



THE WILKIE COLLINS SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2017

THE WCS JOURNAL

Members are reminded that the latest issue of the Wilkie Collins Journal, Volume 14, for 2017 is now online at wilkiecollinssociety.org/journal/current-issue/. The login details are the same as previously, username: **count**; and password: **fosco**, both in lower case. The essays in the current issue are:

‘The Nature of the Law: Struggles between Statute and Morality in Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* and *No Name*’ by Abigail K. Boucher.

‘A Lost Biographical Sketch’ by Emily Bowles.

‘Cornwall and Kamtschatka: Domesticating Cornwall through Pedestrian Travel in Wilkie Collins’s *Rambles Beyond Railways* (1851)’ by Erika Behrisch Elce.

‘Gravy Soup: humouring conformity and counterfeiting in *A Rogue’s life*’ by Rebecca Lloyd

‘In the Mystery and Terror of a Dream’: Sensationalism, Consistency, and Mental Science in Wilkie Collins’s *Armada/e* by Daniel Matlock.

‘You must give up’: Gothic Detection and the Rhetoric of Protest in *The Law and the Lady* by Karen Beth Strovas.

We are grateful once again to the editor, Joanne Ella Parsons, and to all the contributors for producing such an interesting collection of articles. It is also hoped to have a further issue ready towards the end of the year.

WCS NEWSLETTERS

In addition to past copies of the Journal on the WCS website, all of the Society's Newsletters from 1994 to the end of 2016 are also available for either search online or for download from wilkiecollinssociety.org/category/newsletters.

THE RED VIAL AND THE LIGHTHOUSE

The Red Vial is an unpublished play written by Collins and produced at the Royal Olympic Theatre from 11 October 1858. It starred Frederick Robson as Hans Grimm, the lunatic cured by kindness, and Mrs Stirling as Madame Bergmann. Described as 'the most brilliant failure of the day,' the plot was later adapted as the basis for *Jezebel's Daughter* in 1880.

Following the publication in 2013 by the WCS of *The Lighthouse*, the editors, Caroline Radcliffe and Andrew Gasson, have been working on an edition of *The Red Vial* which has until now never appeared in print. It will be published by Francis Boutle and follow the same format as *The Lighthouse*, consisting of an introduction, the text of the play, plot summaries and a variety of contemporary reviews; it will also include several rarely seen illustrations. It is hoped that the publication will be ready later in the year and will be sent out to all members of the Society.

If all goes to plan, *The lighthouse* will be staged at the Acorn Theatre, Penzance, on Saturday 14 October, the first performance for over 100 years. Full details will be confirmed in the next Newsletter and by email.

A NEW ADDRESS FOR E-TEXTS

Most of Collins works have been available as e-texts for some while, mainly as a result of the dedication of James Rusk who carried out all of this work. James has recently moved his website to www.jhrusk.github.io. He has now also produced e-texts of the works of Charles Reade.

Incidentally, the bibliography by Parrish, *Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade: First Editions described with Notes*, as the title suggests, includes both authors. It was originally published in 1940 in a limited edition of 150 copies but reprinted by

Burt Franklin in 1968. This later edition frequently turns up on ebay at fairly reasonable prices.

A WILKIE COLLINS THESIS ON *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*

WCS member, Dr Kirsten Hüttner from Germany, obtained her PhD with a study on *The Woman in White*. Her thesis was issued as a book in 1996 - in English - as *Wilkie Collins's "The Woman in White": Analysis, Reception and Literary Criticism of a Victorian Bestseller*, published by Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.

Kirsten has very kindly donated six copies to the WCS to distribute to interested members. Anyone who would like a copy should contact Andrew Gasson at apogee@apgee.co.uk. The thesis runs to some 300 pages so although there will be no charge for the book, the cost to cover second class p. & p. will be £3.

COLLINS AND THE HORROR OF CLOTHING

Stephanie Lethbridge of the English Department of the University of Freiburg includes several mentions of Collins in her essay 'The Horror of Clothing and the Clothing of Horror: Material and Meaning in Gothic and Sensation Fiction' which appeared in the recently published *Sensationalism and the Genealogy of Modernity* (ISBN 978-1-137-56148-0, Palgrave-Macmillan). The article puts an interesting slant on Collins in relation to an exploration of "the potential of clothing to create horror or terror in gothic and sensation fiction."

Most of the comments relate to *The Woman in White* with examples such as "The true horror of the situation ... emerges when it becomes clear that Jacob's ghost is not a ghost but Anne Catherick" and "It is perhaps not surprising that Routledge ... pushed the aspect of lurid sensationalism ... to extremes. The 1904 Routledge edition no longer focused on the comparatively harmless "woman in white" but on a "skeleton in the cupboard." *The Moonstone* also receives a mention "when Franklin Blake finally finds the nightgown to prove who the thief of the diamond was: ... 'I found the mark, and read: MY OWN NAME.'"

A DRAMATIC REVIVAL OF *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*

The Rose Theatre Kidderminster has become the latest provincial playhouse to put on a performance of Wilkie's most popular novel. Using the well-known

adaptation by Constance Cox, the Nonentities Society entertained the audience for six nights from Monday 8 May. Details may still be found on the website www.rosetheatre.co.uk which called it “A wonderful slice of Victoriana mystery and intrigue.” The company used French’s Acting Edition of Cox’s adaptation which can easily be found via Amazon or direct from the publishers at www.samuelfrench.co.uk/p/11891/woman-in-whitethe.

NO NAME ON BBC RADIO 4 EXTRA

The excellent radio adaption of *No Name* which was originally broadcast in 1989 has recently been repeated on Radio 4 Extra in its original six weekly episodes. It was adapted by Elizabeth Bradbury with such long gone radio stalwarts as Jack May as Captain Wragge and John Moffatt as one of Collins’s best lawyers, Mr Pendril. *No Name* has stood the test of time extremely well; it has turned up before on the BBC iPlayer so may well do so in future. Radio 4 Extra has also been the home of several other adaptations of Collins’s works so from time to time it is always worth checking the schedules.

DOGGED DETECTIVE

Wilkie’s dog detective, Tommie, in *My Lady’s Money* is widely credited as the first crime-solving canine. The story was published in the *Illustrated London News* for Christmas 1877. But Kate Watson in *Women writing Crime Fiction 1860-1880* claims that he was beaten by four years by an Australian woman called Mary Helena Fortune (c1833–c1910). Her story ‘The Dog Detective’ was published in *Journal*, an Australian magazine, in May 1873. Some academics believe that Fortune’s work was available in the UK and Watson suggests Wilkie might have read it. Whether he did or not it seems he was not the first to feature a dog detective.

Tommie is thought to be an *homage* to Wilkie’s own Scotch terrier Tommy who died 28 August 1885. He wrote to his agent A. P. Watt on 7 September “I have lost the dear old friend and companion of many years – my dog.”

Apart from this revelation about the dog detective there are dozens of other references to Wilkie Collins in Watson’s book including mentions of six of his

novels and four short stories. It is well worth getting for those interested in Wilkie and crime.

Kate Watson *Women Writing Crime Fiction 1860-1880*, McFarland & Co, Jefferson and London 2012, ISBN 978-0-7864-6782-2.

LETTERS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Milton Roger Slater was born in Brooklyn in 1918 and died in Sleepy Hollow, Westchester, New York on 30 April 2014. During his long life he made a massive collection of manuscripts, beginning with the American Civil War and moving on to a variety of other things including English Literature. Following his death, his collection has been auctioned in a long series of sales by Swann Galleries in New York. This May six Wilkie Collins items went under the hammer.

There was a page of the manuscript of the stage adaptation of *The Moonstone* from 1877. The single page – numbered 17 – had more than 30 lines from the second Act. They are written, overwritten, amended, re-amended, and in one case pasted over with a small piece of paper with fresh changes. It is always a wonder how printers ever got his texts right either for his plays or stories.

The five other items were all letters. One was sold in the American Civil War section of the sale. Dated 12 September 1862, it was sent to an American fan who seems to have written asking for an autograph, possibly in response to *No Name* which was being serialised at that time in *Harper's Weekly*. Instead Charles Edward Bennett received a three-page letter including Wilkie's thoughts on the American Civil War, then raging.

My horror of all war, my very firm conviction that the remedy of fighting is the most devilish and the most useless of all remedies... it seems to my mind the interest of America, the interest of Liberty, and the interest of Humanity that this strife should end no matter how it ends. Better your one republic should be two than that the cause of Freedom should suffer in American hands.

This letter had been bought by Slater from Swann in 1958.

(Incidentally, in an earlier letter also on the subject of war and dated 7 August 1870 (but not auctioned in this sale) Collins was perhaps the first to consider the idea of Mutually Assured Destruction.

I begin to believe in only one civilising influence - the discovery one of these days, of a destructive agent so terrible that War shall mean annihilation, and men's fears shall force them to keep the peace.)

Another important letter in the Swann sale was to Samuel Carter Hall, a friend of Wilkie's father, and publisher of engravings of several of his paintings in the 1830s in his *Literary Souvenir*. Hall had clearly sent his condolences to Wilkie on his father's death and asked for biographical material of his father to use in a memoir. Wilkie's reply on 18 March 1847 explains in some detail that he is embarking on a biography of his father's life. He sends Hall some biographical material and states his confidence in what Hall will use it for.

For the Critical part, your just and generous appreciation of my father's genius, leave me no anxiety or doubt whatever.

Three other letters were acquired by Slater in 1983. They include two enclosing extracts from his novels for collectors and a letter of 9 July 1881 to the actor and manager Charles Lamb Kenney regretting that his illness means he will miss Kenney's daughter Rosa when she next performs on stage.

Details of these letters arrived too late for the latest Addenda & Corrigenda enclosed with this mailing but will be fully reproduced and annotated in the next edition.

Altogether 130 lots in the sale on 4 May 2017 were letters from writers, the great majority from the Slater collection. Generally items were highly priced, partly reflecting their content and partly their provenance. Agatha Christie's 1940s notebook, for example, fetched \$18,750.

WILKIE IN THE *NEW YORKER*

Don Olson of Texas State University has noticed mentions of Collins and more particularly Dickens in an article by Kathryn Schulz entitled 'Literature's Arctic Obsession' in the *New Yorker* of 21 April 2017.

Schulz regards polar fiction as “a largely overlooked body of literature in the nineteenth century. It included works by many of the greatest writers of the era, or of any era: Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens. Almost invariably, the poles appear in these works as the place where nature reveals its horrifying indifference to humanity; where humanity itself falls away, leaving men to descend into madness and violence.”

Collins and Dickens, of course, acted together in Wilkie’s *The Frozen Deep* and in the context of the lost Franklin expedition Dickens always maintained that no Englishman would stoop to cannibalism. The full article can be found online by searching on <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/24/literatures-arctic-obsession>. And Dickens’s piece from *Household Words* (2 and 9 December 1854, pp. 362-65, 387-393) denying cannibalism is reproduced at www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/arctic/pva342.html

Don Olson is a self-styled Celestial Sleuth “Using Astronomy to Solve Mysteries in Art, History and Literature. He has already produced one volume based on his fascinating researches. His second volume of ‘Further Adventures’ will contain an astronomical analysis of Walter Hartright’s walk in the opening pages of *The Woman in White*. This should appear early in 2018.

CHARLES DICKENS THE MAGICIAN

Published in 2014, *Charles Dickens Magician* explores Dickens relatively unknown conjuring talents. Quoting from the blurb: “For the first time Dickens’s journey to a conjurer has been properly researched and narrated: using his own letters and other contemporary reports, the evolution of the novelist to enthusiastic performer is plotted. What is particularly unique about this book is that Ian Keable brings his own experiences as a magic historian and professional magician to branch out into related subjects.” (ISBN 978-0-9557353-2-5, priced at £10 paperback and £25 hardback).

Wilkie is duly mentioned in the context of *The Frozen Deep* and his trips to Paris with Dickens although Keable considers that Collins’s influence “might not have been entirely benign.” He also mentions their going to seances and Wilkie’s initial acceptance of spiritualism. Collins in fact wrote a series of articles in 1852

on the subject for *The Leader* under the title ‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’ which were subsequently attacked by G. H. Lewes. These can be found online at ncse-viewpoint.cch.kcl.ac.uk/ although the WCS itself reprinted *Magnetic Evenings* in 2001. This publication included the four articles by Wilkie, a rejoinder by the editor G. H. Lewes, and Wilkie’s reply to him. Copies are still available and can be ordered through the society’s website (see final page).

W. H. SMITH AND YELLOWBACKS

W. H. Smith, the newsagents, booksellers and stationers was founded in 1792 and became the second largest circulating library. It expanded rapidly under William Henry Smith II (1825-1891) during the railway boom of the 1850s. Smiths were a prominent presence with more than 500 of their railway bookstalls by 1870. Much of Victorian literature was sold in three volume editions (three-deckers) at the then very expensive price of 10s 6d a volume. It was at the railway stations that Smiths sold vast quantities of cheap ‘railway fiction’ or yellowbacks. They were issued from a few weeks to several months after the first editions.

To celebrate their 225th anniversary, W. H. Smith have just re-issued seven classic titles broadly in the style of their historical antecedents. Unfortunately, the series does not include any of Collins’s titles but gives a rough idea of the original appearance. Books can be seen at local branches of W. H. Smith or at www.whsmith.co.uk/lists/books/whsmith-225th-anniversary-yellowback-special-editions-02x09247. Examples of the Victorian originals can be seen at www.wilkie-collins.info. In particular look at *The Dead Secret*, *The New Magdalen* and *Little Novels*.

All but five of Collins’s 34 titles were issued in yellowback format, excluding *The Memoirs of William Collins*, *Rambles Beyond Railways*, *Mr Wray’s Cash-Box*, *The Guilty River* and *The Lazy Tour*. Single volume yellowbacks were usually priced at 2s and as the cheap version of fiction were the equivalent of today’s paperbacks. The binding consisted of strawboard covered with glazed coloured paper, usually yellow, on which appeared a vivid and eye-catching illustration. The construction was therefore quite fragile and although many have survived they are rarely found in good condition. Their price today varies from about £25 upwards. In Collins’s case, they are generally more expensive.

Currently they can be found on ebay for an excessively ambitious £600 for *The Haunted Hotel* and on ABE for *The Moonstone* an even more kite-flying £1,500!

RESTLESS SHADOW

A new exhibition at the Charles Dickens Museum is called *Restless Shadow: Dickens the Campaigner*. Curated by John Drew, who runs Dickens Journals Online at Buckingham University, the exhibition could have been called ‘anything but the novels’. It is a timeline of Dickens’s work as a journalist, speechwriter, and tireless campaigner for reform. Drew thinks that Dickens was heavily influenced to campaign for the poorest in society by his own time working in a blacking factory while his father John was shut up in the Marshalsea debtor’s prison. The exhibition covers his journalistic writing in his periodicals *Household Words* and *All The Year Round* where he campaigned for changes in workhouses, prisons, boarding schools, and the treatment of the poor and indigent. It contains a blacking bottle, a shorthand book such as Dickens learned from, his chair from the *All The Year Round* office, and a petition used to incarcerate a debtor in the Marshalsea. There is also one volume of the newly discovered set of *All The Year Round* with the author of each piece identified. The annotation next to ‘What is Sensational?’ in vol. XVII newly identifies Dickens as joint author of a polemic against appalling conditions in workhouses and the subsequent denial of any wrong-doing by the managers. This exhibition could be the only chance for the public to see one of these unique volumes.

Restless Shadow: Dickens the Campaigner runs until October 2017 and entrance is included with the museum ticket.

A NEW PORTRAIT BY CHARLES COLLINS

A painting of a young woman at the Charles Dickens Museum is now thought to be a portrait of Catherine (Kate) Dickens by Wilkie’s brother Charles who married her in 1860. Previously the Museum had thought it was a portrait of Dickens’s eldest daughter Mamie by Daniel Maclise. But Museum Director Cindy Sughrue has told the Society that the portrait has been professionally re-evaluated and she is confident it is by Charles and of Kate. The painting is on display at the Museum next to a portrait of Kate by her second husband Charles Perugini.

BARMOUTH SANDS BY WILLIAM COLLINS

One of William Collins's paintings made a rare appearance on a front page of *The Times* on Tuesday 21 March 2017. *Welsh Peasants Crossing the Sands to Market* was painted by Wilkie's father in the autumn or winter of 1834 at their home at 30 Porchester Terrace in West London. Exhibited at the Royal Academy the following year, it was bought by a man called R. Coils for 115 guineas (£120.75) and then bought by a Mr Gillott. Later it was sold for £1,700 at Christies in 1879 and renamed, possibly at that time, *Barmouth Sands*. It was subsequently sold again by Christie's for £1,050 in 1888 and is now owned by The Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London, along with five others of William Collins's major works. They are usually on display there.

The picture appeared as part of the front cover illustration of *Times 2* - the arts tabloid issued with *The Times* - to illustrate a piece by Giles Coren on his new TV series *Fake! - the great Masterpiece Challenge* which began on Sky Arts on 28 March. The painting itself did not appear in the piece nor, as far as is known, has it been in the series. It was simply there as an illustration with Coren in front of it.

MORE WILLIAM COLLINS PICTURES

Two important paintings by Wilkie's father, William Collins, have surfaced at auction.

Morning: Fishermen on the look-out was begun in February 1819 in his painting studio at 11 New Cavendish Street. A few days earlier William had lost out by one vote to be elected as a full Royal Academician; he had been an Associate since 1814. In all he spent 24 days from February to April on the large 36" x 48" canvas and it was exhibited at the Royal Academy Exhibition in May of that year in the main gallery as number 175. Referring to the artist David Wilkie, after whom he was named, Wilkie Collins writes in *Memoirs of the Life of William Collins RA*, the biography of his father,

In the poetical composition of the sky - in that power of presenting original and faithful combinations of atmosphere and cloud, for which, in Wilkie's opinion, his friend stood unmatched among his contemporaries - this picture surpasses all its predecessors.

Artists were admitted to membership of the Royal Academy largely on the basis of their exhibited works and this painting is likely to have been instrumental in his election in 1820 as a full Academician allowing him put the letters RA after his name.

The picture was painted for the Earl of Liverpool, Robert Jenkinson (1770-1828) who was then the Prime Minister. He bought it for 150 guineas (£157.50) – approximately £11,000 in today’s money. He still owned it in some years later when an engraving by Joseph Phelps was made and which was published on 1 March 1827.

The painting was sold by Stacey’s Auctions on 21 March 2017, lot 1737. The hammer price was £2,900.

The second painting emerged in an auction in Madrid. Although catalogued as *Bendición de la mesa* (Grace), art dealer and William Collins expert Alan Bean believes it to be *The Two Disciples at Emmaus* painted in 1841 and exhibited as No.106 at the Royal Academy that year. Wilkie’s *Memoirs* devotes a paragraph to the painting and his words seem to describe perfectly the image published in the sale catalogue. It shows two disciples sitting at a table at the moment “immediately following the supernatural disappearance of our Saviour.” Wilkie adds “In every respect the picture is a thoroughly faithful reflection of Italian life and landscape.” The Royal Academy Exhibition catalogue quotes Luke 24:30-31

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

After the family’s Italian trip from 1836 to 1838, Collins painted a handful of pictures in the style of the Italian masters; they were not popular with the public, however, and he soon returned to coastal scenes. *Disciples* was originally bought by City grocer George Knott for 150 guineas but when sold after his death in 1844 by Christie’s on 25 April 1845 it fetched only 145 guineas (£152.25). The *Memoirs* states that the price was 260 guineas but it seems likely Wilkie confused it with another Collins picture in the Knott sale, *The Peacemaker*.

The 30” x 24” inch canvas was lot 198 in a sale at the auction house Duran on 27 April 2017 and the hammer price was €3,000 (£2,540).

COLLINS AND JOURNALISM

Former *Wilkie Collins Journal* editor, Graham Law, has contributed ‘Wilkie Collins and the Discovery of an ‘Unknown Public’ to the recently published collection of essays, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century Britain*. The elegantly produced volume is edited by Joanne Shattock, Emeritus Professor of Victorian Literature at the University of Leicester. (Hardback, ISBN 9781107085732 at £74.99)

Graham Law’s essay concentrates on ‘The Unknown Public’, Collins’s most widely cited piece of journalism, originally published in *Household Words* in August 1858. Collins’s article discussed the estimated three million readers of Penny novel-journals who should be taught to appreciate better quality fiction. Graham’s essay provides a useful overview of Collins’s career in journalism.

The collection is divided into sections on ‘Periodicals, Genres and the Production of Print;’ ‘The Press and the Public;’ ‘The ‘Globalisation’ of the Nineteenth-Century Press’ and ‘Journalists and Journalism.’ John Drew writes on ‘Dickens and the Middle-class Weekly’ and from Joanne Shattock’s essay on Margaret Oliphant we learn that she may have adapted a subplot from *No Name* (1862) for *The Perpetual Curate*, published in 1864.

WCS PUBLICATIONS

All of the Wilkie Collins Society’s publications are listed on the website at wilkiecollinssociety.org/publications/ from where they can be ordered. Currently there is a 25% off sale and all receipts go to help the Society continue its work.

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