



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

PATRON Faith Clarke

Chairman Andrew Gasson, 21 Huson Close, London NW3 3JW

Membership Paul Lewis, 4 Ernest Gardens, Chiswick, London W4 3QU

NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2016-2017

THE 'HEART AND SCIENCE' CONFERENCE

As most WCS members will know, we held a very successful conference on Saturday 24 September at the Barts Pathology Museum in the heart of the City of London. Our thanks go out to all of the excellent speakers as well as to our ever efficient Journal editor, Joanne Parsons, who deserves the credit for arranging everything so successfully. One of her able assistants was Elena Syvokaite of Brunel University who contributes the following review of the conference.

The 'Heart' and 'Science' of Wilkie Collins and his Contemporaries conference was hosted in the fantastic location of Barts Pathology Museum, unanimously agreed to be a perfect place to discuss all the 'heart' and the 'science' of Collins's work. The conference was hosted by editor and associate editor of *Wilkie Collins's Journal*, Joanne Parsons (*Falmouth*) and Verity Burke (*Reading*), and sponsored by the *Wilkie Collins Society*. The event proved to be enjoyable, valuable and stimulating, delivering fine research from keynote speaker Tara MacDonald (*Idaho*) as well as other excellent guest speakers, and a truly witty performance by Jak Stringer.

The day was split into three panels discussing 'Science in Society and Relationships;' 'Differentiated and Troublesome Bodies;' and lastly 'Madness, Pathology and the Body: Interpreting the Pathologised Body.' Though the subject areas seem rather dense the guest speakers delivered them in a light-hearted manner and more often than not produced chuckles in the audience. The audience also showed themselves to be inquisitive, not only participating in discussion but also provoking new ideas in the guest speakers. Live tweets were posted under #WCJheart throughout the day, keeping those who could not come updated and informed about the progress of the conference. Keynote speaker Tara MacDonald (*Idaho*), who travelled a long way to be here for Wilkie Collins did not disappoint in her talk. Discussing a favourite novel of Collins's, *Armada*, she spoke about public feeling and sensation and how the two reconcile in the novel.

Albeit an academic conference the atmosphere was far from sombre. The room buzzed with excitement during tea breaks which mostly consisted of more Collins talk but those of a strong stomach and peculiar curiosity revelled in the unique specimens of the museum. A talk and performance delivered by Jak Stringer produced high spirits in everybody. Her ‘Rambles in Cornwall’, describing influences and relationships of the county on Collins’s work produced laughter and gaiety in the crowd. Jak’s use of props and sounds was also a delightful way to learn about Collins’s adventures in Cornwall.

For the last talk of the conference Martin Edwards (*Institute of Advanced Studies, UCL*) brought a day full of speculations on ‘heart’ and ‘science’ to a perfect close by discussing the myths and narratives of therapeutic bed rest, as part of the third panel on ‘Interpreting the Pathological Body.’ It was an ideal topic to end with so as to, for the last time, absorb the surrounding scene of dismembered and diseased body parts in jars. This conference marked 127 years since the death of Wilkie Collins, and without a doubt this day, rightly, consisted of all things Collins. Joanne Parsons and Verity Burke truly made this day what it was.

Photographs of the various speakers in action can be seen at https://www.facebook.com/wilkiecjournal/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1294420060600398

There was a further, equally enthusiastic review of the conference by Alison Moulds in *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, posted on 11 December 2016. “For a conference to get me out of bed and into central London for 9 am registration on a Saturday, the theme has to be good.”

“The study day was anchored around a wonderful keynote delivered by Tara MacDonald (University of Idaho) on ‘Wilkie Collins, Armadale and Public Feeling’, which was based on her emerging research about sensation fiction as meta-fiction.” “Ultimately, however, the study day was a wonderful way of facilitating discussion about this prolific author, with the conference themes and quirky venue undoubtedly helping to attract a diverse line-up of speakers and delegates and to generate a range of responses to Collins’s rich body of work.”

The full JVC online report can be found at <http://blogs.tandf.co.uk/jvc/2016/12/11/alison-mouldsreview-the-heart-and-science-of-wilkie-collins-and-his-contemporaries-24-september-2016-barts-pathology-museum/>.

MORE ‘HEART’ AND ‘SCIENCE’ FOR THE JOURNAL.

Journal editor, Joanne Parsons, hopes to produce the next issue of the *Wilkie Collins Journal* over the next few weeks. She is also planning a special issue ‘The “Heart” and “Science” of Wilkie Collins and his Contemporaries’ for later in the year and has put out the following call for papers:

Deadline for Abstracts: 28 February 2017

Deadline for Articles: 31 May 2017

“Why can’t I look into your heart, and see what secrets it is keeping from me?”

The protagonist of Wilkie Collins’s *Heart and Science* (1883), surgeon Ovid Vere, laments the difficulty in deciphering hidden emotions and secrets. Yet the language suggests his medical background, striking a note with the novel’s supposedly anti-vivisection message and highlighting contemporary debates into the nature of experimental medicine, observation and epistemology. What is the best way of uncovering secrets, and what part does knowledge of the body play in this? Can medical training benefit from a thorough understanding of emotion? And does gender play a part in this? Issues of ‘heart’ and ‘science’ reverberate across Collins’s work, from the Major’s collection of women’s hair in *The Law and the Lady* (1875) to Ezra Jennings’s solution to the crime of *The Moonstone* (1868). The special issue will take as its focus the proliferation of “heart” and “science” throughout Collins’s work.

We welcome both abstracts and full article submissions on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- ***Wilkie Collins’s Heart and Science (1883) and/or any of Collins’s work***
- ***The Body***: As a scientific subject, as a site of emotion, bodily representations, and the body in forensics, news reportage and the home.
- ***The Victorian origin of disciplines***: Collins as an interdisciplinary figure, the divide (or not) of “heart” and “science”, the definition of sensation in literature and/or science.
- ***Medicine and anatomical science***: vivisection, taxidermy, anatomical atlases and the nineteenth-century doctor and/or scientist.
- ***Psychology and psychiatry***: the physicality of mental illness, hysteria, the asylum, treatment and therapeutics.
- ***Gender***: the gendered body, representations of gender, the gendered connotations of “heart” and/or “science”.
- ***Sensation***: As genre, as sense or emotion, as subjective.
- ***Detection***: forensics, interrogation, the body as clue, the science of detection, and crimes of the heart.
- ***Relationships***: Romantic, familial, or otherwise.
- ***Neo-Victorian Approaches to “Heart” and “Science”***
- ***Work by other contemporary sensation writers***

Submissions are not limited to papers on Wilkie Collins’s *Heart and Science* (1883) but to “heart” and “science” at work in the full range of Collins’s fiction. The *WCJ* is also interested in related authors and sensation fiction more broadly: interdisciplinary perspectives are also welcome.

Email abstracts to jo.parsons@falmouth.ac.uk and V.Burke@pgr.reading.ac.uk by 28th February 2017.

A POSSIBLE PERFORMANCE OF *THE LIGHTHOUSE*

Jak Stringer whose Cornwall ‘Rambles’ delight all those who witness them, is trying to arrange a performance of *The Lighthouse* to coincide with the Penzance Literature festival, later this year around 6-8 July. If it can be arranged, a Cornwall venue would be splendidly appropriate for the first public performance of *The Lighthouse* since its first staging in 1855. Further details will be confirmed as soon as available.

WEBB LIBRARY

A major collection of more than 7,500 books and manuscripts has been given to Trinity College Cambridge’s Wren Library. It was bequeathed by Mary Duchess of Roxburghe, the granddaughter of Richard Monckton Milnes. Wilkie dined with Milnes on several occasions in the late 1850s and early 1860s and visited him at least once at his Yorkshire estate. So far there are three finds in the library with Wilkie connections. The first is a letter from Collins to Milne’s wife Annabel pasted into a first edition of *No Name*. The second is a note to Milnes enclosing a photograph for him to paste into the first edition of *The Woman in White*; the third is that actual copy complete with a dedication inscription to Milnes.

***THE MOONSTONE* ON TV**

The BBC broadcast its new – sometimes rather confused - dramatization of *The Moonstone* on five consecutive afternoons from 31 October 2016. Writers Rachel Flowerday and Sasha Hails have remained fairly faithful to the story and the dialogue is largely Wilkie’s own.

Franklin Blake was played by Joshua Silver with Terenia Edwards as Rachel Verinder, John Thomson as Sergeant Cuff, and Leo Wringer as a good but totally miscast Gabriel Betteredge.

The programme page is www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0824cbr with links to interviews with the writers and an essay by Executive Producer John Yorke which puts *The Moonstone* in context. He concludes “we can’t wait to introduce a new audience to the jewel that is The Moonstone.”

The television critic of the *Daily Mail*, although noting “Enter the Great Detective: Sergeant Cuff, the morose crimebuster whose genius for deduction set the template for an entire literary genre,” was less than sympathetic, describing the first episode as a “disappointing muddle, all false starts and laboured explanation.”

Sad also that the BBC schedulers consigned this first new production of the classic for twenty years to the afternoon slot. Critic Alison Graham wrote in *Radio Times* “It’s just not the kind of story that would find its way to the heart of the big schedules again.” It was repeated – once more on consecutive afternoons – in the week between Christmas and New Year. A previous dramatization was a two-part version first broadcast on 29/30 December 1996.

You can buy the DVD for £12.99 on Amazon – search ‘The Moonstone 2016’. The earlier 1996 version starring Keely Hawes and Greg Wise is also available dated 2009 and frequently turns up on ebay.

THE WOMAN IN WHITE ON TELEVISION

Those who did see the recent dramatization of *The Moonstone* may be wondering what has happened to the promised new version of *The Woman in White*. It was announced in December 2015 as four 60 minute episodes. It has apparently not been cancelled or forgotten but we still await an announcement with more details of cast and filming dates.

HAUNTED HOTEL ON THE RADIO

Wilkie seems to fare rather better on radio where writers and producers are a good deal more adventurous than those on television where *The Moonstone* and *The Woman in White* appear to be the limit of their imagination. In the past we have had *No Name* and *Basil* plus dramatisations of various short stories. In November, the Radio 4 Saturday Drama presented a one hour adaptation by Rod Beacham of *The Haunted Hotel*. It was produced and directed by Bruce Young and managed to encapsulate the essentials of Wilkie’s plot. Overall, a good production although omitting the forensic details found in the original. It is no longer available on the BBC iPlayer but look out for future repeats on Radio 4 Extra.

THE LIFE OF WILKIE COLLINS ON BBC RADIO 4

Peter Ackroyd’s biography of Wilkie Collins was the recent ‘Book of the Week’ on BBC Radio 4, excellently read by Michael Pennington. The Ackroyd book has always presented a well written and good summary of Wilkie’s life but our recommendation for a comprehensive biography remains Andrew Lycett’s *Wilkie Collins: A Life of Sensation*.

THE FIRST COLLINS BIOGRAPHY

The first book length biography and literary study of Wilkie Collins – and the only one published in his own life – is available in a reprint. *Wilkie Collins – ein biographisch-kritischer Versuch* by Ernst von Wolzogen was first published in German in 1885. The biographical and critical study has been hard to find and even harder to read in German in its traditional gothic typeface.

Its significance was first realised by biographer Catherine Peters who discovered that it corroborated the revelation by Dickens that at the age of twelve Collins fell in love with an older woman “a married woman who was at least three times as old, and his jealousy of her excellent husband was so violent that he could not stand his presence, but ran away when he saw him coming.”

When Wilkie's letters were collected in 2005 a letter to von Wolzogen written in 1882 was found buried in the text. In it Wilkie set out his method of working. "I have four rules. First, the main idea. Secondly, the end. Thirdly, the beginning. The difficulty with carrying out this last rule, is that you always have to start from the beginning! Anyone who can solve that will also be able to manage the fourth rule – you must always be able to move the story forward. People often ask me about my 'secret' and that is what it is!"

The new reprint edition – still in the original German but not in Gothic typeface – was first published in 2012 and copies can most easily be found online by searching on the ISBN 9783955078027.

THE FRIENDS OF KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery – where of course Wilkie is buried - continue to offer a wide range of events and produce a regular Newsletter. The issue for November 2016 featured a review by Jenny Freeman of a talk by Andrew Lycett which included a description of Collins's final journey. "Today new audiences find resonance in some of the ideas and themes Collins explored so vividly in his books, and the memorable personalities he created." For details of membership, contact Tim Robertson, 3 Mead Court, Egham, Surrey TW20 8XF (director@cryptair.co.uk).

WILKIE THE THRILLER PIONEER

John Mullan, Professor of English at University College London, traces the rise of the psychological thriller from *The Moonstone* to *The Girl on the Train* in an essay in *The Guardian* where he "explains how *The Girl on the Train*'s themes of adultery, murder and secret identity are rooted in the Victorian era." Crediting Collins with "a series of narrative tricks and peculiar plot elements that thriller writers still draw on...even some of his unaccountable quirks have become conventions of thriller writing, though modern practitioners will have been unaware that they were following a pattern set by this unconventional Victorian." His essay was published on Saturday 8 October during the same month that the new TV adaptation of *The Moonstone* began. The full essay can be found at www.theguardian.com/books/2016/oct/08/how-we-got-to-the-girl-on-the-train-moonstone-the-rise-of-the-psychological-thriller.

WILKIE IN CONTEXT

Collins turns up several times in the essays collected in *Charles Dickens and the Mid-Victorian Press 1850-1870* edited by Hazel Mackenzie and Ben Winyard.

Collins's ground breaking essay 'The Unknown Public' in *Household Words* 21 August 1858 gets several pages in Helen McKenzie's 'A Defence of the Pen'. In it Wilkie describes his

view of who readers of periodicals are but then laments that the readers of penny journals are not reached by the literary élite. It was an audience he sought to attract for the rest of his life.

Harriet Martineau's objections to his serialised story 'The Yellow Mask' as anti-Catholic is also featured in a later essay.

Overall Collins's massive contribution to *Household Words* and *All The Year Round* was rather underplayed. A final essay by Victoria List editor Patrick Leary puts an interesting gloss on the scandal of Dickens's affair with the actress Ellen Ternan. He points out that Ellen's name was widely published in the American press, free of the libel and taste issues that dogged the London papers. Far from being hidden it actually, as he put it, went viral.

The book is currently free from Amazon in a kindle edition but the paperback is £24.99.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

In 2015 book dealer and academic Jeremy Parrott found a set of *All the Year Round* which had been annotated throughout with the names of the authors of the 2,500 pieces which it contains. He published his early findings in July 2015 and in the WCS Newsletter for Summer 2015 we listed eight pieces newly identified as by Wilkie Collins. Parrott now believes he now knows who wrote the annotations. It was not, as he first thought, Dickens himself but two members of staff - George Holsworth and Henry Walker. Some oddities and errors in the transcriptions lead him to believe that Walker read the names out loud from another annotated set – now lost – and Holsworth made the pencil notes in the margins of the set Parrott now possesses.

The provenance of the eight pieces is analysed in the pamphlet *Wilkie Collins: Newly identified contributions in All the Year Round* sent out with this mailing. The Society will be publishing six of the contributions in pamphlets during the course of 2017.

Important though those Wilkie works are, it is the reputation and biography of his brother, Charles Allston Collins, which will be changed far more by the Parrott discovery. There are 60 titles by him which are newly identified, making him one of the most prolific and regular contributors to *All the Year Round*. They show his work for the periodical was far more than a kindness shown by his father-in-law, Dickens, after Charles gave up painting in pursuit of literature.

In addition to an excellent presentation to the Dickens Fellowship in December, Parrott has also published an updated piece, 'George Holsworth and Henry Walker: the Backroom Boys at *All the Year Round*', in *The Dickensian*, Winter 2016, No. 500, Vol. 112 Part 3, pp. 247-259.

COLLINS AND THE BERGER CONNECTION

John Berger (1926-2017) the well known art critic who wrote *Ways of Seeing* and who died earlier this year was a great-great-nephew of Francesco Berger (1834-1933) a composer who was commissioned to write the incidental music for Wilkie's play *The Lighthouse* (1855) and the Overture for *The Frozen Deep* (1857). The Society discovered the latter work in 2008 and published it on CD where it was performed by pianist Vyvian Bronk. Copies are still available from the WCS at a cost of £5 plus postage.

PUBLICATIONS LIST UPDATED

The comprehensive range of the Society's publications can be found on the WCS website. The list is currently being updated with recent additions.

BRITISH LIBRARY BUYS *THE NEW MAGDALEN* MANUSCRIPT

It has emerged that the extensive 212 page working draft of Wilkie's dramatization of *The New Magdalen*, which was sold at auction earlier this year for nearly £76,000, (Newsletter Spring 2016) was in fact bought by the British Library. The BL already has an annotated script submitted to the Lord Chamberlain for approval before its performance on 19 May 1873 at the Olympic Theatre. The new manuscript shows an earlier stage in the play's development and will be a valuable addition for scholars working on Wilkie's plays. The auction catalogue states

"The whole play was written by Collins at a feverish pace, as demonstrated by the slashing handwriting and the abundant and rough changes throughout the manuscript. A wonderful example of a playwright's train of thought in action, the hand hardly able to keep up with the brain." www.bonhams.com/auctions/23644/lot/4/.

THE *BIRMINGHAM MAIL* ON 23 SEPTEMBER

The *Birmingham Mail* for Friday 23 September 2016 in its 'Nostalgia – On this Day' feature duly noted the date of Collins's death together with a small photograph of the young Wilkie. The date is shared by a variety of other events including the victory of the Greeks over the Persians at the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC; the discovery of the planet Neptune in 1846; the death of Sigmund Freud in 1939; and Peron's re-election as Argentinian President in 1973.

Paul Lewis

paul@paullewis.co.uk

www.wilkiecollins.com

Andrew Gasson

apogee@apgee.co.uk

www.wilkie-collins.info