento, makes no mention of them at all in his letters and writings from the time.

While the professional interests and connections of these male travellers and artists dominated their writings, an often diverging set of concerns is expressed in the many volumes of women's travel writings from the period which are now available – an interesting area of study for Victorianists. With her Italian Journal Harriet does not quite fall within the "intrepid woman traveller" category, even though her journey was arduous and there was danger of cholera. Unlike most intrepid women writers, however, Harriet was travelling in a family with young children.

Harriet Collins the Traveller

Despite their comparative affluence,⁵ the Collins family did not travel in the style of Charles Dickens when he took his family to Italy.⁶ Dickens had

⁵ William's sales lists for the period 1808 to 1827 can be found at the National Art Library. These show a steady progression of income from £85.18.00 in 1808, to £813.15.00 in the

his own carriage, employed an agent who travelled with him to take care of the arrangements, and stayed in rented villas. By contrast, the Collins family endured public coach travel and stayed in hotels. It seems clear that they had consulted contemporary guide books and the Journal reveals that they took with them Fanny Trollope's brand new travel book, *Paris and the Parisians*. They almost certainly had with them a copy of Mariana Starke's *Travels to Europe* as well. This travel bible explained the prices they would be expected to pay for certain items in different countries, the routes to take to see the best art and antiquities, and the belongings they should pack. Following Starke's advice they set out in what she considered the healthiest time for a journey – the winter. If they travelled in summer, Starke warned, they would encounter mosquitoes in the marshy areas in the south of France – the Camargue – and outside Rome – the Pontine marshes. However, in travelling through the winter they were subject to extreme cold and Harriet recorded her concern for her younger son who was often ill on the journey. During their overnight stops she moved into his bed to ensure that he was warm. The family travelled in the large public coaches called diligences, which were slow and generally crowded. Harriet was “much amused by the strange and awkward appearance of horses harness and the whole vehicle”. It was William's task to book the seats and he always arranged for Harriet and Charlie to be in the *coupé* of the diligence, which was a box attached to the back of the coach and was the only place where it was possible to stretch your legs or sleep. He and Willy sat on the outside of the coach, where the swaying of the vehicle forced the passengers to constantly adjust their muscles as if standing on the deck of a ship in a rough sea.

Fanny Trollope's travel guides aptly describe the arduousness of the journey the Collinses were undertaking. As Mrs. Trollope recalled, it was:

. . . an enterprise requiring a good deal of moral courage to undertake, and an equal portion of physical strength to perform . . . we set off by the diligence to travel day and night over the three hundred and thirty miles which divide Paris from Lyons . . . Tedious and tiresome enough must ever be the journey from Paris to Lyons under every possible contingency . . . not even the first

year he married (1822), culminating in £1,075.5.00 in 1827. These are simply his earnings from sales and do not include earnings from engravings. In an appendix to the *Memoirs*, Wilkie Collins lists his father's sales and shows that his fees in 1836 amounted to £1,113.

⁶ Dickens wrote *Pictures from Italy* after his 1844 trip, commissioning Samuel Palmer to illustrate it, no doubt influenced by Palmer's Italian paintings which were inspired by his own trip in 1838. This choice brought Dickens into contact with the world of the young Wilkie Collins, long before they actually met, as Palmer was the protégée and son-in-law of John Linnell, an old friend and neighbour of William and Harriet Collins.

quarter of the honey-moon could render it otherwise, for it is long, toilsome and exceedingly devoid of interest

(Trollope, 1:3-4)

Harriet herself describes one of the worst moments of that same section of the journey, following her last day in Paris:

Packing up went to see the new church of St madeleine magnificent structure though still unfinished the carving most elaborate style of architecture Grecian shopped returned to finish packing very tired got into a Hackney coach and drove to Rue St Paul found the Diligence ready & coupe very comfortable started a little after six dark & dreary began about one to feel very much done for. At four on Tuesday morning we were told the Diligence would stop one hour and we were to get out thought it an odd time to choose but alighted wet and dark found a cold comfortless kitchen nothing to be had a grumbling old man in a night cap made his appearance who could hardly growl out an answer women with screaming babies soldiers etc made up the medley group out of different parts of the diligence our next misery was to discover that we were to be sent on in covered caravans about four for the party ours contained driver two soldiers us four a Lady her husband & child from America very kind people I was taken very ill on the road breakfasted at the most horrid place in kitchen with all sorts of wretches reached Auxerre nearly dead at eight o'clock – comfortable hotel very thankful to get a good bed

(Manuscript Journal, 3, 4 October 1836)

Part of the way was taken by steamboat on the Rhone but this had its own discomforts:

Got on board the boat wet all day obliged to stay down stairs all sorts of people priests gamblers drinkers gents ladies children dogs dinners & breakfasts all sorts of eating reached Lyons about 6 o'clock had tea & eggs poorly in evening

(Manuscript Journal, 8 October 1836)

On 1 December she wrote: “feel very weak & poorly getting neither health nor strength at Nice”. The last part of their journey to Florence, during which they paused for a day in Pisa, took them another nine days by coach and boat. They remained in Florence for Christmas and the New Year but suffered from the cold, which she considered too severe for Charlie to remain in church on Christmas Day. On New Year’s Day, the waiters at the Hotel gave her flowers.

As soon as they arrived in Rome they were greeted by Joseph Severn, who was the most well-established of the British artists living there. He was the artist who had accompanied Keats to Rome and was at this time at the heart of the British artists’ colony. During their stay in Rome, William Wordsworth

also visited. Harriet faithfully recorded their breakfast and other meetings with Wordsworth, noting them down in the same matter-of-fact way she used to record all such encounters. After all, Harriet already knew Coleridge, who had been one of their neighbours when they lived in Hampstead. Almost every day Harriet recorded different visitors to their lodgings. The entry which covers Charlie's birthday on Wednesday, 25 January 1837, is a good example:

Dear Charlie's birthday out shopping after breakfast then I took a ride with Mrs Severn to Borghese gardens back by 2 young Russels came to spend the day went on Pincio home at four to dinner all sorts of company in eveng Mr Severn & Mr Williams came in to tea had a fine feast.

Harriet recorded all the sights of Rome – the Colosseum by moonlight (“never beheld any thing so grand”) – the Vatican (“quite lost in astonishment at the vastness of the place”).

They also visited the Sistine Chapel daily during Holy Week to see the ceremonies, and Harriet described herself as running for a good place and jostling for a view:

we ran with all speed to St Peters . . . but the best places were all taken . . . then I darted off to a hall in the Vatican . . . by dint of great pushing and squeezing I got a tolerable place and saw the Pilgrims . . .

The Holy Week section of the Journal was written on extra sheets of paper and carefully stitched into place. It was written in a more leisurely style but still unpunctuated:

we were in the Sistine chapel soon after 1/2 past eight staid through a long dull service and then went into the sala Reggia where we stood to see the procession of the Pope carrying the host through to the Pauline this was most splendid and imposing the cardinals glittering in white and gold robes. The Pope in superb white and gold a white and gold veil thrown over his head and a white and gold canopy carried over him as this glittering cavalcade left the Sistine Chapel a strong gleam of sunshine fell on it and produced the most marvelous effect while at the other end through the ample folding doors leading to the Pauline Chapel the holy sepulchre was even dazzling with innumerable lights

(Manuscript Journal, 22 March 1837).

With such evocative passages as this, it seems surprising that Harriet did not think of her Journal when she took to writing again in 1853. However, after the stay in Rome there are not many more lyrical moments in the Italian Journal. Harriet had to take on a new and demanding role and became the head of the family, holding the family prayers, managing the doctor's regime and fearing that her husband might not have long to live.

Harriet in Crisis

The Starke guidebook which informed their travels also contained a list of medicines which they should take on their journey: James powder (a purgative), sal volatile (a reviver), pure opium and liquid laudanum (pain killers), ipecacuanha (for rheumatism), emetic tartar (another purgative), prepared calomel (a headache treatment with terrible side effects), essential oil of lavender and spirit of lavender (to soothe), sweet spirit of nitre (for fainting spells), antimonial wine (yet another purgative), court plaster and lint (for bandaging wounds). As Harriet is careful to note everyone's health in her Kirton's Royal Remembrancer, it is highly likely that she took such a medicine chest with her. The Journal shows that she was often called upon to be the nurse of the family.

Some of her most spirited phrases in the Journal are those she used to record her own health. She is often "half dead with fatigue" from coach travel,⁷ and on one occasion notes "stomach in utter rebellion" after eating dinner at a French coaching inn. But it was sensible to be concerned with health, since they were travelling in a region where cholera was rife. They were delayed at Nice because of cholera quarantines in Italy, which prevented onward travel. In Naples, they came face to face with cholera victims. All Harriet writes in her journal to describe their abrupt departure from Naples, after a month there, is: "began to pack for Sorrento Dr Murray engaged to go with us heartily glad too at the prospect of leaving Naples" (Manuscript Journal, 21 May 1837). She does not explain why they left, but Wilkie, in his *Memoirs* of his father, solves the mystery:

Strange-looking yellow sedan chairs, with closed windows, had for some days been observed passing through the street before the painter's house. On inquiry, it was ascertained that their occupants were sick people, being conveyed to the hospital; and, on further investigation, these sick people were discovered to be cholera patients

(Collins, *Memoirs*, 2:106-7)

They had to leave before quarantine bans on travel were imposed. And so, unexpectedly in an Italian tour of grand art, they came to live in Sorrento for three months during the hottest time of the year.

Initially it well suited William to be in such a landscape and light. He was constantly out sketching seascapes, especially the sweep of the Bay of

⁷ Wilkie Collins uses the same expression in a letter to Nina Lehmann, dated 25 February 1883, on completing *Heart and Science*: "I finished my story – discovered one day that I was half dead with fatigue – and the next day that the gout was in my right eye" (Baker & Clarke, 2:455).

Naples with Vesuvius in the background. Harriet felt at home at once. On their second day there she wrote:

Wm, the boys & Dr Murray took a long ride after breakfast till nearly 4 I staid at home worked etc walked down the garden to the sea in the eveng walked out in lanes & like Sorrento better every hour

(Manuscript Journal, 3 June 1837)

During June and July she often recorded moonlit walks, sea bathing and rides on donkeys to admire views. They were lucky to find their idyll as the quarantine had extended down the coast to Amalfi. When William with Wilkie took a boat trip to sketch Amalfi cathedral they were prevented from landing. Nothing daunted, William sketched from the sea:

As soon as his boat approached the shore, two armed soldiers ran down to the water's edge, and forbade all projects of landing . . . a demand for dinner was next proffered, and complied with by the landlord of the inn, who sent his cooks down to the beach in procession with the dishes, which were placed close to the sea, and taken into the boat by the sailors . . . even the money to pay for the repast was ordered to be thrown, with the empty dishes, into shallow water . . . during these proceedings, the idle population, who flocked to the beach, saw themselves, to their utter astonishment, quietly adorning from a distance the sketch-book of the painter; who on this, as on all other occasions, coolly made the most of his time and pencil which existing circumstances would allow.

(Collins, *Memoirs*, 2:110-11)

It was this kind of exposure to the sun which is believed to have caused William's serious illness.⁸

Harriet first described her husband as "rather poorly" in late July. Their doctor, Dr Strange, made daily visits and the August journal entries contain a catalogue of Victorian medical treatments, none of which helped the stricken William. He was given leeches to his temples, blisters behind his ears, subjected to harsh purgatives every day and hot baths. Not surprisingly Harriet observed that he was "quite worn out". She wrote that he suffered inflammation in his eyes, rheumatic gout in his back and severe pain in his shoulder. By mid August, Harriet was struggling in her role of nurse with administering the medicines and heating the bath water to the correct temperature: "Wm very ill in bed all day . . . took a warm bath in eveng great

⁸ Constable died in 1837 and no doubt the news of his death would have caused Harriet extra anxiety over William, for he, like Constable, painted in the open air.

trouble & perplexity broken Mrs Hills thermometer quite ill with fatigue & vexation” (Manuscript Journal, 19 August 1837). The next day she recorded: “Wm very ill miserable day great heat determined to move.”

Taking charge of the situation, Harriet found them new lodgings in a cooler area. William had to be carried by two men in an armchair but Harriet felt the new situation lessened his misery. She sat in the “airy and cheerful” new surroundings, reading to her husband, quietly noting that it was “a great blessing to have such comfortable rooms”. However, these material changes failed to help the patient and towards the end of the month things were no better: “Wm the same dreadfully weak.” That evening, a visitor, Miss Wheldon, had a fainting fit at dinner and Dr Strange was called for her. “Great deal to do,” stoically recorded Harriet; “went to bed quite worn out”. Suffering from his complaint as well as his medical treatments, William was ill for two months. Harriet noted sadly the passing of their wedding anniversary.⁹ Their doctor prescribed more hot baths and Harriet acquired a new machine to heat water over a fire, which often went out. Finally their doctor suggested taking the mineral baths on the volcanic island of Ischia and they set sail on 3 October, leaving Dr Strange behind. William began to recover at Ischia after prolonged suffering, but his health was seriously undermined as his illness weakened his heart and led to his death ten years later, at the age of fifty-nine. The family returned to Naples where Harriet’s journal entries became shorter and shorter, reflecting the effect of her husband’s slow recovery on her spirits.

The conclusion of Harriet’s journal is highly dramatic and full of emotion: guilt, religious prejudice, concern for her husband and young son, feelings triggered by the accident-prone Charlie. On an art outing to a local palace in Naples without her children, Harriet returned to find

my poor Charlie with his coat half off his arm hanging and in a broken voice he exclaimed I have broken my arm the arm was set and bound up my poor child behaving like a hero his bed was moved into our room and he was put into it his pain increased all the eveng we got to bed soon after eleven but no sleep barely all night poor Charlie screaming with pain Alas what an end of the old year but I take shame to myself for not taking my boys with me.

She then lamented:

Many months of this past year have been passed in much anxiety and fatigue caused by the severe affliction of rheumatism suffered by my husband many times my heart has been oppressed with heaviness the climate of Italy is not favourable to the bodily or mental temperament of my husband this is a fact of which I am well assured.

⁹ They had married on 16 September 1822.

Her mood deepened when she looked back to family and friends at home, since “death has been busy with many we left there hoping they would be in health to greet our return”. On this sad note, her journal ends, eight months before their return to London.

Conclusion

Though her Italian Journal opens with regret (“set off ... from our dear peaceful home”) and closes with remorse, in its centre we read of Harriet’s delight at thrilling landscapes, her awe at the monuments in Rome and her sense of wonder at viewing Renaissance art with her own eyes. We know she ran from St Paul’s to the Vatican to catch a glimpse of the mysterious ceremonies for Holy Week, held impromptu tea parties, rode on horseback and on a moonlit night observed a firefly for the first time. Along with her evident care for her family, such details provide a counterweight to the negative sketches so often drawn of Harriet and show why she charmed many of her contemporaries.

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~Reviews~

Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, eds. *Reality's Dark Light: The Sensational Wilkie Collins*, Tennessee Studies in Literature vol. 41, Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2003. pp. xxviii + 386. ISBN 1572332743.

Collins's work, as he famously noted in the Preface to *Armada*, "oversteps, in more than one direction, the narrow limits within which [critics] are disposed to restrict the development of modern fiction," and this new collection of essays aims to move beyond the narrow limits of the "sensation novel" and the time frame of the 1860s, to explore the full range of Collins's aesthetic project. *Reality's Dark Light* ranges from the relationship between Collins's first "modern" novel *Basil* and the Pre-Raphaelite movement, to his uneasy relation to emergent forms of publication at the end of his writing career. However, while the editors stress that the volume incorporates a range of critical perspectives (xix), its principle focus is on Collins the subversive challenger of boundaries – both ideological and aesthetic – and on those aspects of his fiction which anticipate, at times uncannily, our own preoccupations with how power relations are undermined from within. Drawing variously on Freud's own essay on the "The Uncanny" and on postcolonial discussions of hybridity, many of these essays investigate how Collins's fiction embodies what Jonathan Dollimore (in *Sexual Dissidence*) has termed the "perverse dynamic," in which the "other" is absolutely integral to the self, even as it remains trapped within a dominant/subordinate hierarchy. "Transgression" is by no means a new trope in Collins studies, but the forms it takes are explored here in some intriguing ways, particularly in relation to sexuality, disability and race.

In particular, Martha Stoddard Holmes analyzes how Collins breaks with dominant portrayals of various forms of disability, with their taint of degeneration, by refusing to consign his disabled heroines to passive, non-reproductive victimhood. In *Hide and Seek*, *The Moonstone* and *Poor Miss Finch*, she argues, Collins does far more than attempt a naturalistic portrayal of deafness, "crookedness" or blindness; he actively links the heroines' ostensible handicaps to their position as desiring subjects, "exploring and disrupting cultural conventions of seeing, nonseeing and desire" (75). Rosanna Spearman writes and literally smothers the desire that Rachel may not speak; in *Poor Miss Finch* it is Lucilla's blindness that enables her to develop as a sexual subject. Placing Lucilla in the context of contemporary discussions of hereditary transmission, Holmes argues persuasively that it is her *normality*, as a blind woman given full access to "courtship, marriage and motherhood" (62), that makes her such a radical figure.

While Holmes explores how the boundaries between the normal and the pathological are disrupted by the sexualized *and* domesticated disabled

woman, Piya Pal-Lapinski investigates the intricate interconnections between exoticism and toxicity in the figure of the female poisoner. Reading *Armadale* and *The Legacy of Cain* in the context of mid-century medical debates and legal dramas, she offers a seductive interpretation of Lydia Gwilt's hybridity – of her wandering, nomadic identity and complex textual and ideological position that is manifested in her use of poison as an act of resistance, finally turned, in a gesture of containment, back on herself. In Richard Collins's discussion of 'Bearded Ladies, Hermaphrodites and Intersexual Collage' the perverse dynamic is again much in evidence. Placing Marian's disturbing moustache against a background of contemporary freak shows and medical studies of hermaphrodites and unclassifiable nondescripts, he argues that it becomes "the focus of all the anomalies and contradictions of the novel" (136). While Marian's "Medusa-like" visage reflects Walter's own sexual ambivalence and anxiety, Richard Collins suggests, she also enables him to discover his masculinity and detective prowess. Thus Laura becomes the figure of homosocial exchange between Marian and Walter, even though Marian must be transformed from disturbing hermaphrodite to asexual androgyne to complete this exchange. A comparable process of transformation occurs in Karin Jacobson's fascinating comparison of the Madeleine Smith trial and *The Law and the Lady*. Drawing on contemporary legal theory, she argues that both are "weird cases" hinging on the revelation and concealment of letters, that neither can easily be assimilated into legal discourse; and that Valeria, the detective heroine of Collins's novel, becomes the "mother" of the law who attempts, albeit unsuccessfully, to mediate and control this weirdness. Here Miserrimus Dexter is the liminal figure who conceals and reveals Sara Macallan's unhappy past and suicide, allowing Sara herself to become the buried object figure that enables Valeria's marriage to finally be legitimised.

The essays by Timothy Carens, Lillian Nayder and Audrey Fisch that focus on Collins's treatment of empire tease out the slipperiness of "race" as a category and the intimate relationship between colony and home, "black" and "white," domestic self and imperial other. While Carens draws on Freud's uncanny and Homi Bhabha to focus (somewhat predictably) on *The Moonstone*, and Audrey Fisch extends this deconstruction of racial binaries to *Miss or Mrs?*, *Black and White*, *The Guilty River* and *Armadale*, Lillian Nayder argues that Collins moves through the more obvious representations of slavery and empire to explore how 'race' is constructed as an arbitrary category in *Poor Miss Finch*. Comparing Oscar Dubourg's sudden transformation into a "blue man" (a term, she shows, then imbued with connotations of "miscegenation") with John Howard Griffith's sensational expose of Southern racism in the 1960s *Black Like Me*, she offers an extremely thought-provoking analysis of how Collins denaturalises racial prejudice and "effectively pathologises the racist norm" (274).

I found many of these essays fascinating. But while they demonstrate that the very hybridity that caused Collins to be marginalized in the past is what speaks most clearly to us now, there is a danger that this too, can become a new kind of narrow limit, where Collins speaks against a monolithic "Victorian

ideology” rather than engaging with its contradictions and complexities. Such overdetermined reading is paradoxically both challenged and taken to its logical conclusion in Albert D. Hutter’s wonderfully quirky reading of Fosco’s real fate in *The Woman in White*. Opening by exploring Fosco’s roots in Italian nationalist politics, he turns to the text and to the possibilities it opens for the reader to construct alternative endings. Fosco himself must have written his biography, therefore it could not have been his own body in the Paris morgue, he suggests: might the shape-shifting master of disguise, capable of the doubling and substitution of Laura Fairlie, have created his own body-double to evade the Brotherhood’s revenge? Surveying the theme of resurrection across Dickens and Collins, Hutter concludes with a suggestive discussion of the therapeutic possibilities inherent in the act of reading itself.

As Bachman and Cox emphasise in their introduction, Collins always in some sense saw himself as a realist in the complex sense of that term as being both rooted in and “beyond” sense experience. But his practice was also shaped by his aesthetic and economic contexts, and the first and last of these essays illuminate how he moved across and between different cultural circles as a bohemian artist and a commercial writer at the different stages of his career. Tim Dolin and Lucy Dougan unpick how closely *Basil* corresponds to and extends the Pre-Raphaelites’ ambivalence towards modernity; while Graham Law offers a nuanced discussion of the connections between the form of Collins’s late narratives and the expanding national and international literary market place that he both depended on and at some level despised. Law’s analysis of Collins’s uneasy position in late nineteenth century publishing practices offers a useful corrective to those who want to read him, always, as a dangerous radical, and *Reality’s Dark Light* still leaves much to explore in Collins’s *oeuvre*. But it is great to have this new collection, which will help place Collins, perverse or not, at the centre of the dynamics of Victorian culture.

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(1) Alexis Weedon. *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003. pp. xvi + 212. ISBN 0754635279. (2) Bradley Deane. *The Making of the Victorian Novelist: Anxieties of Authorship in the Mass Market*. London: Routledge, 2003. pp. xvi + 170. ISBN 0415940206.

Following John Sutherland in his ground-breaking study of *Victorian Novelists and Publishers* (1976), in recent decades a number of critics have produced detailed studies of major Victorian writers in the light of developments in the history of publishing. These investigations include Robert Patten’s *Charles Dickens and His Publishers* (1978), Peter Shillingsburg’s

Pegasus in Harness: Victorian Publishing and W.M. Thackeray (1992) and *Victorian Publishing and Mrs Gaskell's Work* (1999) from Linda Hughes and Michael Lund. Though it plays a crucial role in developments in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the career of Wilkie Collins still awaits such comprehensive treatment. However, there have recently been a number of more specialist studies on aspects of the Victorian fiction industry – Deborah Wynne on the family magazine and Lillian Nayder on literary collaboration, for example – in which Collins is a key witness. The volumes under review here, both of which concern the emergence of a mass market for the printed word, fall into a similar category. On its own, Collins's impressively prescient essay on "The Unknown Public," appearing in *Household Words* in the summer of 1858 and proclaiming that "the readers who rank by millions will be the readers who give the widest reputations, who return the richest rewards, and who will, therefore, command the service of the best writers of their time," might assure him a place in any study of this topic. It must be said at the outset, though, that the books by Weedon and Deane approach their common subject from positions almost diametrically opposed, and assign to Collins a very different place in their accounts.

Alexis Weedon's perspective is that "of the student of publishing economics, rather than that of the literary, social or book historian" (4), so that the centre of the stage is occupied less by authors or readers than by printing and publishing firms. Though there is the occasional nod in the direction of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, this remains a steadfastly empirical study of the growth of the mass market for books, the bibliometric emphasis signalled by the scores of figures and tables which lend ballast to the argument. This study is one of a number deriving from the History of the Book in Britain project, and makes extensive use of its Book Production Cost Database, an index of the costs of raw materials, labour and printing, derived from the surviving business records of around a dozen major publishing and printing concerns between 1830 and 1939. (These include the two most important houses carrying Collins's work, Richard Bentley and Chatto & Windus.) The trends emerging from this microeconomic data are compared with other sources, at once more comprehensive and more problematic, such as the Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue and the monthly listings of the *Publishers' Circular*, which served for earlier enterprises of this type, most notably Simon Eliot's *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919* (1994). Compared to Eliot, Weedon tells us little about trends in periodical publication, but gives us a good deal more on the surprisingly large output of the provincial presses, and, especially, the expansion of exports of British books to colonial and other overseas markets. After a chapter dedicated to explaining the archival sources accessed and the methodology employed to tap them, Weedon goes on to analyse how general economic fluctuations affected the publishing industry, and to demonstrate the effects of steep reductions in productions costs on the material and aesthetic form of the book. There follow two chapters on trend variations according to field, with literary and educational books the chosen genres. The final chapter, which appeared in

an earlier version in *Book History* (1999), offers a case study of changing publishing strategies in the final decades of Weedon's range, when the triple-decker sinks and the film industry rises, and it is here that two Chatto & Windus authors take the stage – "Ouida" and Wilkie Collins.

Unfortunately the authors are here still limited to walk-on parts. The statistics Weedon offers concerning patterns of production of cheap editions and sale of film rights date only from the period after the death of the two writers, so that it is only the strategies of the publisher that are at issue. The question why Collins and Ouida resisted the production of sixpenny paperback editions of their novels so strongly during their lifetime is raised, but the answers given are narrowly economic. Collins's complex engagement with a mass audience through the serial market is treated only cursorily – Weedon seems unaware that the author's serial rights were marketed by the agent A.P. Watt from as early as 1881 – while Ouida's fascinating diatribe against 'New Literary Factors' (in the *Times* of London of 22 May 1891) is overlooked completely. Similarly, perhaps because the interests of the publishers were not directly involved, there is no mention of the active engagement of both writers in the fight to protect the rights to the theatrical performance of their own fiction (Collins through the dramatization of his own works, and Ouida again through correspondence in the *Times*), which might have made a neat bookend with the section on film rights. Altogether then, this chapter is the thinnest in the volume, in both a quantitative and a qualitative sense, confirming by default that publishing, authorship and readership do need to be studied as a single complex if we are to develop a truly rounded book history.

In contrast to that of Weedon, Bradley Deane's study of the mass market, originating as a doctoral thesis at Northwestern University, is more interested in what Foucault has called the "author-function." It seeks to reveal the ideological underpinnings of the concept of authorship in nineteenth-century Britain, by isolating "the social, economic and aesthetic transformations that allowed it to achieve its almost unassailable hegemony in popular culture and professional criticism alike" (ix). The more immediate theoretical debt, though, is to Althusser's notion of ideology, with Norman Feltes's *Modes of Production of Victorian Novels* (1986) providing an apt model for its application to nineteenth-century publishing history. Like Feltes, Deane proceeds by isolating a series of critical "moments" represented by the production and reception of specific canonical works. In Deane's case, the four crises are: Scott's rejection of the Wordsworthian idea of Romantic genius in favour of a more impersonal notion of the social utility of the author's work (*Waverley*); Dickens's embracing of the role of the friendly, sympathetic author in a period of growing social antagonism and alienation (*The Pickwick Papers*); Collins's adoption of a professional model of authorship in the face of the rise of the "unknown public" (*The Woman in White*), to which I shall return; and James's cultivation of a pseudo-religious concept of modernist literary authority in the face of the "balkanization" of the late Victorian market-place

(*The Princess Casamassima*). These chapters are followed by a more wide-ranging discussion of the anomalies of the “veiled” female authorial personality in the Victorian period, with Gaskell and Eliot serving as examples.

The Making of the Victorian Novelist, however, is a fairly slim volume, and these “grand” arguments are often supported only by a highly selective use of secondary sources. Here, “qtd. in . . .” proves a constant refrain, with the date and provenance of the original left to the imagination too frequently. This is a particular problem in the chapter on the “sensation school,” which Deane sees as a phantom menace conjured by the reactionary critics of the elite quarterly and monthly reviews in order to deride the indiscriminate taste of the emerging mass reading public served by the popular illustrated weekly papers. This leads to a discussion of the fascination with legal discourse in the narrative content and form of *The Woman in White*, which is thus read interestingly as a novel dramatizing “the moment of sensationalism . . . a juncture during which the fantasy of a utopian, universal community of readers was ripped asunder” (59). But the argument is premised on the claim that Collins’s “reputation among critics tumbled rapidly in the early 1860s” though he had “previously enjoyed nearly unanimous critical approval” (60); at the same time, it is stated that *The Woman in White* “received one of its best notices in the *Times*” (75), one of the most powerful opponents of the quarterly press. To maintain such claims it really is best to keep a safe distance from the documentary evidence, which suggests rather: that, in 1852, *Basil* was received with animosity by many reviewers on account of its sexual content; that Collins was treated more kindly by anti-sensationalists like Margaret Oliphant and Henry Mansel than were women writers such as Braddon or Wood; and that *The Woman in White* was given a rather rough ride in the *Times* (both in the dedicated notice on 30 October 1860, and in a reprise in the course of the review of *Great Expectations* on 17 October 1861, both probably by E.S. Dallas), especially in comparison with the treatment of *Lady Audley’s Secret* and *East Lynne*. Recognition of tensions like these might have produced a rather more nuanced account of the complexities of Collins’s position.

Despite the lapses mentioned, though, these two volumes – both in the main engagingly written, tightly argued and attractively presented – are very welcome additions to the growing list of works on nineteenth-century book history which engage with the career of Wilkie Collins. All the same, they still leave me with an appetite for a work dedicated to that theme; one that might grapple with the full range of publishing issues raised by Collins’s writings, including not only volume publication, but also serialization in periodicals, the dramatization of narrative for theatrical performance, the globalization of the fiction market, and the formalization of literary agency; and, finally, one that might attempt to combine the rigorous empirical methodology of a Weedon with the theoretical elegance and sophistication of a Deane.

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