



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

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THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY JOURNAL

Accompanying this Newsletter is the second issue of the New Series *Journal*. Our thanks are due to the hard working editors, Graham Law and Lillian Nayder, who have spent so much time and effort putting together such an excellent publication. The intention is for the *Journal* to continue on an annual basis and submissions are now being sought for the 2000 edition. Those interested in contributing a formal, refereed essay should contact Graham Law at School of Law, Waseda University, Nishi-Waseda 1-6-1, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 169-50, Japan (e-mail: glaw@mn.waseda.ac.jp); or for North America, Lillian Nayder at Department of English, Bates College, Lewiston, ME 04240, USA (e-mail: lnayder@abacus.bates.edu).

In addition, members are also welcome to let us have rather less formal or more speculative pieces of up to 2,000 words which can be sent out with future Newsletters. We would also like to receive any short snippets of Collins related news or information which can be included just as a paragraph in the Newsletter.

LAPEL BADGES

Also enclosed with this Newsletter is a vitreous enamel lapel badge incorporating Collins's own 'WC' monogram. This has been used by the WCS since its inception in 1980 almost exactly 100 years after Wilkie himself began to use the device on his own notepaper. This first badge is complimentary to members. Additional copies can be ordered at a cost of £3.00.

‘WILKIE COLLINS STUDIES: 1983-1999’

Dickens Studies Annual, Volume 28 (pp. 257-329), features the long awaited update by Lillian Nayder to Kirk Beetz’s pioneering *Wilkie Collins: An Annotated Bibliography, 1899-1976*. This was originally published by the Scarecrow Press over twenty years ago in 1978 and updated by Beetz himself as ‘Wilkie Collins Studies, 1972-1983’ in volume 13 of the *Dickens Studies Annual* for 1984 (pp. 333-55). As the current introduction states, This latest survey “examines the scholarship devoted to Collins since 1982, reviews recent editions of his fiction as well as biographical studies, and identifies and discusses trends in Collins criticism.” The long introductory essay of about 50 pages is divided into five parts and the survey concludes with a comprehensive bibliography listing “more than 200 works, including editions, biographical and critical studies, and dissertations. Among the subjects discussed are the canonization of Collins, and the ways in which his status as Victorian rebel has been questioned and his cultural significance and aims redefined.” Overall this is an immensely detailed and scholarly survey which all students of Collins will find an invaluable source of reference.

VICTORIAN STUDIES

The most recent issue of *Victorian Studies* (Summer 1998) features the journal’s annual ‘Victorian Bibliography’. The Collins entry, as usual, lists several entries which include:

Chattman, Loren. “Diagnosing the Domestic Woman in *The Woman in White* and *Dora*,” in V. Siegal & Kibbey, pp. 123-53.

Dolin, Tim. *Mistress of the House: Women of Property in the Victorian Novel*. Aldershot: Scolar 153 pp.

Gomel, Elana, & Stephen Weninger. “The Tell-Tale Surface: Fashion and Gender in *The Woman in White*.” *VU* 25: 29-58

Liggins, Emma. “The ‘Evil Days’ of the Female Murderer: Subverted Marriage Plots and the Avoidance of Scandal in the Victoria Sensation Novel.” *JVC* 2:27- 41.

Law, Graham. “Wilkie in the Weeklies: The Serialization and Syndication of Collins’s Late Novels.” *VPR* 30: 244-69.

Mangum, Teresa. “Wilkie Collins, Detection and Deformity.” *DSA* 26:285-310.
McEathron, Scott. “Romantic Portraiture: The *Memoirs of William Collins* and *The Woman in White*. *VIJ* 25: 7-28.

Moore, Pamela L. "An Insoluble Mystery is Standing on Your Hearthrug: Investigations of Female Bodies in Sensation Fiction." DAI 56(1996):2669A.

Parker, Sara K. "Wilkie Collins and Victorian Masculinities." DAI 58: 886A.
Sherlock, Robin E. "'Fatal Resemblances': Educating the Female Body." DAI 57:3951A.

Wynne, Deborah. "Vidocq, the Spy: A Possible Source for Count Fosco in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*." N&Q 44: 341-42.

THE VICTORIAN

The Victorian Society, mentioned in an earlier Newsletter, has now published the first number of its new magazine, *The Victorian*, as part of its "long-term strategy of broadening and diversifying its range of activities beyond its core work of fighting for the preservation and better understanding of Victorian architecture." Andrew Gasson was invited to contribute an essay on Collins and this took the form of a short biographical piece. This will probably contain nothing new to most WCS members but the publishers have reproduced seven of the illustrations from *Wilkie Collins - An Illustrated Guide*. Further details of the Victorian Society can be had from 1 Priory Gardens, Bedford Park, London W4 1TT (Tel 0181-994 1019; e-mail admin@victorian-society.org.uk).

THE OXFORD READERS COMPANION TO TROLLOPE

Following their *Dickens Companion*, Oxford University Press have now published the *Oxford Readers Companion to Trollope* (ISBN 0-19-8662 10-6, price £40). The volume follows the style of the Dickens with a General Editor, R. C. Terry; two consultant editors, N. John Hall and John Sutherland; and over 30 other contributors including Nelson C. Smith. Reg Terry is a noted Trollope scholar from the University of Victoria, British Columbia and was co-editor with Nelson Smith of *Wilkie Collins to the Forefront: some Reassessments* (AMS Press, New York, 1995). Most of these papers had previously been presented at the Wilkie Collins Conference at the University of Victoria in September 1989, ably arranged by Terry to commemorate the centenary of Wilkie's death.

The Trollope Companion follows the pattern of the Dickens in layout, style and content with 600 pages of detailed entries and illustrations, a thematic overview, chronology, family trees, a series of maps and a brief bibliography. Unlike the Dickens, there is no index but the much more careful adherence to the alphabet in the main makes this unnecessary and the book is generally much easier to use. The Collins entry was written by Terry but, despite the acknowledged friendship

between the two authors, commands only a single paragraph of a little over 100 words.

Minor criticisms are the shaded text for major entries which interrupt the main flow of the alphabetical entries and where characters are described it is not necessarily clear in which novel they appear. Overall there is not a great deal of Collins in this excellent volume but Oxford have produced another indispensable reference book for those with an interest in nineteenth century literature and publishing

THE LETTERS OF WILKIE COLLINS

WCS members are reminded of Macmillan's generous offer, making available the two volume edition of *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* at the heavily discounted price of £50 including postage and packing (normal cost £90). The special order form was sent out with the last Newsletter - or contact Marketing Department, Macmillan Press, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG2 1 6XS (Tel 01256 329242).

THE LETTERS OF CHARLES DICKENS

Just published is volume eleven of *The Letters of Charles Dickens 1865-1867*, edited by Graham Storey. (Oxford University Press £70, ISBN 0-19-812295-0). As with other recent volumes in this superlative series, there is much of Collins interest both in the letters and the detailed annotations. The information is easily accessed through the 'List of Correspondents' and the comprehensive 'Index of Names and Places'. We are taken from the Garrick club in March 1865 to the stage adaptation of *No Thoroughfare* in December 1867. In between we have the house warming party at Gloucester Place and Wilkie's assistance to Wills with *All the Year Round* during Dickens's reading tour of America. There are also numerous references to Charles Collins. With 577 pages for these three years alone, one sympathises with the editors of the Collins letters where Wilkie's entire life had to be fitted into the same space.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Collins rates ten or so entries in the recently published *Stranger Than Fiction: a book of literary lists* by Aubrey Dillon Malone. Wilkie is included under 'Amateur dramatics', 'Father's jobs', 'Literary friendships', 'Authors' hobbies', 'Illegitimate children', 'Lawyers who never practised', and 'Writers who never married'. Almost inevitably Collins is included in the list of 'substance abusers' and *Iolani* is described as "an unfinished work that should have been left to rest".

The book is essentially a collection of literary trivia, published by Prion at £9.99. (Another piece of trivia: prions are a type of protein responsible for the transmission of the new variant CJD).

THE WILKIE WEB

Issued separately for ease of use is the helpful summary by Paul Lewis of Wilkie Collins on the Internet. A recent search with Alta Vista using “Wilkie Collins” gave no less than 3523 results! Paul’s simplification of a Collins search will save a huge amount of time - not to mention the telephone bill.

SOME ADDITIONAL NOTES FROM PAUL LEWIS

ART CONNECTIONS

There are several pictures with Wilkie Collins connections in the newly opened Guildhall Art Library in the City of London. The Guildhall has a major art collection - more than 4,500 works - but none has been on public display since the original 1886 Art Gallery was destroyed by German bombs in 1941. The new gallery, officially opened by the Queen on 2 November 1999, remedies that with more than 250 works on display.

Two pictures by Wilkie’s father - William Collins, RA – are on display: *Borrowdale* (1821 or 23), a scene in Cumberland, is described by Wilkie in his biography of his father as “an inland view, with fertile wood and mountain scenery, rising high in the canvas, and a group of Cumberland children playing by the banks of a brook that ripples into the foreground of the picture.” Close by is *A Nutting Party* (1831), “a rustic inland scene with a fine group of children in the foreground”. Both are excellent examples of Collins’s work and the gallery has four others, currently in storage.

Apart from the William Collins there are pictures by Millais, Rossetti, G. F. Watts, Daniel Maclise, Augustus Egg, Marcus Stone, Edwin Landseer and Constable - all artists who have connections with Wilkie, his brother Charles, and Dickens. There is also a fine picture by James Baker Pyne of London from Hampstead Heath that put me in mind of *The Woman in White*. The gallery is open every day and well worth the modest entrance fee. More information on 020 7332 3700 or consult the internet site at:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/attractions-museums-entertainment/guildhall-art-gallery>

The entire collection of 20,000 images can be seen on the internet at <http://collage.nhil.com/> but using a rather difficult database and only in small format

THE WOMAN IN WHITE

A new edition of *The Woman in White*, edited by Matthew Sweet, was published by Penguin in November. Sweet's introduction provides a comprehensive context to the novel, with most of the detail that could be wanted by a general reader. He admits he has drawn heavily on the work of previous editors - who couldn't in such an over-ploughed field as *The Woman in White*? His notes are good although his enthusiasm perhaps encourages him to believe rather than to check every fact. But the appendix on the 1871 stage version, complete with plot summary and sample scene, is new and very useful. At £2.99 for 720 pages (ISBN 0140437312) a worthwhile edition - and addition - for anyone's collection.

THE MOONSTONE

By contrast, a new edition of *The Moonstone* edited by John Sutherland does have some genuinely new insights in the Introduction. He casts new light on Dickens's change of heart from praising to sneering at it within nine months. He finds evidence that Collins's later recollection that he dictated the novel to an amanuensis is false - the manuscript is almost entirely in Wilkie's own hand. And far from repeating T. S. Elliot's famous phrase 'the first, the longest and the best' of English detective novels he sees that as saddling *The Moonstone* with its worst feature - an ordinary detective tale. Instead, he finds a superb book which is far, far more than that. Sutherland's introduction and, despite his protestations, original notes make this a £2.99 bargain from the Oxford University Press. ISBN 0192833383

One final thought on both new books. Each has a useful chronology of Wilkie's life. But what conspiracy removes from almost every published chronology - including both of these - the Collins' family move to 1 Devonport Place in the summer of 1843?

THACKERAY

A new biography of William Makepeace Thackeray by D. J. Taylor follows in a long tradition by giving scant attention to Wilkie Collins. There are two mentions only in the text both concerning the events surrounding the expulsion of Edmund Yates from the Garrick Club in 1858 after he wrote critically of Thackeray in *Town Talk*. Dickens and Collins supported Yates and left the club

in protest. The account of the incident is clear and makes the context with Dickens's sensitivity to comments Thackeray made about his relationship with Ellen Ternan. Perhaps more surprising is the lack of any detail about the close friendship in his later years between Thackeray and Wilkie's brother Charles. There is just a brief quote from Charles's moving and detailed letter to Wilkie about his death in the final pages of the book. But at least that is more than either Wilkie or Charles get in Catherine Peters' biography of Thackeray, just reprinted by Alan Sutton.

AUDIO CASSETTE

The complete and unabridged tape of *The Two Destinies* has been published recently by Sterling Audio in the US. ISBN 0754002926

BOUCHERCON 2001

Some advance notice for detective enthusiasts: the future Bouchercon 2001, the 32nd World Mystery Convention will take place from 1-4 November 2001 in Washington DC. Guests of Honour will be Sue Grafton and Peter Lovesey. Further details can be obtained from P.O Box 11700, Washington, DC 20008 or info@bouchercon2001.com.

THE DEADLY DIRECTORY

Also for those with an interest in detective fiction is *The Deadly Directory* edited by Kate Derie and published by the Deadly Serious Press. The Directory is "your guide to the mystery community - names, addresses, and all the information you need for getting in touch with everybody who is anybody in the world of mystery, crime and detective fiction." Sections include Booksellers, Small Presses, Archives and Collections, Conventions and Conferences, Organizations, Publications, and Theatre Events. The WCS is duly mentioned under Fan Clubs and Author Newsletters. Further information form The Deadly Serious Press, 868 Arlington Avenue, Berkeley, California, 94707-1938 (e-mail: info@deadlyserious.com).

WHAT WILKIE THOUGHT OF CHRISTMAS

(A compilation from his letters by Paul Lewis)

“This awful Christmas time! I am using up my cheque-book and am in daily expectation of fresh demands on it.” (to Charles Ward, 1861).

“Are the filthy “Christmas festivities” still an insurmountable obstacle to any proceeding that is not directly connected with the filling of fat bellies, and the exchange of vapid good wishes?” (to William Tindell, 29 December 1874).

“There are all sorts of impediments - literary and personal - which keep me in England at the most hateful of all English seasons (to me), the season of Cant and Christmas? But for Christmas-time, I should have read it long ago. I have returned to heaps of unanswered letters, bills, payments to pensioners, stupid and hideous Christmas cards, visits to pay - and every other social nuisance that gets in the way of a rational enjoyment of life.” (to Nina Lehmann, 28 December 1877).

“There is every temptation to die. We have not seen the sun for three weeks, in London - the plague of Christmas Cards is on the increase? Oh, what a miserable world to live in!” (to Sebastian Schlesinger, 29 December 1883).

“But there is surely a chance of a change for the better, after the horrors of Christmas are over.” (to Nannie Wynne, 19 December 1885).

“Your kind and liberal letter reaches me, at the season devoted to prodigious eating and drinking, universal congratulating and holiday-making, and voluminous appearance of tradesmen’s Christmas bills. “Business” is at a standstill, this year, until Monday next.” (26 December 1886).

