



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2003

THE WOMAN IN WHITE - THE MUSICAL

Andrew Lloyd-Webber is pressing ahead with his plans for a musical version of *The Woman in White*. Sonia Friedman produces, ex National Theatre director Sir Trevor Nunn is to direct, lyricist David Zippel (who wrote the lyrics in *Tarzan*, *Hercules* and *Mulan*) will write the lyrics. Playwright Charlotte Jones (whose *Humble Boy* was at the National Theatre) has reportedly been "holed up in a New York hotel" with Webber doing the adaptation. Act I is finished. The musical will open in London early in 2004 but parts of it may be previewed at Lloyd Webber's private Sydmonton Festival in July.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE – 19th CENTURY STAGE VERSIONS

The Woman in White was first performed as 'A Drama in Three Acts' at the Surrey Theatre, Blackfriars Road, Lambeth. This was a short-lived unauthorised production opening on 3 November 1860 and revived at the Theatre Royal, Leicester, 26 August 1870. An unfavourable review of the unauthorised production of 'The Woman in White' at the Surrey Theatre has just been discovered on p. 149 of *The Players: A Dramatic, Musical and Literary Journal* of 10 November 1860, Vol. II, No. 46.

"Fancy an artist being told to turn a drama into a single picture! He would at once reply that it was an impossibility. He might seize upon some prominent and suggestive features; but after all, the single picture and the drama would be essentially different. Not more different, we contend, than the difference between a novel and a drama. From the limit as to time, there must, whether we like it or not, be something like the observance of on the unities. Indeed, the better the novel the worse the drama, and we should advise adapters to turn their attention to "rejected novels." We are led to these remarks by the production of 'The Woman in White' at the Surrey Theatre, on Saturday last. Verily, Mr. Wilkie Collins is translated! We have seen many adaptations, but this is the worst. Had it not been for the blue fire, shooting &c., the piece would have been a decided failure. We would suggest to the management to call this drama a farce, and the audience will laugh at it and enjoy it accordingly. Nothing in the whole piece is more comic than to see the fine acting of Mr. Creswick wasted on such an unseemly part. The irresistibly funny way in which Mr. Holloway did a tragic scene also deserves mention."

In a postscript to a letter to Edward Marston of 31 October 1860 Collins writes "They are going to dramatize the story at the Surrey Theatre - and I am asked to go to law about

that. I will certainly go and hiss - unless the manager makes a "previous arrangement" with me."

Collins own version of *The Woman in White*, extensively rewritten from the novel ran with great success at the Olympic Theatre from 9 October 1871 to 24 February 1872 and was more than favourably received. Reviews of this production were published as a sixteen-page booklet in late 1871 as *Specimens of Criticism Extracted from Notices of "The Woman in White" in the Press*.

BEFORE THE BOOKER

BBC4 Television is currently working on the second series of 'Before the Booker'. The programme takes the form of a literary debate, hosted by Clive Anderson, which sets out to choose what books would have won the Booker Prize before the Booker was invented. The debates will be recorded in front of a Jive audience, members of which will contribute to the discussion. Six programmes in the series are planned, each looking at a different year. 111e years and their respective books will be:

1818 *Northang Abbey* (Jane Austen), *Persuasion* (Jane Austen),
The Heart of Midlothian (Walter Scott) and *Frankenstein*, (Mary Shelley).

1860 *The Woman in White* (Wilkie Collins), *Great Expectations* (Charles Dickens),
The Mill on the Floss (George Eliot) and *First Love* (Ivan Turgenev).

1925 *The Trial* (Franz Kafka), *Mrs Dai/away* (Virginia Woolf), *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald) and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Anita Loos).

1932 *Cold Comfort Farm* (Stella Gibbons), *Brave New World* (Aldous Huxley), *Black Mischief* (Evelyn Waugh), and *light in August* (William Faulkner).

1954 *Lucky Jim* (Kingsley Amis), *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding), *Lord of the Rings Vol. II The Two Towers* (J. R. R. Tolkien) and *A Proper Marriage* (Doris Lessing).

1966 *The Magus* (John Fowles), *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Jean Rhys), *In Cold Blood* (Truman Capote) and *The Master and Margarita* (Mikhail Bulgakov).

The 1860 *Before the Booker* is being recorded on Saturday 17th May at 7pm (Channel 4 studios, Horseferry Rd, SW1) and should be shown during the six weeks preceding this year's Booker prize ceremony in October. They may still need some more audience members, particularly men, so that those interested in attending should contact Anna Ewart-James on 020 7428 3154 or Aewartjames@aol.com.

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR VICTORIAN STUDIES

The British Association for Victorian Studies is making a call for papers for its forthcoming meeting 'The Age of Experiments, 1800-1 900' at the University of Wales Aberystwyth on 4-6 September 2003

111ey invite proposals for papers (of 15-20 minutes duration) on any aspect of experimentation and/or innovation in the nineteenth century, including Victorian avant gardes, experimentation and innovation in music, literature or the visual and plastic, arts, new technologies (and the responses to them), ilmovatory thinking or practice in the sciences (including experimentation and new developments in medical disciplines, and

the emergence of 'new' sciences), innovatory forms of cultural production, social and sexual experimentation, the concern with the 'new'.

Proposals of about 300 words should be sent to Professor Lyn Pykett, Department of English, University of Wales, Aberystwyth, Penglais, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion SY23 3DY. (email lyp@aber.ac.uk).

The plenary lecturer will be Sally Shuttleworth with Plenary Panellists Kathryn Gleadle, Cora Kaplan, Roger Luckhurst, Jo McDonagh, Rick Ryland and Shearer West.

Further details and a booking form can be obtained from <http://www.qub.ac.uk/en/socs/bavs/events.htm>.

LITERATURE AND RELIGION IN MID-VICTORIAN ENGLAND

A SPECIAL OFFER FROM PALGRAVE

Published last December is Carolyn Oulton's *literature and Religion in Mid-Victorian England: from Dickens to Eliot*. (ISBN 0-333-99337-3, Hardback, 221 pp). Palgrave Macmillan has kindly arranged a special offer for WCS members with a price reduction from £42 to £35 for direct purchases on the enclosed order form. This work, as the blurb says, places Dickens and Collins against important figures such as Henry Newman and George Eliot in seeking to recover their response to the religious controversies of Mid-nineteenth century England. It is an erudite treatment of a difficult and previously neglected subject.

The book consists of five chapters in the first of which, 'Tradings in Religion: Legislation and Crisis at Mid-Century', the author states that she is specifically concerned "to assess the impact of evangelicalism on Dickens and Collins in the 1850s and 1860s" and notes that "both writers were more profoundly religious than is often realised". "Collins's disagreement with Edward Piggott and *The Leader* is discussed and though his novels "are not written primarily as religious works it is possible to glean from them some idea of his personal beliefs." Examples noted are the aptly named Mrs Galilee in *Heart and Science* and Miss Clack in *The Moonstone*. Collins had also published the anti-sabbatarian 'A Plea for Sunday Reform' in *The leader* of 1851 and with Dickens collaborated for the 1856 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary' which presents evangelicalism "in its most invidious light."

The second chapter, 'A Man's Resolution and a Woman's Patience: Fighting the Battle of Life' is concerned with Collins's subversive views of manly Christianity, seen through the medium of Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White*, *The Frozen Deep* and *Man and Wife* but contrasted with those of Dickens in *A Tale of Two Cities*. Chapter 3, 'The Redeployment of Doctrine - Treatment of Original Sin, Infant Depravity and Providentialism' endeavours to show that compared with Dickens Collins represents a more liberal and cohesive position in his major novels of the 1860s. Several examples are given of religious austerity from Numerian in *Antonina* and Zack's father in *Hide and Seek* to Midwinter's stepfather in *Armada* and the odious Michael Vanstone in *No Name*. Providence however, both controls the deaths of Sir Percival and Fosco in *The Woman in White* whilst allowing other characters in Collins's novels of this period to make amends. By contrast, the agnostic George Eliot is forced to rely on the Law of Consequences.

Chapter 4, ‘Subverting Judgement: the Case for Redemption through Sanctification of the Siruler’, is concerned with reformation, forgiveness and atonement whilst chapter 5, ‘Pet Prisoners and Honest Paupers: Philanthropic Dealings with Poverty and Criminality’, is concerned specifically with “the impact of poverty and criminality, as they engage with what Dickens and Collins imply to be the evangelical treatment of the issue of salvation and divine judgement.” This is a nice opportunity to remind us of Miss Clack’s “blessed work of interference.”

The Conclusion notes that Collins rejected his evangelical upbringing and denied a belief both in Hell and divine retribution. Nevertheless in the 1850s and 60s both Dickens and Collins were “working towards an increasingly complex model of liberal Christianity” and “In their novels, they attempt to reconstruct their perceptions of these truths for the general reader, through a fictional medium.”

BLIND LOVE FROM BROADVIEW

Following their excellent critical editions of *The Law a,ld the Lady, Heart and Science* and *The Moollstone*, Broad view press intend to publish *Blind Love* towards the end of this year. Editor Don Cox of the University of Tennessee writes:

“The forthcoming Broadview edition of *Blind Love* will be the first critical edition of the novel ever published. The novel was serialized in the summer and autumn of 1889 and a three-volume version was published by Chatto and Windus in January 1890. A somewhat corrupted version of that text was published later in one volume in 1890, and it is generally the text of that 1890 one-volume that we find reprinted in several cheaper editions in the nineteenth century. To our knowledge, the only twentieth-century edition of the novel is the one published by Dover in 1986, which reproduced photographically the corrupt 1890 one-volume version. This new edition takes as its primary text the original 1890 three-volume edition. The original serialization in *The Illustrated London News*, as well as the existing manuscript and Collins’s plans were also consulted. This edition also contains the sixteen illustrations by Amedée Forestier that appeared in the 1890 three-volume edition.

This Broadview edition, like others in the series, also contains a good deal of supplementary material. Among the textual items that have never been published is a sample chapter from Collins’s earlier novel “Iris,” a story that was abandoned and then rewritten to become part of *Blind Love*. We also include an excerpt from the synopsis Collins gave to Walter Besant so readers can compare Collins’s plan for the book with the version Besant actually published. Other ancillary materials include articles reacting to Collins’s sudden death; reviews of *Blind Love*, as well as analyses of Collins’s career, newspaper accounts of the insurance fraud, and the “inside story” of the fraud in the form of detailed notes that were given to Collins; and newspaper accounts describing the turmoil in Ireland during the “Land War,” along with *Punch* cartoons depicting the English attitudes toward the Irish. A short statement which Collins apparently intended to serve as a preface to the novel appears for the first time.”

RADIO INTERVIEW WITH SARAH WATERS

Radio 4’s ‘Open Book’ programme of 9 February 2003 featured an interview with Sarah Waters about both her previous work and her forthcoming novel, set for a change in the twentieth century England. She discussed the background to *Fingersmith*, Wilkie Collins and nineteenth century fiction and particularly mentioned *The Woman in White* and *Armada*. This she described as “the most complicated plot in the history of fiction.” Wilkie would have been delighted as he always considered *Armada* his best book.

HESKET NEWMARKET

Another radio interview at the end of January concerned Hesketh Newmarket in Cumberland where the local inhabitants are fighting to prevent the sale of their local hostelry, The Crown, to a large brewery. Wilkie visited Hesketh Newmarket on 7 September 1857 in company with Charles Dickens at the beginning of their walking tour, written up for *Household Words* as 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices'. The two of them stayed at the Queen's Head, also close to Carrock Fell where Wilkie famously sprained his ankle and had to be carried down the mountain to nearby Wigton and then on to Allonby on the Solway Firth.

KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY

Wilkie, of course, is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery (Grave 31754, Square 141, Row 1) along side Caroline Graves. The stone cross carries the simple inscription 'Wilkie Collins, author of *The H'omallin White* and other works of fiction'. For those who have never had the opportunity to visit his grave, there is an illustration on a website called Page of the Dead at <http://www.xs4all.nl/~androom/dead/kensal.htm>. This useful site also gives brief biographical details of deceased notables with information on the cemetery in which they are buried. Using the index we can discover, for example, that also buried in Kensal Green is Ada Cavendish (1839-1895). She was the famous nineteenth century actress well known to Wilkie through her portrayals of Mercy Merrick in the 1873 and subsequent stage productions of *The New Magdalen*. She also took the lead in *Miss Gwilt* (1875-6).

The annual open day organised by the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery will this year take place on Saturday 13th July 10.00-5.00pm. This is a major event with many attractions including tours of the cemetery, catacomb and crematorium. There will be an art exhibition, a display of funerary artefacts, stalls and refreshments. A large number of motor hearses will be on display throughout the day and will take part in two motorcades around the cemetery. Further details of FOKGC can be found at <http://www.kensalgreen.co.uk/documents/friends.html>.

COLLINS ETEXTS BY JAMES RUSK

The amazing James Rusk, who has single-handedly created etexts for virtually all of Collins's novels and short stories, notes that he has recently updated his website. The format remains the same but the new html versions of Collins's works feature hundreds of minor corrections. If you have archived any texts from his site you can download the new versions from <http://www.blacknask.com/jrusk/wcollins/>.

A HORSE CALLED WILKIE

Adulation of Wilkie Collins in the 19th century was widespread including the USA 'In the 1880s a racehorse was named after him. *Wallace's Monthly*, which describes itself as 'An Illustrated Magazine devoted to domesticated animal nature', listed a horse called Wilkie Collins in its edition February 1885-February 1886. He was the son of Black Wilkes and Rosa and was bred at the General Howard stock farm in western New York State.

Cigars and a cigar cutter were also branded Wilkie Collins around the same time. If any member has more information on Wilkie Collins branding please let Andrew or Paul know.

WILKIE IN THE PRESS

An account of the archives at Coutts's bank by Helen Dunne of *The Daily Telegraph* (6 January 2003) - after a Christmas press evening in December - mentions letters from Wilkie to the bank (they will of course be included in *The Public Face of Wilkie Collins* edited by Baker, Gasson, Law, and Lewis, Pickering & Chatto 2005). Wilkie, his father, mother and brother were all customers of Coutts but only Wilkie's few letters seem to have survived.

Niall Ferguson, author of *Empire - How Britain made the Modern World* - confessed in the *Sunday Times* (5 January 2003) that he was addicted to reading in bed that he was half-way through *No Name* - among other books.

The *Times Educational Supplement* carried a long piece by Faye Hammill (10 January 2003) on 'The Blonde'. She tracks down John Casper Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* which said that fair hair was associated with weakness and tenderness and dark hair with the opposite characteristics. She cites *The Woman in White* as an example of this as well as two of Wilkie's favourite, *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper and "almost all of Walter Scott".

Wilkie's Prologue to *The Moonstone* is a "notable example" of the Preface, according to John Mullan writing in *The Guardian* (11 January 2003). It thrusts us into "a scene of murderous violence ... [and]... violence will surely return upon those who yearn to possess the diamond."

A review in the *1711 Sunday* of David Thomson's *New Biographical Dictionary of Film* claims it is "written in a whimsical fashion and the 'entry on W. C. Fields is written as a letter from Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins'".

The biographer Clare Tomalin writing about *Love and Dirt - the marriage of Arthur Munby and Hannah Culwick* by Diane Atkinson, opens with this: "Not every Victorian gentleman dreamed of being married to a lady... Wilkie Collins had two ménages with women he picked up, one in the street, the other at an inn where she was a servant." (*Evening Standard* 20 January 2003).

The least kind mention of Wilkie recently was Colin Burrow (*Evening Standard* 10 February 2003) in his review of Andrew Motion's biography of Keats. "Its characters have no life at all, and its plot is thin and creaking to an extent that would shame even Wilkie Collins on a bad day."

But Jonathan Heawood in *The Observer* (2 March 2003) writing about the re-launch of Penguin Classics is kinder. "If *Granta* had produced a short list of the Best of Old British Novelists, Wilkie Collins would be near the top of the list... The renaissance of interest in Collins shows that, in some cases, a frisson can be born again in readers who want it badly enough. His huge popularity is a sign of the paucity of our 21st century novelists' ability to create the Wow! Factor."

Now that Sarah Waters' novel *Fingersmith* is out in paperback reviews of it make the obligatory references to Wilkie - one unkindly claims "she has lifted character, setting and plot "from *The Woman in White*" (*The Daily Telegraph* 18 January 2003), a second calls it "a loose riff on Wilkie Collins", and a third (*Sunday Tribune* 2 March 2003)

quotes Waters as saying “I love Dickens and Wilkie Collins. Although every time I read him I find myself going ‘hmmm, you’re not Dickens are you?’”

BEST AND WORST

WCS member Brian Huss suggests we nominate our favourite and least favourite Wilkie novels, though he suggests excluding the big four (*The Woman in White*, *Armada*, *No Name*, *The Moonstone*) – unless of course you want to suggest one as your least favourite! He nominates *The Dead Secret*, *Poor Miss Finch*, *Jezebel’s Daughter*, and *No Thoroughfare* as his favourites “And the worst? *Fallen Leaves* for me.” If members want to join in send nominations by email to paul@paullewis.co.uk or by post to the address on the front of the newsletter.

MARY BRADDON

The Trail of the Serpent by Mary Elizabeth Braddon was originally serialized as *Three Times Dead* in 1860 while *The Woman in IV/lite* was causing such a stir in *All The Year Round*. It sold badly and Braddon revised and cut the text republishing it under its new title in March 1861. It was then an immediate success setting her on a writing career which included 80 popular novels. Like many Victorian novels it has not been in print for almost a century. So this new edition of the first full-length novel of a contemporary and competitor of Wilkie Collins is welcome. It has meticulous notes by Chris Willis of London Metropolitan University, a forward by Sarah Waters, and Braddon’s own account of the book, Written in 1893. Willis believes that the boy detective was an inspiration for Gooseberry in *The Moonstone* and the asylum scenes are reminiscent of those in Collins. The edition also has a two page ‘Reading Group Guide’. *The Trail of the Serpent*, edited by Chris Willis, Modern Library, New York, ISBN 0812966783, \$13.95, is available at £8.03 plus postage from Anlazon.

LEDBURY POETRY FESTIVAL

The Ledbury Poetry Festival is this year being held from 4-13 July in conjunction with the Arvon Foundation which runs courses to stimulate new writing. Further details from <http://www.poetry-festival.com>, or telephone 0845 458 1743.

RECENT SPANISH EDITIONS 2000-2003

Collins’s international popularity continues to prosper. We are grateful for the efforts of Spanish WCS member, Antonio Iriarte, who has produced a new list of current Spanish language editions of Wilkie’s works. Antonio writes:

“Further to the list published in the Summer 2000 *Newsletter* (pp. 9-12), the following new titles by Wilkie Collins have been published in Spanish. Most titles in the original list are still currently available, as are all those detailed below, as at 1 March 2003. It is worth mentioning that the various new editions of both *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* make use of translations already long available in other editions, some of which are still on the market. Please note, however, that Rialps’s *El secreto* constitutes the second, different, translation of *The Dead Secret*, already available as *El secreto de Sarah* (Montesinos) since 1999. There are also new translations of *The Haunted Hotel* and of several short stories.”

Editorial Montesinos, Barcelona:

Dos destinos [The Two Destinies], translation by Elena Martin Enebral, first published October, 2000. ISBN: 84-95580-00-4.

‘La dama de Glenwith Grange’ [‘The Lady of Glenwith Grange’], short story collection including: ‘La dama de Glenwith Grange’ [‘The Lady of Glenwith Grange’]; ‘El ultimo amor del Capitán’ (‘The Captain’s Last Love’); ‘El diario de Anne Rodway’ (‘The Diary of Anne Rodway’); ‘El fantasma de John Jago’ [‘John Jago’s Ghost’], and ‘¿Quién mato a Zebedee?’ (‘Who Killed Zebedee?’), translation by Elena Martín Enebral, first published November, 2000. ISBN: 84-89354-99-5.

Ediciones Alba, Barcelona

Marido y Mujer [Man and Wife], translation by Gema Moral Bartolome, first published November, 2002. ISBN: 84-8428-167-1.

Ediciones del Bronce, Barcelona

Las hojas caídas [The Fallen Leaves], translation by Miguel Martínez-Lage, first published November, 2001. ISBN: 84-8453-077-9.

Ediciones Peninsula, Mataró (Barcelona)

La reina del mal (‘A Queen’s Revenge’), translation by Oscar Maristán Tolós, first published July, 2001. ISBN: 84-95776-02-2.

El río culpable [The Guilty River], translation by Oscar Maritany y Denise Despeyroux, first published October, 2001. ISBN: 84-95776-06-5.

la piedra lunar [The Moonstone], translation by Horacio Laurora, first published in this edition January, 2002. ISBN: 84-95776-16-2.

la dama de blanco [The Woman in White], translation by Maruja Gomez Segales, first published in this edition May, 2002. This translation first published 1984. ISBN: 84-95776-03-0.

El legado de Cain [The Legacy of Cain], translation by Esther Pérez Pérez, first published August, 2002. ISBN: 84-95776-32-4.

Ediciones Rialp, Madrid

El secreto [The Dead Secret], translation by Maria Cristina Graell Vázquez, first published October, 2001. ISBN: 84-321-3368-X.

Ediciones Rueda J.M., S.A., Madrid

El hotel de los horrores ‘la confesión del pastor anglicano [The Haunted Hotel/ ‘Miss Jéromette and the Clergyman ‘), translation by Rocio Agudo Aceme, first published June, 2002. ISBN: 84-8447-114-4.

Suma de Letras, S.L., Madrid

La piedra lunar [The Moonstone], translation by Horacio Laurora, first published in this edition September, 2001 “Punto de lectura” series, no. 172/1. Translation first published 1981. ISBN 84-663-0425-8.

la dama de blanco [The Woman in White], translation by Miguel Martínez-Lage, first published in this edition, February, 2002. Translation first published 1998. “Punto de Lectura” series, no. 172/2. ISBN: 84-663-0509-2.