



# ***THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY***

**PATRONS** Faith Clarke Benny Green

**Chairman** Andrew Gasson, J Merton House, 36 Belsize Park, London, NWJ 4EA

**Membership** Paul Lewis, 47 Hereford Road, Acton, London WJ 9JW

**NEWSLETTER**

**WINTER 1997**

'I hope you won't pay the rheumatic penalties of a winter residence in England.'

*(The Black Robe)*

## **THE 1997 COLLINS REPRINT**

Continuing our series of Collins reprints, we are enclosing with this Newsletter '**Considerations on the Copyright Question Addressed to an American friend**'. It was originally published during 1880 and republished as 'thou Shalt not Steal' in the June 1890 issue of *The Author* (the journal of the Society of Authors).

## ***IOLANI* - AN UPDATE**

Ira Nadel writes from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver concerning the forthcoming edition of *Iolani*:

The edition of Wilkie Collins's first novel, an apprentice work written while he was employed at Antrobus & Company, tea merchants in the Strand, in 1844, is complete with a final review by Princeton University Press now occurring.

The edition will contain not only an 'Introduction', outlining Collins's sources and contextualizing his fascination with Tahiti, but will list all substantial variants and cancellations in the manuscript. Unlike Collins's other manuscripts which show much reworking and many deletions, the manuscript of *Iolani* is reasonably clear, suggesting that it might be the fair copy made for circulation to, first, Longman and then

Chapman and Hall in 1845. Publication of the novel for the first time is expected in 1998.'

### **THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA**

The recently formed Wilkie Collins Society of North America has just issued its own first Newsletter, Volume 1, Number 1, Fall 1997. It contains an essay by Graham Law on 'Collins and the Newspaper Novel', a review of Collins Websites by Simon Cooke and some general announcements. Subscription is \$20 (\$15 for full-time students) with further details from Professor Lillian Nayder, Department of English, Bates College, Lewiston, ME 04240, USA.

### **THE REVISED *JOURNAL* - A CALL FOR PAPERS**

Graham Law, as mentioned in the last Newsletter, has been putting together an editorial board *as well as* exploring various methods of publication for a revised Journal. He has now asked us to include the following Call for Papers:

The *Wilkie Collins Society Journal* is an annual volume dedicated to original scholarly essays and reviews of publications relating to Wilkie Collins, his works, and his culture. The *Journal* appeared regularly during the 1980s but has recently been dormant. A New Series will be launched in 1998, with a fresh editorial team and editorial board, sponsored jointly by the original London-based Wilkie Collins Society and the newly-formed Wilkie Collins Society of North America.

The joint-editors are Graham Law and Lillian Nayder; the editorial board includes Tamar Heller, Clair Hughes, Phillip O'Neill, Catherine Peters, and Jenny Bourne Taylor.

The editors are now actively seeking submissions for the opening issues. Articles (not more than 6,000 words) should be sent to one of the postal addresses provided below. All manuscripts should follow the MLA Stylesheet, 2nd edition, and be submitted on computer diskette (MS-DOS Format, with Microsoft Word or Word Perfect) plus one paper copy, and should not be under consideration for publication elsewhere. Please note that the e-mail addresses below should be used for enquiries only, not for submissions.

Submissions from the UK and worldwide, excluding North America should be sent to: Graham Law, [Until March 1998], School of English

and American Studies, University of Exeter, Exeter EX4 4QJ, England; or [from April 1998), School of Law, Waseda University, Nishi-Waseda 1-6-1, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-50, Japan. (e-mail, Graham Law - glaw@mn.waseda.ac.jp).

Submissions from North America only to: Lillian Nayder, Department of English, Bates College, Lewiston, ME 04240, USA. (e-mail, Lillian Nayder - lnayder@abacus.bates.edu).

Under the guidance of our joint editors, the new Journal will publish refereed essays of the highest possible standard. We will continue to use the Newsletter for publishing shorter articles which can be of a less serious or more speculative nature. A maximum of about 2,000 words fits the current AS format as a separate sheet but a short paragraph on an interesting theme would be just as welcome for inclusion in the body of the Newsletter. Katherine Haynes has contributed for this issue 'The Possible Influence of Wilkie Collins on Bram Stoker' which should encourage us to look at Stoker's less well known works.

#### **WILKIE COLLINS-THE NEW TWAYNE EDITION**

Lillian Nayder's *Wilkie Collins* has just been published as no. 544 in the Twayne English Author Series (New York 1997, ISBN 0805770593). This new edition replaces the 1970 version by William Marshall and brings new insights particularly on class and feminism. A fuller review will appear in the next Newsletter.

#### **BASIL (THE FILM)**

(Directed by Radha Bharadwaj and financed by Kushner-Locke, a Californian TV, film and media company.)

A pre-release screening of *Basil* took place in mid-October - a welcome event to see a film of a major Collins novel which is not *The Moonstone* or *The Woman in White* and which is not made for television. The final version differs in some respects from the original screenplay mentioned in the Summer Newsletter.

Changes from the author's original seem inevitable in any adaptation for the screen but the alterations to *Basil* are probably less severe than many made by Collins in dramatising several of his own works for the stage. The film, therefore, is generally true to the spirit of the book if not

always in the detail and tells the story of the aristocratic Basil (Jared Leto) who contracts a secret marriage beneath his class to a linen draper's daughter.

The opening scenes are not in the book as written by Collins but set the scene well through the eyes of the infant Basil, suitably autobiographical as a young storyteller and artist. We are introduced to his proud, stern father - 'an English gentleman of large fortune' whose family is 'one of the most ancient of this country' extending 'back beyond the Norman conquest.' The cast is largely unknown with the major exception of Derek Jacobi who gives an excellent performance as Basil's father, gliding with natural ease through a Victorian England admirably recreated with elegant sets and costumes. Margaret (renamed Julia for no apparent reason in the film and played by Claire Forlani) is convincing with her increasing contempt and avariciousness towards Basil; while Mr Sherwin is perfectly cast as her overprotective and mercenary father ('£30,000 will do nicely for a start').

The photography is good rather than brilliant but uses some clever camera angles. In some places the cutting is mildly confusing with rapid switches between the various locations, whilst the musical score provides a stylish accompaniment. The way the story has been reworked for the screen explains the unexpected elimination of the scene where Basil falls in love at first sight with Margaret (Julia) on a London omnibus. Two other dramatic opportunities, however, have more inexplicably been missed. The first notable omission is the scene where Basil's father tears the last leaf out of the family bible before expelling him from the house. Secondly, Mannion's fall to the abyss below from the dramatically perilous and misty rocks of Cornwall is replaced by a tame suicide leap from grassy cliff-tops in undramatic sunshine - a disappointment compared with Collins's powerful descriptive writing for this particular scene.

Other changes from the original are both inexplicable and unsuccessful. However, the seduction scene, for which most of the contemporary critics never forgave Collins, is now set in Mannion's rooms and probably more convincing to a modern audience. This is also true for his subsequent brutal disfigurement by Basil. The mysterious background of Mannion (Christian Slater) has been carefully changed but the long letter to Basil provides a convincing explanation for Mannion's obsessive revenge to destroy Basil's father and the family name. The character of Clara, however, is a weak version compared with Basil's sister in the

book and lacks any compelling warmth. The ending has also been partly changed but provides 'the full and loving reconciliation' between Basil and his father glossed over in the novel's last chapter. The final confession of his motives towards Basil to explain his stern and overbearing guidance is more reminiscent of the equally flawed Mr Thorpe in *Hide and Seek*.

Overall, a very watchable film mainly true to the original in most areas but strangely divergent without obvious improvement in others. Would Wilkie have approved? Compared, for example, with the appalling *Moonstone* of last year, almost certainly yes. Further details of *Basil* with an illustration can be found on Paul Lewis' web site.

### **THE WOMAN IN WHITE - ON TELEVISION - AGAIN**

Following on from last year's *The Moonstone*, the BBC have produced a new television film of *The Woman in White*. It will also be shown in two parts over the Christmas period and follows their much earlier production in 1982. That original version starred Alan Badel in his last role, as Fosco, Jenny Seagrave as Laura Fairlie and Diana Quick as Marion Halcombe. Ian Richardson who played Philip Fairlie takes the same part in the current version. The cast also consists of Susan Vidler - as The Woman in White - Justine Wadell, Tara Fitzgerald, John Standing, Simon Callow and James Wilby. *The Mail on Sunday* of 16 November featured an interesting two-page illustrated article by journalist Michael Burke on *The Woman in White* and Wilkie's private life. This appeared to have been based mainly on the late Kenneth Robinson's biography and gives the rather speculative Millais version of Wilkie's first meeting with Caroline Graves. Penguin Books have been quick off the mark and have changed the illustration on their front cover to fit in with the television film.

### **'THE USE OF GAS IN THEATRES' - A QUERY**

Steve Farmer who edited the excellent Broadview Press edition of *Heart and Science* writes with the following query:

'Here's an interesting puzzle concerning Collins's article 'The Use of Gas in Theatres' or 'The Air and the Audience'. The 1924 reprint of the article in the journal *The Mask* proclaims that Collins wrote the article in 1881. In fact, most sources suggest 1881 as the date of composition. Some checking, though, has led me to believe that Collins wrote the piece in the early summer of 1885. The *Mask* reprint contains the following passage:

'On the sixth of April last, (1881) Mr. Steele Mackaye, author of the most popular play thus far written by an American dramatist (*Hazel Kirke*) opened a new theatre in New York.'

*The Masks* parenthetical is incorrect, an editor's or printer's typographical error perhaps, for the new theatre and the new play to which Collins refers in this passage both opened in New York on April 6th, 1885. Steele Mackaye (1842-1894) was an American playwright whose most successful play, *Hazel Kirke* (1880), ran for over 500 nights without interruption at the Madison Square Theatre, which had been taken over by Daniel Frohman (1851-1940) when Mackaye went bankrupt in 1879. Mackaye went on to build his own theatre, the Lyceum, of which Collins is writing here. The 'new play' was *Dakolar*, which opened at the Lyceum, Mackaye's new theatre, on April 6, 1885. The play was a failure, and Mackaye thereafter withdrew from management.

Both R. V. Andrew's and Beetz's bibliographies claim the article was written in 1881 but printed in 1885. That seems unlikely unless Collins's embedded the new 'Steele Mackaye' material when Allen Thordike Rice published it in 1885. Other references to the article simply refer the reader to the 1924 date.

Does anyone have information on this problem of dates or know of any letters in which Collins alludes to this article before 1885? Does the Rice publication, which I have not seen, suggest that Collins had written the piece four years before he published it?'

Steve Farmer's address is 3822E.Tanglewood Drive, Phoenix, AZ 85044, USA; e-mail STEVE.FARMER@ASU.Edu.

#### **PUBLICITY OFFICER**

Katherine Haynes - the new Honorary Secretary of the Dracula Society - has now relinquished the position of Publicity Officer for the WCS. She will remain on our committee so that we will still retain the benefit of her almost infallible knack of finding useful information relating to Wilkie; but please let us know if any member, probably from the London area, would like to take over publicity and PR in general.

#### **VICTORIAN STUDIES**

The latest issue of *Victorian Studies* (Summer 1996, vol. 39, no. 4) contains the Victorian Bibliography for 1995. The listing for Collins

includes reviews of the recent editions of *The Evil Genius* (Broadview, edited by Graham Law), *No Name* (Penguin, edited by Mark Ford), *Poor Miss Finch* (OUP, edited by Catherine Peters), as well as the following articles:

Andres, Sophia "Pre-Raphaelite Paintings and Jungian Images in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White!*" VN 88:26-31.

Calanchi, Alessandra. "Visite guidate: La Complicità dello scenario domestico in *The Moonstone*." *Paragone* 32-32 (1992): 28-46.

Crawford, Scott A. G. M. "Wilkie Collins: Master of Melodrama and the Critic of Victorian Athleticism." *Aethlone* 5, 2 (1994): 87-96.

Ledwon, Leonara "Veiled Women, The Law of Coverture and Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*." VLC 22 (1994): 1-22.

Morris, Debra S. "The Matrilineal in Wilkie Collins's Novels." DAI 55:560A.

Naugrette, Jean-Pierre. "*The Moonstone*. Signes Indiens." EA 48:407-18.

Thoman, Ronald R. "Wilkie Collins and the Sensation Novel," in V, Richetti, pp. 479-507.

### **SOME DUTCH NOTES**

Louise Marchant has discovered from one of our Dutch members, Jeanette van der Kruijff, that there is a new Dutch edition of *The Moonstone*. This 1997 edition of *De Maansteen* is published by Menken Kasander & Wigman Uitgevers of Leiden (ISBN 90 74622 13 5). The novel's first publication in Holland was in 1869 with another edition the following year. There is also a translation of *The Woman in White* which itself had nineteenth century editions in 1861, 1866 and 1875.

### **WILKIE'S GRAVE IN KENSAL GREEN**

A recent issue of *The Magazine of the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery* (September 1997, No. 21) contains 'A Literary Pilgrimage to Kensal Green' by Alan Frost. Wilkie's grave 'the tidiest and most well-kept' is duly mentioned. 'Who has not read *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* and not marvelled at the intricacies and unrivalled skill of this man who wrote them down? ... (the) great precursor of all mystery fiction; all this long before the likes of Agatha Christie came upon the scene.' Members are reminded that there is a small plaque from the WCS at the grave which is situated a little behind, on the west side, of the central church.

## MASTERMIND

It took the 25 years, but Wilkie finally made it to Mastermind. One of the contestants for the third semi-final of the last series chose as her supplementary subject 'The Life and 1860s Novels of Wilkie Collins. This was broadcast on Wednesday August 27. She put up a very creditable performance, scoring 12 in the first round of special subjects but was overtaken by some fierce opposition in the general knowledge round.

## MY MISCELLANIES

Katherine Haynes has sent me a copy of her 1982 English Literature GCE examination paper which includes *The Woman in White* as one of the set books - probably to coincide with the BBC Television adaptation that year. The questions: (a) Basing your answer on specific incidents, explain whether you find Sir Percival Glyde or Count Fosco the more wicked. (b) Do you think patience is Laura Fairlie's chief characteristic? Answers on a postcard.....

BILIPO (Bibliothèque des Littérature Policieres) is holding another in its series of exhibitions on the history of crime fiction. It is currently showing '1927-1997 *Le Masque: 70 ans d'aventures*' until 17 January 1998. Address 48-50 Rue du Cardinal-Lemoine, Paris Ve (01 42 34 93 00).

Sutton Publishing still have their sixteen Collins titles in print together with *No Thoroughfare* listed jointly with Dickens. A copy of their New Titles catalogue is available from Regina Schinner, Sutton Publishing, Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud, Glos. GL5 2BU (01453 731114); this includes new editions of Mrs Braddon, Hugh Walpole, Thomas Hardy, the Brontës and several others. Their current special offer is free 'p & p' for all orders over £15 and 10% discount for all orders over £30.

The 13th edition of the *Directory of British Associations* is available from CBD Research Ltd, 15 Wickham Road, Beckenham, Kent, BR3 2UQ (£142.50 or £200 for the CD-Rom).

APG

'Nobody can accuse me of having ever been accessory to the disturbing of quiet people with useful knowledge.'  
(*A Rogue's Life*)